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The Henry George School of Social Science

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I venture to say that, outside of the United States, few followers of the social philosophy and economic teachings of Henry George are acquainted with the really astonishing success of the educational methods practised by the Henry George School of Social Science with its headquarters in New York and with extension classes in seventy-three cities across the American Continent.

The accomplishments of this School seem immensely significant, not only as illustrating a new method of teaching fundamental economics, but as a rapid means of turning out soundly educated and enthusiastic proponents of the Georgeist faith. A discussion of the School and its work, therefore, would seem to be an important matter to impress upon the attention of followers of Henry George in every part of the world. It is this fact that has induced some of us familiar with the work and accomplishments of the School to make some sacrifices to be here to deliver a message to you about it.

It may be assumed, I suppose, that Georgeists in every land are interested in making new converts to their faith, especially among the youth who are about to assume the responsibility of coming of age, among whom may be the future leaders of public opinion in their countries. Young men and women who have seen the light of a great and beneficent truth are bursting with eagerness to do something to right the wrongs of a world as they see them. We who are Georgeists believe we know the source of the injustices that afflict the world and the way in which they may be righted. Our programme is to teach certain simple fundamental economic truths to those who may become the file leaders of the public opinion of the future; to teach in such a way that those who learn will be impelled to pass on to others the vision of righteous social relationships that they have come to see.

Some of us feel that our great movement for social justice and the prosperity of nations has not had in the past the cohesion nor the driving force that insures its growth and extension. Viewing the astonishing increase in a few years of the number of students in the Henry George School of Social Science in America, we feel deeply that as a world movement it may be that Georgeism needs to be born again through an extension in every civilized land of the teaching methods of the School. So we, of Henry George's birthland, are here to ask you to join us in thinking of the world as the campus of the

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Henry George School of Social Science. We want you of the older lands to examine the teaching methods that have proven so strikingly successful in America, in the hope and confident belief that you will find these methods helpful to you in spreading the beneficent teachings of Henry George into every part of the world.

The policies of the School may be summed up by a quotation from Henry George :—

“ Whoever, laying aside prejudice and self-interest, will honestly and carefully make up his own mind as to the causes and the cure of the social evils that are so apparent, does, in that, the most important thing in his power toward their removal. . . . 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. Until there be correct thought, there cannot be right action ; and when there is correct thought, right action will follow.”

This School, inspired by the great faith of its founder, the late-lamented Oscar H. Geiger, has amply proved the efficacy of its method over three years of practical experience. The School received its charter from the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York on 15th September, 1932, though it was a year before it was located in permanent quarters. At first Mr Geiger was the only teacher. His classroom was a small room adjoining his living apartment. The first year the School enrolled 84 students in eleven classes in that one room. The second year showed an increase of 1,322 students in 65 classes in 23 cities. In the third year, up to 1st May last, there were 3,247 students in 163 classes in 73 cities, and now the extension work of the School, carried on almost entirely by enthusiastic volunteers, is expected to take 10,000 students through the study of *Progress and Poverty* in the next year.

Perhaps the most impressive single fact about these results relates to the character and quality of the student body. Mostly the students are young men and women, many of them public school teachers, a number of them members of other learned professions—the law and journalism, for example. Practically every walk of life is represented. Another inspiring fact is in evidence among the graduates, and that is that they seem to be in most instances not merely intellectually convinced respecting the truths of natural law in the economic world, but spiritually exalted with a concept of the possibility of a new world that may be built on foundations of social justice among men.

Another fact that I would like to impress upon you is that the record of the School is not due to any extraordinary talent or ability upon the part of its devoted teaching staff, who for the most part, as I have intimated, are enthusiastic volunteers. The method devised by Oscar H. Geiger, the founder of the School, plus the inspiring content of *Progress and Poverty* when systematically studied, are the factors which perhaps account most for the School's success. I believe this success can be duplicated anywhere in the world where even a small group of Georgeists can be found to make the start. It can be done, too, at a surprisingly small money cost. It can be done with the human raw material available anywhere. The zeal of the new converts will serve to carry on the work.

At the national headquarters in New York the costs of getting a nucleus were heavy in the beginning. One of the handicaps, be it confessed, was the scepticism and hopelessness of old Single Taxers, who could not believe that the School could ever do more than they had been able to do themselves throughout the years of arguments and debates with the unconverted. The first year the cost for each student enrolment in the School was \$76.20, no salaries being paid except a small compensation to the Director of the School and a stenographer. The second year the cost per enrolment had dropped to \$5.90. This past year it has reached \$3.63 and the budget for next year offers a cost of \$2.20 per enrolment. Nevertheless, the paid staff of the School has been enlarged, although at modest salaries, though the teaching staff continues to be, with the exception of a staff leader, an unpaid body of student graduates who simply love the work they are engaged in. If you will reflect upon the costs of making converts as I have recited them to you, you may concede that from the mere money standpoint, we have discovered a means of sound and successful propaganda superior to any that has been in operation in our own country, or elsewhere perhaps, since devoted men and women of the old guard first undertook the job of spreading the light of Georgeist teachings.

