

An Appeal to Youth

Kate de Fremery at the HGS
Annual Conference

I FEEL very honored to be included on the program today. I know I can't tell you much that you don't already know about Georgist theory and its application, so I'll stick to a subject I know—youth.

I think that the Henry George School should concentrate more of its teaching efforts on young people. On the whole, young people are more apt to be idealists than adults; they haven't yet given up the hope that better things are possible.

The fact remains that young people are very interested in the problems of today's world. And they want to help—they want to do something to improve the situation. But they don't know what's really wrong, so they usually end up participating in demonstrations or planning a career in social work. In Marin County, California, there is a high-school volunteer program for tutoring under-privileged children. Some of my friends gave up several hours a week for this, because they felt that lack of education is the main reason for slum conditions.

This willingness to work, to improve things, offers great possibilities to the Georgist movement. This is why a Georgist youth program, if it were properly handled, would be very effective.

The problem, of course, is, how are we going to direct this interest? How are we going to channel it into something really constructive? In other words, we need areas in which we can contact young people and interest them in what we have to offer. There are three main possibilities which I will mention.

Let's start with the schools. A school seems the logical place to teach any-

thing. In Marin County we have had considerable success working through the high schools. We have found that teachers are usually very willing to invite Georgists (or anyone else) to speak to their history or government classes. Or, if that method doesn't work with a particular school, it's a good idea to contact the political clubs on campus with the idea of giving a talk after school. In Marin County, at least, there's a good deal of rivalry among the various political clubs in each school to see which one can obtain the best (or most controversial) speakers. An after-school speaker, besides getting a larger and more interested audience than a speaker in class, is also better covered in the school newspaper. This is something to keep in mind.

One very important consideration when dealing with young people is this: anyone who speaks to a high-school audience must be completely at home with his subject. He should also be very quick on the trigger in answering questions. I remember we once had a speaker from the John Birch Society. He may have known his subject thoroughly, but he just wasn't very fast with his replies. He also had a tendency to become nervous and flustered. The students soon realized this and took advantage of the situation, deliberately confusing the poor man until he became completely ineffective as a speaker. This is why anyone who works with young people must be quick-witted and absolutely sure of himself and of his subject.

The school, then, is one area of contact. Another is the family. How many of you have children? And how many of your children are Georgists? Not

many, I'll bet. And yet those of you who are Republicans have children who will almost certainly be Republicans; the same goes for Democrats, or for Catholics or for Methodists. Why doesn't this hold true for Georgists?

I think that the determining factor in this situation is whether or not the parents talk about their beliefs—whatever they may be—in front of their children. The age of exposure, also, has a lot to do with it. Most kids are exposed to their parents' religion since infancy; how many people are of a different religion from their parents? Many Georgists seem to think that it would be useless to talk about their beliefs in front of their children because they might be too young to understand everything. Yet they don't hesitate to take the children to church or Sunday School. The point here is that it doesn't really matter whether or not a young child understands, so long as he gets to the idea that his parents believe it. And when the child grows old enough to understand, he will be more apt to accept the idea than if it is suddenly sprung upon him.

A third area of contact is youth organizations—particularly such groups as the political and church youth groups. These groups should first be contacted through someone who is not only a Georgist but who is also well acquainted with the purposes and feelings of the group. His effectiveness will be in his knowledge of how the subject may best be presented to that particular group.

Once contact has been established, in the form of a speaker, free classes should be offered. But I think the

basic class should be revised a little first. Most of you have taken the basic class at least once; you know that it starts out slowly. Young people are apt to be impatient with something unless they can quickly see its importance. Therefore, I suggest that the seventh lesson, or part of it, be presented first—as an introductory lesson; it can be presented again in its regular order as the class continues. If you recall, the seventh lesson is the one which very simply presents the idea that since all men have an equal right to life, and since land is necessary for life, all men therefore have an equal right to the land.

I think that if this were used as an introduction to the class the dropout rate would be much lower.

Once a group of young people has graduated from the basic class, a youth program can be set up. Perhaps there could be discussions held every few weeks, taking some topic of current interest and determining how Georgist principles apply to it. At first there should be an adult Georgist—someone with a deep understanding of the subject—present at such discussions—until the group or some one member of it becomes thoroughly familiar with the principles and can apply them quickly to any given situation. The group should be left to its own resources as soon as possible unless it wishes further help.

An active and enthusiastic youth group could do wonders for the Georgist movement. It would also help to counterbalance the present widespread sympathy held by young people for the socialist movement.

A new edition of the third basic course, *Economic Science*, has been issued by the Henry George School. It is based on *The Science of Political Economy* by Henry George and follows the two other basic courses, *Fundamental Economics (Progress and Poverty)* and *Applied Economics (Protection or Free Trade? and Social Problems)*. The new *Economic Science* incorporates studies of the GNP, a review of monetary theories and other topics, and a critique of George's work by Charles and Mary Beard from their book *The American Spirit*.