

HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

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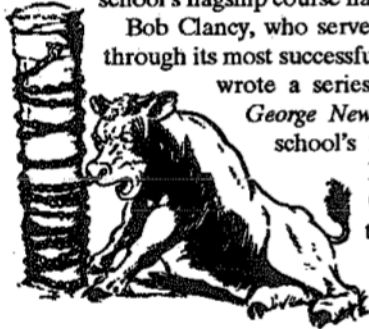


May - June, 1992

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL: The First Sixty Years

The Henry George School of Social Science was founded by Oscar Geiger in 1932. Sixty years ago! During those years, the New York headquarters has had five locations and seven directors - and approximately 150,000 students have completed the basic HGS course over the years.

The numbers become especially impressive when we realize that the Henry George School has always relied on volunteers to do its teaching. Its staff has always been small, and its funding has always come from contributions. Through depression, world war, the McCarthy era, sixties social upheaval, seventies doldrums, and the greedy 80s, the school has managed, somehow, to keep going. It has managed to develop innovative new approaches and yet - for most of its history - to keep its core intact. That core is the school's course in *Fundamental Economics*. The syllabus, divided into ten weekly sessions and provided with supplemental readings, has been revised and updated, but its basic pedagogical approach is that of the *Progress & Poverty* course developed by Oscar Geiger. Like its classic text, the school's flagship course has stood the test of time.



"Are we Americans like this bull - IN A SPOT?" From the St. Louis HGS, 1950

Bob Clancy, who served as Director of the HGS through its most successful period in the 50s and 60s, wrote a series of articles for the *Henry George News* on the occasion of the school's 25th anniversary in 1957. In the first he spoke of Geiger's conviction that the movement needed an educational foundation on which to build:

For many years Geiger carried the school idea within him. He was an ardent follower of Henry

George and watched the emergence of a movement under its leader's guidance, saw it flourish for a while, then decline and become all but extinct. [In 1932,] the world was bewildered and chastened by a long depression. And Geiger who had become jobless as a result of the depression was living on his savings. It was thus that in this time of Georgist, world and personal adversity, Oscar Geiger made his decision and brought the school into being.

In the summer of 1933 the school moved into its first home, at 211 West 79th Street. A year's rent was paid by a student, Leonard T. Recker, and early fund drives raised enough to establish a secure financial basis for the school's survival. Through the 30s the school built a strong program of classroom teaching, correspondence courses, and support for extensions in other cities.

The school's program was diminished - but not destroyed - by World War II. Bob Clancy in 1957:

As the European war waxed, Americans were divided on the issue, and so were Georgists. Feelings on both sides ran high in the school and the controversy reached the pro-



Oscar Geiger

portions of a split, until that fateful day, December 7, 1941, took the matter out of the realm of discussion. [Teachers and students] were involved in the war effort, and so it was that 1942 to 1945 were ebb-tide years. But - and this is important - the work did go on. It was not like World War I, which crippled beyond repair the great Georgist political efforts that had been going strong prior to the war. This seems to me to indicate that Oscar Geiger was right in his diagnosis of the Georgist movement, and that the educational work was truly a solid foundation that would make continuous growth possible.

Ebb-tide or no, it was in 1944 that the school moved into its finest headquarters at 50 East 69th St.. Many oldtime Georgists remember this place with pride - its spacious auditorium and classrooms, commodious library, graceful winding staircase, student lounge, and restaurant on the premises.

Since it was sold in 1980, the school has made do with progressively less space.

