



"Watchmen on the Wall"

Robert D. Benton

THIS year, for the first time, two cooperating Georgist groups met together. The Henry George Foundation, organized in 1926, six years earlier than the Henry George School, held a one-day conference at the Pick-Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit on July 6th. That was followed by the annual conference of the Henry George School beginning July 7th and closing Sunday, July 10th.

The Foundation conference was opened by Clayton J. Ewing, formerly of Mobile, Alabama, acting president, who said that because Georgists are people to whom "the secrets have been revealed," they should be the watchmen "to blow the trumpet and warn the people." (Ezekiel)

Since 1930 our country has traveled far down the road toward socialism, with increasing federal encroachment upon the prerogatives of the states, a debt of 293 billions, steadily advancing infiltration, and uncertainty as to the value of our currency, he said. Confiscatory taxation discourages and impedes all business activity and reduces the opportunities of employment. The spread of Communist power and influence is a direct threat to the continued existence of the United States as we have known it. As watchmen on the wall we can discern the crisis which is steadily building up as devotees and *infil-traitors* increase all over our country.

A Communist was defined by Mr.

Ewing as anyone who believes in state or government control of the machinery of production and distribution of wealth. Such a person, whether he carries a card or not, advocates the ideology of a Communist, he said, so why shouldn't he be called one?

If it is true that communism can be defeated only by a conquering idea or principle, then what we need is an idea that embraces the essentials of true economic justice and personal liberty, not the subjection of the individual to the totalitarian state.

"Is it not clear that the only way to secure economic justice is to collect the annual economic rent of land into the public treasury to pay public expenses," he asked, "and thereby to abolish or reduce other forms of taxation?"

One individual acting alone may not be able to accomplish much, but acting with others of like faith the influence is increased. Do we not agree then that above and beyond our individual efforts we should provide adequate financial support for our Georgist institutions which have proved their permanence and faithfulness over a term of decades, Mr. Ewing queried. "I mention specifically the Henry George Foundation, the Henry George School of Social Science and the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. We can be thankful for these organizations—we can also be proud of them and support them."

ROBERT BENTON, our Detroit host, extended a welcome on this first morning and showed no strain whatever as a result of months of preparation culminating in what was to be termed the "smoothest conference yet." He said he visualized a conference as a place to exchange thoughts and enjoy pleasant associations—a place where we could get facts, then go home and use them, having received inspiration to achieve our common goals. He also vowed that it should not be dull.

Robert Clancy, director of the school from New York, was the first speaker on the H.G.F. program. He expressed pleasure because a joint conference was being held, saying "there are few enough of us, and the world is a pretty big place."

Apparently several people present had had experience with friends who at various times had referred to Georgists in some such terms as—"they're nice people and I love them—but. . . ." It was the last word that Mr. Clancy chose to explore by looking into Henry George's method for building up his case. The New York director has spoken before many groups of various kinds and has found an encouraging degree of interest in Henry George. He noted that it is not unusual to find people who agree with his philosophy, but they don't get excited—and it is important for this to happen.

It was recalled that Henry George had a very deep and perhaps mystical concern. He saw wretched poverty and wealth side by side and said he would never rest until he found out the cause. So before anything else can happen there must be the deep concern, because you can't talk to people who don't care. Here a Danish quotation was translated, "first make alive, then enlighten."

George's technique was to narrow

the field of inquiry to political economy, which according to his interpretation was concerned with wealth. He investigated what others had to say in this field, accepted what he could, and rejected the rest. As a journalist, he was trained in observation, and he also had a speculative turn of mind. First he studied the facts, then he reasoned them out.

This would seem to imply an inductive approach—but only in his first book, *Our Land and Land Policy*, did he use the inductive method. Then, having established his principle he moved more and more toward a deductive approach. "We begin with premises about which there can be no doubt," George said—and surely his basic premise is pretty well accepted: "men seek to satisfy their desires with the least possible exertion."

Henry George was careful to check every so often to make sure he was not straying from the facts. Mr. Clancy cited a number of examples from George's books indicating how mental experiments and imaginary incidents were used in lieu of laboratory experiments which would be too difficult in political economy. Frequently George looked to "the man in the street" for confirmation, because he seemed to have a considerable amount of faith in an average man's reasoning power.

But, the speaker mused, what percentage of the population has this necessary ability to observe and reason? Are these faculties slumbering? Perhaps one reason why a person does not seem to care so much today, is because he is confused—possibly asking the right questions might awaken him.

The aware, concerned citizen, Mr. Clancy said, belongs to a minority which can no doubt be built up. If we can reach the leaders from that minority we will be doing a great deal.

The first day closed with a banquet

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to which school delegates were invited, followed by an informal social hour. This afforded an opportunity for directors and others to meet representatives of the Henry George Foundation. Eight members of the board of trustees were present: Clayton J. Ewing, first vice president, now acting president following the death of Charles R. Eckert; Percy R. Williams,

executive secretary; Robert C. Bowers; Harry Gunnison Brown; Sidney G. Evans; John R. Fuchs; Joseph S. Thompson, recently elected president of the Henry George School; and John C. Weaver.

THE PENNSYLVANIA STORY, an interesting triple report, of current progress by Percy R. Williams, Harry Gunnison Brown and W. Wylie Young, will be published next month.

The Henry George School Conference

Robert D. Benton, presiding at the first meeting on July 7th, introduced the director of adult education from the University of Michigan and Wayne State University, Dr. Hamilton Stillwell. This "New Dimension" talk was greeted with enthusiasm, especially by instructors in the audience. "The world needs adult education," he said, because of the "explosion of knowledge in the past 25 years," and because, since 1900, every ten years has doubled the number of facts available to us. "There is a commonality between those of us in adult education and the followers of Henry George," he observed, "as we strive to convince our fellows of the value of our ideals."

Outlining the categories of adult education he placed us among the private or voluntary organizations, capable of reaching people who cannot be reached by the more formal educational agencies, and he believed we should capitalize on this.

It was noted that for the adult who has continued to study and learn from age 20 to 40, it is easier to go on after 40. As Henry George teachers meet with these adults it was suggested that their individual differences should be respected; they must be made to

feel welcome; they should be considered in planning the subject matter of the course; teaching techniques must be geared to the heterogeneity of the group; and evaluative techniques should be utilized. The adult education teacher, he noted, should not be the wanderer, the echo, the reader, the comedian, or the machine.

All delegates quickly reassembled for lunch in another room in the hotel after this talk to hear Dr. William A. Paton of the School of Business Administration, University of Michigan, speak somewhat at random with a good deal of non-"equalitarian sentiment." He confessed to being a "genuine free trader" while carefully avoiding any mention of land value taxation. He disagreed with many of the "so-called scientists" who claim that all people have equal abilities. "I suggest," said Dr. Paton, "that we should talk about widening or spreading inequalities rather than the opposite." He made a plea for more freedom while freely admitting that freedom, or competition, requires bravery. Yet competition, while perhaps not welcome at first, may turn out to be fun.

The speaker, having cheerfully worked his way through college, re-