

Henry George News

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THE EARTH IS THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL.

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End of Semester Open House

This year, beginning with the Winter term, the School inaugurated a new tradition: the end of term Open House. More than just another party, this last semester's gathering was a chance for students to get acquainted, or in some cases reacquainted, with the various functions of the School and the services it provides.

Students got a chance to speak with instructors one-to-one, to view a video on the practical applications of Henry George's ideas (produced by School

Trustee Steve Cord) and were introduced to the archives and study resources that comprise our extensive library holdings.

Students also got a chance to meet amongst themselves and discuss and debate contemporary social issues.

A number of students brought refreshments, including many homemade dishes, which were shared and enjoyed by all. And it was generally agreed that this was one new tradition that should by all means be continued.



HGS Instructor Bruce Oatman and School Trustee Si Winters discuss matters of import at the Winter term Open House.

The Georgist Review of Books

Owning the Future: Inside the Battles to Control the New Assets – Genes, Software, Databases, and Technological Know-how – That Make Up the Lifeblood of the New Economy by Seth Shulman

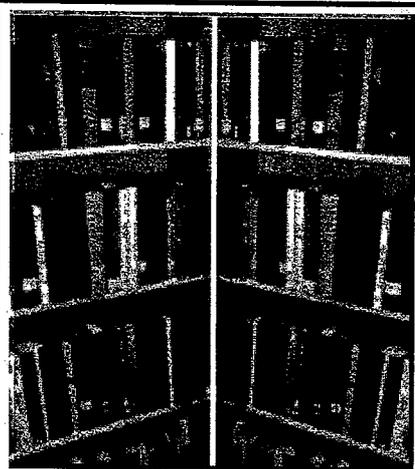
Reviewed by Rick Hill, HGS Instructor

If one of Henry George's main ideas was to distinguish between natural resources and the wealth derived from them as capital and to further distinguish between wages and interest from capital versus rent collected for the use of natural resources, then this book is a great update, a glimpse at the new privatization goldrush and an exploration of the ways land, wealth and capital keep getting redefined in the so-called new economy.

And if there were Georgist awards for bringing these issues into the public forum, Seth Shulman, award-winning veteran science journalist, and former Knight Science Fellow at MIT, should get one for his remarkable book, *Owning the Future*.

You can wade through a mountain of books, articles and web sites on these topics and not find a more comprehensive, sensitive and passionate treatment. This would be an ideal text for a Georgist course in the problem of ownership - it even has with some variations on George's land use "remedy" implicit throughout.

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ADOPT A BOOK

in the Henry George School Library - p. 8

Alumni Nights

This Spring semester the Henry George School begins a series of Alumni Nights. These special nights will offer a chance for advanced students to meet, discuss and debate a wide range of topics relevant to the ideas of Henry George.

Anyone who has completed *Progress and Poverty* is welcome to attend our Alumni Nights; the two remaining nights will be June 5 and, a specially added night of June 21 which will focus on alumni research projects with School Trustee Steve Cord. The meetings begin at 6 p.m. and run until 8 p.m. The meetings are held in the first floor lounge, where food and drink are permitted.

The meetings will be led by a staff person and/or HGS instructor and each evening will be dedicated to a special topic under this semester's general theme: *Owning & Controlling the Natural World*. For example, the meeting of May 8 focused on the natural rights of indigenous peoples in the face of increasing corporate and international encroachment on their lands and natural resources. Issues discussed: is it possible for developing peoples to establish a bill of rights which will guarantee their autonomy and rights to their own land? How can nations and corporations be made to respect indigenous rights? To what extent can native peoples control access to and exploitation of their natural resources?

Alumni Nights will not be an end in them-

selves, however. The School hopes to gather from these nights a core group of interested and dedicated people who will form an Alumni Association. This association of Alumni will be comprised of advanced students volunteering their time and services and becoming further involved in the services and activities of the Henry George School. Such a group might in the future assist in School promotions, the creation of School seminars and the organizing of field trips and special projects appropriate to the School's goals.

So, please join us! - get involved and help the Henry George School carry on its mission.

YOU'RE INVITED!

