

HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

published by

**Henry George School
of Social Science**121 East 30th Street
New York, NY 10016
(212) 889-8020Edward J. Dodson
PresidentGeorge L. Collins
DirectorLindy Davies
Editor**AFFILIATES****LONG ISLAND**Stan Rubenstein, Director
P.O. Box 553
Cutchogue, NY 11935
(516) 734-7543**PHILADELPHIA**Mike Curtis, Director
413 South 10th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147
(215) 922-4278**NEW ENGLAND**Ernest Kahn, Director
114 Ames Street
Sharon, MA 02067
(617) 784-3086**CHICAGO**Sam Venturella, Director
1772 W. Greenleaf Ave.
Chicago, IL 60626
(312) 338-6698**CALIFORNIA**Wendell Fitzgerald, President
1568 Schrader Street
San Francisco, CA 94117
(415) 661-6933
Harry Pollard, Director
Box 655
Tujunga, CA 91042
(818) 352-4141**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**Lucy Silfa, Director
Apartado Postal 758
Santo Domingo,
Republica Dominicana
(809) 565-6725**CANADA**School of Economic Science
2267 Westman Road
Mississauga, Ontario L5K 1M7
(416) 822-4694
Gaye/Gerry Shaw, Co-Directors
3017 25th Street, S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T3E 1Y2
(403) 242-4291**New Discovery Advances Dominican Republic Land
Tax Timetable - Cadastre Eliminates First Steps**

by George Collins

The 1992 C.G.O. Conference, hosted by the Santo Domingo extension of the Henry George School under the Directorship of Lucy Silfa, was an unparalleled success.

At the 25th anniversary of the school in September, 1991, Lucy and her lieutenants promised to put on a conference that would capitalize on those twenty-five years of work - and they did, in ways that we could not have anticipated.

News coverage - the lack of which is always lamented at Georgist conferences - was overwhelmingly abundant at this event. But the most noteworthy aspect of our gathering in the Dominican Republic was the opportunity it created - one that was readily seized upon - to set the direction and agenda for the next phase of the Henry George School's work. Last September, when I spoke to Nelson Frias, President of the Santo Domingo

City Council, and to the leaders of the four parties that make up the council, he asked me to come back and conduct a seminar on land value taxation for the entire Council. I said I would, and the Conference trip offered me the opportunity to fulfill that pledge. And when I did, there was no quibbling about the conclusion that land monopoly was the essential cause of the disparity

between great wealth and hopeless poverty in the country. These municipal legislators, who have no independent revenue source at their disposal, warmly received the land value tax remedy.

However, this multi-party support for land value taxation in the Dominican Republic is something more than an improbable anomaly occasioned by the fiscal limitations imposed on a City Council without money. As *Henry George Newsletter* readers already know, support exists for the reform at higher levels in the Dominican government. In another event unprecedented at a Georgist conference, a delegation of the leaders of Georgist organizations met with the president of the country. The keynote speaker at the conference, Pedro Bretón, Director General of the *Banco Agrícola*, arranged the meeting with President Joaquín Balaguer at the National Palace.

Balaguer commended Doña Lucy for the work she had done over the years, saying that he had been taking note of it all along - and he stated, without prompting, that it is very important that the idea of raising public revenue from land values be better known. But the unanticipated, almost unimaginable conclusion of our interview was his unsolicited offer to give any assistance we required to have a land cadastre developed and a general appraisal conducted - the steps needed to introduce land value taxation. He backed up the offer then and there by appointing Pedro Bretón to be the liaison with his office as the project goes forward.

The choice of Don Pedro was fortuitous, or perhaps wise. The Assessor General at Bretón's bank, Dario Bencosme, is a long-time student of Lucy Silfa's and a committed Georgist. As the man who conducts appraisals of farm land for bank loans, he will undoubtedly have an important role in the appraisal process. This on-the-ground linkage between philosophical Georgism, technical expertise and official sanction is irresistibly promising.

Since we left the Dominican Republic, work has been done that offers even more hope. Documents and records have been unearthed which reveal that following the land value taxation conference in the Dominican Republic in 1981 (which was spearheaded by then-HGS Director Phil Finkelstein and jointly sponsored by the HGS and the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy), a land cadastre was developed for the entire country. It was never released to the public - and it would appear that its existence was unknown to everyone except those who worked on it. Each page of the cadastre is headed "Joaquín Balaguer, Presidente de la República Dominicana." Along with it is a booklet documenting the legal basis for establishing the cadastre. The availability of this material will significantly reduce the amount of basic groundwork required to arrive at current values on which an equitable land tax can be imposed.

But, the political question still must be resolved: will the data be made officially available for this purpose? In this, Sr. Breton is on the answer seat (*continued on back page*)

Lucy Silfa and her lieutenants promised to put on a conference that would capitalize on those twenty-five years of work - and they did, in ways that we could not have anticipated.

