

## The West Is Best—Conference Echoes

ON July 7th visitors arriving from various points, loosely identified as Georgists attending the 26th annual conference of the Henry George School, became honorary westerners and had the "purely pleasurable privilege of visiting the only dad-burned cowtown left in Canada—name o' Calgary. Having enjoyed exceptional amounts of genuine heart-warmin' back-slappin' neighbor-lovin' hand shakin' Calgary hospitality," they were deputized as honorary Calgary White Hatters. Each was given a white Stetson in the correct head size, and charged with responsibility of "extendin' said Calgary friendliness among all folks an' critters."

There was occasional impromptu music, appropriate and mirthful, abundant refreshment, a welcome from Wilbur Freeland, and instant acceptance. It was a happy Henry George family gathering.

That was the way the conference began in the Hotel Palliser on a warm, carefree evening, with Mr. and Mrs. James Ramsay and the many cordial friends and members of The School of Economic Science in Calgary, Edmonton and Peace River.

Four panel discussions were on the program for July 8th—a real talk day. The most unusual feature, greatly appreciated by visitors, was the "At Home Buffet" where Calgary graduates were hosts to small groups of out-of-towners in their homes, for supper and for more of the zestful Georgist talk that some look forward to all year.

Robert Tideman of San Francisco presided at the first discussion on the role of the graduate and the private sphere of influence of the individual. He spoke of motivation through the work itself and mentioned a leader-

ship course where he learned that a good volunteer job is one where the volunteer has a chance to fail. "Every Georgist should think for himself, not just accept what other people say," he ventured. Mr. Tideman, executive secretary of the HGS in Northern California, is a valued speaker at many meetings where important tax matters are discussed. His views and those of his active staff members are expressed in radio programs and the newsletter, *The Analyst*, edited by Harlan Trott.

Dorothy Sara, handwriting expert and long a devoted teacher at HGS headquarters in New York, said, on the subject of "involving students" that she herself was never encouraged to be a volunteer, and it was by her own volition entirely that she pursued an extensive study which led to her long teaching career. Now she continually tries to encourage students to go ahead.

Volunteer efforts of various kinds were reported by Mina Olson of Chicago; Harry McKinders of Edmonton; and Hank Rasmussen of Calgary.

A second panel directed toward monopolies was called to order by John Tetley of New Jersey. Seymour Rauch, the first speaker, thought our program should be extended to include such subjects as monopoly of public utilities. P. D. Bolton of Edmonton's School of Economic Science, questioned use of the word monopoly, saying it is hard to find one. Land is not one—it is merely "in short supply"—so is capital and labor. It becomes a matter then of which is the scarcest.

Claude W. Arnold of Fairhope, Alabama, responded that land as such is not a monopoly but is largely monopolized. "I have yet to find access to land on an equal basis," he said, pointing out that when the Fair-



Arnold A. Weinstein, "the cowboy from New York," receives an official welcome from the Calgary Stampede Queen and her attendants.

(All photographs by John Nagy)

hope Single Tax Community had continuous control on a reasonable basis it was sometimes thought of as a monopoly. What we're really discussing, he observed, is special privilege. Sooner or later we make it possible to finance something that otherwise doesn't get financed. Periodically the government should sell whatever it is operating in competition with private individuals.

Loral Swofford of St. Louis referred to the monopolization by unions. Gaye Shaw of Calgary said she uses Phil Grant's book, *The Wonderful Wealth Machine*, in her classes because one chapter distinguishes between privileged business and big business, better than anything she has seen. (Those who hold copies of this book, now out of print, should take note.)

"Advance and Consolidate," the conference theme, was the title given to a meeting presided over by Andrew Williams of Calgary.

Malcolm McCarthy, director at Toronto, announced a new head office at 1218 Islington Avenue North in Rexdale, a suburb of Toronto. Aside from classes, the chief activity has centered around a brief presented to the Special Senate Committee on Poverty in Ottawa. Senator A. W. Roebuck, at 93 years of age, assisted in its preparation but was unable to attend when it was presented. He is ill at present in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Toronto, and loving friends may wish to send him a line.

