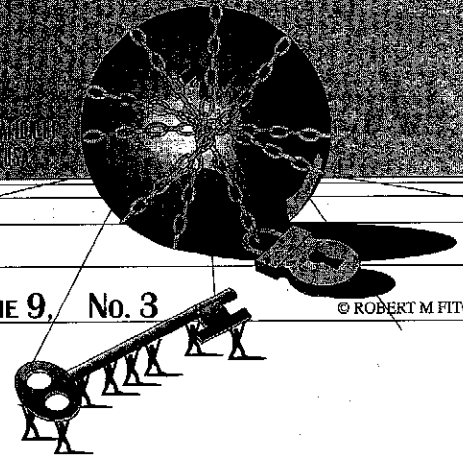


GROUND SWELL

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Kaczorowski to be presenter at Habitat II in Istanbul

The official representatives of Common Ground-USA at the international meeting of Habitat II in Istanbul, Turkey, are Common Ground-USA members Mary Rose Kaczorowski and Judith Vidaver, both of Ft. Bragg, CA. The representative to Habitat II from the International Union for Land Value Taxation is Alanna Hartzok, Chambersburg, PA.

In order to be represented at Habitat II, Common Ground-USA applied in late January to the United Nations for official recognition as a Non-Governmental Organization, and that NGO status was granted in late February. The Common Ground-USA Executive Committee approved Kaczorowski and Vidaver as the representatives in March. The entire Common Ground-USA board approved a small grant, from the Earl Hanson

bequest, to the two representatives in April to partially cover their expenses to the conference.

The official United Nations conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) will be held June 3-14, 1996. Habitat II will deal with two main themes: "sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world" and "adequate shelter for all". Special attention will be focused mainly on urban problems; hence, the U.N. Conference has been dubbed "the City Summit." Most environmental problems originate in cities (production, consumption, air and water pollution, solid and liquid waste).

The City Summit will place urbanization and urban/ rural

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relationships at the top of international and national development agendas and will promote new policies and strategies for managing urbanization and housing development. The City Summit also is calling for actions to help improve living environments of people, and to make the world's cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, equitable and sustainable. The conference will adopt principles, commitments and a related "Global Plan of Action"; while individual countries will adopt "National Plans of Action" for making the cities of the 21st century just, healthy, secure, and convivial places for all.

Habitat II's partners in finding and implementing solutions include local governments, academics, professionals, foundations, the private sector, labor unions, non-governmental and community based organizations (NGOs and CGOs). The partners will be active contributors to the official Conference documentation through several participatory mechanisms and organize their own forums parallel to the Conference.

Between May 30 and June 11, NGOs and CBOs will hold a separate Forum concurrent with the Habitat II Conference. (NGO forums have been held concurrently with the U.N. World Summits since the Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972.)

The NGO Forum venue is the Taskisla Building of the Istanbul Technical University, one of many sites within the conference. Over 22,000 people are registered to attend the NGO Forum and the City Summit. Common Ground-USA qualifies as a national NGO and the International Union qualifies as an international NGO, so Alanna Hartzok (the official representative from the International Union) and Kaczorowski and Vidaver will be attending the U.N. portion of the conference as non-voting delegates.

The International Union and Common Ground-USA will be co-presenting a forum: "The Earth Is the Birthright of All People" — a discussion on the implementation of a fair and efficient local public finance policy based on the universal right of access to land and resources as a key policy that redresses the maldistribution of wealth at its source. This forum is most relevant to the action items as stated in the "Ensuring Access to Land" section of the Habitat II draft agenda. Hartzok has booked one of the largest conference rooms available for this forum and has John McConnell (founder of Earth Day) on the platform for this discussion. Hartzok has been busily networking with other NGOs to make this a success in giving the Georgist

platform its due.

Common Ground-USA, through the efforts of Kaczorowski and Vidaver, will be presenting a workshop preceded by Kaczorowski's 25-minute slide talk on "For Whom Are We Saving the Earth?" The slide talk is her work in progress for a multi-projector soundtrack slide show and is based on looking at the history of land tenure, humanity's relationship to the environment and land use. Land value taxation will be one of her key models in this presentation, along with success stories of projects between community and government that are cooperative and solution based in regards to land restoration, poverty, and hunger. Kaczorowski will note that the system of land value taxation would be the foundation for such projects to succeed and that land value taxation is a key tool in creating a sustainable future. The workshop segment is an Action Plan Working Group to formulate local government and citizen cooperation on equitable and sustainable land use strategies. Both Kaczorowski and Vidaver have started working with the Super Coalition for Women, Homes and Community to present their slideshow at their Best Practices venue at Habitat II. The Super Coalition is comprised of thousands of women from over 52 countries and includes the International Council on Women and Bella Abzug's Environment and Development Organization.

