

*Single-Taxers*

A MAN we know on the staff of *Time*, name of Abel Balding, was telling us the other day about an error of punctuation which had resulted in the following rather astonishing post-election item: "In Minneapolis, the discovery of a 10,000-vote tabulation error put snaggle-toothed William J. Gallagher, 69, a retired street sweeper, and Henry George, single-taxer, into the House." *Time* erred, as *Time* is wont to say. For one thing, Henry George

wasn't elected, and, for another, he is dead. He was carried off by a stroke in 1897, while running for Mayor of New York, which was, incidentally, the nearest he ever came to holding public office. The item in *Time* was intended to indicate that snaggle-toothed Gallagher was a Henry George single-taxer. As, indeed, many people are. You probably never heard of it, but we have a Henry George School of Social Science right here in town, up on East Sixty-ninth Street, and it is converting considerable numbers of people to the single-tax idea.

We looked in at the school last week and had a chat with the director, a tall, white-haired lady named Margaret Bateman. Miss Bateman was in business—something to do with the Canadian end of Standard Brands—until somebody lent her a copy of Henry

George's book, "Progress and Poverty," to read on her vacation. Like most Henry George converts, Miss Bateman got it bad. In no time at all, she had given up her job, taken a trip to Denmark (the only country where George's scheme has been put into effect widely), and written a book, "Whose World," in which she pointed out what a tiny percentage of the world's population owns the land and controls the natural resources. George's idea, as almost everybody knows, was that the sole tax should be a sort of rent paid on land by the user.

The school was started in 1932 by Oscar Geiger, a disciple of George who had helped him in his mayoralty campaign. He gave an intensive course on single-tax theory to eight friends, basing his lectures and discussions on George's

writings; the eight friends spent the following year instructing eighty-four friends of theirs; and the year after that the enrollment was sixteen hundred. Not to drag out the story further, a hundred thousand people in all have enrolled at the school and thirty thousand of them have completed the course and received diplomas. It's all free: the teachers aren't paid, nor do the students pay tuition. Rent and other expenses are taken care of by well-wishers. The courses' progress from Fundamental Economics up through International Trade and Social Problems. Those who plan to spread the gospel can also take courses in public speaking and teaching technique. We dropped in on an afternoon class that was in progress. The teacher, who, along with performing other intellectual feats, was demonstrating how the entire population of the world could, under the single-tax system, live in economic comfort in the state of Texas, was a pretty blond lady—a Mrs. Sexton, we later found out, a descendant of the man who wrote the Virginia Bill of Rights. A fellow came around from the F.B.I. a while ago, just checking up, and Mrs. Sexton told him, "George Mason, my ancestor, wrote the Bill of Rights for Virginia; Henry George wrote it for the entire world." Not only did the F.B.I. man give the school a clean bill of health but he enrolled for the course on his own time and got a diploma.