TUESDAY NIGHTS, SPRING SEMESTER

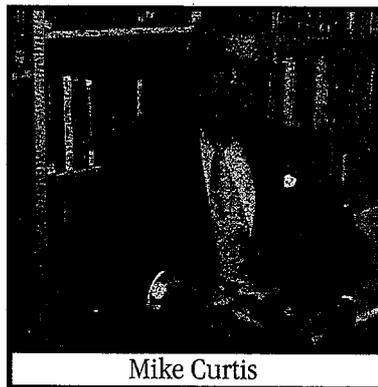
Graduates of Progress & Poverty are invited to join us for analysis, discussion and debate on contemporary economic and social issues. Alumni Nights will be open 6-8pm and will be held April 24, May 8, and June 5 in English; May 22 (in Spanish).

Meet Our New Director of Education

Alumni Nights will also give students a chance to meet the School's new Education Director - Mike Curtis. Longtime Director of the Henry George School of Philadelphia, the birthplace of Henry George, Mike has taught the philosophy of Henry George for 30 years.

In fact, Georgism runs in the family. Mike's grandfather and great uncle worked on Henry George's 1897 mayoral campaign.

Both his grandparents were very involved in the early development of the town of Arden, Delaware, a single-tax community that is thriving to this day.



Mike Curtis

to study what the man really had to say."

Such was his quick grasp of the main tenets of Georgist philosophy that in 1971 he began teaching classes in Arden as an extension of the Philadelphia School.

In his professional life at this time, Mike maintained close ties to the land. "For about 20 years, I was an arborist for the Winthur Museum & Gardens outside Willington, Delaware."

Mike became Director of the Henry George School's Philadelphia Extension in 1989. Not only did he teach classes there, he frequently

went into the community and beyond. "I've taught in community centers, in prisons and the slums of northern Philly."

Mike also developed a unique program for the teaching of political economy to grade school children. "I was amazed at how quickly many of them caught on," Mike says.

Mike sees his new mission at the New York School "as making sure the quality of education is as good as we can make it."

I see my mission as making sure the quality of education is as good as we can make it.

Despite his family's history, Mike says "I didn't really take George's teachings to heart until I was elected to the assessor's board in Arden." Mike felt it his duty to study George's ideas intensely, so "I went to Philadelphia, which had the nearest Henry George School,

Henry George News

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Torah Based Economics

Dr. Edward Tamler and Yisroel Pensack

The Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco has recently purchased two buildings next to its present downtown location for \$28 million to alleviate pressure on other Jewish nonprofit agencies in that city which are facing expiring leases and "skyrocketing rents," according to the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California.

The Federation hopes to mitigate the problem by leasing space in these buildings to local Jewish agencies at below-market rates. Sharply rising rents and land prices -- in Northern California and elsewhere around the country -- also pose a dilemma for many other nonprofits, businesses and individuals needing affordable workspace or housing. Soaring rents and high land prices shift wealth from producers to non-producers. This translates into lower real spendable wages for most workers.

The San Francisco Federation's private subsidy approach to dealing with rising rents may solve the problem facing Bay Area Jewish agencies, but it won't help the rest of society. Interestingly, however, the Hebrew Bible offers guidance as to how to establish an economically just society for all.

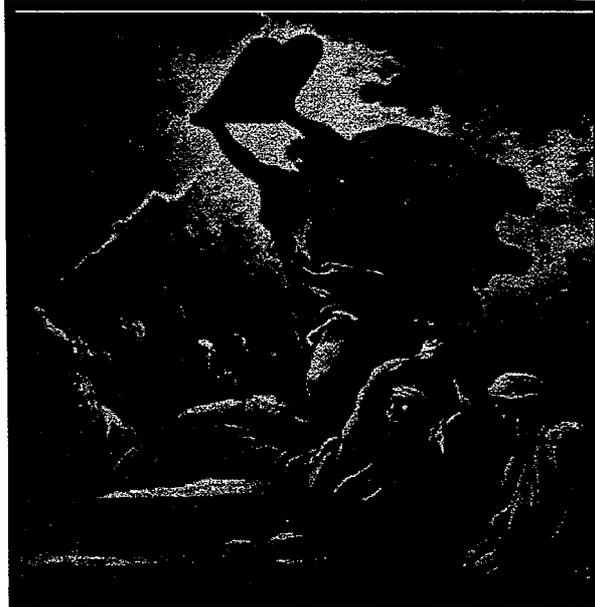
The Torah recognizes the importance and unique economic status of land, which includes not only the earth's surface but all natural resources. Land, by definition, is fixed in quantity, essential to human life and not a product of human labor.

