

## **A REMEMBRANCE OF HARRY POLLARD**

By Edward J. Dodson / 10 November, 2020

One of the great teachers of political economy, Harry Pollard, has died. In his ninety-sixth year he was one more victim of the virus that has taken so many lives all around the globe. I came to know Harry during the early 1980s and was honored to call him a colleague and friend. Harry's intellect was keen, and his commitment to using all of his talents to spread awareness of the teachings of Henry George unequalled.

Harry spent more than half of his long life in southern California, settling in the town of Tujunga in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles. He arrived in California in 1961, after living for six years in Canada and serving as the Director of the Henry George School in Toronto. He had left England for North America in 1954. Back in England he had served as editor of the journal, *The Radical* and had been a Liberal Parliamentary candidate in the 1951 General Election. In London, he became a member of the faculty of the Henry George School.

The record tells us that, leaving his wife and children behind, he initially came to New York City, where he took over as editor of The Henry George News for one month. An article titled "Impressions on Arrival" appeared in the May, 1954 issue, in which he took readers on a tour of the school, revealing a writing style charged with wit and humor:

"There is little chance to delve deep into the complexities of the rest of student and faculty life. Suffice it to say that these men and women are in revolt against social injustice and at present they are taking the offensive. In fact, a more revolting and offensive group of people I have seldom encountered."

Without skipping a beat, Harry immersed himself in the activities of fellow Georgists. He attended the 1955 conference of the Henry George Schools held at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio. The next year he presented a paper titled "The Theory of Interest" at the conference held at Harcum Junior College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Year after year for six decades, Harry was a regular participant in these annual events, leaving attendees with much to contemplate as he shared his insights and growing experience as an innovative educator.

For several years he remained in Toronto, Ontario, serving as Director of the school there. Then, in 1961, he took over the educational work in Pittsburgh for a short time until succeeding William Truehart and Robert Andelson as director of the newly-combined Henry George School of Southern California. His territory now stretched from Los Angeles down to San Diego.



The above photographs of Harry were taken in 1961 and 1964. He appears in the second photograph with fellow Brit Vic Blundell. By this time, Harry was already beginning to innovate in his approach to attracting and retaining students. His objective was not the number of students who took and completed courses but the number who went on to become teachers. Only by teaching the political economy of Henry George would people truly come to understand the true importance of George's insights and embrace them as their own.

Out of his continuing experimentation came the program he called "InterStudent," with material developed from his "Classical Analysis of Political Economy." At the 1973 international conference held on the Isle of Man in the United Kingdom, Harry explained how his thinking had evolved:

"As the Los Angeles School 'InterStudent' Program gathered strength, it became evident that the content of our teaching required important revision: the reconstruction of Henry George. The *Progress and Poverty* course was inadequate as a basis for an encompassing and satisfying philosophy, serving mainly as a vehicle for land tax reform propaganda, with my educational role underplayed or forgotten. The deeper implications of the classical political economy of which George was so articulate a spokesman was lost to all but a few of the thousands who completed our courses."

Harry was offering an alternative approach to Georgist education at a time when the reach of the Henry George Schools was experiencing rapid decline. Part of the reason was the withdrawal of financial support from the Lincoln Foundation. However, it is fair to say that the loss of these funds occurred because the Henry George Schools could not compete with credential-granting community colleges and other educational institutions. Harry remained convinced that these challenges could be overcome by changes in how political economy was taught. His detailed explanation was provided in the paper, "Reconstruction of Henry George – Teaching Economics as a Science."\*

By 1976, Harry was convinced that his approach – if broadly adopted – could help to rebuild public support for Henry George's political economy. He warned: "We don't learn from our errors – we embellish them." While thousands of people had come through the educational programs, few had become stalwart supporters, had become activists. "There are so few Georgists around," Harry

observed, “that finding them wastes time and energy.” The solution was to “produce” more Georgists. This, the school was not doing, he argued:

“For more than 40 years, the Henry George Schools have bent their energies to the creation – not of Georgists – but of land-value taxers.”

The various surviving Henry George Schools were doing their best to attract students by offering ten-week courses for which a nominal fee was charged. Harry reported on the comparative success of the year-long program introduced in Santa Ana, California, where 350 students paid \$435 to attend 52 sessions and 3 workshops. As he noted, “From these courses there are few drop-outs.” At the annual conferences, he wrote, directors of the other schools met “not to measure the advance from last year – but to record our activity.” These individuals worked hard, but were prevented from achieving success because of “an organization that isn’t organized and a movement that fails to move.”

Harry estimated that the Santa Ana program took in nearly \$200,000 in fees from this one year program. None of his subsequent reports discusses whether this program continued or for how much longer. Certainly, what he reported then suggested reason for optimism and for replication. And yet, he shifted his attention to the challenge of finding high school and junior high school teachers willing to experiment with an innovative group learning model in their classrooms. In 1980 he reported that 92 schools had signed on as subscribers to the InterStudent program. Harry had reason to be gratified by the outcome of his efforts. At the international conference in 1983, held at Utrecht, Holland, he made yet another attempt to recruit other Georgist educators committed to adult education:

“Our new adult course is based on the improved secondary course, but contains further revisions and changes. ...As we developed our thinking, we did not try to confine ourselves to a particular book. All of George’s books became the raw material from which we built the successful adult courses we present under the name of ‘The Classical Analysis’.”

