

Putting the School First

By LOUIS WALLIS

Any speaker sent out or booked by the School should try to make the audience conscious of the School as clearly and emphatically as possible, with a view to getting the largest number of enrollments. The speaker's primary object, of course, is to make the audience feel and see the problem which Georgism attempts to solve. But there is nothing like establishing a direct connection between the audience and the School. The question is how to do this in the best way.

A highly important psychological fact which must be held in mind is, that any audience has only a limited amount of "effective attention-energy." For instance, let us suppose that the speaker presents the main subject as well as he can. Then, at the end of the talk, he mentions the School and informs the audience that any one who cares to do so may come forward and sign a card which will bring a free course on economics by mail. A few will come forward and do as suggested. But the objections to this procedure are (1) that the effective attention-energy of the audience has now been absorbed into the main subjects, and (2) that a certain amount of inertia has to be overpowered and neutralised in order actually to bring a person to the front. The result is that the School appears to be a mere, casual afterthought which does not link itself up with the main subject of the address.

A second method is to mention the School at what appears to be an appropriate point in the talk, and then start cards into circulation through the audience. This will bring a somewhat larger volume of response. But even so, the reference to the School seems to break up the address and introduce an alien item into the development of the subject; the result being that the effective attention of the audience is broken up into competing ideas which distract the mind.

A third method follows the logic of the situation and brings the best results. The School is back of the speaker; and the speaker has been sent out by the School. Very well! After he has been introduced, he says, "Before taking up the main subject, I wish to make a brief announcement." (This rather unusual procedure at once rivets the audience; and they speculate upon what is coming. In other words, not only the fresh attention-energy of the audience is enlisted; but their curiosity is aroused.) The speaker then goes on: "The Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York"—(he now notices that the audience attends even more closely, and he goes on without a pause)—"has chartered a School of Social Science which will give anybody in this room a free course on economics, the uppermost problem before the public. You get the mimeographed sheets once a week for ten weeks. It only takes a few minutes to

go over each lesson; and the course costs you nothing. All you have to do is to write your name and address clearly on one of the blank cards which will be put in circulation through the audience."

(Parenthetically, it is better to have blank cards, five by three inches, without any special places for this, and the other item. A card with dotted lines and minute directions where to write is distracting and requires more attention-energy than is available in a meeting).

The advantage of putting the School first in this way is very great. The people composing the audience are already economic-problem-conscious before they assemble; and you connect up with this mental condition at the very start by saying that the School gives a course on economics. The fact that the course is free is also a drawing card, as is the initial mention of the Board of Regents, etc. Moreover, as you proceed with the address, you have already laid the groundwork for natural and logical reference to the School. You can emphasize your points by saying, "In a brief meeting like this, we can only consider the main facts of the economic problem. But by taking the free course, you get the underlying philosophy of the facts."

The latest meeting in which this method was tried was with the Jersey City Rotary Club. About seventy-five upstanding business men were present. Mostly of course from Jersey City; but there were visitors from a dozen other places, the most distant being from Chicago. When the talk was finished, fifty-three of these men had written their names and addresses on the blank cards which had been meanwhile distributed from hand to hand. They are now in regular touch with the HGSSS, getting their lessons every week. Each person in the audience was also handed a piece of free Georgist literature; and the reporter who covered the event for the Jersey Journal put a column write-up in his paper under big headlines, giving the essential facts of Georgism.

Make the New York area talk; and the nation will listen.