From a biblical perspective, land is the gift of the Creator to all mankind to use and enjoy; no one has the right to monopolize it. Equal rights to land were the economic foundation of the Jewish commonwealth envisioned by the Torah. Every 50 years there was to be a Jubilee restoration of each family's equal footing in the Promised Land.

Except for the priestly classes, who were to live primarily on specified donations of agricultural produce from landholders, no citizen was to be permanently deprived of equality of land tenure. The Torah promises that if its commandments, including equal rights to

land, were maintained, poverty would be unknown and economic justice and prosperity would prevail (Deut. 15: 4-5).

In modern times, urban and suburban land are far more valuable than outlying agricultural land. Periodic restorative reallocation or redivision of the land, the Torah's approach, is no longer a practical way of securing equality of land rights. An equivalent and far simpler method is to annually collect the



ground or site rent of land for the benefit and use of the whole community by means of a tax on land values, irrespective of the value of improvements, such as buildings.

Land rent is socially created. Landholders, as such, do nothing to create or increase the value of land. Land values arise and grow due to population growth, community investment in infrastructure and public facilities and services, and as a result of advances in technology and general economic activity. It is both proper and imperative that the community recover for itself the value which the community as a whole, by its very existence, creates.

No one should be allowed to reap where he has not sown, especially not at the expense of oth-

ers. Owning valuable land is a privilege; landholders should pay rent to the community based

Most landholders have no qualms about raising rents they charge their tenants. But private landholders themselves are actually tenants of the sovereign public, and should be treated as such.

on, and proportionate to, the value of land they hold. Most landholders have no qualms about raising rents they charge their tenants. But private landholders themselves are actually tenants of the sovereign public, and should be treated as such. They should be required to pay market-rate ground rents to the community through the land value tax, while taxes on houses, buildings, personal property, incomes, sales and commerce should be drastically reduced or abolished.

This reform, advocated by San Francisco economist Henry George in his 1879 book "Progress and Poverty," adapts biblical principles of land tenure to modern economic conditions. George, who though not Jewish was an outspoken admirer of Moses and the Torah (George is cited at least six times in the widely used "Hertz Pentateuch"), died in 1897 during his second campaign for the mayoralty of New York. He was a world-famous figure at that time.

George's proposal, which came to be known as the "single tax" on land values, would raise wages and liberate labor by putting an end to land monopoly and land speculation -- the systemic withholding, non-use or suboptimal

use of valuable land in expectation of future price increases. Land monopoly and land speculation cause an artificial market shortage of reasonably-priced land, which in turn raises rents and land prices beyond normal levels. This discourages economic activity and drives down wages because of excessive private tolls charged by landholders for merely al-

Land monopoly and land speculation cause an artificial market shortage of reasonably-priced land, which in turn raises rents and land prices beyond normal levels.

Over to You.....

We want to hear from you! Please read the following short article and send us your comments and suggestions for publication in future issues of the Henry George News. You can email the editor, The Editor at hengeoschool@att.net or write to him at 121 East 30th Street, New York, NY 10016.

People Respond to Incentives

The world is at work.

- Jeremy Bentham

Personnel changes are an inevitable fact of life at almost every company. Often, these changes are viewed positively, as when business is expanding and more workers are needed, or when individuals are given increased responsibility (and hopefully, increased compensation!).

Slowing global economic growth in the past few months has resulted in reduced staffing levels at many companies. Layoffs, or more politely "downsizing" or "right-sizing" have occurred.

Society is quick to cite unemployment as a waste of human resources and a human misery. Yet society seems to be more tolerant of waste of natural resources. Abandoned factories and other buildings make new development more expensive, contribute to urban sprawl, and pose a danger to the health and welfare of the community.

We seem to forget that in all activities, people respond to incentives.

There are many ways to motivate or encourage someone to do something. Life is full of such incentives. The child is offered a reward if he tidies his room. The speeding motorist is subject to a fine. Our experience at a restaurant was excellent, so we leave a large tip for the waiter.

