

## Organization of Georgeists Pro and Con

PRO

By GILBERT M. TUCKER

**T**ODAY we have hosts of groups and organizations working to advance our philosophy but we have no broad and comprehensive organization of Georgeists to unite our efforts. The need is imperative; independent groups are doing excellent work in specific fields but, without united support, they are at a great disadvantage and the growth of the movement is seriously retarded, and one can name hardly another comparable endeavor which lacks organized unity. Our present-day organizations fall into two categories; they are purely local or they confine their operations—and wisely—to specific fields. In the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, we have an admirable publishing agency, and in the Henry George School of Social Science, we have the nucleus of systematic education, but we need a bigger and broader program. We must have a national, or better a continental organization, for our brethren in other American countries who are doing such excellent work should not be excluded.

The major features and objectives of such a body might well be as follows:

1. The preparation of a list, and as large a membership enrollment as is possible, of those already committed to our creed or to be won in the future. This is the first requisite if we are to know our strength and where it lies, and unite for a common purpose.

2. To avoid the criticism so often levelled against some of our existing organizations—that they are too closely knit and arbitrary and give rise to factions—it should be essentially democratic in form. Since true democracy is best achieved through representative action and “home rule,” a national organization may well be decentralized, encouraging in every way the formation of local groups, to be represented in the governing board, although active executive management may well be left to a smaller group.

3. To make it broad and catholic, its declaration of principles should be general rather than specific. Qualifications for membership should be so liberal that no true Georgeist will be excluded.

4. It should aim at cooperation with and support of existing organizations, furthering the sale and circulation of literature, the extension of formal education, study and research, and all that goes with “publicity,” both for the movement as a whole and for specific approved programs. A public relations counsel, publicity man, advertising expert—call him what you will—might be employed, when possible, to put our philosophy in a more favorable light with the public and to overcome prejudices based on false conceptions or built up by our own mistakes. This might be the means of

opening to us more generously the pages of the press.

5. An important objective would be to secure more adequate financing of our work in all its aspects—something comparable to the community chests of our cities. Acting as a general soliciting, receiving and disbursing agency, such an organization, on sound lines, would prove a bulwark of strength. This is an urgent need today, for very considerable funds are often lost because there is no strong and stable institution to which funds can be given or devised for the movement as a whole.

6. The great and ultimate aim would, of course, be the extension of our philosophy, bringing in new blood, keeping alive enthusiasm, and directing it into wise channels, and building for the final realization of our hopes. Every Georgeist knows full well the limitless, potential appeal of our creed, in its bearings on practically all the pressing problems of today. We have the answers to unemployment of both men and capital, to the labor question, to housing, and even to the international problems of war and peace. But how do we go about enlisting the aid of the great numbers eagerly seeking a solution to a problem in which their interest is intense and to which they give freely of both time and money? They ask for bread and we give them a stone; they seek definite and specific remedies for evils of which they are bitterly conscious, and are given literature—inconclusive pamphlets or a formidable book—and there it rests. Or they are told to study economics in the class-room. If they do sit at our feet to learn wisdom, or if they give desultory reading to our books, and begin to get a glimmer of light, we offer no program, except perhaps that they aid in putting others through the same mill.

This is no impatient plea for political action, or for ill-judged and half-considered political campaigns prematurely undertaken. But we must shape our policies and have a plan for the future, however long we may wait for its realization. Education is our first need but we must interpret that word in a sense broader than only class-room study, and there must be a vision of the road to which it leads, with a constructive program. Present activities must continue unabated and we would not suggest that those now giving themselves so generously to valuable undertakings, in which they have faith and for which they are fitted, should scatter their ammunition. Let each one do that task which appeals most strongly to him, and for which he is best qualified, but opportunities are legion and many who have “seen the cat” are unable, for one reason or for many, to contribute much to these operations. It is these who must be enrolled, whose enthusiasm must be quickened and whose zeal must be fired, by opening new avenues of service to the cause of truth and justice.

