

NEW YORK LECTURES REACH DIVERSE AUDIENCES

The New York HGS was even busier than usual around the last weekend of February. On Friday the 23rd the School offered *Perestroika in Russia and Hungary*, the second of three Friday night forums scheduled for its winter term. And on Monday the 26th, a lecture in memory of longtime HGS faculty member Cyril Harvey (see last month's *Newsletter*) was given by George Collins, with Richard Barbuto and HGS teacher Nan Braman.

Speakers for the *Perestroika* forum were Arnold Bratov, a Russian playwright who has been living in the United States for only one year, and Professor George Schmidt, a physicist at Stevens Institute of Technology. Dr. Schmidt, originally from Budapest, was a member of the 1956 Hungarian pro-democracy movement, and fled the country when the movement was defeated. Both speakers were able to provide a personal view of the momentous changes in Eastern Europe. Mr. Bratov, who has a play now running in Moscow, compared the concerns of writers and artists in the two societies. Dr. Schmidt summarized Hungarian history, and suggested that, for the countries of Eastern Europe, democratic national self-determination is often more important than economics. The program was moderated by Prof. Norman Horing, also of the Stevens Institute, who has written an *Open Letter to the Communist World* (see the December '89 issue of the *Newsletter*).

After their presentations the speakers fielded questions left and right. The chief areas of concern were the potential for a reunified Germany, and the preservation of socialist-style economic rights (i.e. the right to housing and medical care) should Eastern European nations fully embrace capitalism. A cordially dissenting view (to that of her husband) was presented by Mrs. Schmidt, who, while conceding that "full employment" policies in Hungary led to massive stagnation, held that the political structures emerging in Eastern Europe must provide for people's basic needs if they are to succeed. Discussion continued as everyone was treated to a selection of delicious Hungarian pastries.



Prof. George Schmidt



Prof. Norman Horing



Mr. Arnold Bratov

The selection of Harlem's Touro College as the site for the Cyril Harvey Memorial Lecture was suggested by Richard Barbuto, who worked with Cyril Harvey on the Harlem Land Value Tax Project in the early 80's. This was the neighborhood where Mr. Harvey lived and worked, established the Harlem House of Commons, and tirelessly promoted, as George Collins put it in the title of his address, "the philosophy of social justice".

The lecture was the concluding event of Touro's Black History Month schedule. After a brief welcome to the college and the series by Jamal Joseph, Touro's Director of Student Affairs, Richard Barbuto introduced the work of the Henry George School. Then, Nan Braman spoke on the life and work of her friend and fellow teacher, using biographical material on Mr. Harvey's early life, which was provided by Sydney Bridgeman Harvey. She remembered a man who was too honest to be a pool shark and too gentle to be a boxer, yet was skilled at both -- big, energetic, magnetic, and passionate about justice.

George Collins's lecture followed: a stirring description of the justice and practicality of Henry George's vision, using examples from around the world, and down the street; a newly-modeled subway station opened out onto an entire block of rubble-strewn vacant land, along a busy thoroughfare. The audience had not far to look to see the applicability of George's ideas, and they received the speech with enthusiasm. A reception followed.

The final Friday night forum of the spring term, *Muckrakers and Reformers* with Stan Rubenstein, is scheduled for March 23rd at the New York School.

"HARD DRUGS & HARD DECISIONS" IN L.A.

On February 23rd, in the second of its Final Friday dinners devoted to "Internal Pollution", The Alumni Group of the Los Angeles HGS examined "Crack in the Window: Supplying the Retail Market in the Age of Cocaine." Invited speakers were Craig Peters and John Myner of the LAPD, and John Vernon, entrepreneur in the food business and State Chair of the Libertarian Party.

Some of the issues covered included: the corrupting influence of the drug trade by which "a policeman offered more cash than he's likely to earn the rest of his life is facing intolerable and unfair temptation" (one Mexican policeman was offered \$35,000 to simply go to the other side of town while planes landed and unloaded); the violation of due-process under the new anti-racketeering law (the moment you are charged with a crime, the government seizes all your assets) which is being extended beyond drug-related cases; the high cost of financing the war on drugs (e.g., many more prisons will need to be built); and the fact that anti-drug laws are creating a large new class of criminals.

