

## Georgists Lunched With Ralph Nader

by Alanna Hartzok, Scotland, PA

Green presidential candidate Ralph Nader was in Philadelphia on Wednesday, March 8th for lunch with a number of land value taxation advocates at the famous White Dog Cafe on Sansom Street near the University of Pennsylvania. Attending the luncheon gathering, which raised \$1000 for Nader's presidential campaign chest, were Melanie Douty, Richard Biddle, Joan Sage, Bradley Keach and Herb Lubwitz (all members of the Philadelphia based Henry George School of Social Science); Jake Himmelstein, Treasurer of the Council of Georgist Organizations; Paul Johnson, former Board President of the Henry George School of Northern California; Rebecca Hicks, editor of Green Revolution, a publication of the School of Living; Anne Goeke, Green Party leader and activist from Lancaster; Ted Gwartney, Director of the New York City based Robert Schalkenbach Foundation; and Alanna Hartzok, United Nations NGO Representative, International Union for Land Value Taxation, who had worked with Green Party organizer Dan Kinney to make arrangements for the gathering.

Nader, already familiar with basic ideas of Henry George, requested and was given a brief update on the movement for land value taxation. He gratefully received an information packet containing Alan Durning's book Tax Shift and other relevant material. When shown The New Economics of Sustainable

Development, James Robertson's latest book (just published by the European Commission) which makes the case for eco-tax reform, land value taxation and citizen dividends, he requested and received this as well.

He called taxation a "nightmare of inequity and inefficiency", stating that "we need a big debate on different kinds of taxation, to talk about how corporations are freeloading on public services and getting tax breaks while taxes are falling on workers and smaller businesses. We need to open a debate about land taxation and Henry George, to tax bad things not good things, and not tax people to go to work everyday."

Stating that there is a huge problem with media access for third party candidates, Nader realizes that a major obstacle to getting his campaign issues out to the broad public is that not enough time is given for depth consideration of issues. He was looking to us for sound bites to get our message across and was given several suggestions such as "tax waste, not work" and "tax bads, not goods." The Nader campaign will be approaching a dozen major civic groups to invite them to co-host a debate which the media would want to cover.

Very articulate about the problem of wealth maldistribution and how our democracy has been compromised and undermined by the concentration of economic power, Nader is clearly looking for powerful solutions to add to his arsenal of proposals for change. The impact that our discussion made on him was immediately apparent, as he proposed that there be public debates about the merits of land value taxation and the economics of Henry George,

in his talk to several hundred students and Green Party members in the Steinberg-Dietrich Hall at the Wharton School immediately following our lunch with him.

Nader is running a serious campaign for President under the Green Party ticket, intent on winning 5% of the vote which would give several millions of dollars of funding for Green Party efforts. He is running "to escalate peoples expectations of what is possible," stating that there are "huge capabilities being obstructed by the concentration of power."

"These are booming times according to GDP and executive stock, and news reports that things could not be better, but there is a huge disconnect between this and the majority of people," says Nader. "Anyone who controls the yardstick controls the agenda." He points out that with the nine trillion dollar plus GDP there is massive consumer debt and the US has 20 percent child poverty, the highest of any Western nation. The majority of workers are making less today when adjusted for inflation than in 1979. More and more family members are trying to eek out a middle class living, spending 163 hours more a year working for less than 20 years ago. Fifty million Americans try to make ends meet on less than \$10 an hour. Bill Gates wealth equals that of 120 million Americans, while vast numbers of Americans are broke with no net wealth at all or deeply in debt. Public works, transportation, schools, drinking water quality and other infrastructure are crumbling while stadiums and arenas are being built for the enrichment of a few, like the Roman stadiums of past ages. (For more about the Ralph Nader for President campaign see the website at [www.votenader.com](http://www.votenader.com))

March-April 2000, GroundSwell,