

## Sixteenth Annual Henry George Congress

CHICAGO, Metropolis of the Middle West, was the scene of the 1941 Henry George Congress, sponsored by the Henry George Foundation of America. This sixteenth annual conference of the followers of Henry George was held at Chicago's famous Hotel LaSalle, September 29 and 30, and October 1. There were about 100 registered delegates, and the total attendance was approximately 150.

In an atmosphere of fellowship and free discussion, the principles and problems of the Georgeist cause were talked over, the progress of our organizations was reported, and recommendations for the future conduct of the movement were made.

Outstanding among the guest speakers was Frank Lloyd Wright, America's foremost architectural designer. Mr. Wright is in sympathy with our principles. Other Conference highlights were: an unusually wide geographical representation, including J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco, C. A. Gaston of Fairhope, Alabama, Noah D. Alper of St. Louis, Mo., and delegates from New York, Washington, Pittsburgh, and other parts of the country; an entertaining performance of a single tax play, "The Dangerous Riddle," directed by Mrs. Clayton J. Ewing; and the closing banquet including among the speakers Hon. George E. Evans and Hon. Charles R. Eckert.

### FIRST DAY—MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

MORNING SESSION—Clayton J. Ewing, vice president of the Henry George Foundation, opened the Congress by pounding with a gavel made from the wood of a tree grown in Fairhope, Alabama, on a pounding block made of the same material. He introduced Hiram B. Loomis, president of the Chicago extension of the Henry George School of Social Science, who gave an address of welcome to the delegates, commending them for their faith in freedom and their pioneering for a better world. The response was given by Dr. Mark Millikin of Hamilton, Ohio, who also stressed the principle of freedom as the bedrock of our philosophy. (Readers will recall that it was Dr. Millikin who, at an earlier Congress, expressed the hope that there would some day be a Henry George University—a suggestion which inspired Oscar H. Geiger in the founding of the Henry George School.)

AFTERNOON SESSION—Dr. Millikin spoke again at the opening of this session, on "Possibilities of Rural Land," stressing the value of decentralization and closer contact with the soil. He was followed by Edwin Hamilton, president of the Chicago chapter of the Henry George Fellowship, who gave an account of the Physiocrats, their program and the reason for their failure. The Physiocratic "rule of nature" program would have been a great boon to

corrupt eighteenth-century France, said Mr. Hamilton, but it was not understood, and was bitterly opposed by the nobles. In addition, it had the disadvantage of not being a fully correct analysis of economics, proposing only a tax on the net production of lands devoted to agriculture, thus overlooking vacant and industrial lands.

Walter I. Swanton of Washington, D. C., spoke on "Some Specifications of Henrico County, Virginia." He explained that land and improvements in Henrico are assessed separately, thus providing a practical base for a single tax on land values. The concluding address of the afternoon was given by J. Rupert Mason who told of the extent of land value taxation in California, explaining the public land renting system of the California irrigation districts.

EVENING SESSION—Carl D. Smith of Pittsburgh, as chairman, introduced the first speaker—Sidney J. Abelson, representing the recently formed New York organization, the American Alliance to Advance Freedom. Mr. Abelson delivered a talk on "The Georgeist Task in a War-Torn World." He pointed out that in the world today "freedom," "equality of opportunity" and other ideals are spoken of as vague abstractions. The distinction of Georgeists is that that have a definite *method*—the single tax—whereby to make those ideals a real and immediate way of life. The task of Georgeists is to devote themselves to the establishment of this method, and to demonstrate to the world that our program looks not to some distant era for results, but that a better world will immediately emerge upon the adoption of single tax.

The guest of honor, Frank Lloyd Wright, known as one of the creators of modern architecture, was the next speaker. In a sincere and simple impromptu talk, Mr. Wright spoke on freedom, and stressed "freedom of land, freedom of money and freedom of ideas." He characterized America as a plutocracy rather than a democracy, but expressed the conviction that the three freedoms would some day triumph. He also spoke of his debt to Henry George for the inspiring ideas contained in "Progress and Poverty."

Frank Chodorov, director of the New York Henry George School, told of the efforts of the School in "merchandising an ideal," by introducing to as many students as possible the works of Henry George. The School, he said, was a private institution rather than a democratic organization, where "we work and work and work." He added that the two tasks of the School are to teach Henry George and to avoid politics.

Henry H. Hardinge of Chicago concluded the evening session with a talk on "Georgeism Versus Marxism," in which he posited that there are only two choices for America

to make—control or freedom. He characterized Americans as "a race of industrial giants, political children, and economic infants."

### SECOND DAY—TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

**MORNING SESSION**—C. A. Gaston, secretary of the Fairhope Single Tax Colony told the Congress about this Alabama "enclave of economic rent." The Single Tax Corporation of Fairhope owns 4,000 acres of rural land in Baldwin County, and 320 acres of city land. While it owns less than one fourth of the land of Fairhope, more than 70% of the real estate and personal property values are on its holdings. The Corporation collects the rent of land from its tenants and applies it to public purposes, thus endeavoring to apply the single tax principle on a small scale. The total rent collected this year was \$31,000 (\$4,000 from rural land and \$27,000 from city land). Fairhope had to have relief projects in the early days of the depression, but for several years now no "make-work" program has been in effect, as there is plenty of productive work to do.

John Lawrence Monroe, secretary of the Chicago Henry George School, presented a picture of the activities of the Chicago extension. To date, 2,300 students have completed the School's courses. This term 40,000 announcements were sent out, and more than 500 graduates are expected. Mr. Monroe related anecdotes concerning the School's trials and tribulations, among them being a police raid on headquarters because of a fantastic rumor that the School was a "bookie joint." After Mr. Monroe's talk, Noah D. Alper told of the St. Louis extension of the School.