Until we have such an organization, on broad and liberal grounds, we work under a heavy handicap. Only by united, concerted effort can we begin to make real and substantial

progress and only through strong cooperation can the foundation be laid and preparations made for the day that must come.

CON

By FRANK CHODOROV

A discussion on the value of organization as an instrument to advance Henry George's philosophy will be made clear if we define the term organization.

This word, like so many other words, is used in a variety of ways. When we speak of the organization of a business we refer to the departmentalization of the work. For greater productivity the various parts of the one enterprise are assigned to various specialists, each one of whom makes a contribution to the general objective.

But in the field of political or social activity organization has an entirely different meaning. Its central idea is that of grouping together a number of people who have a common interest, for one of two purposes: 1, To enjoy one another's company because of this common interest, or 2, to impose on others their common interest by the strength of their numbers.

There may be some division of labor in a social club or in a political society. These organizations do have officers and committees. But since such specialization is necessarily limited, the vast majority of the members have very little more to do with the group's activities than the paying of dues and the attending of meetings.

Social groups have a tendency to become self-centered. When we have met with a number of people of common interest for a long time the pleasure of such meetings tends to create resistance toward including people with whom we are not acquainted, even if they happen to have the same central interest, and even though we think we want new members. We are not sure that the newcomer will adjust himself to the new environment. The "mutual admiration" atmosphere might be disturbed.

The political organization has for its purpose the election of an individual to public office, or the adoption of some political measure. In so far as it shows signs of succeeding in its purpose it will gain adherents who hope for some advantage as a result of this association. If it does not show signs of success it will not gain adherents, because the political minded person is not anxious to be connected with a failure. The idea which drew together the original organizers of the political society does not spread because the members are not primarily concerned with spreading the idea; they are, rather, interested in imposing the idea through political action. The teaching of a philosophy to others always becomes a secondary consideration with every organization, no matter what its original purpose may be.

The history of the Henry George movement since 1897 is

the history of one organizational attempt after another. Those of us who have been in the movement any number of years remember how few Georgeists there were. When we went to a Single Tax meeting we met the same faces, we listened to the same speeches.

We were not growing. And the reason we were not growing is that we were not making new Georgeists. There may be some other explanation of this decadence, but we cannot escape the fact that fifty years of organization and political work had not prevented it.

Those of us who have devoted years to soap-boxing, lecturing, campaigning, contributing to this or that effort which at the time seemed quite worthy, must now decide whether our remaining years should be spent in the same kind of unproductive work; or whether they should be devoted to the only kind of work which apparently has produced results commensurate with the effort, namely, education.

It is eight years since Oscar Geiger started the Henry George School of Social Science. In those eight years there have probably been more new Georgeists added to the cause than during all of the previous years since Henry George died. A recent commencement exercise in New York City was attended by over 500 people. Several weeks ago Chicago assembled 300 people. And so it goes all over the country, wherever there are classes. Some 20,000 people have taken the course either in these classes or by mail.

All this has been done without organization, save in the sense that organization is the division of labor. In that sense the School is an organization. There is work for everyone to do. Some teach, some address envelopes, some lecture, some do research work, some write articles, some bombard editors with letters. But the objective of the School is to make more and more Georgeists, not to consolidate in social or political groups those who have already subscribed to the philosophy.

The Trustees of the Henry George School of Social Science recognize the danger of crystallization which results from organization and have therefore established it as the policy of the School not to encourage such activity among its graduates, although recognizing the fact that these graduates are at liberty to carry on as they see fit. Obviously an educational institution must be devoid of any political effort, even by implication.

When or how the fiscal reform advocated by Henry George will be put into effect is something none of us can definitely answer now. But it is a certainty that the reform will never come about until it has many more proponents. Therefore, we must recognize the essential importance of spreading our philosophy far and wide through the most effective means at hand. Fifty years of organization have not had this effect. The educational method initiated by Oscar Geiger is accomplishing it.