The boss praises her staff for getting the work done on time. The volunteers at the shelter are satisfied that their work makes life a little less burdensome for those whom have fallen on

hard times.

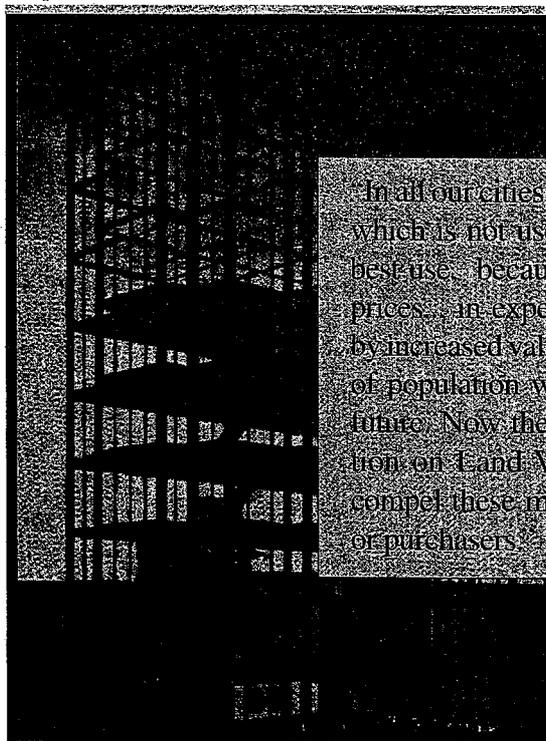
Our entire economic system is "incentive driven." That is essentially what is meant by the law of supply and demand. In *Progress and Poverty* Henry George says: "The demand for consumption determines the direction in which labor will be expended in production." Or as Louis F. Post has said: "The expenditure of money in purchasing products for consumption, determines the expenditure of money in purchasing services for production."

Incentives are most effective when everyone benefits – a "win-win" situation.

Incentives are most effective when everyone benefits – a "win-win" situation.

Other forms of incentives, such as force, coercion or threat of punishment, result in tension between the individual's interests and those of society, and are therefore not very effective.

With this in mind, how can we encourage



In all our cities, there is much land which is not used, or not put to its best use, because it is held at high prices, in expectation of profiting by increased value which the growth of population will give to it in the future. Now the effect of the Taxation on Land Values would be to compel these men to seek tenants or purchasers. - Henry George

owners of abandoned factories and buildings to put these properties to use? What incentives or disincentives might society provide to make land speculation a thing of the past and com-

The rent of land represents a premium to ownership, and above the return which is sufficient to induce use. It is a premium paid for permission to use. To take an taxation apart for the whole of this premium in no way affects the incentive to use, or the return to use, in no way diminishes the amount of land there is to use, or makes it more difficult to obtain for use. - Henry George

pel landowners to make their land fully productive?

According to the 19th Century British economist John Stuart Mill: "A tax on rent falls wholly on the landlord. There are no means by which he can shift the burden upon anyone else." In other words, a system of land value taxation would supply a landowner with ample incentive to put the land he owns to its most productive use.

Because of the distortions inherent in today's economy, any increased tax upon the landowner can be passed on to his tenants - simply by raising the rent they must pay for the use of the land. There is a strong incentive for the landlord to do this.

But with Land Value Taxation, a landlord has a very strong incentive to make his land productive and a strong disincentive to let his land lie idle.

In an article written in 1890, *The Single Tax: What It Is and Why We Urge It*, Henry George talks about the incentive structure of the present economic system and the moral improvements consequent upon the adoption of LVT:

"It will make undeserved poverty a thing of the past. It will check the soul-destroying greed of gain...It will enable men to be at least as honest, as true, as considerate and high minded as they would like to be."

By George

Mike Curtis

We may have a tax cut yet, by George. George Bush, that is. Originally, we were told the economy was so good, we need a tax break. Between the expanding economy and inflation causing bracket-creep, the government will have too much money.

The more money governments have, the more they spend. Do we want our government to do more of the things that we as individuals could do for ourselves? Do we want an invasive government, which pays for and oversees every facet of our lives, from building

and live. The reason most people get paid more than the minimum wage is because their skills and knowledge are not universal.

Every enterprise wants to maximize productivity, so they start bidding for the most productive workers. This is supply and demand.