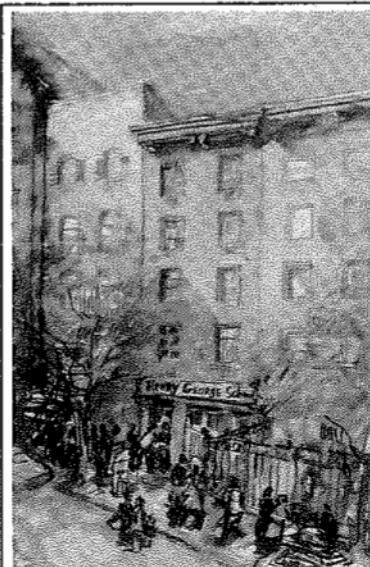
The Henry George School's programs flourished in the 1960s. Perhaps the social ferment of the times led more people to question fundamental economic relationships, or perhaps years of plodding work were simply bearing fruit, but during those years the school's activities on many fronts reached their greatest height and breadth. A perusal of the 1967 annual report, for instance, shows: daily *Fundamental Economics* classes (over 700 graduates that year in three languages,) correspondence courses (over 700 graduates in five languages,) and reports from 23 extensions, 13 of which were outside the U.S.

The early 70s brought a sea change in the school's educational program. Arnold Weinstein, elected president of the Board of Trustees in 1968, felt along with other board members that the school had to achieve greater academic clout in order to fulfill its mission. Accordingly, a prestigious academic advisory council was named, and attempts were made to hire a tenured economics professor to direct educational programs. This was not achieved at the time. The school continued to explore the land question; various modernizations and extensions of the *Progress & Poverty* course were developed.



...asked a New York HGS flyer, mid '40s

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121 East 30th Street, New York. Watercolor by visiting Russian urban planner Prof. Yuri Bocharov, 1991

The school continued to supplement its basic teaching with new approaches in the 70s and 80s. Director Philip Finkelstein initiated the Center for Local Tax Research in 1977, to provide students and researchers with (continued on page 7)

POSTSCRIPT ON RERUM NOVARUM

Vincent Ponko, Jr. presented a paper on "Henry George's View of *Rerum Novarum*" at the First International Conference on Social Values. The paper, sent to us by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, indicates that the conference was held this past Summer at the Von Huegel Institute of St. Edmund's College, University of Cambridge, England, and that the co-sponsor was Iona College, New Rochelle, New York.

Ponko starts with the observation that the interpretation of Pope Leo's intent, in *Rerum Novarum*, was divided within the Roman Catholic Church at the time, 1891, and even remains so today. Citing the article by Dr. J. Brian Benestad in the January 1986 issue of the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Ponko goes on to a detailed exposition of George's response, *The Condition of Labor: An Open Letter to Leo XIII*.

Ponko notes that "George demolished Leo XIII's contention that what is purchased by rightful property is rightful property by noting that the same argument could be used in the buying and selling of slaves." He goes on to note the demolition by George of several other papal assertions, including that private property in land deprives no one of the use of land (George lists historic examples to the contrary). George also makes the distinction between secure possession and private property.

As Ponko details, George even questions the religious assumptions of Leo's arguments, quoting George: "you give us equal rights in heaven, but deny us equal rights on earth." George notes that the early Christians did not separate words and actions, in their hope for the speedy reign of justice and "Thy Kingdom come on earth."

"The stars in the courses fight against Sisera, and in the ferment of today, to him who hath ears to hear, the doom of industrial slavery is sealed. Where shall the dignitaries of the Church be in the struggle that is coming, nay that is already here? On the side of justice and liberty, or on the side of wrong and slavery?" This question, cited by Ponko, that George put to the Pope over one hundred years ago, is even more relevant today... as the dispossessed workers of the world are being caught in an ever-tightening net of global economic monopoly and political domination.

There were, in George's day, clergy who chose the side of justice and liberty. On is reminded of Dr. Edward McGlynn, the Roman Catholic priest in Irish New

York who was temporarily excommunicated by the Vatican for supporting the Single Tax cause. That the upper levels of Roman hierarchy are more concerned with maintaining power and privilege is nothing new. The Middle Ages saw the Crusade against and slaughter of the Cathars in southern France. The Cathars denied papal authority as well as the Biblical imperative of sexual reproduction. It seems that while the pope wanted to protect his power, the feudal lords wanted to stamp out this threat to a growing labor force that would generate a growing feudal tribute. There are good reasons, if you are a landowner, employer, or member of the church hierarchy, to act to ensure that the birth rate is kept as high as possible. More people means more tribute, and competition among workers means lower wages. Even Saint Francis, who led a popular movement devoted to voluntary poverty, was almost excommunicated.

