

Robert Clancy 1914 - 1995

I first met Bob Clancy in the fall of 1938, almost 57 years ago. I had just completed my initial courses at the Henry George School in New York, and he was then a clerk at the school.

Clancy was a rather fine-looking young man. He was quiet, judicious, conciliatory, able to see both sides of a controversy. He had many talents: he was an artist, a writer, a teacher, and a student of history and literature. But his one overwhelming passion was the philosophy of Henry George, to which he dedicated his entire life.

As members of the old H.G. school, Bob and I often had to engage in debates with different enemies of Henry George: socialists, communists, fascists and others of their ilk. We even participated in didactic plays to demonstrate the principles we propounded. One hilarious skit featured Bob Clancy as a very righteous, very puritanical Georgist, and me as an obnoxious, villainous communist.

When World War II broke out, Bob and I, both in service, accidentally met in Seattle, 3,000 miles from our homes in New York. One funny scene that stands out in my mind is that of Private Clancy saluting Lieutenant Schwartzman! Bob and I (with the venerable George Dana Linn) opened a Henry George School extension in Seattle, which lasted until Clancy and I were shipped off to our respective destinations. I also remember a poignant episode in Bob's life while he was stationed in Seattle. He had become engaged to

a lovely young lady named Barbara, but that liaison ended unhappily for Bob. Wistfully, he wrote to me: "My little *affaire du coeur* has taken a turn for the worse, after being so promising." Barbara married someone else, but Bob remained single for the rest of his life.

Soon after the war Bob became the Director of the Henry George School. Bob made many an effort to maintain the quality of teaching at the school, but there was much friction between the Board of Trustees and him, and he was dismissed from the school. Undaunted, he organized and became President of the Henry George Institute. In that role, he was quite successful. Correspondence courses reached students all over the world. As head of other Georgist organizations, he exerted a great deal of influence, and as Editor of the Institute's *Georgist Journal*, he was able to communicate with hundreds of readers.

Robert Clancy, 80, Institute's Founder

Robert Clancy, an educator who was director of the Henry George School of Social Science from 1946 to 1970 and founder of the Henry George Institute, died on Feb. 9 in Jackson Heights Hospital in Queens. He was 80 and lived in Jackson Heights.

The cause was colon cancer, said George L. Collins, the executive director of the Manhattan school.

Founded in 1932, the school teaches the economic and social philosophy of the 19th-century economist and philosopher Henry George, who saw land speculation as the scourge of the time and the cause of poverty and inequality.

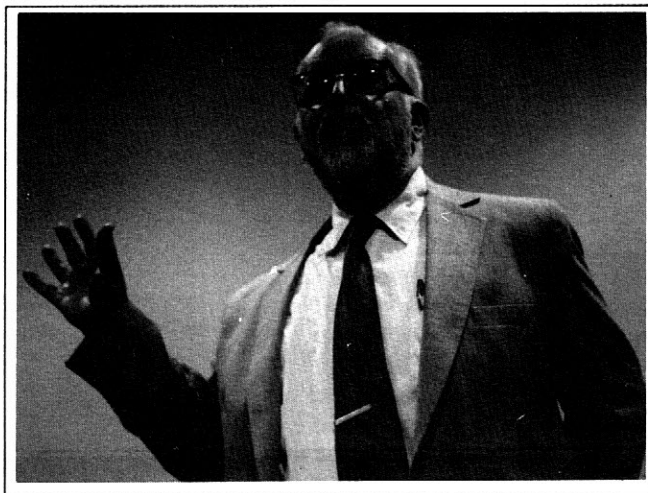
George argued that society, not the landowner, was responsible for the increase in land value, and that the increase should be taxed and thereby returned to society. He saw such a levy as the only tax necessary and, thus, was an early proponent of a single tax. George twice ran unsuccessfully for mayor of New York City in the late 1800's.

Mr. Clancy expanded the school's role in adult education and through establishment of the institute set up a worldwide network of correspondence courses in subjects related to George's social and economic concepts. Students from more than 200 countries enrolled in courses.

In 1952 he wrote a biography of the founder of the school, "A Seed Was Sown: The Life of Oscar Geiger." He was co-founder and chairman emeritus of the Council of Georgist Organizations, an international association of Georgist schools.

