

# SCHOOL NOTES

## Philadelphia

*Progress and Poverty Centennial School Library Project Continues:*

The Henry George School in Philadelphia has continued its award-winning School Library Project into 1980, with three members of the school donating Centennial editions of *Progress and Poverty* to their respective high school alma maters.

Jack Himmelstein, Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Philadelphia school, and a Trustee of the Henry George School in New York, presented a copy of *Progress and Poverty* to Central High School, which was also the last school Henry George attended. Linda Marucci, who taught a course during the Fall semester, presented the book to St. Maria Goretti High School, where she also showed the film, "For the Land is Mine" to an economics class. David Zwanetz, an attorney and member of the Board of Assessment, who is also involved with the Incentive Tax League of the Delaware Valley, presented an edition to Lincoln High School.

The program has received media coverage in the local newspapers, and is proving to be an informative way to introduce high school students to the works of Henry George.

Mayor William Green of Philadelphia, after receiving a copy of *Catalyst* from Richard Biddle, of the Incentive Tax League of the Delaware Valley, which was acknowledged on February 4, said in a major televised speech, "I am not going to let the politician, the union leader, or the land speculator run away with the treasury of the city."—from Philadelphia Extension Annual Report, 1979-1980.

## San Francisco

As part of the new focus on the need for land reform, Bob Scrofani of the Henry George School in San Francisco recently wrote to Mrs. Jimmy Carter with regard to the crisis in South America and El Salvador.

Scrofani wrote:

"I am writing to you because of your deep interest in what is happening in Latin America. I am deeply concerned that the recent revolutions and coups in Central America may lead to further repression and strife rather than stability and a secure future for the people.

"Most of the people of Latin America and Mexico are still agricultural. In many nations an elite group of families dominate most of the resources needed for survival. Access to land is non-existent or very limited. The peasants, without much hope for the future, often identify with left-wing personalities or groups who promise 'land to the tiller'."

Since the new junta declared that agrarian and

financial reforms were key to their new government, Scrofani pointed out that "the records of most land reform attempts have not been impressive. Mexico's land reform has been called a 'castastrophe.' Land reform in Iran was unfinished. In countries like Chile, it has been aborted."

He points out the need for success of any land reform program, for "A poorly conceived or executed land reform program which frustrates the peasantry in their legitimate demands often undermines the government even further. It is our government's desire to stabilize the countries of Central and South America while proving opportunities for all classes in society to participate in an equitable distribution of wealth."

Scrofani pointed out some of the "cogent lessons and reasons for hope from the Taiwan experience."

Some of the key lessons are:

1. A land reform system which upgrades the economic condition of the peasantry and provides the government with an important political power base.
2. Land reform must be imposed by a central government strong enough to do it.
3. To prevent the land from reverting to the old landlords, the government must supply marketing, supply and credit facilities.
4. Agricultural labor should not be displaced until the industrial sector is developed enough to demand it.
5. When there is a proper allocation of resources and a diligent working force, the economic circumstances of the bottom quintile is greatly improved.

"In the past," Scrofani pointed out "our aid contributed to a tight concentration of control over food producing resources by a small group of families. Riot control material sent to El Salvador or more weapons to the military do not solve the land reform problem. An elite land reform team to aid the nations of Latin America might be more useful than more military training for national guards."

## New York

by Khana Chakraborty, Librarian

These books are a sample of recent publications on Land and Property Taxation, available in the library:

Amborski, David P. *An examination of the administration of the property tax in metropolitan Toronto*. Toronto, Ontario: School of Economic Science, 1979.

Cord, Steven. *Catalyst: How a reform of the property tax can revitalize our cities and counter inflation and recession*. Indiana, Penna.: Henry George Foundation of America, c1979.

League of Women Voters, California. *Let's look at the property tax.* San Francisco, California: League of Women Voters of California, c1976.

Seminar on Property Taxation, Washington, D.C., 1970. *Property taxation, housing and urban growth, with attention to tax reform and assessment modernization.* Washington, D.C.: Urban institute, 1970.

