

## A Word With You

ELSEWHERE in this issue, Marshall Crane reviews *The Lunatic Fringe* by Gerald Johnson. In his chapter on Henry George, Mr. Johnson notes the increased interest in George in the 1950's and attributes it to the two recent biographies of that man by Anna George de Mille and Charles A. Barker.

Mr. Johnson thus noticed an effect and, like so many armchair researchers, looked for the cause in the Cumulative Book Index. He evidently doesn't know about the Henry George School which has as many students every year as each of those admirable biographies has had copies sold during its entire existence. No reflection on the books, just on the curiously habitual carelessness of scholars when writing about Henry George.

Harley Lutz, known as a leading expert on public finance, was asked a few years ago by the N.A.M. to make a report on Henry George, as his single tax idea had come to them for consideration. Dr. Lutz began his critique as follows: "There is no readily available critical discussion of the Single Tax doctrine of Henry George. Long ago, as I recall, one of Hart, Schaffner & Marx essays dealt with the subject, but it is long since out of print." He did not even bother with a book index, but pulled something out of a rusty memory! This is scholarship?

So many writers, when they have something to say about George or the single tax or the Georgist movement, just crib from one another. The fact that so few know about the Henry George School, or the Justice Party in Denmark, or the post-war progress of land value taxation in Australia and New Zealand, belies the ancient vintage of the stuff they are cribbing—even though many of them profess to

be looking back at George with up-to-date eyes.

As for our Henry George School, one would suppose that any school named after any economist—an American, at that—which teaches economics for the layman, would arouse the excited interest of all teachers and writers on social studies. Why, I'll bet you that if there were a little school in Wisconsin named after that bad-boy pet of the academic world, Thorstein Veblen, doing two percent of the work of the Henry George School, it would be on the lips and the pages of all the teachers and writers, and there would be an article on it once a year in the Sunday magazine section of the New York Times!

At our San Francisco conference in 1954, that Georgist and journalist, Walt Rybeck, heard the claim that probably not more than one person in ten thousand in the U.S. knew anything about Henry George. Walt thereupon went out into the street and asked passers-by what they knew about George. Of forty people interviewed, four had some cogent notion of who George was. Four out of ten, not out of ten thousand. Not a conclusive survey, but at least it was based on some living evidence.

More of this spirit please, writers, when you write about Henry George.

—Robert Clancy

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