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Promote Land-Value Taxation and  
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## Henry George School of Social Science in the U.S.A.

By Robert Clancy

*Education and Patience.* With this simple formula the Henry George School of Social Science has grown since 1932 from one room with one teacher and a few students to a great institution with a five-storey headquarters in New York, branches throughout the United States of Canada, sister schools in other countries, thousands of graduates and correspondence students throughout the world.

The formula was given by Henry George. In *Social Problems* he wrote: "Social reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting; by complaints and denunciation; by the formation of parties, or the making of revolutions; but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas . . . The great work of the present . . . is the work of education—the propagation of ideas."

Elsewhere in his works George expressed the same thought: the need for education, widespread knowledge of the truths he taught; and patience—the willingness to let achievement come in its own good time, when the world should be ready for it.

After George's death many of his followers thought the work could be accelerated. Impressive quantities of literature were distributed and oratory abounded. Not a few Georgeists became leaders in high places. The reform was brought to halls of legislation and in some cases advances were made. But ultimate achievement seemed as far away a generation after George as during his lifetime.

One of George's followers, a New Yorker by the name of Oscar H. Geiger, participated in the movement's various campaigns and activities, but he found himself going back to George's original thoughts on the matter of achieving his reform. At a Conference of Georgeists in 1914, Geiger delivered an address which opened as follows:—

"Fundamental social betterment, to be lasting, must come in response to a demand from the people, and the people

must understand before they can demand. If we are ever to get the Single Tax\* on the statute books so that it will stay there, we must first get it into the minds of the people. We must get the people to want it and to get them to want it we must first get them to know it.

"It is proper for us to try to get whatever measure of justice we can by such legal enactments as with the present state of the public mind we are able to obtain, but we must not delude ourselves into believing that merely direct effort toward legislation will secure fundamental justice, or if by chance it does, that it could be maintained. The people themselves would soon undo or sanction the undoing, passively if not actively, of any law, however just or right it may be, which they did not understand." (A warning that has had its share of exemplifications!)

In the course of this talk, Geiger made a plea for a more effective and persistent method of education than the hit-or-miss affairs that were then current. He proposed *reading circles* that would undertake a thorough study of George's teachings and that would develop leaders for conducting more reading circles, thus reaching out in ever-widening circles.

Unfortunately, nothing more than a flurry of temporary interest came from Geiger's idea at the time. Some study groups were in operation—the work of Louis F. Post in this respect deserves special mention—but there seemed to be so many more important things to do. Geiger himself was drawn into the political activities of the movement, and he was also busy earning a living as a furrier, but he nurtured his idea and the opportunity to realize it eventually came, at a somewhat grim time.

When the 1929 crash deepened into a long depression, Geiger gave up his business and resolved to devote the rest of his life and his savings to his idea. He felt strongly that the right time had arrived. And so, in January, 1932, Geiger set about founding the Henry George School of Social Science in New York. The reading circle idea was to mature into an institution.

Only two years remained to Oscar Geiger from the founding of the School to his death. But in that time he established it firmly, secured a provisional charter† from the University of the State of New York, developed a method of teaching classes based on Henry George's works, acquired a headquarters, gained the interest of the Georgeist movement, and formed a nucleus of ardent students who were ready to take up the work when he passed away.

\* The term "Single Tax" is seldom used nowadays at the Henry George School because of the misconceptions and prejudices associated with it. No short and simple term has yet been accepted as a satisfactory title for George's major reform.

† Within five years the School was granted an Absolute Charter.

Geiger did not believe in planning far ahead, nor did he concern himself too closely with ultimate results. "We can, but sow the seed," he would say, "the rest is in the hands of Nature." But he had sown well, and the School grew rapidly. The School idea, within a few years, gave direction to the work of Georgeists in other cities. The influence was felt in other countries, too—particularly England, Denmark and Australia, where the movement was already strong and there was a background of educational activities.

It was in 1936, at the Fifth International Conference for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade, in London, that Lancaster M. Greene, trustee of the School, was able to report the impressive growth of the Henry George School to the assembled Georgeists from the world over. Mr. Green's paper for the Conference, which is well worth re-reading, also outlined the School's educational techniques, which have not substantially changed since then. The basic course, which is offered free of charge, uses *Progress and Poverty* as the text book. It is divided into ten lessons, with a Teacher's Manual to guide the instructor. Upon completion of this course the student is invited to enrol in advanced courses, also free and also based on the works of Henry George—*Social Problems, Protection or Free Trade, Science of Political Economy*. New courses have been added—Monetary Theory, American History, Philosophy of Henry George and others, and additional courses are planned that will round out the students' knowledge of the philosophy. It is often observed by college students that their studies at the Henry George School are more interesting than their college studies and that their George teachers are able and more convincing that a good many college teachers. The teachers themselves are selected with care from the student body and are trained in a special Teachers' Training Class. All teachers serve on a voluntary basis, without monetary remuneration, and feel honoured to do so.

A new enthusiasm soon grew out of these educational activities. The progress of the School fired Georgeists everywhere and classes were conducted in scores of cities, towns and hamlets. "The World is Our Campus" became the School's motto.