Kaczorowski's paper, quoted in part, follows:

"All nations and all peoples must come to realize that, since we all share the same life supporting resources on this earth, we must share equitably in their use and conservation. Yet no where have the root issues of appropriate land tenure and stewardship and land access come to the forefront for consideration. Despite our technological advances - How we deal with these issues is crucial to determining whether or not we have a life sustaining future.

"We can designate and codify a whole list of human rights - the right to pure air, to food, adequate shelter, personal safety, security of personal property, and liberty to reach our highest potential. Yet if access to the very land we must live on is limited or denied, then all rights become subservient to the land allocation and tenure system...

"In (Habitat II Global Plan of Action) Section B3.b, Ensuring Access to Land, is stated: 'Access to land is a strategic prerequisite to the provision of adequate shelter for all. It is also a precondition for breaking the vicious circle of poverty. Governments at all appropriate levels, including local authorities should strive to overcome all possible

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obstacles which may hamper equitable access to land. The failure to adopt, at all levels, appropriate rural and urban land policies and land management practices remains a primary cause of inequity and poverty. It is also a cause for increasing living costs, occupation of hazard prone land, environmental degradation and urban and rural vulnerability, affecting all people, especially the poor.

“ACTIONS: To facilitate access to land and security of tenure for all socio-economic groups, governments at all appropriate levels, including local authorities should:

“...9(d) Apply transparent, comprehensive, easily accessible and progressive taxation and incentive mechanisms to stimulate efficient, environmentally sound and equitable use of land: exploit the full potential of land-based and other forms of taxation in mobilizing financial resources for service provision by local authorities;...”

“Common Ground-USA supports Habitat II Agenda for Action, Section B, ‘Ensuring Access to Land.’

“Common Ground-USA further submits that U.N. Agencies, National and Local Governments consider alternative methods of taxation, including land value taxation as the innovative instruments which capture land value gains and recover public investments, as stated in Section B, Habitat II Agenda for Action.

“Common Ground-USA submits that an international commission on land use, land tenure and land taxation be instituted to include all representatives of society; and that this commission’s purpose be to:

“a. create and support sustainable solutions regarding access to land,

“b. explore and support equitable public finance and community revenue strategies to promote a more

equitable distribution of wealth,

“c. to educate all sectors of society to come to terms in recognizing that environmental degradation affects our common heritage.

“d. to uphold the tenet — ‘That if society chooses to operate upon a free market principle, whatever is derived directly from nature (water, land, mineral resources, the electromagnetic spectrum, satellite orbit zones, etc.) should be considered as the common heritage and right of all. The value of these resources should thus be the primary source of funding for sustainable governmental activities from the local to the global.’

“Here in Istanbul, we have the historic opportunity to begin to create action plans and strategies that will create a better life for all. All that we do is upon the earth. In order to accomplish this, we must return to a respectful relationship with our mother earth that has given abundantly of her sustenance. The earth is the birthright of all people - but it is up to all people of all nations to reinvent and recreate practices and systems that serve values of accountability, responsibility, and justice if we are to have a sustainable future or any future at all....

“It follows then, that the earth’s worth should be equally shared. This can be accomplished by collecting a “property” or “land value” tax equal to the rental value of land, excluding structures and improvements to land. Since land value is determined by inherent productive capacity, population concentration, and access to public services and infrastructure (none of these created by the landowner!), it is logical and equitable that revenue for the public’s common needs should come from this source and that the remainder should be distributed, in equal shares, as a dividend to each taxpaying citizen. A democratic people

would then be free to establish whatever kind of post industrial society they wish for themselves and their children...

“But the appropriate remedies will not be instituted unless people insist on the right to a public debate on the philosophy of public finance and land tenure. Such debate as is sponsored by governments is directed as the ‘efficiency’ of specific taxes - a discussion designed to make life easier for the tax collector rather than the taxpayer” (quoting Fred Harrison, London)...

“Millions of people have died and many are still dying in the defense of land that did not belong to them, deceived by the ideology of nationalism. By the millions, many have starved to death for want of access to land. Millions have wandered and still wander the world for the want of homes of their own...

“The paradigm of our global and local economies must rest on economic principles that treat our planet as a trust to be preserved rather than a conquest to be looted.

“World famous 18th century political economist Henry George stated: ‘More is given to us than to any time before and therefore more is required of us.’”

Kaczorowski is taking to Istanbul with her 1,000 Common Ground-USA membership brochures, as recently updated by Marion Sapiro.

(Editor’s note: Above article contains information sent by Habitat II and was contributed to by Mary Rose Kaczorowski, Ft. Bragg, CA.

For articles related to above, please see GroundSwell issues as follows: Jan.-Feb. 1996, “Land Access on Habitat II Agenda” and Sept.-Oct. 1995, “First United Peoples Assembly Held in San Francisco.” N.W.S.