

SOCIALIST SCHOLARS CONFERENCE HOSTS HGS PANEL

The Socialist Scholars Conference is an annual gathering of a huge variety of left-of-center groups. Maoists, Trotskyites, Greens, Socialists, world government advocates, anarchists - and this year, Georgists - gathered at the Borough of Manhattan Community College on April 9 - 11.

The general comment of veteran attenders was that this year's conference was even more multifarious and disjointed than usual. While hundreds of presentations on a huge range of topics were going on throughout the cavernous college hall, a tide of traffic ebbed and flowed around over 100 literature tables throughout the lobby. Dozens of advocates strolled about, handing out urgent bulletins; many more, who could not afford the cost of a table, informed the smokers and late arrivers outside the front door.

The participation
(continued on back page)

of the Henry George School in a panel on land rent and debt was suggested by Dr. Michael Hudson, who has participated in this conference many times over the years. For 1993, Dr. Hudson wanted to put together a panel on land reform and debt, particularly in connection with the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America, which is seeking a workable economic paradigm. However, the leading publisher of works on liberation theology, Orbis Books, was unable to find any speaker on the subject. Ultimately, only one organization in Dr. Hudson's considerable circle proved ready (even eager) to deal with debt and land reform: the Henry George School. Indeed, this panel was eagerly welcomed by the conference organizers, since it was the only one on the entire program dealing explicitly with economic issues.

On the panel with Hudson were HGS Executive Director George Collins and Assistant Director Lindy Davies. First up was Davies, who introduced the viewpoint of three-factor economics and why the fundamental importance of land rent is either ignored or misunderstood in modern economics both right and left.

Then, George Collins discussed the potential for Georgist land reform in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The small audience listened attentively as George explained the potential for a sane economic order in a nation where the land is already owned by the community. He explained that the problem of land tenure and valuation must be resolved

soon, since it is vital to privatization and currency stabilization.

Finally, Michael Hudson showed how the worldwide debt crisis is a direct consequence of the land problem. Most of the developing countries struggle under a yoke of foreign debt, necessitating "austerity programs" and social unrest. Yet foreign loans generally do nothing to help either productivity or living standards in those countries; they mainly line the pockets of the landowning elite.

Two people who attended the panel (one a graduate student in economics at Columbia University) made plans for further research at the School.

On the next day, Sunday, George Collins was the moderator of a panel on conspiracy theories, which featured two HGS friends and occasional presenters: Dennis King, author of *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism* and *Get the Facts on Anyone*, and journalist Kahlev Pehme, former editor of *Our Town*. Also on the panel was counterculture scholar-at-large A.J. Weberman.

It shows, perhaps, something about the eclectic and somewhat fragmented nature of this conference that the conspiracy-theory panel was presented to a capacity crowd, while the economics panel took place in a nondescript classroom to a small group of stalwarts. Economics, apparently, is a dismal science in the minds of socialist scholars in 1993. It would have been better had more of them attended a panel which showed that is not necessarily so!