If there's a shortage of auto mechanics, their wages will go up until the rewards create the incentive to learn how to fix cars. When the

supply of auto mechanics exceeds the demand, mechanics bid against each other

and their wages fall accordingly.

Suppose the minimum wage was \$5 and it took an extra \$10 to create an ample supply of auto mechanics (\$15 per hour). Then the government

takes 25% in taxes.

What would happen to the incentive to learn how to fix cars, and the supply of auto mechanics?

In order to reestablish the incentive, which yields an ample supply of mechanics, they have to raise wages. \$20 per hour, minus 25% in taxes equals \$15 per hour, the magic number.

By the same token, every reduction in taxes will also reduce gross wages and leave take-home pay the same. However, any government programs like free education or health care enjoyed by people at the bottom will seem like an increase in the mini-

mum wage. A rising tide lifts all boats.

Of course all taxes are paid at the expense of land rent and other monopolies. But then Mirabeau, the French *Physiocrat*, is said to have stated this postulate in the Palace of Versailles more than 200 years ago.

Now, in the year 2001 we are told the tax cut is needed to stimulate the ailing economy.

'Tax Cut 'Shell Game'

According to a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal*, "some of the taxes Congress claims to be cutting would quietly reappear after a few years." Critics are referring to these disappearing-reappearing cuts as a "shell game."

The *Journal* article says, "many of the Senate bill's basic provisions, including its cornerstone income tax rate cuts, would be permanent, although they would go into effect very slowly in many instances. But some other tax breaks go into effect for a few years, then go away."

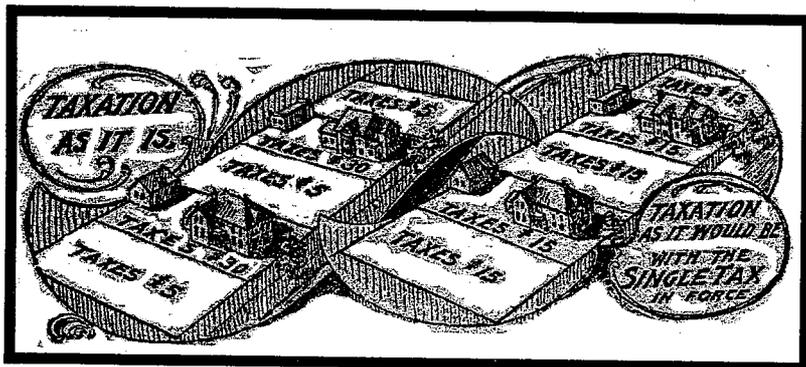
The *Journal* attributes this disappearing act to both the need for Congress to "hold down the cost of tax cuts to \$1.35 trillion" and political wrangling between Republicans and Democrats. The article quotes a spokeswoman for Democratic Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle as saying, "Democrats are seeking more breaks for lower-income tax payers and Republicans should reduce the bill's benefits for the well-to-do to make room." Senator John Kerry complains that this bill "is using

budgetary tricks to dump even tougher choices in the laps of future Congresses."

There is yet another provision that disappears only to reappear under a different guise: the federal estate tax will go, only to come back later as an increased capital gains tax on inherited wealth.

Surely, we need a tax system as proposed by another George, by George.

Would most of us be better off with lower taxes? It's hard to imagine that we will get back in benefits as much as we yield in taxes.



highways to providing health care, education and social security - from subsidizing farmers and job creating industries to taxing drinkers and smokers. Congress has recently given farmers a 77 percent increase in government assistance. That amounts to an extra \$79 billion over the next ten years. This new increase includes \$5.5 billion to compensate farmers for falling commodity prices and increased fuel and fertilizer costs. Farm bailouts amounted to a total of \$25 billion last year.

Would most of us be better off with lower taxes? It's hard to imagine that we will get back in benefits as much as we yield in taxes - given that all governments have a propensity for bureaucracy and inefficiency.

Well, allow me to take a short cut. In the U.S. we have a minimum wage law, public housing and welfare. That is to say: a minimum below which virtually no one must work

Now, supposing we should abolish all other taxes direct and indirect, substituting for them a tax upon land values, what would be the effect? In the first place, it would kill speculative values. It would relieve energy and enterprise, capital and labor from all those burdens that now bear upon them. In the second place, we could from the value of land not merely pay all the expenses of the government but we could do infinitely more.