He is survived by a sister, Norma Hempe of Massapequa, L.I.

New York Times, February 18, 1995



On March 31, 1984, *Fragments* magazine honored Bob by giving him a dinner. Visibly moved, he gave an eloquent and gracious address, and the memory of that evening still lingers in my mind.

Eventually, the Henry George School of New York extended an invitation for Bob and the Institute to occupy — without charge — one room in the school's building, and, in that capacity, as a tenant of the school, he remained until his death.

Bob's last days were spent in and out of hospital, but he bore his illness with his usual quiet dignity and typical acceptance.

Bob was a person of great integrity and unflinching dedication to the Cause he believed in. He was a true aristocrat of the soul, and it can be truly said: "Noblesse oblige." — Dr. Jack Schwartzman

At the 1984 dinner that the editors of *Fragments* hosted in honor of Robert Clancy, I called attention to Bob's recently-grown beard, pointing out that not only did he devote himself to Georgist teaching, but even sought to look like Henry George. When later I assured him that my comment was wholly facetious, Bob smiled and said, "Well, it's the least I can do." He was a good sport.

I first met Bob Clancy at the old H.G. school on 29th Street, circa early 1940, when the nation was still reeling from the effects of the Great Depression. Bob was young in years, of course, and even younger in looks and spirit. He was full of profound faith and fervent energy, a shining example of what in those days we called an "eager beaver." The remedy for the world's social and economic problems having been revealed to him, all he wanted was the opportunity to reveal the same to anyone who would listen. This remained the quiet passion of his life.

Bob's job at the school apparently was to do whatever had to be done that no one else would do. The Director of the school at the time was Frank Chodorov, a likable but rough-and-ready individualist who ran the place with a firm hand — and ran Robert ragged. Inevitably, dedicated though he was, Bob declined to continue to "take it," and left to accept a position as one of the new editors of *Land and Freedom*, a publication that flourished all too briefly.

After WWII, in which I too was called to participate, I lost little time heading for the Henry George School, which had relocated in sumptuous quarters on East 69th Street. Warmly welcomed, I joined a lively crew of Georgist instructors that then "Acting Director" Robert Clancy had assembled. It was my privilege (and great joy) to carry on there for the next 22 years. We worked together, endeavoring to upgrade, improve and innovate the school's curriculum.

Then, quite unexpectedly, the curtain fell. (continued on page six)

Some people you think will never cease. Others seem to just go on and on and on. And then there are those few who you wish would survive forever. Bob Clancy is one of the latter.

No matter when you entered the Georgist movement he appeared to have been there for its entire existence. That it could have existed without him seemed impossible. He knew everyone and everything about it. He could reach back into his unfailing memory and in the movement's remote history to supply the name, cite the reference, show the relevance that would inform debate and advise the present.

Bob began his stewardship at the very start of the Henry George School 63 years ago. At the feet of its founder Oscar Geiger he learned the nuances of the sound political economy, the essentials of liberty, and the true meaning of justice, that Henry George proclaimed. He learned the lessons well and in his turn pursued with grace what his mentor felt each life should seek — a worthy goal.

He recited and he lived that philosophy. "He who would be served must serve." Undaunted through the years, with acclamation and in adversity, he did the work that virtue told him had to be done. Unhurried, unassuming, reasoned and reasonable, his faults or failings, to which all are subject, could never foil his ceaseless search for the right path.

Teacher to us all, he had the harmony and spirit to impart what we were ready to receive from his vast store of knowledge and his wide range of interests. As he would with the philosophy of Henry George, he could open a door for you, the moment you rapped, to music, art, literature or lore.

This he meant to me. A life well lived in service of a supreme cause, the cause of society and humanity at its best. — *George Collins*

I first met this extraordinary personality in 1981, when I was working to reorganize the Department of Latin American Affairs in New York. From the first, Bob Clancy offered his collaboration and advice. Through the years he was always eager to keep me in contact with the Spanish and Argentinean Georgists. Thanks to him, I met the immortal Georgist Emilio Lemos Ortega, and the venerable intellectual Blas Infante.

Every year at our annual conference, Bob Clancy's serene way of speaking mixed and merged with the heated, lofty voices of each phalanx of young speakers. Bob Clancy was a man of distinguished intelligence, and his brilliant thoughts were expressed at every civic event he attended. Because of his humanity, his high ideals and his boundless self-sacrifice, his spirit lives on in our

troubled times today.

