

## Prentice Tells Conferees George's Reform is Gaining 'Respectability'

by Harlan Trott

San Francisco "I've got a shock for you," publisher Perry Prentice told the national conference of Henry George Schools in San Francisco in July. "You are becoming respectable."

This was his theme at the 1971 banquet honoring him for his monumental work in bringing Henry George's principles into the mainstream of academic recognition and public policy consideration.

Prentice pointed out many areas wherein the breakthrough has occurred, in the published hearings of the Muskie Committee, in policy declarations by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, in faculty pronouncements at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and in the prestigious Committee on Economic Development where one CED official told Mr. Prentice: "You don't have to sell me on land value taxation. How do we get something done about it?"

Delegates from places as far apart as Calgary and the island republic Dominica heard New York's Arnold A. Weinstein, President of the School, announce exciting new goals to build more effective teaching programs.

Weinstein said the Trustees are taking steps to make the course based on *Progress and Poverty* "more relevant in a modern industrial society." Part of the broad new program calls for experimental courses in the applied disciplines—anthropology, and psychology in particular, he said. The school will "draw on history," and there will be a special course focussing on "economics and urban problems" augmenting the Trustees' plan to offer college transfer credits.

Weinstein recalled the tentative offer of a university chair at Berkeley held out to Henry George, and how that prospect was dispelled by his forthright address to the Berkeley faculty with its harsh likening of professors to "monkeys with microscopes."

"Unfortunately," said the national president, "too many of his followers took on this bias when a professor didn't agree with them 110%. We must assess every professor on the basis of his own individuality. Instead, we alienated

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## Urge Site Tax To Save City

The American Institute of Architecture's critical commentary on the City Planning Commission's 1969 plan for New York City may provide the answer to New York's two most crushing problems: a lack of decent housing and an overabundance of automobiles.

The critique, recently released by the Institute's Design Subcommittee, recommends that land value taxation be implemented to provide private enterprise with an incentive to build housing. The 1969 Plan cited the need for increased housing, the report says, but proffered no suggestions regarding how or where to build it.

Under the committee's proposal, every parcel of land would be assessed and taxed by the "local" (presumably city) government according to its location value and relative to its planned usage. With taxes on improvements systematically waived or reduced when land is put to "better or higher" use, pressure would be on landowners to erect something more "socially desirable" than parking lots. Beyond housing, the report does not specify the characteristics of "higher or better" use.

Tax exemptions or reductions are also recommended for well-maintained buildings, removing the deterrent to improvements inherent in present taxes.

Land value taxation would also facilitate the assemblage of parcels of land for large projects by automatically eliminating land speculation, the report adds.

## New Course Notes African Site Levy

Henry George may have been the first to expound the ethics and economics of site value taxation in the Western world, but in Africa tribal societies have been practicing it for centuries.

"Of course it isn't taxation as we know it, but the ethics, and the effects, are the same," according to Barbara Rockefeller, who will teach "The African Experience" to New York City social science teachers this fall. The accredited course, offered as part of the city's "In-Service Training" program for teachers, will examine the geography, history, and culture of Africa.

"Most people know a few exotic facts about Africa, but few realize that African systems of thought are as sophisticated, complex, and rich in tradition and history as our own," Miss Rockefeller explains. Like many of the new courses offered this fall, "The African Experience" will present George's ideas in a new context for a wider audience.

"Although there are more than 2,000 tribes in Africa, some aspects of philosophy, social organization, and religion are universal," she says. "All African societies have a monotheistic cosmology so similar in concept to Christianity, that the success of Christian missionaries and the growth of African churches is hardly surprising."

Of particular interest, she notes, is the African tenet that each individual has a birthright to a plot of land on which to live and support himself. "The trend now is to talk of the 'natural socialism' of the African. This is a fallacy.

"It is true that all land is considered to 'belong to' God, who allocated some portions of it to the tribe. Each tribe has a myth of origin in which God gives land to its founder. Succeeding chiefs and elders are his fictional descendants and hold the land in trust for all the tribe, present and future."