Following the land value taxation conference in the Dominican Republic in 1981, a land cadastre was developed for the entire country. It was never released to the public - and it would appear that its existence was unknown to everyone except those who worked on it.

Dominican Republic

(continued from page two)

- and he is already asking the questions. He and Lucy Silfa are putting together the strategies required to move ahead with what he considers to be a vitally important project. President Balaguer, as in all things great and small, must give his approval for its release. Here, then, is the first test of his generous offer.

When the data becomes available and up-to-date appraisal can begin, the Dominican assessors will need assistance with procedures that are beyond their experience. Establishing a land value tax department will also require the consultancy of someone with a solid background in land tax administration.

The good offices of the Henry George School are being looked to, and it can be counted on to continue its role in this phase of the important job of educating the public on the essentials of an equitable land tenure system - as it has been doing for twenty-five years in the Dominican Republic. It is just possible that common ownership of land, conformed to the needs of the twenty-first century, could return to the land in the Western Hemisphere in which it was first compromised five hundred years ago.



Meanwhile...

(from page 7)

progress unless individuals take responsibility for their own lives."

While the Bush administration plan consigns inner-city initiatives which might prove expensive to the limbo of "demonstrations" (small-scale pilot projects costing less than \$10 million), Bill & Al propose spending real money on things our cities really need. This kind of direct public investment, particularly in the areas of infrastructure and education, might do more to revitalize cities than other more sophisticated plans - but it is still, inexorably, a trickle-down process. Repairing bridges and highways, as everyone knows, is a good way to revitalize land values.

Even if we were to grant that inner-city dwellers would benefit from the proposed federal largesse, it is not realistic to expect such sums to be appropriated. Can we really expect tax-wary suburban voters to allow a deficit-spooked Congress to pay billions of dollars to aid the inner cities?

Clinton & Gore also propose enterprise zones. Although the position paper's lack of specifics denies us the luxury of lambasting the plan point-by-

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK

BASIC COURSES

Fundamental Economics
Monday, 5:30 - 7:30, *Mr. Irving Kass*
Tuesday, 6:30 - 8:30, *Ms. Vandana Chak*
Wednesday, 6:00 - 8:00, *Ms. Lynn Yost*
Thursday, 6:30 - 8:30, *Mr. Tom Smith*

Progress & Poverty (in Spanish)
Tuesday, 6:00 - 8:00, *Mr. Nibaldo Aguilera*
Wednesday, 6:00 - 8:00, *Mr. Nibaldo Aguilera*

Understanding Economics
Wednesday, 12:30 - 1:30, *Mr. Lindy Davies*

ADVANCED COURSES

Applied Economics
Tuesday, 6:00 - 8:00, *Mr. George Collins*

Economic Science
Wednesday, 5:30 - 7:30, *Mr. Manuel Felix*
(In Spanish)
Thursday, 6:30 - 8:30, *Mr. George Collins*

Classical Analysis I
Monday, 6:00 - 8:00, *Mr. Lindy Davies*

Roots of Enterprise, Ownership, and Debt
Monday, 6:30 - 8:30, *Dr. Michael Hudson*

Great Decisions '92
Tuesday, 6:30 - 8:30, *Mr. William Brown*

History of Economic Thought II
Wednesday, 6:00 - 8:00, *Mrs. Fryda Ossias*

Current Events
Tuesday, 12:30 - 1:30, *Mr. Lindy Davies*
Thursday, 6:00 - 8:00, *Mr. Sydney Mayers*

FRIDAY EVENING FORUMS (7-9 PM)

Land in the Movies
September 18th, *Burn*

The Fever
October 16th, *Ms. Carol Holmes*

Colombian Poetry & Music Concert
October 23rd, *Produced by Mr. Luis Fernando Diaz*

The Quincentennial Celebration & The Other Story (in Spanish)
November 6th, *Sr. Carlos Eden*

The Income Tax and You
December 4th, *Fred Kahn, C.P.A.*

SATURDAY SEMINARS (1-3 PM)

After The Summit
October 3rd, *Mr. Jim Morgan & Mr. Georg Kell*

Immigration & Human Rights
October 31st, *Ms. Vandana Chak & Mr. Cyrus D. Mehta*

The Livable City
November 14th, *Dr. Stephen Sussna*

point, it is portrayed as a more humane version of the Republican proposal, promising to minimize business taxes and federal regulations "to provide incentives to set up shop." These incentives closely resemble the invitations to land speculators made in the Bush plan. However, Clinton seems to recognize that inner-city residents may

not automatically benefit from tax breaks for real estate developers. In return for generous enterprise-zone incentives, "companies will have to make jobs for local residents a top priority." Undoubtedly, large numbers of waitresses and dishwashers will be needed in Democratic E.Z.'s, too. -L.D.

Henry George School of Social Science
121 East 30th Street
New York, NY 10016

Address correction requested

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New York, NY
Permit No. 7759