Our experience in the New York headquarters of the School, confirmed by the experience of Georgeist leaders of the extension classes throughout the United States and Canada, has demonstrated that the reasoning of *Progress and Poverty* when properly and systematically taught, can be readily comprehended by men and women of limited academic training, and, what is more, can be made vitally interesting to people in every walk of life. We have had confirmed Socialists and Communists enrolled in our classes, inspired very often, perhaps, more by curiosity than by ambition to get our message. Graduates tell us that those who come with preconceived and erroneous economic views end up in becoming thorough-going Georgeists, convinced that we are proposing a reform without which no other reform can be practical or successful.

Indispensable to the instructor of *Progress and Poverty* is the carefully prepared *Teacher's Manual*. This remarkable instrument, based on the notes used by Mr Geiger in his classroom work, makes it possible for anyone acquainted with the philosophy of Henry George to teach a class with results that cannot fail to please both the teacher and his students. The *Manual* contains questions and answers covering each chapter in *Progress and Poverty*, together with suggestions on how to conduct the class, reading assignments, and illustrated charts. The instructor finds himself with a faithful guide each step of the way.

The School's prescribed course in *Progress and Poverty* as outlined in the *Teacher's Manual* requires that the student shall spend two hours a week in the classroom, usually in evening classes, for a period of ten weeks. Outside of the classroom the student is expected to spend about two hours in reading assigned passages in *Progress and Poverty* carefully planned so as to set the student seeking the answers to printed questions that are handed out at the close of each school session.

At the next week's class period the instructor strives to have the members of the class furnish the answers to the questions. He merely supplements their efforts. He observes the class closely and encourages the less active members to take part, remembering that "truth is the daughter of time and

discussion." At all times, however, the discussions, as well as the questions, are confined to the particular lesson before the class. Digressions along irrelevant lines during the class period are avoided. Valuable time is not lost on hair-splitting discussions in which only one or two of the class may be interested.

Students' questions of a partizan or local political nature are not taken up by the instructor unless they have a direct bearing on the current lesson's assignment. Such questions are always answered in reference to their economic rather than their political aspect.

Sessions are opened and closed promptly. The instructor constantly keeps in mind that the essential core of material as outlined in each lesson must be covered during the two-hour period. Under no circumstances, in the early lessons, does he reveal the conclusions to which Henry George was led by his inquiry. The student's curiosity is kept alive as an incentive for his further study. Experience in the classroom has shown that *Progress and Poverty* is veritably a "linked argument" that cannot be anticipated at any point. It must be followed link by link. Once the chain is forged in the student's mind, it cannot be broken by the spurious arguments of false philosophies which to-day threaten the sanity of mankind.

When one or more classes have been completed in any community it is found that from among the graduates can be developed the most effective teachers. At the headquarters in New York more than three-quarters of the teaching staff are graduates of the School who took the Teachers Training Course. Pittsburgh now has a staff of twenty-five instructors, nineteen of whom are recent graduates. In these cities, as in many others, district classes are being organized to take advantage of the new additions to the teaching staff.

The technique of the Teachers Training Class is simple. The students literally teach themselves how to teach. The class is formed limited in membership to those who have completed the course in *Progress and Poverty*. The class goes through exactly the same study following the *Teacher's Manual* but instead of there being one teacher for all the lessons, there are as many teachers as there are students, each student being assigned to take the class through a portion of the course. Thus each student gets some actual experience in teaching, but more than this he gets a thorough review of the subject to serve him in good stead when he is to go before a class of new students.

In addition to the Teachers Training Course, the graduates of the primary course in *Progress and Poverty* may enrol for other courses using *Protection or Free Trade*, *Social Problems*, *The Science of Political Economy* and George Raymond Geiger's *The Philosophy of Henry George* as textbooks. Incidentally, there are courses in the art of expression by the written or spoken word.

Graduates of the School automatically become members of the Henry George Fellowship as the world-wide alumni body of the School. Chapters of the Fellowship have already been formed in many cities and their field of activity is constantly widening. The members of the Fellowship everywhere feel a close bond between them because of their common understanding of the truths taught by Henry George. The motto of the Henry George Fellowship is: "Let us move forward together."

We who have seen this miracle of the practical success of the Henry George School of Social Science grow under our eyes until its potency for making converts has won warm support and approval of the student body and graduates alike, would like to bring the School to you who are keeping alive the light of Georgeist teachings in the older lands.

We would like to put at your service an instrumentality and a method that if you will but try it, we are sure will delight you in the making of new converts and supporters for the Cause more easily and more rapidly than ever before. The Extension Department of the Headquarters School in New York will help with counsel and practical aid. It will supply the *Teachers' Manuals*, advertising material, and questionnaires, and the sheepskins, so-called, for the graduates. We do not want to keep this as exclusively an American and Canadian movement. We crave for it the distinction of being a world movement for the service of mankind everywhere. The world is our campus. Our experience in the United States and Canada demonstrates, we believe, that we have found a sure way for popular education in the great and inspiring truths of the natural economic order which must lead to the setting up and maintaining in all civilized lands of a system of just human relationships that will mean more for world peace and human happiness than the treaties or leagues upon which a disturbed and unhappy world has vainly relied in the past. We offer you the Henry George School of Social Science.

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