

School Leaders Plan Future Program at St. Louis Conference

THE Sixth Annual Conference of the Henry George School of Social Science at the DeSoto Hotel in St. Louis was an all-star performance—not the least important of the stars being the weather, which was so pleasantly cool as to rival the air conditioner.

Among unscheduled attractions was a television broadcast on which Joseph Stockman, director of the Philadelphia school was interviewed. Sitting in the cafe at the hotel, delegates enjoyed watching inimitable Joe marking up a blackboard with Chinese characters and innocently teaching the fundamentals of economics at the same time.

This was in a sense a preview of "The Wit and Wisdom of China" the feature of the Sunday morning breakfast. Mr. Stockman was introduced as a visitor to St. Louis for the Henry George Conference. He ran through seven basic terms, including wealth, capital, labor, wages and interest. The novelty of his presentation lies in the fact that when the Chinese characters are drawn the rudimentary nature of these fundamentals are at once graphically and entertainingly understood. A number of telephone calls to the station indicated that listeners would have welcomed a longer program.

J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco was also interviewed on a St. Louis radio station on the concluding day of the conference. He spoke of the hopeful situation in Denmark and emphasized that our American Constitution and ideals are as valid as ever.

Over 100 persons attended, a third of whom were from outside St. Louis. Among visiting delegates, aside from those whose pictures appear on this page, were Leta Gale, secretary of the Chicago school, who got down too late to be included. Harry Kuck and Carl Strack of Cincinnati (both instructors), Gwen Speelman of Columbus and Everett De Jager of Everett, represented Ohio. Also present were Lucian Wilcox of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; S. C. Sweazy of Ottawa, