Panel on Property Tax Reform and the Environment Opens Annual CGO Conference in Ottawa

Canadian host Frank Peddle introduced a distinguished panel at the October 11 opening day of the annual conference of the Council of Georist Organizations. Addressing the topics were Economics professor Dr. Mason Gaffney; journalist and author James Kunstler; Western Canada real estate appraiser Steve Rickard; and Alex Cullen who is a councilor in the Regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, Ontario.

Economics and pollution. Mason Gaffney, professor of Economics at the University of Southern California-Riverside, addressed economics and the environment, and specifically non-point pollution. Explaining that non-point pollution is that which comes from non-point sources (drift wind-blown from pesticide treated fields, watershed runoff, etc.), he noted this is pollution which you can't measure or put a price on. The damages are spread unequally over other nonpoint receptors.

Thus economists arrived at a green tax, a surrogate tax on input proportionally on landowners. Thus fertilizers, highway salt, pesticides, etc. would bear the tax. The problem is that such taxes overlook the locational element in the pollution, and imposing the tax on fertilizers and pesticides can have the unintended consequence of forcing use of more lands and spreading the problem more widely.

One more problem of imposing excise taxes on pesticides, for example, is bootleggers who resort to the underground economy. When the black market becomes the respectable market, there is pressure to eliminate regulations, and a resultant consequence of bailing out owners of stocks on hand (i.e., Chlordane when contaminated milk brought about its ban.)

Another problem of taxing surrogates is that it fails to distinguish among the individual applicators, taxing the most careful for the sins of the least careful.

Guidance from Entomology professors cannot be relied on since many continued on page 5

Nobel Laureate William Vickrey dies

It was Dr. Nicolaus Tideman, president of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, who announced the death of William Vickrey to those attending the Council of Georist Organizations conference in Ottawa Oct. 11. Effort had been made to contact Vickrey and invite him to come and address the Georgists after the Taxation, Resources and Economic Development meeting in Cambridge, Mass. Vickrey was driving to that meeting when he died of an apparent heart attack about 20 miles from his Hastings-on-Hudson, NY home. He was 82.

A long time colleague, Dr. Mason Gaffney, shared memories of Vickrey with conference attenders. Gaffney had impulsively phoned and congratulated Vickrey the evening it had been announced that Vickrey had won the continued on page 8