

## Education and Political Action—NOAH D. ALPER

Partial Text of an address before the Henry George Congress

Always in meetings of this kind the "differences" of our group are bound to come forth. This is true regardless of the fact that at the hub of the wheel there is unity.

The differences, however, remind me of a story told by Jackson H. Ralston. He said there was a politician who had grown old in the service of the Democratic party. Splits had occurred in the old party. The members were divided into three factions. Certain members close to the old boss shed crocodile tears about the disintegration of the party. He listened to them and said: "The more splits the more Democrats." Perhaps this is true of us—the more splits the more Georgists. . . .

I am sure the ultimate end of education is and must be political action, but it must be preceded by educational action of a broad type.

During the war I watched the war maps of Europe. The military strategy was largely a "divide and conquer" type, and this must be our strategy in advance of any political campaign. The nature of the structure of the economic science dictates our strategy and our educational pattern. We know the basic elements of the economic science are labor and land. The basic interest of man in the produce is in rent-wealth and wages-wealth. I do not have to tell you that capital is an affinity of labor and they are of necessity associated together. What is good for one is truly good for the other. Both are opposite to land and land-wealth interests.

And because of this natural fact, any political campaign which is not preceded by a campaign to separate land-rent-wealth-collecting groups from wages-and-interest-collecting groups, cannot be really successful. For here too, our strategy must be "divide and conquer." We must isolate enemy interests. This is done by education. This is the best of politics in our case.

Whether we take a step by step measure or a full measure of rent depends on the extent to which the community area involved is saturated with educational barrages preceding political action. The more education—and the slower the political phase of the action—the bigger will be the bite we can take in any given situation. If people don't *know* you can't take the first step, let alone a man sized step.

I'm a school man, myself. I am for it. I am sure we would have nothing at all in St. Louis in the way of a Georgist movement were it not for the school. It is our "West Point," and an important one.

But I do not think the school has any kind of a monopoly on education, and I'm sure most school folks would agree. If those who favor political action do their work with vision and understanding of what they are up against, the school may even gain by political action. In the case of most of us here, a little knowledge made us want to know more; and I believe people who are alerted to our movement by political action can be induced to want to know more and so to take a course.

But I think the school should keep its independence as much as necessary. Some graduates have tried to capture our school "West Point"—and I protest such action. If they are interested in other forms of action we should not stop them. Let them carry on and not seek to force the school into their way of thinking. The fact that few have succeeded in making a

go of it may prove the school is right in not following the suggested ideas. I am for an independent school. Where it is possible and the effort warrants it, I feel the school should cooperate within the limits it chooses to set.

I, for myself alone, mind you, am convinced that the only political action worth while is basic educational action. The political part would be, at least in the beginning years, education tied to practical situations, and a tie-up so that this leads those who may be caused to want to know more to take a course given by the Henry George School of Social Science or some other school or organization.

It costs less in money and man power to make the other fellow's measures and candidates the basis of our educational program. Let's use them. Issues are always with us. There are the issues of labor-management-capital, slums, housing of a general nature, relief, social security, the population theory, money and credit, policies, farm parity, coal miners parity; and all provide a wealth of opportunity for those who seek political action.

But such action requires the best information available—the best advocates with soundest attitudes and public relations concepts—control of the situation—coordination with real economic education, and suggestions of what people should do to secure education.

I have given some indication of how I would educate. I intend to work on ideas that detail this program, and I am doing this on my own. One day those who see in it anything they can use will be most welcome to investigate. I'm in the same boat all are in. I may flop on this. I may be the only one who believes, and I may

have to go on my own where I think I'm right. I want freedom. You can have freedom too. The more freedom the more Georgists—I hope!

I am not prepared to dictate what anyone else should do. I must say none have a record that I know of to justify any claim to supreme leadership. I believe the school since 1932 has justified hope and confidence and until something better looms up I say hands off the school by those with political attitudes. I do not think anyone has a mission to be *the* successful one. I believe the situation warrants the open field and the competitive spirit. Trial and error is still the best way. . . . These are the days of radio, the motion picture, television and great newspapers. With the right combination of men, money and ideas we can do in a year what could not have been done previously in a hundred years.

It is said that more people are always gained by any movement when great numbers of people fear something and are running from something. Business men and self respecting labor leaders fear what is happening today. The old siren song about keeping things as they always have been, is no longer having an effect. Self interest is strong in those who cling to the *status quo* and oppose real reform, but they realize a good deal is not always one which makes them a profit. It may be one which reduces their losses. Now they are on the *loss* side, and they know it. Most business men will gain by our measure, and those who will lose, will at least lose less by our proposal than they are losing at present.

Education is the key and *our only key*.

I wish success to all who work in any field. Hold fast to what you are doing until you see a better way.