

Henry George Newsletter

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK

The mayoral election in New York this November brings an end to one of the city's most memorable political eras and may well set the stage for another. After twelve years of the administration headed by Mayor Ed Koch, whose now jocular, now acerbic personality was felt to have contributed to inflamed racial tension and which draws to a close amid charges of corruption and cronyism, many New Yorkers are anticipating a new set of standards and priorities from City Hall.

Whether the man on the hotseat becomes former Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, the first black to come within reach of the office, or Federal Prosecutor Rudolph Giuliani, the task will be daunting. Drugs, crime, and racially motivated violence have overshadowed the campaign, and people are expecting strong action on these fronts. They are looking for a tone of social healing from city hall, strong anti-crime measures, and an unrelenting war against the drug trade.

What are the prospects that any meaningful improvements can be achieved before an understandably cynical populace gives up on the new mayor? The records of other cities and other mayors faced with similar conditions offer no encouragement. All have failed to achieve real fundamental change. And New York's problems are not unique. They are the ones plaguing all major cities. Crime, homelessness, drug abuse, job dislocation, poor educational levels, lack of affordable housing and deteriorating infrastructure head the long list of human, social and structural deficiencies they all share.

Gentrification, depleted housing stock due to deterioration, and insufficient low and moderate income housing are pointed to as just the tip of the iceberg of New York's housing crisis. Not even the city's best efforts can come close to addressing the condition of the poorest. Mean income in the city is defined as \$10,948. But in East Harlem, the mean income \$6,623, not nearly enough for its residents to afford housing provided by the city based on its own standard. Among other things the Community Board in the district recommends is the elimination of land and housing speculation to preserve the character of the neighborhood.

Add to this the plight of the more than 90,000 homeless people in the city. Shelters are inadequate. Stories of subway riders stepping over naked men as they rush to the trains, and of young mothers offering babies for sale, are more than isolated occurrences. But the social and economic problems of the city are not new. While a decade ago, or a century ago, they did not seem to pervade the city as they do today, they did nevertheless exist. More rigidly confined to particular sections of the city, they appeared less virulent, but the seeds of social disaster were clearly perceived.



Cartoon from 1897 showing Henry George wrestling with the Serpent of "Corruption, Monopoly, Rings, Deals, Spoils..."

Henry George ran for mayor of New York in 1886 and again in 1897. The conditions of squalor, hunger and joblessness described in those campaigns were the festering cankers that have now erupted into full-blown sores,
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**Henry George School
of Social Science**
121 East 30th Street
New York, NY 10016
(212) 889-8020

Lancaster M. Greene
Publications Chairman

George L. Collins
Director

Mark A. Sullivan
Editor

AFFILIATES

LONG ISLAND

P.O. Box 553
Cutchogue, NY 11935

PHILADELPHIA AREA

413 South 10th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147

701 Green Lane
Arden, DE 19810

NEW ENGLAND

114 Ames Street
Sharon, MA 02067

CHICAGO

4536 N. Ravenswood Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640

CALIFORNIA

1568 Shrader Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Box 655
Tujunga, CA 91042

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Isabel La Catolica #212
AP #758, Santo Domingo

CANADA

School of Economic Science
2267 Westman Road
Mississauga, Ont. L5K 1M7

3017 25th Street SW
Calgary, Alberta T3E 1Y2

SPANISH-SPEAKING PROGRAM THRIVES IN NEW YORK

To fill classes, Henry George School teachers are accustomed to wheedling, pleading, bush-beating. . . what a sight it is, then, to see a class with sixty-eight students — and to hear a teacher say he had to turn some away because there just weren't enough seats in the auditorium! That is the experience of Manuel Felix, who is beginning his seventh year in charge of the New York School's Spanish-speaking economics classes. To what does he owe his tremendous success? This year, he says, choosing a different newspaper in which to advertise yielded an unexpected bonanza. But, having taught more than 700 students since 1982, Felix must have more going for him than dumb luck.

One thing Manny Felix has going for him is a whole bunch of energy. Although he works full-time as an academic consultant, Felix manages to hold special seminars and end-of-semester cultural events in addition to regular weekly classes. Last November, a concert devoted to peace issues in Central America was held, with entertainment by bands from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina. That sort of event, says Felix, is the perfect culmination for the school year — and a tradition he wants to establish firmly in his program.

New York's Hispanic community keenly feels the dearth of educational opportunities caused by the language barrier. However, the fact that the Henry George School does not provide academic credit is no deterrent to Hispanic students. Some who attend the Spanish classes actually speak fluent English. The main motivator, says Felix, is concern about the political economy of Latin America (he has taught students from 22 countries) and some graduates have resolved to introduce Georgist analysis into the political dialogues there — such as Yolanda Bescopé in Bolivia.

