

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

**I**N that lucid interval between New Year's Resolutions and Income Tax Returns this year occurs an event of the highest social significance. It is the opening of a new term of classes at the Henry George Schools of Social Science. A glance back at past ages is all that is necessary to prove that this is not an overstatement.

Recently a scholar in the field of English literature has pictured a proud procession in the spring of the year 1597, bound out of London for nearby Windsor, where Count Mompelgart *in absentia* and others in bodily presence were to be honored with the lofty distinction of the Order of the Garter. Following the gay and glittering aristocrats in their bravery of ruffs and silks came trains of men in livery, and among these retainers of the rich and powerful rode William Shakespeare, perhaps clad in blue with an orange pennon in his hand.

Today that proud procession is remembered chiefly because of the possibility that it contained this blue-clad retainer. Count Mompelgart's claim to fame lies in the fact that Shakespeare immortalized him by a word or two in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." Even Elizabeth shines with double glory because her reign included the career of this quiet poet.

Today we have other proud processions and other candidates for social and military honors. We need not belittle them even while we remind ourselves that they are less lasting than the least shred of a true and timeless idea. The real importance of the year 1942 lies not in its military conquests but in the measure in which truths such as those expressed by Henry George are allowed to thrive.

Much has been accomplished. Leadership which in general has been wise and devoted has brought the New York School from its rented home of a few small rooms, only a few years ago, to its present owned building and its thousands of students. Other Georgist schools have also progressed. And one evidence of healthy growth is the putting forth of individual groups to teach and practice the Georgist principles in their own way. No true Georgist can regret the diversification of groups which has taken place within recent years, for all must have equal opportunity to spread the truth as they see it, and all mean the spread of the knowledge of true economic reform.

There is no social danger in nonconformity; it is when conformity is most complete that danger is greatest. No one should desire or tolerate a social order in which everyone thinks alike. The word regimentation accurately depicts such a state of repression. Henry George Schools everywhere should and do reflect the ferment of individuals each seeking truth and finding it in varying garb.

It is a matter for congratulation rather than for condolence when groups branch out from the parent stem and thrust down deeply roots of their own. Such enterprises should never be interfered with, and in the same way they cannot be permitted to hinder or hamper the normal growth and operation of the parent body. So long as our enrollment is counted in thousands out of the millions of truth-seeking minds within our territory, there can be no destructive competition for students or teachers.

With all of us there is one goal in view. We desire and propose to disseminate as widely as possible a knowledge of the way to put into operation that fourth freedom formulated by our President—"Freedom from want, everywhere in the world!" We have neither the time nor the inclination to squabble over persons and policies. We are fighting to win the cruelest and most depressing war in the world, the war on poverty. And we have faith that we can win the peace by opening to men and women everywhere the vision of a practical and universal social justice.

We do not know how long or how soon it may be before this peace is won. We are grateful for every public pronouncement which shows the instinctive realization on the part of world leaders like Churchill and Roosevelt that our goals are right. We rejoice in the increased usefulness of our School and the many evidences of awakening interest on the part of promising students. We thank those friends and officers both present and past, who have given so freely of themselves in the service of the School.

And we believe that when in future centuries histories of social progress come to be written, it may be regarded as no hyperbole but rather as a platitude to say that the most important event of the year 1942 was the February opening of classes at the Henry George School.

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