Henry George

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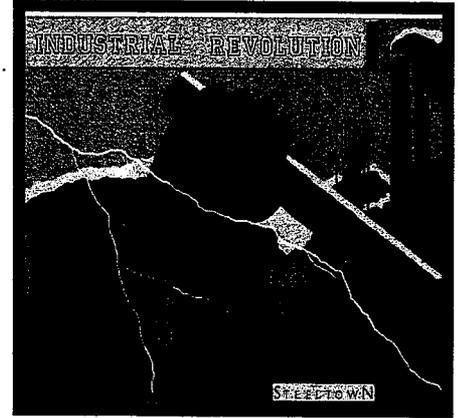
lowing others access to land. All man-made wealth comes from applying labor to, and on, land. Heavy taxation of land values -- by means of an annual ad valorem property tax on market-determined land valuations -- will compel holders of valuable land to use it optimally or sell it to someone who will, because the annual carrying charges on such land will increase significantly. This will tend to reduce land prices and rents, because the land value tax cannot be passed on to tenants.

Without resort to public or private subsidies, this simple but far-reaching reform will extirpate involuntary poverty by opening up natural opportunities to labor, thus dramati-

cally raising wages and increasing employment. It will greatly alleviate urban decay and suburban sprawl, with their attendant traffic congestion and adverse environmental effects. It will also help cure the shameful plagues of homelessness and beggary in our cities.

Edward Tamler and Yisroel Pensack are Jewish Georgists who live in San Francisco. Dr. Tamler is a retired ophthalmologist. Mr. Pensack is a former newspaper reporter and founder/president of the Alliance to Raise Wages and End Poverty (ARWEP), a Georgist group. Mr. Pensack is a regular contributor to these pages. We recently printed his national radio interview on the philosophy of Henry George.

UPCOMING SEMINARS



Industrialization: Past, Present and Future Friday, April 20 6:30pm

When did the Industrial Revolution really begin? How is our future being shaped by technological change? Mr. Karl Dennis, an industrial engineer and management consultant, shares his insights into the history and process of industrialization. Discussion follows.

Friday Film Forum Friday, April 27 6:30pm

The River - Story of the conflict between a landowner and eight hard-working farm families as they struggle against both the ravages and the power of greed. The landowner wants to divert the river for the irrigation of his own land and as a source of hydro-electric power; the families simply want to work their farms in peace. Discussion follows.



Labor Market Dynamics Friday, May 18 6:30 pm

Has the career been replaced by a "portfolio of skills?" What is the future of tele-commuting? Will unions make a comeback? Mr. Henry Silverman, a manager in the Community Services Division of the NY State Department of Labor, explores current trends in the labor market. Discussion follows.

Spring 2001 CLASS SCHEDULE

The Production & Distribution of Wealth

PART I: PROGRESS AND POVERTY

(All classes 6-8 pm)

Mondays: Vesa Nelson
Tuesdays: Quisia Gonzalez (in Spanish)

- ◆ Learn how our economy is structured to ensure an imbalance in the distribution of wealth and opportunity.
- ◆ Make a distinction between the natural opportunities of the Earth and those values produced by human labor.
- ◆ Explore the relations between the individual and society and principles of private and public property.

Progress and Poverty (accelerated)

Mondays: Billy Fitzgerald
A three week intensive study of Progress & Poverty, focusing on theoretical issues as well as the practical solutions behind our society's major problems. **First Course:** 4/16, 4/23, 4/30
Repeated: 5/14, 5/21, 6/4

PART II: APPLIED ECONOMICS

Thursdays: Mike Curtin
Beneath political problems often lie social problems caused by the maldistribution of wealth. This course confronts those problems directly and examines the current global economy and free trade initiatives. Will the World Trade Organization increase your wealth or reduce your wages?

PART III: ECONOMIC SCIENCE

Thursdays: Dan Kryston
Thursdays: Tito Ortiz (in Spanish)
This course enables students to understand and evaluate economic theory and demonstrates how economic behavior is the engine of civilization's development. This class may be taken as the second part of the three course program.