Today, there is a lot of evident and active concern for the poor and dispossessed among Roman Catholics. For example, there is the Catholic Relief Services "Operation Rice Bowl." This 1992 Lenten program "reflects the close links between caring for the poor and caring for the environment.... when we examine the ecological destruction of our planet... we realize that a disregard and abuse of the environment reflects the inequitable distribution of the world's resources. The poor have access to limited resources and are therefore sometimes forced to misuse these resources to meet their basic human needs." So reads a flyer put out by Catholic Relief Services (209 West Fayette St., Baltimore, MD 21201-3443).

The flyer includes data from such organizations as Worldwatch Institute (e.g., there are now more than 13 million refugees in the world, due to political, economic and/or ecological conditions). Among the telling quotations is one from the Guatemalan Bishops, who call for compensation, as a matter of justice, for centuries of "neglect" suffered by the peasant and indigenous groups of their country.

A small box delineates the "Effects of Skewed Distribution: • landlessness leading to poverty and hunger • migration to already overcrowded cities with high rates of unemployment • frustration among the landless poor leading to armed conflict • destruction of rain-forests by people who desperately need land • deforestation leading to soil ero-

sion and extinction of species • overcultivation of existing croplands • exploitation of tenant farmers and sharecroppers who work for large landowners."

While the conclusion of this pamphlet does not mention the method George proposed, it certainly is in the spirit of justice that inspired his vision: "Let us be good stewards by caring for the earth and respecting the rights of all people to share in its many gifts."

- MAS

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL

The First 60 Years (from first page)

relevant statistical analysis on the land question. Several years after Prof. Finkelstein's death in 1982, the Center's work was taken up by the Center for the Study of Economics, in Columbia, Md., under the direction of Prof. Steve Cord.

Under the direction of NY-HGS director Stan Rubenstein, and Northern California HGS Director Bob Scrofani, an ambitious high school program was begun. Twenty-three semi-annual high school urban workshops have been held, in cooperation with the NYC Council on Economic Education at Baruch College. Over 4000 teachers nationwide have used the school's *Land and Freedom* high school lesson materials and videos.

In 1989, an international conference celebrating the 150th anniversary of Henry George's birth was hosted by the Philadelphia HGS. This extension is housed at 413 South 10th St. - the birthplace of Henry George. At the 1989 conference, the birthplace was re-dedicated. Lovingly restored to its appearance and dimensions at the time of George's birth, the building has received a number of awards for excellence in restoration.

Now, in 1992, the Henry George School endeavors to keep juggling most of the plates it has successfully thrown in its 60-year history. Adult classes at the headquarters and extensions, returning to the tried-and-true HGS curriculum, are gathering momentum. The high school program continues to expand in

(continued on page 8)

Henry George School Directors

Oscar Geiger 1932 - 34
Norman Fowles 1934 - 35
Otto Dorn 1935 - 36
Frank Chodorov 1936 - 42
Margaret Bateman 1942 - 46
Robert Clancy 1946 - 68
Arnold Weinstein 1969 - 74
Philip Finkelstein 1976 - 82
Stan Rubenstein 1975, '83 - 89
George Collins 1989 - present

BOOK NOTES

From Poverty to Prosperity By 2000

Review by the Editor

As the subtitle of this study indicates, it deals with *prospects for reviving West Virginia's economy*. Edited by Walt Rybeck, this 63-page large format paperback offers a Georgist perspective on this Appalachian state. The paradox, like that of progress and poverty, is "That an area so richly endowed with natural and human resources is so economically depressed."