Bob Clancy's achievements speak for themselves. He built the conscience of contemporary Latin American Georgism, guiding us along the straight, sure path of socioeconomic justice. Eternal praise to this guiding light of orthodox Georgism!

— *Manny Felix*



The New HGS Director: Bob Clancy in the 1940s

One of the things I remember best about Bob was his love and appreciation of art. He had a sensitive eye and good instinct for the fine arts, particularly for painting and prints. His print collection, parts of which I was privileged to view on occasion, was extensive. A common historical thread running through his collection was land and the common people's relationship to it, whether it be peasants and farmers living amidst a natural landscape, or the growth of the urbanized industrial landscape of the early nineteenth century. Both of these aspects came together for Bob in the later Impressionist period, which represented for him, in part, the urban dweller's need to find a balance between the growing fragmentation of city life and the *plein-air* realities of a vanishing way of life.

Bob also had a life-long fascination with the era of the French Revolution, an era which combined for him many of the contradictory aspirations of the human experience. His print collection contained a number of works relating to that period, and he had an strong grasp of that period's literature. Democracy, justice and human rights were among Bob's fundamental convictions and these beliefs found expression through many facets of his life. Bob not only held these beliefs but sought to embody them, and did so — in both his professional life and in those areas of his personal life that I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with.

— *David Domke*

When I met Bob ten years ago, I was very much a neophyte in this movement, but I learned rather quickly that "Mr. Clancy" was a Georgist "walking encyclopedia." Because of his comprehensive understanding of Henry George's life and times, it seemed as if Bob must have had direct contact with George (although he was born seventeen years after George's death).

What Bob offered anyone who came in contact with him was a vastly interesting array of knowledge — Georgist philosophy, of course, but then a deep appreciation of art and music, and an acumen for all forms of heady debate. As it was for me after Bob Scrofani died, so has it been since Bob Clancy's passing: the voice stays in my mind, repeating something familiar: "I'd like to order ten copies of *P & P*." I hope for Bob, as I'm certain his many Georgist friends are hoping, that he's discussing economics with his idol, somewhere in the realm of heaven.

— *Susan Klingelhofer*

Bob Clancy: if anyone could be, he was the reincarnation of Henry George. My first meetings with Bob at the West 42nd Street office of the Henry George Institute were what got me actively involved with the Georgist movement — first as a volunteer for the Institute, then, after the 1980 conference in New York, as Secretary of the Council of Georgist Organizations, of which Bob had just been elected the Chairman.

From Bob I learned firsthand the history of the Georgist movement. And Bob succeeded in impressing me — an habitual doubting Thomas — with the logic and beauty of the Single Tax. Together we refurbished the School's library, restoring titles that had been hastily discarded in the early 70s. Each book had a history, and Bob made sure to tell me. Friday evenings, after the work was done, was often reserved for sitting in the HGI office, now at 5 East 44th Street, discussing Georgist theory and history, and world events and issues, over wine and crackers. These were often most pleasant discussions, but sometimes very heated disagreements — and even more so when other Georgists, such as HGI staff persons Lois Jessop and Joe Jespersen, and school directors Phil Finkelstein and Stan Rubenstein, were about. "Where two or three" Georgists "gather together," debate is certain to ensue!

Through it all, I became and remained impressed by Bob's loyalty to the Georgist cause, rather than to any particular organization. He was very generous in helping out any sincere researcher, and volunteered his time not only to the Institute but to the Council and to the International Union as well. Still, he had energy enough left over to issue his regular (continued on page six)

A Robert Clancy Reader

Georgist Journal, Winter 1987-88:

Discussing with some friends about why the Georgist philosophy is not more widely accepted after all these years, I suggested three "I's": Ignorance, the Interests and Inertia.

Re the first: Ignorance is above all the major obstacle. This is not simply a matter of people not knowing the existence of our philosophy but of the difficulty of following its reasoning. The vested Interest in the private collection of the rent of land exerts a tremendous Influence on politics, education etc. It is not to be underestimated.

Inertia is the tendency to go on doing things in the same way, even after a better way is demonstrated — a quite universal trait.

