

The Freeman and We

HERE is quite a bit of interest among Georgists in a little monthly magazine called *The Freeman*, published at Irvington-on-Hudson, New York. This interest springs from the mutual concern of Georgists and the editors of *The Freeman* over problems of freedom. *The Freeman* comes so close to, and yet remains so discrete from, the Georgist point of view that the fascination is irresistible.

This fascination may be unconsciously enhanced by the fact that there is an involved family relationship between *The Freeman* and us. This is not widely known, and the story may be worth the telling.

Not to delve into the remote past, the first magazine called *The Freeman* made its weekly appearance in 1920. The founders and editors were Francis Neilson and Albert Jay Nock. Mrs. Neilson gave her financial support to the project. B. W. Huebsch, who was also a book publisher, was its publisher. All these and others on the staff were deeply interested in Henry George, and so the first *Freeman* had a strong Georgist flavor.

Mr. Neilson, who selected the name for the paper, explained that "it was to be a Radical paper (in the old English sense of the term) opposed to all the nostrums of socialism and bureaucratic paternalism." The *Spectator* of London was to serve as a model. The editors wanted *The Freeman* to be not only a journal of social comment, but also one of literary quality. This weekly magazine did indeed maintain a high standard, and to this day the literary world looks back upon that first *Freeman* magazine with fondness. Van Wyck Brooks was on its staff, and in his latest book, *Days of the Phoenix*, he main-



Helen Swift Neilson, supporter of the first *Freeman*. (From a portrait now hanging in the Henry George School, New York.)

tains that *The Freeman* was the best of the lot of literary magazines that came and went in the 1920's.

The *Freeman* went, too, in 1924. Francis Neilson tells its story in detail in a supplement to the October 1946 issue of the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*. (Mr. Neilson's version may be read as a corrective to Mr. Brooks' version.)

In 1930, six years after the demise of *The Freeman*, there appeared a revival under the name of *The New Freeman*. It was also a weekly, with Suzanne La Follette as editor. (She had been on the staff of the first *Freeman*). Albert Jay Nock later joined as contributing editor, and a host of literary figures wrote for *The New Freeman*, including John Chamberlain, George Jean Nathan, Clifton Fadiman, Mark Van Doren and Eu-

by Robert Clancy

gene Lyons. There wasn't quite the Georgist touch that the first Freeman had, but there were articles by Whidden Graham and other Georgists, and "The Great Land Racket," by Paul Blanshard appeared in its pages. A new feature was art work—high-class cartoons by Art Young, Boardman Robinson, John Sloan, and others.

The New Freeman was a depression baby and it did not survive beyond 1931. The problem was, understandably, financial.

The following year, 1932, the Henry George School of Social Science was founded, and five years later it seemed to be ready to have a periodical of its own. (An irregularly published paper, *The New Standard*, appeared during 1936.)

The then director, Frank Chodorov, and Will Lissner (who later became and still is, the editor of the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*), worked out a plan to again publish a Freeman magazine. Suzanne La Follette was consulted and she gave the project her approval; Mr. and Mrs. Neilson consented to the use of the name. And so another Freeman was born, this time as a monthly, beginning November 1937. Albert Jay Nock joined the editorial council, and Francis Neilson wrote articles for the paper; Will Lissner was the editor, with Frank Chodorov as the publisher. It was not, strictly speaking, the organ of the school, as a separate Freeman Corporation was formed, using the same address. But it was of course intimately associated with the school, and was regarded by most people as its paper. Practically all articles were Georgist in character, and Henry George School news was reported thoroughly in its pages.

In July 1938, Frank Chodorov be-

came editor, while remaining director. He continued in both capacities until January 1942, when C. O. Steele (later editor of *The Individualist*) became editor, and Margaret Bateman became director of the school. A few months later an editorial board was formed, in place of an editor, and carried the paper on until August 1943 which marked the end of this particular Freeman's life-span.

In that final issue, it was explained that *The Freeman* was intended to be a unit apart from the school, but had been generally looked upon as its organ; and it therefore seemed more fitting to have a paper that would serve that purpose. There was also a financial problem, and a school paper had to be more modestly produced.

And so in September 1943, appeared the first issue of the monthly *Henry George News*, "continuing *The Freeman*." Rights to this latter name were transferred to the school. The *News* was at first edited by a committee, headed by Lancaster M. Greene. In April 1946, Alice Elizabeth Davis was appointed editor, and so remains to this day. The committee continues in an advisory capacity.

The *Henry George News* appeared first as a four-page paper, about the size of a tabloid newspaper. In 1946, the size was halved and the pages doubled; and this copy that you are reading represents another halving of size and doubling of pages. (It is hoped that more pages will be added without any further reduction in size!)

Meanwhile, elsewhere the phoenix was again getting ready to rise from the ashes. In October 1950, there appeared on newsstands the first issue of a fortnightly bearing the name of *The Freeman*, "with which is combined the magazine *Plain Talk*." This

latter publication had been primarily aimed against communism. The resuscitated Freeman broadened its scope, as noted in its credo, "The

MARGIN OF CULTIVATION



* Earnings, \$04.60¢ a day

A cartoon by John L. Monroe, from the May, 1940, issue of The Freeman.

Faith of The Freeman": "For at least two decades there has been an urgent need in America for a journal of opinion devoted to the cause of liberalism and individual freedom. The Freeman is designed to fill that need."

The "two decades" harked back, no doubt, to The New Freeman—and indeed, Suzanne La Follette's name appeared on the masthead of this newer Freeman, as managing editor. The editors were John Chamberlain and Henry Hazlitt. The by-passing of the 1937-1943 Freeman could be excused on the grounds that it was not really a newsstand paper for general circulation. There was the question of using the name The Freeman, however, to which the Henry George School had reserved the rights. The school was not consulted, but it did not press the matter. Thereafter, The Freeman Corporation was allowed to lapse and The Henry George News dropped the line "continuing The Freeman."

(To be continued)