According to The Alumni Group's flyer: "Former addicts... can go to McDonald's for \$5 an hour, or... get \$5 a minute continuing the illegal activity that supported their habit. What are they likely to do? What would you be likely to do? The question remains. Do social rights transcend individual rights? Does individual freedom include the right to choose hard drugs? Does society have the right to... abridge the Bill of Rights...?"

Craig Peters and his partner John Myner agreed to disagree over the legalization issue. Peters pointed out that while the discussion may be philosophical, hundreds of thousands of babies are being born in American already addicted to hard drugs. Peters, who had done 14 of his 18 years of police work in drug enforcement, also reported that high schoolers can earn \$200 to \$300 a week selling drugs to schoolmates.

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**1990 Conference in
Santa Fe - see inside**

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"BY GEORGE" PRESS COVERAGE UPDATE

The merits of Georgist property tax reform are making further inroads on the public dialogue, and an even more encouraging sign is that this month's coverage includes three op-ed pieces that eschew the usual habit of damning Henry George's ideas with faint praise.

A piece entitled "Revitalized Cities Require Property Tax Reforms", by Seymour Rauch, appeared in the *Buffalo News* on January 17. Rauch's article argues for a two-rate property tax as a powerful tool in the fight against urban decay—particularly if the tax is gradually shifted to fall completely on land. Buffalo, Rauch writes, is an ideal city to exploit the virtues of this tax reform, because it is blessed with many natural and locational advantages, and waits only for the proper incentive to develop them.

The Chicago HGS is reprinting an article by William S. Pierce, "Make Tax Abatement General", which appeared in the February 15 edition of *A Heartland Perspective*, issued by the Heartland Institute. Pierce's article observes that while tax abatements for real estate developers serve some useful purposes, they also serve to reward existing privilege and encourage corruption. Why not, Pierce ar-

HARD DECISIONS

(continued from page one)

The sentiments of the meeting were with John Vernon who argued for decriminalization. Removing exorbitant profit from the drug trade is the only way to roll it back and cut down on related crime; the only way to lower the profit is to allow a free market to replace monopoly.

Two volunteers served as "designated hitters" to open the discussion period with hard questions: libertarian Michael Green and printing firm owner David Byrnes. Also, copies were distributed of a correspondence on the pros and cons of Prohibition from *Science* (Journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science).

Next Final Friday will be on March 23rd (not the last Friday, due to Michael's Restaurant closing for two weeks) and the topic will be the first of three on the external, rather than internal, environment: "Local Pollution (and urban sprawl)." Speakers will be Margil Wadley, an associate of LA-HGS, and Jeff Smith, Green activist. April's theme deals with electric power and ecology, and May's Final Friday will be on global warming and other possible catastrophes.

Errata: Our February 1990 article on "To

gues, let everyone in the the community share in the benefits of tax abatements, and institute a permanent tax abatement—by removing the tax on all improvements?

Also on February 15th, W. Philip Cotton, Jr., an architect and the treasurer of the Public Revenue Education Council in St. Louis, Missouri, published a piece in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* called "Property-Tax System Promotes Slums". Cotton's article argues for site-value tax, and hints at the beginning of a movement in Missouri for constitutional change allowing the adoption of local two-rate property taxes, as Pennsylvania's constitution now does.

Mr. Cotton has also been active in the public dialogue abroad, corresponding with Mayor Manfred Rommel of Stuttgart, West Germany, regarding the usefulness of land value taxation against housing shortages. Mayor Rommel was quoted, in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on Nov. 4, 1989, as saying that the West German government would have to spend many times the \$1 billion figure it has projected for new housing, to keep up with the skyrocketing demand.



Smoke, To Drink, To Die in L.A." contained two errors: Fred Allen should read Steve Allen (*the* Steve Allen); and David Byrne should read Byrnes. Apologies to Mssrs. Byrnes and Allen!

- Editor.

SECOND L.A. ESSAY CONTEST ANNOUNCED

In addition to the college undergraduate essay contest reported in our last issue, the LA school has announced a high school essay contest on the same theme: "Managing the Earth's Limited Resources: Henry George's Policies as Tools." Prizes are \$1000 for first, \$500 for second, and \$250 for third place. Deadline for submissions is April 15th, and is open to high school students in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Prize money and copies of *Progress and Poverty* for the contests are being provided by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. For more information, please contact the LA school in Tujunga.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Winter term graduation festivities in New York will be held on Friday evening, April 6th. Contact the New York School for the exact time and location.