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Newsletter**
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**Henry George School
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121 East 30th Street
New York, NY 10016
(212) 889-8020

Lancaster M. Greene
Publications Chairman

George L. Collins
Director

Mark A. Sullivan
Editor

AFFILIATES

LONG ISLAND

P.O. Box 553
Cutchogue, NY 11935

PHILADELPHIA AREA

413 South 10th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147

701 Green Lane
Arden, DE 19810

NEW ENGLAND

114 Ames Street
Sharon, MA 02067

CHICAGO

4536 N. Ravenswood Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640

CALIFORNIA

1568 Shrader Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Box 655
Tujunga, CA 91042

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Isabel La Catolica #212
AP #758, Santo Domingo

CANADA

School of Economic Science
2267 Westman Road
Mississauga, Ont. L5K 1M7

3017 25th Street SW
Calgary, Alberta T3E 1Y2

THE HENRY GEORGE SESQUICENTENNIAL— MORE THAN JUST HISTORY

The figure of Henry George himself was a strong presence at this conference. His face was ubiquitous: on name tags, mailing labels, ties, coffee mugs, and the conference banner. This event commemorated the sesquicentennial of his birth; and it was hosted by the Philadelphia School which is housed in the building where George was born. One sensed that George was less a historical figure, that week, than a participant—his spirit urging us to think, holding in check our urges to be parochial or combative.

The conference began on Sunday with the dedication of the beautifully restored birth place. Among other things, it represented a triumph for George Collins and his crew over a host of last-minute glitches. The building has been restored to its original configurations, and has thus become an authentic—and rare—example of a working-class home, circa 1830. Agnes George DeMille, who contributed many priceless pieces of memorabilia including the bed in which Henry George was born, was on hand, as were Ed Dodson, president of the Henry George School, Richard Tyler, director of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, and other officials. A group photo was taken, showing conferees in front of the birthplace, copies of which are available, along with the other souvenirs, from the Philadelphia School.

Sunday evening's opening dinner was a perfect example of the conference's synthesis of past, present, and future Georgist concerns. Prof. Arthur Dudden from Bryn Mawr College spoke on Joseph Fels, inventor, industrialist and prominent early single taxer. Councilman James Tayoun, an ardent supporter of the land value tax in Philadelphia, discussed the opportunity for this great but troubled city to adopt this Georgist reform. Robert Scrofani lightened the proceedings by presenting gifts to Barbara Sobrielo and Jose Mernane from the International Union office in London. Finally, Agnes DeMille's keynote speech was a rousing call to action, a reminder that the world needs George's remedy more than ever, and that Georgists must get that message out.

The presentations on Monday afternoon and evening were directly concerned with that message in the here-and-now of state politics. Officials from the Pennsylvania cities of Washington, McKeesport, and Scranton spoke on the merits of the two-rate property tax in their home cities. In the evening the focus turned to Philadelphia's struggle. The panel, packed with weighty Philadelphia educators and city officials, was split on the LVT issue—but Councilman Tayoun solidly expressed his belief that the only real question is how long it will take Philadelphia to enact the LVT it so obviously needs. The overall consensus was that LVT gained ground, that evening, in the Philly debate.

The Henry George Schools are not living in the past, either, as could be seen in Tuesday afternoon's program on teaching strategies. A wide variety of 90's style methods are being used across the country. Mark Sullivan demonstrated the highly successful "Classical Analysis" technique. Bret Barker discussed a version of classical analysis, called "Interstudent", modified to fit the needs of high school students. Ted

Gwartney revealed his methods for recruiting adult students. Alanna Hartzok outlined her one-day intensive seminars which have been stimulating Georgist dialogue in large numbers. Sam Venturella shared his experience in getting students to read George's books in this age of low attention spans, and Mike Curtis described an innovative way to fix definitions of terms in people's minds. Finally, William Ranky suggested the analogy between land rent and parking fees—and anyone who has not heard that particular brilliant tidbit should write to Mr. Ranky in Chicago.

There were also two detailed presentations of teaching strategies on Thursday. Stan Rubenstein demonstrated his new video series, *American Heritage—the Story of the Land*, which the School is providing, along with lesson plans and supplementary activities, free of charge to high school teachers. The video, narrated by George Collins, was produced on location and offers the variety needed to capture high school students' attention. Harry Pollard's presentation, called "It Ain't Necessarily So!" was a freewheeling demonstration of his classroom methods. It certainly got the participants thinking. Faced with a bunch of (seemingly) absurd and (apparently) offensive statements, Pollard's audience was compelled to examine prejudices and crank up rusty brains. Disagreement was rampant, but then honest thought was the goal, not agreement.

Of course, the final confirmation that the spirit of Henry George was among us that week came in the form of the play, *Henry George, World Citizen*, presented on Friday evening by Douglas Broyles. The one-man show was based on the biography of George by Henry George, Jr., and tells Henry George's life story in his own words (as conceived by Broyles). The play was presented as a "work in progress"—so it was performed with book in hand and without the aid of proper stage effects. Nevertheless, Broyles delivered a powerful script. We were there with young Henry George, who, able-bodied and experienced, was so unable to find honest work that he was reduced to begging. We felt the earth sifting through Henry George's fingers, and shared his joy, when he was struck by the great flash of insight that became the thesis of *Progress and Poverty*. The Henry George of this play was a plain, unassuming man, stubbornly disposed to think things through and to act on his conclusions without reservation. And he was a family man whose love for his wife and children was evidenced throughout. The play should get the careful staging it deserves—but even in this preliminary form it was a stirring experience.

The conferees got a welcome dose of fresh air and greenery on Saturday, first with a tour of Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, and then with a visit to Arden, Delaware. The Arden Land Trust was founded in 1900 along Single Tax principles: collecting economic rent, and circumventing the tax on buildings by paying all local taxes out of the rent fund. The Arden Henry George School extension has long been under the directorship of Saturday's host, Mike Curtis. After a walking tour of the village, the guests gathered in the lovely, rustic, open-air theatre. There, a group of presenters including William Press of Arden, Charles Ingersoll from Fairhope, Alabama, and George Jukes from Canberra, Australia spoke not of future plans or past glories but the often sobering present. In a sense, the stories of Arden, Fairhope, and the Australian land lease experiments are ones of continual frustration and compromise, showing the difficulty of maintaining just taxation policies in one area while the greater economy refuses to address the vital role of land. Still, Arden is a beautiful town; its hospitable residents offered us a swim, a chat, and a peaceful stroll, and a great time was had by all.

A great deal happened at this conference. In fact, there was a broader variety of presentations that many longstanding Georgists might have wished. But that stands to reason, for this was a conference that paid attention to the past, present, and future—and I say that the spirit of Henry George was with us that week in Philly, and he approved.

—Lindy Davies

Editor's note: Lindy Davies, an associate of the Arden Henry George School, has recently moved from Delaware to the Big Apple, to work as Assistant Director of the New York School.