

## H. G. "Men of Distinction"

**A** MOVEMENT gains sinew and stature when it begins to be known and respected for spokesmen of integrity. In Henry Georges' day and immediately thereafter, a dozen or more men of importance in various cities were esteemed, and are still remembered, for their single tax views. One even has a monument erected to his memory in Cleveland's public square — Tom Johnson.

This was followed by a period where the Henry George philosophy was taken "to the people" in a free educational program. Now there is evidence again of the emergence of spokesmen whose positions of leadership warrant serious hearings in the news media. Ten or twenty years ago news stories referring to land value taxation were hard to find, and actual mention of Henry George was rare indeed. Today it would be impossible to read them all, even with the help of a clipping service. From a partial sampling of articles in the last month, note the variety and forcefulness of the following:

"Sit Tight and Grow Rich," is the title of a Christian Science Monitor editorial by Richard L. Strout on March 18th in which he gives examples of property prices jumping from thousands to millions, and then supposes someone deliberately wanting to create a slum. The method he outlines is well known to HGN readers. Mr. Strout quotes magazine articles and especially the Architectural Forum where Perry Prentice stands out as the most widely quoted proponent of our day for re-activating the principle of just assessment and taxation practices. Again on March 25th a Christian Science Monitor special correspondent reported that in several states, especially California, "debate is heating up over reform of the property tax." He quotes Dick

Netzer of New York University, author of a tax study, who suggests taxing the land alone, regardless of improvements—but at the full value of the land, stating that property taxes discourage improvement because they mean a higher tax bill.

In the Sunday (Columbia) Missourian, Dr. Harry Gunnison Brown, economics professor, author and lecturer, was accorded honors long overdo. Though retired, Dr. Brown at 85 is still occupied in trying to make the public see that his home city of Columbia could have a building boom if it had a higher land tax. He has recently produced a booklet showing that land percentages are now as low as one-fourth in relation to the total property tax all over the country. In the busy and cheerful life as a beloved teacher, Professor Brown was not only a star, but a star-maker.

Among former pupils are Pinkney C. Walker, who succeeded him as dean of the School of Business and Public Administration, and Carl McGuire, chairman of the Economics Department of the University of Colorado at Boulder. But many more in all professions have come under his influence. Dr. and Mrs. Brown have spent several winters in Pennsylvania doing volunteer service for the Graded Tax League. Now that they are in residence again in Columbia, they are back home with friends, and near St. Louis where conference visitors may hope to see them in July. Dr. Brown was referred to by a colleague as "a dynamic lecturer, interested in students and teaching," and as "one of the few who really understand money."

In a weekly Montreal publication, The Suburban, Professor R. W. G. Bryant of Montreal University com-

ments on construction of an underpass which has virtually ceased because of feverish activity in land speculation. When a Roman Emperor built the Appian Way he extracted a road charge of one-third the cost from the owners of adjoining land, he said. The City of Quebec could have profited greatly by following that example, since "the increased value of the land created by the community should in all justice and equity belong to the community." The city must now try to protect itself, preferably by expropriating the still vacant land, but that is not possible according to law (it has already changed hands several times with fat increments added each time).

The author suggests two possible directions for change. Check the amount of tax revenue lost through the inordinate delay in construction — compare the actual tax revenue with the calculated revenue in five years when the area is fully developed — and require the landowners to pay the difference, regardless of whether the land is developed or not.

The second suggestion he calls "homologating" the whole area for public uses to put the lid on speculation and phony rezoning. The mere threat of this, he thinks, would be enough to bring about the desired activity.

The Detroit Free Press has a staff writer, Doris M. Jarrell, who has reported frequently on the efforts of Benjamin F. Smith, an engineer in Grand Rapids who, acting largely alone for twenty years, with the encouragement of his wife, has of late emerged remarkably as one who can gain attention and respect with calm, well pre-

sented proposals. Several city officials are moving in his direction and are laying aside an old prejudice. He was long dismissed as "an advocate of Henry George's theory of land-only taxation."

The Free Press Real Estate Editor devoted half of his title page on March 5th to "Weapon Against Blight: Land Tax." He explains with the help of figures and pictures how LVT would help to eliminate slums, and he begins with a reference to another emergent spokesman for tax reform — an alumnus of the Detroit HGS, now a mayor.

"One way to fight slums is to tax them out of existence. And some say the way to do this is to base property taxes on the value of the land, not on the buildings which stand upon it.

"Perhaps the best-known advocate of land value taxation in the Detroit area is James Clarkson, mayor of Southfield. He feels very strongly about it and has made progress toward this kind of a tax system in his city."

Jeremiah F. Enright of Syracuse, the man with the Old Testament name, is pictured as one of the "heretics" in a weekly series in the *National Insider*. The article names Henry George and the HGS in "A Bold Plan to Wipe Out Slums" with "theories that get to the core of the urban problem" — a simple and effective plan is clearly explained.

The new stars in the Georgist movement are developing now and going into orbit. They are an important part of the contemporary scene. Read about them in the only U. S. national and international publication devoted exclusively to *Henry George News*.

**Philip E. Wallace, voluntary director of the HGS Jamaica (W.I.) extension, is in New York for a period of study and training preparatory to assuming extension duties on a full time basis.**