**FOUNDATION LUNCHEON**—The annual business meeting and luncheon of the Henry George Foundation was held at the Hotel LaSalle, with George E. Evans, president of the Foundation, presiding. All present officers were unanimously re-elected for the ensuing term of one year, and the following members of the Board of Trustees were re-elected for another three-year term: Charles R. Eckert, Hugo W. Noren, Charlotte O. Schetter, Charles Jos. Smith, Abe D. Waldauer, and Percy R. Williams. J. Rupert Mason was elected to the Board to succeed the late George J. Shaffer of Los Angeles.

**AFTERNOON SESSION**—This session was "an open forum on moot questions," and opened with a talk by Spencer Heath of Elkridge, Md., on "What is Rent?" Mr. Heath elucidated his definition of economic terms and his advocacy of a landlord proprietorship rather than government collection of rent. The following speaker, J. Edward Jones of Chicago, also spoke on the nature of rent, but held to the view that it resulted from location advantages of sites, whether natural or social. He advocated communal collection of rent.

Philip Rubin of Washington, D. C., turned to internal problems of the movement, deploring the lack of a spirit

of comradeship among the different organizations and workers in the same cause. He stressed justice and fraternity as the foundation of the Georgeist philosophy, and urged that we abide by these principles in our relations with one another, pointing out how they have been violated by prominent leaders within the movement. Reminded of the Hebrew holy day about to begin, Mr. Rubin said that a Georgeist Day of Atonement would be a salutary thing for our movement.

**EVENING SESSION**—After an excellent speech on "The Heritage of Youth," by Mrs. Lyril Clark Van Hyning of Chicago, came the Single Tax Play, "The Dangerous Riddle," directed by Mrs. Clayton J. Ewing. The play, with a cast of sixteen actors and two musicians, represented a delegation sent to Heaven to ask God to help the earth which had fallen into such woe. It was brought out that God has given us all the means for our salvation, including abundant natural resources, and that it is up to mankind to work out his own destiny. The play received an enthusiastic ovation.

### THIRD DAY—WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1

**MORNING SESSION**—A paper from the editors of *LAND AND FREEDOM* was read by Clayton J. Ewing, explaining the position and functions of our journal as "the voice of the movement." All viewpoints are given opportunity for expression in *LAND AND FREEDOM* and all Georgeist activities are reported, in the belief that a free and democratic "market place" is needed for the good of the movement.

Another paper presented *in absentia* was from E. S. Woodward of Vancouver, B. C. Mr. Woodward speculated on "What Would Henry George Do in 1941," and came to the conclusion that he would do substantially the same thing, in terms of today, that he did in his lifetime—that is, take an active part in the political question of the day, and integrate his reform with other progressive reforms presented currently. (In a subsequent issue we hope to present a more extended publication of Mr. Woodward's thesis.)

Thomas Rhodus, chairman of the National Prosperity Legion, a Georgeist organization of Chicago, entitled his talk "The Next Step," and expressed the belief that his organization was prepared to take it. A drive for obtaining 10,000 members for the Legion is under way.

**AFTERNOON SESSION**—Charles H. Ingersoll of New York reported the campaign to pass the Sanford Bill through the New Jersey legislature. As most readers are aware, this is a measure to secure local option in land value taxation, and it has already passed the New Jersey Assembly. An effort is now being made, to have it passed by the Senate.

Noah D. Alper presented his views on "Paving the Way for a 'G' Day," presumably a "George Day." Mr. Alper believes that the two most important things to teach the

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people are the injustice of private collection of rent and the impossibility of shifting a land value tax. He also deplored the lack of facts which have ruined many Georgeist campaigns, and urged followers of Henry George to devote themselves to this neglected field.

Helena Mitchell McEvoy of Washington, D. C. (whom readers will remember as "Alaska Jane"), spoke on the role women might play in our movement, recalling their successes in the socialist movement and in churches. Mrs. McEvoy also advocated an organization which graduates of "Progress and Poverty" classes might join.

BANQUET—The banquet, held on the evening of the third day, concluded the Congress. After the dinner, Clayton J. Ewing, vice president of the Foundation, presided. The speeches began at 10 P. M., but late hours seldom bother an assembly of Georgeists.

George E. Evans, the first speaker of the evening, spoke on the future of the Henry George movement. He expressed the belief that we are too narrow in our outlook, and that we should strive to be as broad as Henry George, who saw that there are other forms of unearned income and special privileges which should be fought.

John Z. White, "the grand old man of the movement," gave a talk on "The Obvious Remedy"—government collection of land rent and abolition of all taxes—which is indeed obvious to Georgeists. Mr. White also presented his view that repetition and illustration are the best means of education.

Lancaster M. Greene, a trustee of the New York Henry George School, delivered an address entitled "The Only Emergency is Ignorance." The way to combat ignorance, said Mr. Greene, is to endeavor to make people think, through the Socratic method of asking questions.

Charles R. Eckert, ex-Congressman from Pennsylvania, gave an impromptu talk, in which he took our present government to task for not governing in accordance with sound principles. It is our task, he said, to teach governing officials that the Henry George philosophy is the answer to the world's problems.

Thus concluded the Sixteenth Annual Henry George Congress. It was notable for its concentration on practical problems in advancing the Georgeist philosophy, its sincere tone and democratic spirit in presenting so many points of view, and for the many challenges presented concerning more effective work and closer cooperation in leading our cause to success.

(For most of the material used in the above report of the Henry George Congress, we are indebted to William McCormick Lundberg, a young graduate of the Chicago Henry George School, who served as our reporter.

See page 171 for the resolutions adopted at the Congress.—Ed.)