

Henry George Newsletter

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AN OPINION: Social Problems Through Every Window

The last two Georgist conferences have had one day set aside for sightseeing. Since participants come from all over the country, or the world, the sightseeing activity is usually a trip to some local place of cultural or historical interest. But, our culture being what it is, such spots are, alas, tourist traps.

Now, since we have worked all year long for our cause without thanks--and mostly without pay--such an excursion seems little enough to ask. It's fun!--and we deserve it. Fair enough, but there is something creepy about the process.

The fact that there are tourist traps at all is, I think, something that would trouble Henry George. I suspect that he would point to them as sure signs of the kind of social corruption which he fought to correct.

For one thing, a tourist trap is often a last-ditch effort to save a faltering economy. This is painfully evident at Taos Pueblo, where the Pueblo Indians, sequestered in tiny "sovereign" units lacking the land and resource bases of the larger tribes, literally depend on the tourist trade for survival. But it is also true in Philadelphia, where tourism is a desperate remedy for the business activity driven out by increasing sales and income taxes. What was proposed to save the nightmarish economy of Camden, New Jersey? An aquarium, to try and bring tourist dollars into a city from which virtually all businesses had fled.

Secondly, because tourist traps are primarily economic ventures, concern for the history and culture they are supposedly celebrating becomes a peripheral matter. Such things must be on display, because history and culture is, after all, the stock in trade. But the main concern is marketability, not authenticity. Just about everyone feels this, at some level. There is a weary sort of resignation in the air at a place like, say, Philadelphia's Independence Park (which was the outing at the 1989 International Conference). This is the best we can do? The place can't tell us anything about our history, but at least it can remind us that we are rumored to have a history. The fact is, though, that places like Independence Park or Taos Pueblo are designed to insulate visitors from any meaningful contact with history.

Tourist traps are only one aspect of this phenomenon, though. Our society is full of institutions that trivialize, or trample, our sense of place. Mega-malls plow down main street shopping districts. Fast-food eateries crowd out local diners. Huge consolidated schools replace time-honored community schools. People pray with televised preachers instead of attending their local churches. All of these things erode both our sense of place and our sense of human community. This is a spiritual matter, but it has economic roots.

As we urge society to adopt the Georgist Philosophy, the Single Tax, the two-rate property tax, or whatever, we would do well to stay in touch with the unquantifiable, subjective, human side of the ideas that guide us. No, Georgists shouldn't be begrudged an annual outing with old friends to some interesting spot. They deserve better than tourist traps. But they probably won't get it--not until the First Great Reform establishes the necessary economic base for sustainable, organic human communities. -Lindy Davies

ENEMIES OR ALLIES? An Opinion

Most Georgists who attended the Santa Fe conference session on "How Georgists and Greens Can Increase and Deepen Their Cooperation and Effectiveness" will agree that, for now, the only thing that has increased and deepened between Georgists and Greens is a communication gap! However, I trust that this gap will decrease in the near future since some of our Green-Georgists will continue to participate in Green conferences.

The session in Santa Fe was expertly chaired by Hanno Beck of Common Ground USA, and speakers were Nelson Denman of the Santa Fe Greens; Chellis Glendinning, ecofeminist psychologist and author on the hazards of nuclear technology; Randy Prince, Oregon political activist and Green-Georgist; and Harry Pollard of the Southern California Henry George School.

Nelson Denman opened the session with information on the future of the Santa Fe Greens, saying they will be "living more in balance with the natural world." He stressed a need for urban planning for "ecological cities" so that they would be "life-enhancing and regenerative."

Following Nelson was Chellis Glendinning, with whom I had the pleasure of speaking prior to the discussion. She told me she has moved many times in the past to get away from nuclear waste sites. Her recent move to New Mexico was supposed to be a permanent one, but she has since learned that nuclear waste is being



Chellis Glendinning

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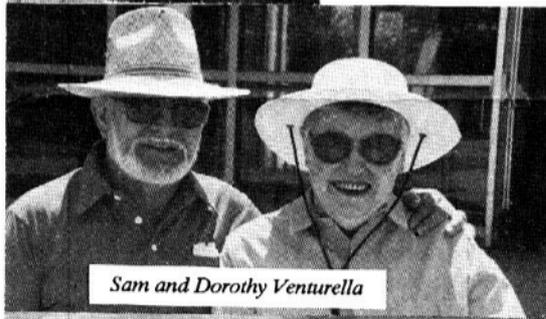
1991 NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED

Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania will be the venue of next year's Annual North American Georgist Conference, according to Mark Sullivan, Secretary-Treasurer of the Council of Georgist Organizations. Lafayette was chosen by vote of Council members at the Santa Fe Conference on July 28th. A visit to the College followed a few weeks later: Bob Clancy, Lindy Davies and Mark Sullivan from New York were joined by Lu Cipoloni, Mike Curtis and Jacob Himmelstein from Philadelphia. Msrs. Curtis and Himmelstein were chosen in Santa Fe to assist CGO officers in arranging the conference. In addition to housing on campus, the conference team is looking into alternate accommodations and a reception at a downtown Easton hotel.

The CGO conference will begin on Friday evening, June (not July) 14, immediately following Lafayette College's own first scholarly Henry George Conference (June 13-14) which is being organized by Prof. Jerome F. Heavey. The CGO conference will continue during the weekend and taper off into post-conference special meetings by mid-week. Further information will be released in the near future by Council Chairman Sam Venturella.



Joan Noyes



Sam and Dorothy Venturella



Bus trip to Taos

ENEMIES OR ALLIES?

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transported from as far away as New York to be dumped in the Southwest.

Chellis opened her talk with a definition of *Green*: "Greens are not necessarily an environmental group; Greens are neither left nor right, but out front." Emphasizing the close relationship between Green politics and ecofeminism, she asked for a count of feminists in the audience (most of whom raised their hands). Chellis noted the basic differences between male and female values. Men, for instance, tend to be separate, individualistic, and competitive. Women, on the other hand, tend to value relationships, interdependence, and cooperation. Clearly, the emphasis of her talk was that Greens are more than environmentalists.

Randy Prince was the third speaker, and his reputation as a tree-dweller was upstaged by his informative, eloquent and terse presentation. Speaking as a member of both movements, Randy said "the likeness between Georgists and Greens is how to change the world." Both, he stressed, are looking for answers to similar land questions.

The tone of the session changed from A sharp to B flat when Harry Pollard took the podium. How to cooperate for a

The concept of progress acts as a protective mechanism to shield us from the terrors of the future.

- Frank Herbert, *DUNE*

greener world was forgotten when Harry introduced his new theory, "Pop Dread!" He suggested that much of what passes for environmentalism today, such as concern over DDT and nuclear power, is hogwash, and that our abuse of the planet can and will be controlled. An intelligent discussion with the Green guests could have ensued, but did not, due to personally directed insults from members of the audience, and an overall feeling of *dread* from the turn of events. Coalition-building between Georgists and Greens was distorted into a *dreadful* discussion about real vs. false environmental fears. Are there any that aren't real?

Where do we go from here? It would be wise for

Georgists, as well as all people, to become caring and conscientious inhabitants of the only planet we have. As Georgists, we should be looking to our Green friends for a sharing of ideas, both political and personal. We all want justice and fairness, and land to live happily upon. In the words of Henry David Thoreau, "What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?" We cannot isolate our Georgist activities; our success depends on coalitions with other organizations having similar concerns--for, as Henry George said, "The land question is nowhere a mere local question; it is a universal question."

- Susan Klingelhoef

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE WANTS HENRY GEORGE SCHOLARS

Progress and Poverty by Henry George was published six years before the founding of the American Economic Association. In the ensuing years Henry George became an internationally famous political economist. During these same years economics was increasingly becoming a university-centered profession, so that George was, from the beginning, outside the mainstream of contemporary economic scholars. Although George was neglected by several generations of economists, he was not forgotten, and his continuing importance in the history of economics was indicated by his inclusion in Martin Bronfenbrenner's essay, "Early American Institutional and Critical Traditions," published as part of the centennial observance of the American Economic Association. This was followed by an evaluation of George as, in Bronfenbrenner's phrase, "a full-scale economic theorist."

This is an opportune time to increase knowledge of George's works in the academic community. To fulfill this purpose, Lafayette College will host its first Henry George conference, June 13-14, 1991. We invite proposals for papers which provide a scholarly analysis of George's written works and their significance and impact in the history of economics and the other social sciences. Authors of conference papers will receive a stipend of \$1,000 plus expenses, and it is the intention of the conference organizers that the collected papers will be published as a volume.

Proposals for papers and requests for additional information should be sent to Jerome F. Heavey, Department of Economics and Business, Lafayette College, Easton, PA 18042.

Q: How many Single Taxers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: It's not a tax!