

The Time is NOW!

by MARTIN SIMON

FOR about thirty-five years after the untimely death of Henry George, his teachings were kept alive primarily by those who had followed him during his lifetime. These dedicated people banded themselves into Georgist groups, held meetings, sponsored lectures, issued periodicals, encouraged the reading of George's works, and generally did what they could to maintain the existence of an economic and social philosophy they knew to be valid. They were, in a sense, much like the cloistered monks and friars who devotedly kept learning alive during the Dark Ages. Because of their noble efforts, the candle of enlightenment continued to glow in a world of economic darkness.

To these old-line Georgists is owed a great debt, and profound gratitude for their faith and constancy. Yet, at best they were able to assure no more than a *status quo*, a limited (almost esoteric) adherence to tenets with which far too few outside their circle were acquainted. Despite their endeavors, not only was there no appreciable spreading of George's ideas, but in time inexorable attrition thinned their ranks, thus lessening even more the dissemination of their important message. Had these conditions prevailed much longer, who knows but that Georgism by now might have declined to the point of mere historic importance?

However, happy to say, in 1932 there began a remarkable resurgence of interest in the Philosophy of Freedom, spearheaded by the founding of the Henry George School of Social Science under the inspired guidance of Oscar Geiger. Soon a new vitality ensued, and whereas for decades com-

paratively few had been introduced to *Progress and Poverty*, now hundreds were turning its pages, and a gratifying number "got the message." Thanks to the foresight of Geiger and his associates, and to the enthusiasm of those who later picked up the torch he had lit, the magnificent bequest George left to the world has been preserved. Alas, this great gift has not yet been accepted by those who would prosper by it, but it will endure as long as new generations will learn it and teach it to all who will listen.

But it must be carefully noted that the achievements of Geiger and the early success of the school were in large part made possible by the timeliness of their activities. The school was established when the depression of the 1930's was at its height (or depth). Production had slowed to a trickle, unemployment was widespread, savings were vanishing and poverty was rampant—all this in a nation whose productive potential was gigantic. Thousands of people wondered why this should be, how it *could* be; quite spontaneously they asked the same question George expressed so clearly in "The Problem," the opening chapter of *Progress and Poverty*: why do wages tend to fall in spite of increased productive power? The urgent search for an answer provided a veritable horde seeking information, many of whom turned to the Henry George School for a solution. So time, if not the essence, was a definite factor.

It is now some thirty years later. The new administration has bluntly declared the country is in a depression, though this acknowledgement is superfluous to those observant enough to

see what is happening. Plants are closing, which means production is being curtailed; unemployment is massive and growing; shelves are laden with unsold goods—once again, poverty in spite of tremendous productive power. Already there is talk of increased doles, pump-priming and other well-intended but futile anti-slump measures. "The more it changes, the more it remains the same."

This then is the time for renewed action and energetic activity, the appropriate time for Georgists to edu-

cate a public eager to learn the answer to an age-old query. Only where there is such large-scale belt-tightening can there be found so ready and willing an audience. All who have faith in George's view of political economy, and who feel prompted to help spread the boon of knowing and understanding it, should take advantage of the day's unusual opportunity, for it is a chance not too frequently presented. There is always a need for Georgist education, and from time to time also a great demand. The time is NOW.

The Los Angeles Times of September 5, contained a news item captioned: "President Urged to Act in Long Beach Layoffs." A subheading stated: "Kuchel, Engle and 5 Representatives Sign Letter Asking Jet Contracts for Douglas." The item went on to say that unless Douglass Aircraft plant in Long Beach, Calif. received new contracts for jet transport planes, one congressman estimated that layoffs might reach 20,000 workers.

In this day and age, with all the advancement in the arts and sciences; with all the talk about travel to the moon; the well-being of a large proportion on the population in certain areas of the nation—depends on defense expenditures—on preparation for war—a war which may mean the death of all mankind. On a TV program recently, one of the panelists stated that—*one-third of all jobs in the Los Angeles area—depend on defense contracts.*

Gilbert M. Tucker, president of the Economic Education League, Albany, is encouraging our readers to write to their two senators and congressman with a specific request for a modification of the local tax system. (Let the national government solve national problems and remove the problems of housing, slum clearance and employment—putting an end to these calls for subsidies and federal spending.) He would be glad to furnish literature for enclosure, for anyone who is interested. His address is 17 D. & H. Building, Plaza, Albany, New York.

"Economic theory is bound hand and foot by the static, abstract character of modern thought. On the one hand, everything to do with *industry* and the possibility of substituting human labor by machinery has reached an unexampled pitch of perfection. But when it is a question of *distributing* this potential wealth, when it is demanded of us, therefore, that we think in terms of flow and rate of flow, we cannot even begin to rise to it. The result is that our "labor-saving machinery produces, not leisure, but its ghastly caricature, unemployment, while nearly every civilized and half-civilized nation of the world sits helplessly watching the steady growth within itself of a malignant tumor of social discontent. And this increasingly rancorous discontent is fed above all things by a cramping penury, a shortage of the means of livelihood, which arises, not out of the realities of nature, but out of abstract, inelastic thoughts about money!"

From *Romanticism Comes of Age* by Owen Barfield