In his preface, Rybeck makes a sobering observation in this era of cold war victory: "Many nations, after decades of mindless bureaucracies and centrally-dictated production, hasten to call for free markets. Then, as they take a closer look at capitalism, some ask if this means they must face the poverty and high unemployment seen, for example, in Appalachia. We can't sell what we haven't got. If we have no answer for the poverty of West Virginia, how can we sell an answer to Russians or anyone else?"

And so, in December 1990, in Charleston, seventy West Virginian economists, business people, labor leaders, public officials, religious leaders and community activists met with twenty national experts to examine the obstacles to progress and the steps to overcome them.

This thirteen-chapter account of the proceedings covers a wide and deep range of issues: the problems and strengths of West Virginia; the state's poverty in the midst of its rich natural resources; how subsurface wealth has been taxed and how to make appraisal more equitable; efforts to update property taxation; basic rules of good taxation and how to raise revenue from land and natural resources without depressing incentives for work and prosperity; and tax issues related to school funding, farming, timber and housing.

Among the ninety participants, several familiar Georgists are quoted in this study, including George Collins, Steve Cord, Ed Dodson, Mason Gaffney, Ted Gwartney, C. Lowell Harriss, Sein Lin, Richard Noyes, Arthur Rybeck, Erika Rybeck, and John Strasma.

This work is dotted with nine case studies, or success stories. For example, Success Story #6 by John L. Kelly tells

"How It Plays in Peoria: Everybody Knew Plan Would Not Work, But It Did". This, perhaps, sums up the experience of site value taxation over the years. Everybody knows it won't work.... This book explains how and why it does!

Trying to Change the World

Review by Susan Klingelhofer

"The mayor of New York City, David N. Dinkins, proclaimed Sunday, September 1990, as Henry George Day." This is the opening sentence in a chapter

devoted to Henry George in the new book by Peter M. Rinaldo, *Trying to Change the World*. The author, a graduate *Summa Cum Laude* of Bowdoin College, discusses the lives of George and other reformers as a way of introducing his own program for reform.

George is in good company in this book: Rachel Carson, Moses Cotsworth, Margaret Sanger, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Randall Forsberg, and Ralph Nader. "Would you like to follow in their footsteps?" asks Rinaldo.

Chapter IV, "Henry George: Tax Reform", is an accurately detailed biography of the son of Catherine Vallance and Richard Samuel Henry George, "the second child and oldest boy." Rinaldo sprinkles the history of young Henry's life with such details as, "He also started a program of self-education... as well as attending popular science lectures at the Franklin Institute." And in reference to his early writing career, Rinaldo cites

George's second published piece, "a stirring article about President Abraham Lincoln's assassination entitled 'Sic Semper Tyrannis.'"

Most of George's subsequent writings are named, with special attention to *Our Land and Land Policy, Progress and Poverty, and Protection or Free Trade*. Unfortunately, the author fails to mention the success of *Progress and Poverty* as a classic of political economy, but compensates by carefully citing dates and numbers with regard to George's 1886 New York mayoral campaign, and later, his funeral in 1897.

Rinaldo writes about the "Single Taxers" conference in New York City in 1890, and names the inspired supporters of late years: Joseph Fels, Carrie Chapman Catt, Oscar Geiger (founder of the Henry George School), and Robert Schalkenbach. At the end of the chapter, meritorious credit is given to George's ideas with citations as recent as the fall of 1990, including the recommendation "that the Soviet Union put into practice Henry George's theory."

Henry George School at Sixty

(from page 7)

both breadth and depth. Efforts to integrate the Georgist philosophy with professional economists are bearing fruit, e.g., this year's intensive seminar for a group of economists from Moscow. The school has survived depressions, doldrums, and divisiveness. Speaking to the 7th Henry George Congress on the founding of the school in 1932, Oscar Geiger said, "If truth were the goal of our Schools and Colleges, ...our task, as our master's, would have been done." That day has not come, but the HGS's longevity, and its current vitality, make it likely that the school will continue its work until that day arrives.

- Lindy Davies

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