Seminar on the Property Tax, Washington, D.C., 1973. *Property tax reform: the role of the property tax in the nation's revenue system.* Chicago, Illinois: International Association of Assessing Officers, c1973.

Tolbier, Emanuel. *Aspects of the New York City property market: a study of trends in market values, assessments, effective tax rates and property tax delinquency.* New York: Citizens Housing and Planning Council, 1975.

Woodruff, A.M. & J.R. Brown (eds.). *Land for the cities of Asia.* Hartford, Connecticut: John C. Lincoln Institute, Univ. of Hartford, 1971.

## Los Angeles

Harry Pollard, Director of the L.A. area H.G.S., has submitted two abstracts on papers he will be presenting at the Pacific Division, A.A.A.S. Annual Meeting in Davis, California, from June 22-27.

### 1. Land Speculation and Ecology: How and Why Environmental Policies Fail.

The environmental objectives of conservation and enjoyment of natural resources-along with the less often mentioned improvement of urban habitats-cannot be effective during widespread speculation in land values. Economic Rent can be expected to rise in a developing economy. The normal action of the price mechanism is for a rising price to stimulate supply, which lowers the price. In the case of land, no fresh supply can arrive to affect the price, so it continues to rise. This upward movement is recognized by the astute and land tends to be kept out of use, further restricting its availability and increasing market prices. When the retainable market rate of increase moves ahead of actual interest return, there is no point to selling and re-investing. At this time a market paralysis occurs, in which land changes hands more in response to speculative pressure than productive needs. The unused and underused areas force urban sprawl, with its attendant heavy gasoline usage, smog, and underfinanced transit systems; cities become unattractive and less useful to civilized uses; the countryside becomes prey to the normal desires of the land speculator whose actions, while contextually sensible, can be disastrous when general human environmental improvement is the goal.

### 2. Communication-The Principal Economic Problem.

The science of economics suffers from a communications problem mainly because careful atten-

tion has not been given to the simplest terms of the discipline. Without a common and precise language, the advances made at the frontiers of the study tend to trip over the ill-defined basic terminology. Problems of inexactitude stem from several sources, including a tendency to use terms as they are used in ordinary and non-scientific currency (profits): concepts that are defined less by the boundaries of pertinent classification than by their ease of measurement, and terms that achieve a disciplinary meaning by custom rather than definitional decision (inflation). To these problems must be added the proclivity to amend without explanation a previously determined meaning so that it fits a new hypothesis. This last underlines a further problem. Any criticism tends to be muted among economic scientists (except at an advanced level often involving political shading). An economist stumbling over an inadequate term is less likely to spend time correcting it than use the term after noting his particular contextual meaning. In this fashion, a single term may name several defined concepts any of which may be chosen to strengthen an economic contention.

## Land from page 1

safety and welfare of Americans depend fundamentally on food and shelter. Land is the basic resource. America's farm production has allowed us to:

- satisfy our own food needs
- help to alleviate world hunger
- export food to help pay for imports, particularly energy.

But population growth and sprawling cities encourage continued conversion of rural lands to urban uses. In recent years, significant amounts of our croplands have been annually urbanized by 'leapfrog development'.

"We should avoid, and where necessary reverse, those features of taxation controls and zoning that stimulate dispersion. We should follow a policy of filling in by-passed city and suburban lands which have access to public services. In a balanced land use, we should also examine marginal and difficult city lands. Neighborhood preservation and housing revitalization programs should be encouraged. The recent tendency to move back to the city should also be encouraged.

"As cities become more compact, public policies of land use control, taxation, credit, and capital investment must be guided by the fundamental principle of equal opportunity."

A number of participants objected to the failure of the report to address urban problems in land use as specifically as those favoring farm land. In partial recognition of that concern, the following statement was included to introduce the recommendations:

"Public policies and private decisions must accept all land, urban and farm alike, as a unique and irreplaceable resource and our common heritage."