The core of the Spanish-speaking program is similar to the three-course structure that has been used for many years. The titles, though, have been changed to reflect the prevailing concerns of Latin American students. The first, *Progress & Poverty*, is apt enough. The second segment is based on George's *Social Problems* and is titled *Third World Issues*. The third installment, called *Fiscal Policy*, completes the traditional three part study of political economy.

Another successful project of Felix's Spanish language program has been the publication of a newsletter. *El Georgista* contains articles by Mr. Felix as well as translations, done by his students, from other Georgist publications; it has circulated in 29 countries. Sadly, though, the letter has not been published in the last five months because of a lack of funds.

Manny Felix is no Georgist-come-lately. He took his first class with Lucy DeSilva in the Dominican Republic, in 1971. The relationship between teacher and pupil has blossomed over the years, and last year Ms. DeSilva came to New York to teach a two-day seminar to Felix's students, on how to implement land value taxation and social reform in Latin American countries. And Manny Felix is confident that, if and when he leaves New York, his teaching duties will be taken over by capable successors. He has two alumni who are "willing and able," and plans to start them on their way with sections of *Progress and Poverty* in the near future.

—Lindy Davies

STAN RUBENSTEIN VISITS UPSTATE NEW YORK

Stan Rubenstein, head of the HGS high school program, met with teachers in five upstate New York high schools — three in Albany and two in Rome. Stan also gave a three-hour mini-course for adults in Rome on Thursday evening, September 21st. These meetings were arranged by Al Hartheimer. The mayor of Rome supports the land value tax, having been a student of the late Manny Choper.

LAND & WORLD ORDER: Report from Alanna Hartzok

Our *Land and World Order* panel and strategy session at the Philadelphia conference last August has opened up an enormous opportunity for education and activism among significant constituencies from the local to the global level. The purpose of the strategy session was to build a network to bring land tenure and taxation policy issues into the global dialogue and onto the global agenda. It was considered by many to have been an important "conference within a conference" which brought together key players representing important organizations on the leading edge of global transformation: *Denise Giardina*, an award-winning novelist writing about conditions in Appalachia and former secretary/treasurer of the Kentucky Fair Tax Coalition; *Dr. Harry Lerner*, organizer of many high-powered "Peoples Assemblies" of non-governmental organizations within the United Nations; *Gerald Mische*, director of Global Education Associates, an acknowledged leader in the peace and world order movements with associates in over 70 countries; and *Dr. John Strasma*, agricultural economist and associate of the Land Tenure Center at University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Strasma is organizing a Latin American conference on land tenure in the spring and invited Prof. Mason Gaffney to play a prominent role. We spent some time discussing ways in which the Henry George Schools and the Land Tenure Center could work in closer association. Gerry Mische has offered to initiate a project on "land Use/Tenure/Taxation in our Global Village." Harry Lerner understands the importance of land value taxation and invites Georgists to play an important role in creating a UN Second Assembly. This is a proposed house of about 550 people elected by population to represent the people of the earth as a whole. Over 100 organizations have endorsed this effort so far. Denise Giardina's experience with a successful grassroots movement with tangible victories offers a lot we can learn from. Her intense dinner meeting with Walt and Arthur Rybeck will likely prove helpful in their work in West Virginia.

Others who attended the strategy session and committed themselves to ongoing work within the land and world order network include: Richard Barbuto (trustee, New York HGS), Mitch Chanelis (Green movement, New England), Betsy Dana (Federal Caucus and Georgist Registries, from Oregon), John DeSantis, Jr. (The Peoples Answer project and perpetual mayoral candidate, NYC), Jim Dorenkott (Basic Economic Education, San Diego), Burton and Elizabeth Dyson, MD (publishers of *Neighborhood Caretaker* in St. Paul), Charles Ellinger (Long Island HGS), Dr. Alexandra Hardie (economics professor, Exeter University, England), Bob Jene (Chicago HGS), Bernard Rooney (Australian Georgist researcher/activist), Art Rybeck (West Virginia LVT advocate), Walt Rybeck (Center for Public Dialogue, DC), and Jeffery J. Smith (Green movement, California).

From the Henry George Sesquicentennial Conference I went on to the Eighth Assembly of the Fourth World Decentralist Congress in Toronto, Ontario. About 100 attended, including 10 or so who had attended the Philadelphia conference. The Fourth World Congress is sponsored by a London organization led by John Papworth which emphasizes the importance of human scale, drawing from the works of E.F. Schumacher, Leopold Kohr and others. The co-sponsor for the last three years has been the School of Living, founded by the late Ralph Borsodi and Mildred Loomis, and based on decentralist principles and Georgist economics. In part, this Congress is becoming another international Georgist conference. Here we have our economic approach placed within a holistic framework which includes forums on communication strategies, organizing for change, spiritual and cultural transformation, and bioregionalism. Susan Witt of the Schumacher Society (Great Barrington, Massachusetts), Jeff Smith and myself chaired and facilitated the *Geonomics Forum*. This was based upon the "Strategy Map for Geonomic Transformation" that has been built through a consensus process over the past three years. I also had the opportunity to present two 90-minute workshops: *Community Ground Rent* on land tax reform, and *Land Reform, Tax Revolt, and Hatching Out of the Nation State*, a discussion of ecological era economics drawing in part from the work of Ralph Borsodi.

