

SCHOOL NOTES

Santo Domingo

Increased economic awareness and political expression has helped to promote interest in the Henry George School throughout the Dominican Republic. Lucy de Silfa, director of the School, in Santo Domingo, reported to the Trustees, in New York, last month. She also credited the widely-publicized visit of New York School Director Philip Finkelstein, last year.

In order to accomodate the larger number of students attending, the school is planning to renovate its landmark colonial building in the old downtown section, badly damaged by Hurricane David. New classes are also being organized in other areas, including Santiago, the second city, Puerto Plata, on the north coast, and smaller communities in the East and West. Programs are also being conducted with university and government personnel in the capital city.

New York

Khana Chakraborty, Librarian at the school in New York, has compiled a partial list of periodicals, newsletters, and other serials that are currently received by the library:

American Economic Review
American Journal of Economics and Sociology
Appraisal Journal
Appraiser
Assessment Digest
The Brookings Bulletin
Center City Report
Economic Review, published by Federal Reserve Banks of Atlanta, Kansas City, and Richmond
Environmental Comment
Fragments
The Freeman
The Georgist Journal
Good Government
Henry George News
The Indian Libertarian
Intergovernmental Perspective
Land and Liberty

MidAmerican Outlook
Monthly Economic Indicators published by Chemical Bank
Monthly Tax Features
National Tax Journal
The New Leaf
People and Taxes
Persuasion at Work
Progress
Quarterly Review, published by Chemical Bank
Resources for the Future (R.F.F.)
Tax Review
Taxing and Spending
The Urban Institute-Policy and Research Report
Urban Land
Ways and Means
Weekly Economic Package, published by Chemical Bank

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system reflects the desires of the people who voted for Proposition L3-the belief that people should have an opportunity to vote on increased levies and that beneficiaries should pay for services."

"The major beneficiaries of a transit system are the land holders whose values are enhanced by the accessibility of population and services. This is why a city follows the trolley tracks, and why lands along BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) or any subway are enhanced in value by the public investment."

"The benefit district legislation to finance transit projects is directly related to the fact that land

values increase as transit services increase. Senator James Mills, the author of the law, believes that a benefit district applying a tax on land values could provide the needed funds for the municipal railway to pay for its projected improvements and deficits. A report done for the board once before on this issue shows that homeowners would pay less under a property tax (land and buildings) than under a fare increase."

"The lines for such a benefit district which requires a 2/3 vote of the people could be drawn around the entire city of San Francisco, or limited to the downtown sector, which benefits most directly."

"One of the results of Proposition L-3, according to the assessor, is that within five years, homeowners will be bearing a greater percentage of the real estate tax in this city, possibly greater than downtown. A benefit district, around the financial district which most greatly benefits from transit expenditures, would help rectify this inequity."

"This kind of tax, and system, is an ancient and honorable way of raising money to pay for public facilities responsible for the increase in land values. Toronto is using it effectively to expand its subway system, rather than the sales tax in use here."

"We recommend that the possibility of using the method of solving the continuous municipal transportation crisis be examined carefully before the juggernaut urging higher fares led by the P.U.C., and now M.T.C., overcomes any rational attention to other solutions."

Profile:

Lucy de Silfa

Lucy de Silfa, Director of the Henry George School in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, attended the March meeting of the Board of Trustees at the School in New York, where she was interviewed by Louise Pulini:

- Q. How did you become interested in Henry George?
- A. I was living in the United States when Trujillo was dictator in my country, since I did not agree with his politics. I was going through some old books one day, when I came across a very dusty copy of *Progress and Poverty*, or *Progreso y Miseria*, as it is called in Spanish. I happen to be allergic to dust, but I became so interested in what George was saying, that I sneezed my way through the book. I found out that the school in New York was offering a course in Georgist economics, and also a teacher-training course, so I bravely took both courses at the same time. This was a challenge, but then I have never done things the "easy" way. I felt very comfortable at the school, and took other courses as well. I always felt that I would like to teach Henry George to my people, so I

hoped I would be able to return and start a school.

Q. When did you return, and did you then start a school, as you hoped?

A. In 1965, I was able to begin planning my school, once I returned to Santo Domingo. At the time, the country was going through many political changes, and the people were searching for new outlets of expression. I worked very hard on a non-existent budget, holding classes day and night, traveling, lecturing, and getting our building in good shape. We have always had people come to the school who are from all walks of life; university students, farmers, businessmen, the military, and lately, more women than ever. There were hardly any women in government, or running schools, fifteen years ago, and that presented problems.

Q. In the fifteen years that the school has been in operation, what have been the accomplishments? What have been the disappointments or some of the problems you have encountered?

A. The school is currently in a very "up" period, especially since my political party is now in power, and so I find it easy to deal with the government. I am friendly with the President, and I invite members of the powerful Instituto Agronomo to speak at the school. It has not always been this way of course. Throughout the years, when other parties were in power, we have had problems with interference, surveillance, disruption of activities, among other things. We have had to be very careful that Georgist philosophy is not interpreted as Communist ideology, or else we will be mislabelled as Communists. It is very different than the U.S., where people are free to disagree with the government. I suppose that one of the main accomplishments is that we have reached so many people through lectures, classes, and other activities. It is pleasing for me to see students of the school from ten years ago, who are still very interested in the school.

Q. What is going on at the school presently? How has the rebuilding gone since Hurricane David?

A. We were able to hold classes only a few days after the hurricane, but it took a lot of work and dedication from volunteers. The school was badly vandalized, and we had a leaking roof, bad water damage in the library, and lots of broken windows.

Gasoline shortages, power outages, and blockage of many roads prevailed in most parts of the country for months. However, the spirits of the people are very good, and we have had more interest in the school than ever before. We have had classes of 85, and we recently held a nice graduation ceremony. Also, we have been traveling around the country, organizing classes. One main problem is that I wish I had a twin, because people always want me to come again and again. Luckily, my assistant, Ismael Reyes, who is studying law at the university, is also very popular, and supportive, but he is limited for time, and all the traveling and schedule juggling can be tiring. But, I love my work, especially the teaching, and I am always happy to meet new students.

Q. I understand that you were given a gift to bring back to the school, by Professor Steven Cord, today. Tell me about it.

A. I am so pleased, because Professor Cord has found one of the rare, original translations of *Progress and Poverty*, into Spanish, dated 1898, and it is something that I know my students will love to see. We are so sad, because we lost much valuable library material, but I know this will be a jewel in our small collection.

Q. Your husband has written a book, *Guerra, Traicion y Exilo*. Translate the title for me, since I do not read Spanish.

A. My husband, Nicholas, who is the Consul for the Dominican Republic in Barcelona, Spain, has just published Volume I of his series, *War, Treason and Exile*, as it is called in English. We are hoping to get it translated into English, so it can be published here also. As a study of politics in the Dominican Republic, it is a valuable book that has been very well received in my country. Incidentally, I might add that I will be visiting my son, Nick, who is currently living in Houston, while I am now in the U.S.

Q. I have never thought of visiting the Dominican Republic before, but now I think I would like to come and see your school in operation. It sounds like such a lively, spirited organization. Thank you for sharing your life with us.

A. You are welcome anytime. I enjoyed our talk, and I hope your readers will find all of this interesting.

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