

the Henry George News

PUBLISHED BY HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE • MAR. 1962



Anniversary of a Journal

by WILL LISSNER

AT recent meetings the board of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation adopted resolutions honoring three individuals. The occasion was the twentieth anniversary of a quarterly periodical with a jaw-breaking name, The American Journal of Economics & Sociology. One of the three was the present writer, editor of the Journal since its founding in 1941. The others were Mrs. Violetta G. Peterson, who has handled its production and business affairs for the same period, and Miss Frances Soriero, her able assistant for many of those years.

These three were singled out to symbolize a company of several hundred whose cooperation over two decades, voluntarily given, has made this one of the most successful scholarly jour-

nals in the field of the social sciences. The collaborators are so widely scattered over this country and several foreign ones that they could not be gathered for an anniversary dinner.

The amazing thing about the Journal's career is that its success was never contemplated and it has rather taxed the periodical's resources, scant as they have been, are and are bound to be in the future. Actually it grew out of a project that was a failure.

Frank Chodorov, then the director of the Henry George School of Social Science, and I were struck in the mid-Thirties by the lack of factual research to prove or disprove the theories of Henry George, particularly with respect to how absolute private owner-

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tackle them by having relevant specialists work in teams, or develop an integrated science of society from the several sciences, or build a synthesis of the relevant sciences adequate for the total understanding of these many-faceted problems.

Our title came from Dr. Lowe's book, embellished by "The American Journal of" to distinguish our Journal from a list with somewhat kindred names. Only after the first few issues were out did I discover that one of the most distinguished and familiar of all had been omitted from the list by some aberration. (The American Journal of Sociology). It has been most kind about it, fortunately.

With all my plans in hand, I had dinner one evening in the Forty-second Street Cafeteria with Frank Chodorov and he agreed to handle the promotion. He undertook to sell the idea to Vi Peterson, with whom I was not then acquainted, and between them, they sold it to the Schalkenbach directors. The directors made a decision which was crucial to the Journal's success. They named as a committee to supervise the editor's responsibility and integrity and to guide the Journal's business policies, the late Otto K. Dorn, the late Charles Johnson Post, and the foundation's present president, Albert Pleydell.

Never once did they, or any of the other directors, attempt to influence the policy. Their job was to see to it that the editor and his editorial collaborators ran a periodical that was a medium of publication for research workers, a means of communication for them, one that published the results of honest study regardless of what findings were dictated by the facts, and one that gave equal access to all working in the field, according to established standards of competence, interest and importance. They have done their job well.

We did not expect to have enough

original material. So I had plans to pad out the book by translating articles from foreign journals. The first issue, with the minimum of pages, ninety-six, includes several such reprints. I counted, successfully it turned out, on interesting Francis Neilson, Franz Oppenheimer, George R. Geiger and Harry Gunnison Brown in turning out the basic core of each issue. (Oppenheimer, alas, died in 1943. But Neilson, happily, was spared until last year; he became my mentor in serious journalism and my chief collaborator.)

The translations I had in reserve never saw the light of day; we have little room even for reprinting highly pertinent articles in inaccessible languages. After the first issue we were inundated by excellent articles from the younger scholars (for whom we try to reserve half of each volume) and from the established veterans. Indeed the theory of integration and synthesis in the social sciences was accepted long before it was adequately worked out. Even today we are long on practice but weak on theory in this respect, although several outstanding scholars have published books which have moved us far along toward a theory systematizing our approach.

Before the first issue was out we had our first crisis. The promotion manager on whom I relied found himself committed in other directions. Vi Peterson took over the task. What she accomplished on the business end is seen in a few statistics. We started out with a single edition. Now we have half a dozen, using several modern means of reproduction. They sell here, there and everywhere around the world. Our basic letterpress edition has paid subscribers in fifty-eight countries of the world, and at every important institution in the United States.

On the editorial side we have done equally well. In some countries the research libraries rate high only if they subscribe to a number of indispensable

journals one of which, I am happy to say, is the American Journal of Economics & Sociology. Many of our investigations have found their way into textbooks. Articles and longer studies are reprinted, abstracted and summarized widely. From Anna George de Mille's biography of her father, to Percy R. Williams' study of graded taxation in Pittsburgh, we have nurtured many works that have become classics of Georgist literature. We have helped to win for George in academic circles a respect and an interest that were not evident in the years before we began our work.

From academic circles, particularly the older scholars and established journals and societies, we had expected disinterest or hostility. On this score, too, we were totally wrong. They welcomed us, accepted us into the fold and helped us at every turn. Even the leading scholars whose intellectual positions obliged them to be our severest

critics, gave us what help they could, often without the asking. Their attitude was in direct contrast to that of many—but not all—academicians in George's time. Once we demonstrated that we intended to observe strictly the canons of objectivity and integrity, acceptance was no problem for us.

To those of us intimately associated with it, the Journal has been a great deal of hard work over the years. But I hope each has found it rewarding, not merely in making a contribution toward the solution of the grave problems with which we are concerned, but in the one aspect I consider most important. Our work together has won me the dedicated and devoted friendship of each of the foundation directors and of many other collaborators. Our task is bigger than a single generation can achieve. But it is a good fight and its comradeship is its own reward.



—Courtesy of Leatherneck, the magazine of the U.S. Marines.

"Just think of it George! . . . We can live like millionaires now!"

Mr. Robert Clancy,
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