After presentation of the brief, a copy of *Progress and Poverty* was

given to 18 senators in Canada's senior House and 8 members of the Senate research committee, followed by lesson transcripts of the basic course every two weeks over a twenty-week period. In addition 90 other key men in the Toronto area were given a copy of the book and the lesson series.

In June two University of Toronto undergraduates who are working on their M.A.'s were hired to assist in a detailed survey of Port Credit, a suburb of Toronto with a population of 8000 and about 2500 parcels of land. Researchers are copying the assessments on each parcel on an enlarged map, and arrangements have been made to obtain details of property sales in Port Credit over the last three years. A series of suggested steps will show the Port Credit Council how to switch the tax from improvements to land and how, by this shift in taxation, working with their zoning plan, the community can be made to develop. Later they hope to obtain financial support for further much needed research and start a similar survey of the core of the City of Toronto.

Gerry Shaw of Calgary reported on a provincial legislative committee initiated by Jim Ramsay, which had gathered material, prepared a brief and made recommendations for the provincial law to be changed so the municipality could, if it wanted to, assess improvements separately. Interest has been created although no sure action has taken place as yet.

Emanuel Choper, a tireless worker in Albany; Stanley Sapiro of Los Angeles and John Nagy of San Diego completed the panel.

(Continued, next page)

**San Diego** and its loyal Georgists have always ranked high in the annals of the Henry George School—and many remember the conference there in 1958 as one of rare charm. It was therefore a cause for sadness when this year Henry Cramer, long a conference participant, was unable to attend. His greetings and regrets were brought by John Nagy, president of the Statewide Homeowners Association. This important research organization owes its existence to BEE (Basic Economic Education) through the wisdom and generosity of Sidney Evans and his successor in administration, Henry Cramer.

Mr. Cramer, and before him, Mr. Evans, were courageous in trying new things. The tremendous interest and awareness in California regarding the whole subject of property assessment could hardly have gained the attention that is noticeable in the press, if these men had not persistently kept at the business of educating and offering to scattered individuals the increased effectiveness of a research organization.

As for inferences earlier in the day that nothing was being done to occupy the minds of HGS graduates, Mr. Nagy offered as examples those present and many others not present who, without anyone trying to "involve" them, had found a way to make their contributions count. The philosophy of Henry George encourages people to think for themselves. Students of George apply themselves at the point where their talents best fit the need.

The school in San Diego has focused on one aspect of Henry George's teaching. The most important step seemed to be getting the fair share of taxes onto the land under the present structure. To say that it is only *one* step is not to say that it is easy. Against years of entrenched habit and administrative privilege, how was this to be done? The dramatic answer was found in attacking inequitable as-

sessments and driving home, by means of surveys, the shocking inequity of the taxes paid by home-owning individuals and those paid by slum owners and holders of vacant land.

"I believe in crawling before you walk," said Mr. Nagy. "In our survey of Alameda County we showed that homeowners could pay less taxes if we got equitable assessments according to law. But it isn't merely a matter of reducing the property taxes, it's a matter of reducing the homeowner's taxes on property and *not* increasing them on sales, income, gasoline, etc. We can do that by taking taxes off the improvements and personal property and collecting the same revenue from land."

After several surveys which crashed the headlines and aroused the populace, another more elaborate one is under way in San Diego County. This one will enable accurate and immediate information to be made available through computerized reports. At a glance any parcel of land can be identified along with all the pertinent details, assessment figures, location, parcel number, owner, etc.

Because of the vast number of taxing districts in each code area in San Diego County it will be difficult to arrive at the rate needed to calculate tax on "land-only." When that hurdle is overcome and funds are available (\$15,000) Mr. Nagy's group will have a land value study to "show the world." It will summarize each block, each city, and all unincorporated areas in the county.

When, at the instigation of Benjamin Smith of Grand Rapids, Michigan, a church program was activated for an assessment survey, Mr. Nagy, sponsored by BEE, was asked to come to the Grand Valley State College and assist in outlining a county survey. (See HGN May, p. 9 and June p. 7). He is willing to aid all efforts of this kind whenever possible.