In our discussion, other "I's" were suggested: the In-

come tax was one — this tax is so entrenched that people — those who pay as well as those who collect — have difficulty in imagining any other mode of taxation. Indifference was also cited; only a small minority are concerned with questions of fundamental reform and equal justice and liberty. There is also an "if" factor: "If only the Single Tax were adopted at the very beginning" or "If only some important leader would get behind it," etc. And we may cite the Indisposition of non-converts to think, and even the Indisposition to talk about it or do anything about it for fear of being ridiculed. Finally, there is simply "I" as in "I'm all right, Jack." Seeking, or having found, a little comfortable niche somewhere, let the rest of the world go to hell! We could go on with Iconoclasm and Idiocy, to say nothing of world Insanity.

Getting carried away with this Imagery, we also have to cope with our own Inadequacies: Impatience with our glacially slow progress whilst Illogical Ideologies are steaming ahead; our Irritation at the difficulty of getting a hearing; our Insistence which sometimes turns people away; occasionally our bizarre Inventions of methods to attract attention; and other Idiosyncracies.

And that's only one letter of the alpha-

bet! So we have 25 other multiple obstacles to overcome. But at least there are some more positive words throughout the alphabet. Staying with "I", we have a powerful "Idea" that has in it the "germanitive power of truth." So let us continue to spread Information about it and keep up the Inclination to Illuminate the world with it. Let us maintain our Independence, be Immune from the world's discouragements, and have the Idealism to believe It will eventually triumph. We may well reckon with an Invisible Influence which will take time to become manifest.



Henry George News, Nov. 1964

The private collection of the rent of land acts as a heady narcotic.... The grimness with which this privilege is grasped bears this out. People do not act with a fraction of the hysteria when earned income is taken from them as when unearned income is taken from them.

For when earned income is taken, a person can calculate how much has been taken and he knows how he can recoup that amount. But when the unearned income of rent is taken away, the proprietor has been despoiled of an aladdin's lamp, a mysterious source of the bounty that he would not know how to replace. And so the countenance of this privilege is protected and defended like nothing else on earth.



"The Enslavement of Laborers" from Bob's *Illustrations to Progress and Poverty*, 1955

Henry George News, April 1966

The wage-price spiral seems to be a mysterious thing, with no one seeing how it starts, and each blaming the other for starting it. The real culprit, the increase of land rent, escapes detection. As the value of land goes on its inflated way, absorbing the benefits of progress, it presses against the returns to labor and capital. They in turn

exert pressure — usually against one another — to keep up their accustomed returns. They seemingly succeed by getting a monetary return which apparently puts them ahead of the game. More money is printed to take care of the increase — and the invisible, insidious drain of inflated land value goes on. The more obvious things get blamed.

Excessive taxing and spending by the government doesn't help — but we have had inflationary periods without big government — but with land speculation. Reform the currency, cut down big government, curb the unions and control big steel — and we would then most probably have the most rampant land values ever, and the biggest inflation ever.

✂✂✂

Henry George News, June 1967

Many Georgists of today are attracted to various conservative or right-wing movements, and there are reasons for this. These movements seem to favor individual liberty as against government encroachment, and this cuts a lot of ice with Georgists. But a word of caution is in order against too close an identification.... While there are some things in common, there are some serious differences.

There is among right-wingers a strong tendency to blame poverty on the poverty-stricken; and if any help is needed, to depend on private charity. Although they are cool toward public welfare, they are not quite against more government, for they want a stronger police to quell signs of discontent among the poor. In this mood, they are seldom if ever receptive to another way, the Georgist way, of getting rid of poverty.

The devotion of right-wingers to freedom is open to question in other respects, too. They find it hard to swallow that freedom means equal freedom for all mankind, and do not want to inconvenience the present owners of the earth in order to give the disinherited billions a chance. "Freedom" to them means "do not disturb those who possess."

Years ago, left-wing causes seemed to have something in common with the Georgist cause because they too were protesting against the status quo. But the differences were too great. Since then, the status quo itself has become more leftist, thus giving our protest against more of a semblance of right-wing protests....

Grumbling about taxes and regulations is pretty universal, and this is what makes it seem that the right-wing movement is going places. But a protest without a program cannot get far.... We do not need to link up with dubious causes, whether of the right or the left. Our greatest strength will come from remaining (continued on page six)