The response Harry received from others teaching Henry George’s political economy was underwhelming. Few had the talent or inclination to discard the basic Socratic approach that depended on student reading of Henry George’s books and answering questions derived from the assigned readings.

I became more intimately familiar with Harry’s activities after I was elected to the board of the Henry George School in New York. This was the mid-1980s. The New York school continued to provide a modest level of financial support to Harry, but few members of the board understood or appreciated what he had been attempting to accomplish. Yet, Harry never wavered in his confidence that teaching Classical Analysis could rebuild the movement. In his view (expressed again and again over the years), “the Henry George School blew it.” We cannot know whether -- had the surviving Henry George Schools initiated

their own InterStudent programs – they would have continued to operate by taking in enough revenue to become self-sufficient. After 1972 most of the school's extensions and affiliates had to close down. Would Harry's InterStudent program be able to compete for students with the degree-granting institutions? There had been several failed efforts over the years to establish a Henry George College. Would InterStudent work as a part of a college-level curriculum?

Harry continued to keep in touch with high school and junior high school teachers, promoting his InterStudent Program. In 2005 he reported that over 1,000 students had completed the program in 2004.

In 2006, I decided to interview Harry about his life and his commitment to the Georgist cause. That interview\*\* occurred with exchanges of e-mails over some months, and Harry provided details I have omitted here. Harry acknowledged that people had many more educational opportunities to choose from, which required a change in how a Georgist program had to be promoted:

“If you are a busy adult involved in many things, you are more likely to take a course that immediately improves you than a recreational activity – including saving the world. So the thrust of our advertising was ‘Improve your ability to think, to reason, to communicate’.”

For whatever reason, my running interview with Harry was never completed, although I tried several times to reinitiate the conversation. Harry was very engaged in exchanges with others who participated in the online Land-Café discussion group. Getting back to me in 2011, Harry provided his reflections on the years he served as a Henry George School Extension Director. He felt that the adult education courses were reasonably successful and quite cost effective, working well into the early 1990s.

Along the way, Harry managed to convince a high school teacher named Bret Barker to try out InterStudent. Bret had been introduced to Henry George's analysis by fellow teacher Bob Scrofani at a conference both Bob and Harry attended. As Harry recalled:

“He offered to teach a Georgist Economics course if we had one. Well, we didn't, so it became necessary to write one. I dropped everything and proceeded to write the InterStudent Course to be taught as a 12<sup>th</sup> grade economics course. ...It's safe to say that I wrote InterStudent, but Bret made it work.”

After that, Bret sometimes joined Harry at teachers' conferences, recruiting new teachers to introduce InterStudent into their classroom. Some teachers utilized the lesson modules as a change of pace from lecture and discussion. Others, such as Bret, incorporated InterStudent as a major component to their classroom structure.

While I served as President of the Henry George School's board of trustees, I strongly supported funding to support and expand the InterStudent Program. I encouraged Harry to produce a promotional film that could be shown at teachers' conferences – and to the skeptical trustees of the school in New York. Unfortunately, intensifying career demands forced me to step down as President in 1997, leaving the board entirely the next year. In an exchange with Harry during 2012, I observed:

“You were on the right track, Harry, by developing a course or courses on political economy that could be taught to high school students. Unfortunately, without repetition (e.g., courses taught with gradually increasing sophistication every year from grade 7 through 12) retention into adult life is not likely to occur, except for the rare and intellectually curious young person. Few within the community of ‘Georgist educators’ embraced what you started and, so, the effort was marginalized and never appropriately funded.”

I have tried to remember when I last saw Harry. We managed to link up for a few hours one year while I was attending a corporate management retreat in Pasadena, California. I also have a vivid memory of Harry at the 1991 conference held at Lafayette College, in Easton, Pennsylvania, where we engaged Jerome Heavey in some deep (but now forgotten) debate. We both also attended the conferences held in 2007 (University of Scranton), 2008 (Kansas City, Missouri), 2010 (Albany, New York), and 2014 (Newport Beach, California). After the 2014 conference my contacts with Harry were all by e-mail.

Over the last few years Harry seemed to enjoy exchanging views with Mason Gaffney on any number of issues. He and Mase had passed their 90<sup>th</sup> year and had shared many experiences over their long decades teaching and writing. The two of them were among the few of the *old guard* still around. Sadly, both are now gone. I knew Harry much better than I knew Mase, but I miss them both for much the same reason. I learned a good deal from both of them.

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- [http://www.cooperative-individualism.org/pollard-harry\\_reconstruction-of-henry-george-teaching-economics-as-a-science-1973.htm](http://www.cooperative-individualism.org/pollard-harry_reconstruction-of-henry-george-teaching-economics-as-a-science-1973.htm)

\*\*[http://www.cooperative-individualism.org/pollard-harry\\_classical-analysis-story-2006-sep-oct.htm](http://www.cooperative-individualism.org/pollard-harry_classical-analysis-story-2006-sep-oct.htm)