On to Quebec where 10 of us gathered at the Pigeon Hill Bruindeen Peacemaking Center in the village of St. Arnaud. We brought together people doing work in the field of creativity development and psychosynthesis, and our discussions evolved an emergent field of "sociosynthesis." We considered the "land problem" from a deeply psychological context and the perspective of Western culture's worldview. Working with chess pieces and a chess board proved an effective teaching method for discussing the land issue along with leadership dynamics.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CLASSES & CONTESTS

Harry Pollard reports that courses in *Classical Analysis* have begun in Montrose and Burbank. The Los Angeles HGS will soon be announcing two essay contests for high school and college students throughout southern California. The college section, under the direction of Prof. Mason Gaffney, will award a \$2,000 prize for the best 15-20 page essay. Tom Rosenstein will head the high school section which will award \$1000 for the best 10-page essay. In both contests students will be asked to consider what would happen if Henry George's ideas were put into effect.

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disfiguring the city that once was, and could again become, the world's greatest metropolis.

Although it is believed that George would have won the 1897 election had he lived, there is very serious doubt, if not sure knowledge, that he would not have been able to institute his land reform. In 1886, replying to a reporter's question on what his election would do to put his theories into practice, George said candidly, "My election will forward those ideas simply by increasing the discussion of them. They cannot be carried into effect until the great majority of people wish them to be carried into effect. . ." And the issue, for George, was far greater than any mayoral election: "The single tax is not a party or an organization. It is a perception of a great truth."

The reorganization which would create Greater New York with its five boroughs, on January 1, 1898, would still not have given George the power to enact his great reform, had he lived and achieved victory in the election of November 2, 1897. His candidacy was not aimed merely at providing good government but at promoting natural rights. He mounted the platform to inform and to educate the public, as he had done in his books.

While some mention is made of the need to deal with the underlying structural imbalances and dislocations, today's mayoral hopefuls, who can do more than George could have, are locked into actions that are purely expedient: public housing, drug, alcohol and AIDS programs, educational remediation schemes, more prisons and a host of other measures that treat the symptoms and not the underlying causes. It is not in the interest of today's candidate to probe, or to educate.

In a real sense, the New York Henry George School is the successor to the endeavor of Henry George's mayoral candidacy. It is uniquely placed to carry out that function in the unbiased, non-political atmosphere of the classroom. If we do our work with proper concentration and consistency it should lay a groundwork of favorable disposition to real reform among the people.

A cadre of well-trained adherents to Henry George's philosophy is essential to its propagation, whatever medium is used to transmit them. Accordingly, great emphasis is being placed at the school on a thorough program of classroom study covering George's major works. The program, *Principles of Political Economy*, is structured as a 30-week study presented in three independent 10-week segments. *Fundamental Economics*, based on *Progress and Poverty*, is part one and is prerequisite for parts two and three. *Applied Economics* is based on *Protection or Free Trade* and *Social Problems*, and *Economic Science* is based on *The Science of Political Economy*.

This basic direction is by no means the only path to follow in our endeavor to educate and inform. Other classes, lectures, seminars, workshops, films and videos can all be employed. Speakers and instructors can address audiences on areas outside of our specialty, as well. Many people respond more readily to programs that deal with specific issues. Topics with broad general appeal, such as the stock market, U.S. foreign policy, income tax, banking, writing, and logical thinking should attract a more varied audience to the school.

Reorganization and promotion of the Henry George Research Library also promises to be of great value in attracting scholars and students. With our convenient location off Park Avenue South, a variety of Georgist and other programs, and our unique tuition-free policy, we expect the school to become identified as a center for economic studies. Here can be found a variety of stimulating educational experiences on topical subjects as well as long-term remedies for social problems.

Perhaps then another candidate for mayor of New York will be bold enough to say, as Henry George did in 1886, "There is one great fact that stares in the face of anyone who chooses to look at it. That fact is that the vast majority of men and women and children in New York have no legal right to live here at all. Most of us—ninety nine per cent at the least—must pay the other one per cent by the week or month or quarter for the privilege of staying here and working like slaves. . . But what do we propose to do about it? We propose, in the first place. . . to make the buildings cheaper by taking the tax off buildings. We propose to put that tax on land exclusive of improvements. . . In that way we propose to drive out the dog in the manger."

—George L. Collins

ANNOUNCEMENT: The New York Henry George School invites its friends and students to attend the FALL TERM GRADUATION & HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES at the School on Friday, December 8th beginning 7:30 PM.

Henry George School of Social Science
121 East 30th Street
New York, N.Y. 10016

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