

the Henry George News

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J. Rupert Mason

WITH these words, "J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco," many an item of Georgist news has begun in the past, because J.R.M. always had something of interest to report, even during the illness preceding his death on November 18th. He was a founder and enthusiastic supporter of the Henry George School in San Francisco, whose headquarters have recently moved to 833 Market Street. Georgists at home and abroad have lost a great friend, and all who visited the San Francisco conference and were entertained by Mrs. Mason in their enchanting home, at 1920 Lake Street, will wish to extend heartfelt sympathies to her.

Mr. Mason was elected president of the International Federation for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade at the conference in Denmark in 1952, at which time he said, in an address entitled "Civilization at the Crossroads":

"Justice is the highest form of expediency; freedom is the antidote to fear and war. People in the western democracies must take the initiative; their gagged and bound brothers behind the Iron Curtain are powerless to do so. Americans have accepted the



challenge. They can win hands down . . . if they put a Henry George free economy team in the field."

Long a member of the Commonwealth Club of California, Mr. Mason was quoted at length in the club's publication recently when he addressed a business economics group on the subject of a state planning agency. He called the land value tax "the only effective brake against public extravagance," and said:

"The increasing need for public revenues with the growth of population is natural, and there must be a right way of getting them. It must not conflict with individual rights. There is such a source for public revenue. It has been used by Congress, by the

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states and most local governments traditionally in the United States. It can easily be collected by means of the traditional direct, annual ad-valorem land tax, which stimulates private enterprise and cannot increase the general cost of production, of distribution, or of living. This tax takes nothing from capital or labor."

J. Rupert was a descendant of George Mason of Virginia, a delegate with George Washington who defended certain economic and political freedoms at the time of the framing of the Constitution. For the last 32 years, Mr. Mason, too, has defended the Constitution both in state and federal courts, and although not a member of the bar he is said to have filed more test cases in the U. S. Supreme Court between 1936 and 1946 than any California member of the bar.

Mr. Mason was educated in the Midwest, and at an institute in Switzerland, after which he was active in the bond departments of Chicago and Los Angeles banks. He organized his own investment company in 1909 but retired in 1926 to devote his time to travel and study.

This "hard headed" American was much impressed by Justice Marshall's statement that the power to tax is the power to destroy, and he set before himself the task of encouraging a wider study and understanding of the vision of the founding fathers, who,

Joseph L. Richards

Joseph L. Richards, a life-long Geologist, died August 11, 1959. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1886. He graduated from Dartmouth in 1912, and in 1914 received a Master's degree in forestry from the Michigan Forestry School. It was only until 1924 and again from 1941 on, that Richards practised his profession of forestry. The years between he spent

as he said, "conceived" this Republic and gave it reality in the Preamble to the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

Everyone who has known Mr. Mason at conferences has learned, many for the first time, of the irrigation districts in California. Long before the present interest in these districts, he saw the significance of their enlightened tax structure and for that reason he became a self-appointed protagonist and counselor, supporting the rights to life, liberty and property which the 5th and 14th Amendments guarantee.

"In the case of J. R. Mason v. Paradise Irrigation District," states the publication, *Economic Liberty*, "the Court compared Mr. Mason to a 'hold-up man operating within the law,' and gave judgment to the bankrupt which was clearly 'without the law.'"

More and more we see that in the midst of life there is death. So we try to replace emotion with a commonplace acceptance, saying, of ourselves and others, that no one is indispensable. It is clear, however, that no one else is available at this time who has the vision, the strength or the particular American viewpoint that J. Rupert Mason had. It is sometimes hard to find one who has read the documents on which this country was founded, certainly, therefore, much more difficult to find one who with skill and high moral courage, is ready to give himself in their defense.

in his father's business, Doll and Richards, leading art dealers in Boston. He never ceased, however, to be a forester at heart.

Still closer to his heart was the philosophy of Henry George, which he had absorbed early in life. He helped start the Boston Branch of the Henry George School, and for years enabled it to have the free use of the