Foreign Policy

Mondays: Bruce Oatman
The daily media are our "textbook" for each session of this course. We'll examine the timeliness of the economic and social philosophy of Henry George over a wide range of issues. This course will depend heavily on student participation in seeking to establish a logical means of coping with today's problems.

Choice: Market & Social

Tuesdays: Vesa Nelson
There are goods that society needs but no firm has the economic incentive to produce. How does society obtain these goods in the absence of a "market" offering them for purchase? This course examines the relationship between the functions of government and the market place. Our analysis will cover a broad range of "market failures" and their solutions.

U.S. History & Government

Wednesdays: Manuel Felix (in Spanish)
A survey of American politics and culture, from the Colonial period to the challenges of the post-Cold War era, focusing on U.S.-Latin American relations. This course will also focus on current trade issues.

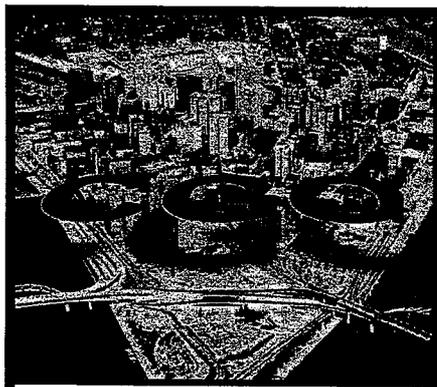
ALUMNI NIGHTS
Graduates of P&P are invited to join us for analysis, discussion and debate on contemporary economic and social issues. Alumni Nights will be open 6-8pm and will be held April 24, May 8, May 22 (in Spanish) and June 5.

Next CGO Conference

The 2001 North American Conference of the Council of Georgist Organizations will be held in Pittsburgh, PA, and will run from Wednesday, August 29 (evening) through Labor Day, September 3.

This year's conference theme will be *Land and Labor: America's Lost Legacy*. The events will focus on the relationship between land monopoly and:

- ◆ Local tax Policy
- ◆ The Erosion of Wages
- ◆ Distortions in Trade
- ◆ The Birth of the American Labor Movement



The "golden triangle," Pittsburgh's business district

The conference will be held at the Pittsburgh Airport Holiday Inn. This year's local conference host will be Dan Sullivan.

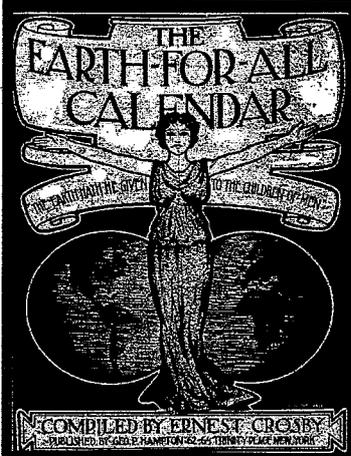
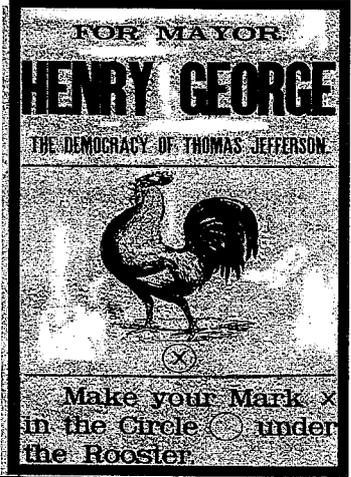
A full conference schedule is being prepared and will soon be made available.

For more information contact Sue Walton at swalton@interaccess.com. Sue advises that a number of discounted, limited time fares are available through various airlines.

The annual conference is attended by Georgists from around the world and each conference focuses on a major theme. Last year's annual conference was held in Des Moines, Iowa, and focused on sustainable urban renewal.



From the Archives

	
Advertisement from the National Single Taxer, 1900	Henry George Campaign Poster 1886

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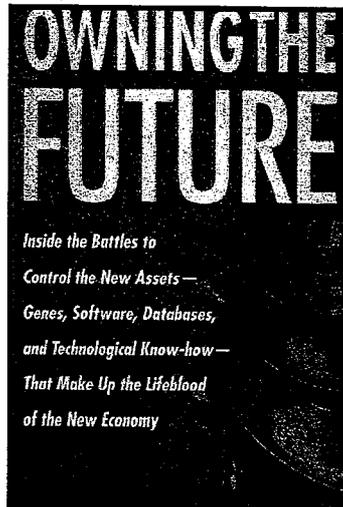
Harvard Professor Richard Lewontin has gone so far as to say of this book: "Shulman does a superb job of showing how knowledge is turned into property and how the drive to maintain property rights over knowledge has invaded and indeed taken over in both agriculture and health to the public detriment. [The public should] understand the way in which the drive to control property for private profit works against the general welfare."

