

## *Railroads Urged to Relinquish 1800s Land Grant*

The railroad problem in the United States involves much more than the inefficient handling of transportation. There is a growing body of opinion that an historic wrong needs to be righted—the lands granted the railroads in the late 1800's must be returned to the federal government.

From 1850 to 1871 the government granted a number of railroad companies tremendous amounts of land to aid them in providing railroad transportation to and for the Western states. This land grant totalled 187,785,850 acres—or approximately the same land area of the National Forest system—10% of the nation's total continental land area.

Unfortunately over the years, as Robert Mellem so aptly states in his article in the journal *Environmental Action*, most of these "landed companies" have found it extremely profitable to develop these land interests at the expense of their transportation services.

Millions of acres of privately-owned railroad land are within the National Forest system, and in order to consolidate the national park areas to allow for easier handling, a series of exchanges have been going on—not exactly in the public's interest. For example, according to Mr. Mellem, deals are currently being made in Gallatin and Beaverhead National Forests of Montana. Burlington Northern Incorporated is acquiring choice, developable land in the West Fork of the Gallatin River watershed while the Forest Service is gaining primarily steep, high, undevelopable land in return.

The Consolidated Coal Company, a subsidiary of Continental Oil Company, is

## **Fall Semester Marks Big Advance for School**

The Fall semester marks a significant change for the Henry George School, and a vigorous increase in the School's impact on the New York community.

For the first time the School is offering courses in Social Philosophy that investigate George's role in the history of thought and evaluate his philosophical contribution in the context of other ethical positions. The three philosophy courses are taught by two young college professors who were introduced to Georgist thought in a lecture given at Hunter College last year by Barbara

leasing land from Burlington Northern in order to prospect and prepare to strip mine for subbituminous coal in the lovely and fragile Bull Mountains, 30 miles north of Billings, Montana. "The problems of lowered water tables and dried up springs, water, pollution, erosion, non-reclaimability due to poor soil and the death of wildlife," states Mr. Mellem, "threaten to be very severe."

A bill introduced by Senators Metcalf and Mansfield would help rectify this situation by providing that "no railroad holding any title of any kind of lands, other than rights of way, which were received as a grant from the federal government shall discontinue any regularly provided passenger or freight service unless it reconveys to the United States all land rights and titles in the amount of one hundred acres for each mile of service discontinued."

This may be going down the road in the right direction, but it will hardly lead to a solution of the basic problem. For if the corporations and the government are to continue to wheel and deal, neither will the need for conservation be met nor will the public receive the benefits of its share in the nation's natural resources.

Rockefeller. They subsequently became interested in George and in the School, and developed the three courses to present George in the light of the history of philosophy and the various "futures" proposed by thinkers through the ages.

"The Future of American Society" and "Man vs. Society" are taught by Dr. Lester Hoffman, a Harvard graduate formerly at Hunter and now at C. W. Post University. These two courses look to this century's changes in technology and society, and ask whether America can "get it all together" through a synthesis of the thought of philosophers and social scientists.

"Reform, Revolution, Utopia" is presented by Henry Epstein, one of Hunter's most popular and dynamic teachers. This course focusses on the question, "What is a good Society?"—perhaps the most important philosophical enquiry the School could entertain.

Together these courses have over 50 students. According to Mr. Epstein, "this is the brightest, toughest class I've ever had." Not surprisingly, the library is doing a brisk business in social philosophy books.

The other courses in the new "academic" category are proving themselves successful, too:

"The African Experience" is being given to some 35 public school teachers who have already demonstrated their appreciation of this course as devoted not to exotica but to land management and law and traditional systems of thought.

"Economic Policies for America's Cities" is an updated, hard-hitting look at the urban malaise, led by economics' foremost exponent of land-value taxation, Dick Netzer. "The History of Economic Thought" is being given again by

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