

On Becoming a Georgist

by NANCY HALL

YOU remember what it's like to become a Georgist. All of a sudden a great light dawns as the universe becomes comprehensible at last, and your fears that there is something terribly wrong with the world are clarified. When you discovered the answers to all the "why's," I'm sure you said, as I did, "Why didn't I know this all along?"

I don't waste time mourning my forty years spent in ignorance; instead I'm grateful for the time I now save, to say nothing of the emotional energy. I've learned to use that handy two-letter negative the omission of which used to get me into so much useless volunteer activity.

I was a "do-gooder" of the worst sort. Once upon a time, as an eager member of the League of Women Voters, I dashed about Brookline, Massachusetts, giving talks to coffee, luncheon and tea groups about conservation. For some reason it seemed important to decide *which* federal agency should control "our" water resources. The fact that my briefing sessions had been conducted by someone straight from Washington didn't deter me in the least.

When I was even younger I was a poll-watcher for the American Labor party, having rung doorbells to get out the vote for Wallace. (No, not George — Henry Wallace. Remember him?). My feeble excuse for that fiasco is that as a former animal husbandry student I believed those glowing campaign promises about aiding the poor farmer. It was my first election. The chap under whose direction I labored was later deported as an "undesirable alien," but that didn't teach me anything either.

The year I did the most damage was when I was simultaneously president of the local chapters of the PTA, the church women's guild, and (gulp!) the

American Legion Auxiliary. I shudder to think that somewhere there exist pictures of me leading the Memorial Day Parade. It was a small town, you see, and I felt compelled to do something constructive. Don't ask how I could have considered baking pies for an organization which now seems devoted to warmongering. I even deluded myself into believing that directing the PTA was contributing to better education, rather than aiding and abetting the state's efforts to undermine, with my own money, my influence over and control of my children. And please don't inquire why I collected half a ton of clothing for the missionaries in Africa, because I prefer to forget the whole thing.

I cannot, however, forget what I have learned. The world's needy require justice, not handouts. You cannot help people by providing what they should have an opportunity to provide for themselves. Not only do you not help them, but you injure them and even destroy them by eroding their sense of responsibility and self-respect. When you contribute in any way to any other cause than that of instituting justice, you help postpone the day when justice will prevail.

Of course there are some problems involved in adherence to principle. The couple across the street think I'm some kind of a nut because I won't let my children go with them to the "lovely little crafts group" at the Salvation Army. It's hard to explain to my nine-year-old why I won't approve her collecting money for UNICEF. When she wails, "but do you want to let the poor Biafrans starve?" I struggle to justify my stand in a way which she can understand. (Yes, I even slipped a few pennies into those orange containers last Hallowe'en. I'm not perfect!)

It makes me exceedingly sad to think of the millions of man and woman hours expended by kind, compassionate people in the sincere belief that they are doing some good. Even if they

manage to lop off a few of the branches, the evil root grows stronger all the time. Pruning just makes it more vigorous. Our task is to develop true "radicals" and get to work on that root!

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what had been said about radio. So with cheery confidence he called on a local station and was quite abruptly "in." It's as simple as that. Having picked up an idea at the conference he redesigned it taking into consideration the capabilities of his staff and also their limited available time. Inspired by his enthusiasm all cooperated willingly.

Anyone wishing to commend "Conversations With Georgists" to a local station should begin by finding the nearest educational non-commercial station and inquiring as to whether they are affiliated with the National Educational Radio Network. If such is the case a request from a listener will probably meet with a willingness on the part of the station manager to look into the material suggested. Stations naturally want to present programs that will win a favorable response, and the fact that this series was chosen by the national network from a great number of educational efforts is in itself an endorsement of its listener acceptance.

Before committing his station to 6½ hours of air time a manager may wish to satisfy himself as to the quality of the tapes and he may do this by requesting a set for use in the studio. He will find this listed in the spring 1969 program, but it would be well to offer a general idea of the subject matter.

Here are a few highlights of each session.

International trade with its financial implications in every country throws a light on the continuing devaluation of currency. (1) Who does not need a

clarification of the role of government and private ownership? (2) There is much current discussion about the rights and duties of citizens—hear the classic view of an original economist, Henry George. (3) What is the effect of public debt, the device used for public improvements? (4) Migration is the story of a population in motion—from rural to urban areas and from other countries. (5) Everybody wants higher wages but how many know that the "protection" advocated by unions and industries often blocks pay increases?

Those who think (6) that the poverty slogan was new when it was introduced in Washington will be fascinated with the profound thought Henry George directed to this subject in *Social Problems*. (7) Monopoly is not a game but a persistent power struggle throughout history. Discussion produces answers that will surprise listeners. (8) The fear of unemployment and automation spreads panic through organized industry—here is a basic approach worth looking into. (9) The controversial farm support program and the dilemma of the working farmer is of vital importance.

The urban crisis, having grown threadbare from interminable repetition, is explored here (10) in a new vein cutting through the superficial to something basic. (11) A sobering analysis of the rights of man and the formidable subject of natural law is approached from the standpoint of economics and science. (12) Who was Henry George? Why have his ideas suddenly come into more prominence

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