And Tufts Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy Sheldon Krinsky calls it an "elegantly argued and well-researched book that shows how the appropriation and privatization of scientific knowledge and medical procedures has taken market mania to its absurd limits. The patent system has turned the limits of publicly funded science into great wealth for a few. *Owning the Future* is a sober expose of a U.S. patent system run amok."

Early in Chapter 1, *Gold Rush in the Idea Economy*, he asks: "Is owning rights to a concept really akin to owning a piece of real estate, as the phrase 'intellectual property' implies? Are there some types of know-how that

shouldn't be bought and sold?" He goes on to refer to "the fundamental fallacy of a system that lavishly rewards the incremental innovations of individuals but ignores our collective stake in society's accumulated wealth of know-how." In another chapter entitled *The Most Precious Asset*, Shulman asks, "What can be done to preserve some categories of knowledge — raw data, essential techniques, and cultural treasures — so that they can be shared by all of us rather than by a few for private gain?" He goes on to emphasize sanctuaries, zoning and antitrust solutions as curbs to the growing information monopolies.

Any Georgist knows that stolen goods bought at a high price are still stolen. Throughout this book, Shulman chronicles the new stolen goods of human genes, natural processes, and public information and how their commodification has led to a rich and legal "black market" in these stolen items. The analogy to the real estate market is hard to miss. All the corporation lawyers and entrepreneurs must surely realize their complicity in this theft unless they really believe the unqualified value of buzz words like



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“private property” and “fair share of taxes”.

For Shulman the key to this whole discussion lies in Franklin, Massachusetts, home of the first U.S. public library, thanks to the generosity of a Philadelphia printer named Ben Franklin who, grateful for the town’s recognition, bestowed 116 books on four shelves in 1738 in lieu of their requested gratuity of a steeple bell counseling the locals that “sense is preferable to sound”.

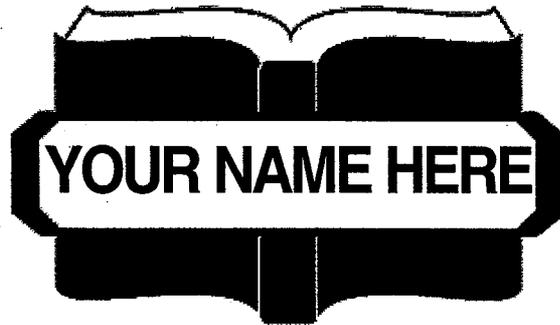
The library knocked around town in the homes of the intelligentsia for a while until the access issue was settled, after ten town meetings, when it was decided the little library would be accessible to all, unlike other existing libraries of the time. Thus were born the seeds of the nation’s public library system and the related free and mandatory public education system.

The knowledge wars, says Shulman, threaten precisely this kind of public treasure and heritage.

My favorite quote is from shareware champion and McArthur Fellow programmer Richard Stallman, “The Supreme Court as ruled that no one can patent an algorithm or other law of nature, but skilled patent lawyers have been tricking the Patent Office into regularly doing precisely this in the software field.” Then he refers to a patent won on Kirchoff’s Law, an 1845 theory that electric current flowing into a junction equals the current flowing out, suggesting the Patent Office understands neither electricity nor software.

Yet nowhere in his book does Shulman mention Henry George. To see how George’s ideas pertain to these controversies, he would need look no further than Book VIII, Chapter 3 of *Progress and Poverty* where George says: “Discovery can give no right of ownership, for whatever is discovered must have been already here to be discovered.” The discovery of a law of nature, or a combination of genetic information, should give no one exclusive right to the use of that information. While some claim that a patent in such cases is warranted as an incentive to innovation and invention, George says in that same chapter: “Such a prohibition, though given for the purpose of discovery and invention, really in the long run operates as a check upon them.”

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