At first it was anticipated that the School would progress in geometric ratio, à la *Malthus*, and that the world would become Georgeist within a matter of years! Such progress did not materialise, but the progress that was made was incontestable. After a few years the School may have lost some of its allure as a novelty, but it had proven itself a good investment, and so the Henry George School developed from an adventure to a business. Those who survived the transition learned and applied a valuable lesson: that it is hard enough to start a venture, but it requires just as much fortitude to keep it going. It requires the constant diligence of a core of earnest workers whose inspiration can revive after set-backs. It requires a constant flow of

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funds. Enough of such workers and enough funds were obtained to permit the School to continue growing.

During the war the School confined itself to the effort of staying in business, with the temporary sacrifice of workers and teachers to the armed forces and war industries, and the interest of prospective students concentrated on winning the war. The war over, the School proceeded to give attention again to moving forward.

At the present time the Henry George School, with headquarters in New York, is firmly and permanently established in twenty-two cities in the United States and Canada. From the idea of geometric expansion, a new pattern is emerging—a pattern more in keeping with the original aims of Oscar Geiger when he founded the School. Teach the leaders and thinkers, said Geiger; when they understand and advocate the Georgeist philosophy they will, in their own fields, influence a much greater number of people. Eventually, the idea will work its way into the fabric of society and legislation will be a matter of course. It has been realised at the Henry George School that with our present resources and methods we cannot yet strike for mass education. The course that has been settled on is an effort to influence those who are in a position to influence others.

In New York (Robert Clancy, Director) attention is being directed to securing some recognition by the educational world. The School co-operates with the New York Adult Education Council in bringing education to the outlying communities of the city. Our courses are also approved for the adult educational centres sponsored by the Board of Higher Education of New York. The interest of Bryn J. Howde, President of the New School for Social Research, has been gained, and a course in *Progress and Poverty* has been added to the curriculum of the New School, which is the largest independent adult school in New York, outside of the universities. Also valuable is the interest of Eduard C. Lindeman, outstanding educational leader in America, second only to John Dewey, who himself is the School's Honorary President. We can also count Harry J. Carman, Dean of Columbia College, among our friends.

In the industrial world the active interest of Roy A. Foulke, Vice-President of Dun & Bradstreet, Inc., is worthy of mention. Another asset to the School is that John C. Lincoln, prominent industrialist, is President of our Board of Trustees, which also includes other successful business men—Otto K. Dorn, Vice-President; Leonard T. Recker, Treasurer; Ezra Cohen, Geoffrey W. Esty, Lancaster M. Greene and William S. O'Connor.

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has sponsored a series of Commerce and Industry luncheons, at which prominent business men have given talks. As a follow-up to this project, and with the interest thus created, a campaign is now being launched to establish classes in various business firms in Chicago. (In the Chicago educational world, the interest of Robert M. Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, should be noted.)

In Philadelphia (Joseph Stockman, Director) contacts are being made with clubs, groups and co-operatives, and interest in Henry George classes stimulated among them. Richard E. Howe in Pittsburgh is doing work with labour leaders and stewards in the United Electrical Workers' Union. In Montreal, under the direction of Strehel Walton, efforts are being made to influence French Catholic leaders. With Noah D. Alper in St. Louis, Sanford Farkas in Boston, William B. Truehart in Los Angeles, and other extension directors, similar special campaigns are undertaken to gain the attention, interest and support of special groups, particularly the leaders.

Besides classes in many cities, the Henry George School also offers courses by correspondence, and development in this department has followed the new pattern generally. Instead of buck-shot campaigning for correspondence students, special nationwide lists are selected and circularised. Among lists recently used are Harvard Business School alumni, engineers, executives of business firms, buyers of economics books from various publishing houses, and subscribers to economic periodicals. Results with the correspondence courses hold out great promises of future development. The correspondence students are on the whole of very high calibre, and already class leaders have been developed by correspondence.

In all, over 50,000 persons have completed the basic course in *Progress and Poverty* since the School was founded, and thousands are being added every year. During 1948 there were almost 3,000 graduates in the United States and Canada. Even with the aim of reaching a higher grade of students, we are able to report increasing enrolment each year.

It might be asked, "What of students when they have finished the basic course at the Henry George School?" The School's first job is education and we urge the student to continue his studies, to assist in the educational work by voluntary effort and contributions, and we encourage the more promising students to become teachers. There is also, in New York, an alumni association, S.A.G.E. (Society for the Advancement of the George Economy) which invites graduates to join them and to participate in projects related to the School's work. As for work outside the School, if leaders are brought into the movement, it is a matter we need not worry about, for leaders are just the sort of people whose activities do not have to be planned for them. We have already seen many indications of students carrying the

philosophy into their own fields, into other schools, into churches, newspapers, among business associates. The total effect of our educational effort is incalculable.

Another factor in sustaining the interest of graduates is the *Henry George News*. This is a monthly periodical published by the Henry George School and it is the link which holds students, teachers and workers together. Besides reporting the activities of the various branches of the School and related activities throughout the world, the *News* carries articles by outstanding writers on matters of interest to students of Henry George. Among recent contributors to the *News* are Harry Gunnison Brown, C. Villalobos Dominguez, Msgr. L. G. Ligutti, Arthur W. Madsen, Francis Neilson, Herbert T. Owens, V. G. Peterson, Lawson Purdy, Samuel Seabury, Joseph S. Thompson, and other well-known Georgeist leaders.

The Henry George School, after years of growth and experience, has struck a pace of development that should continue. Its aims and its work are clearly cut out. If Henry George correctly divined the road to world acceptance of his philosophy—the road of education and patience—the Henry George School of Social Science is well on the way.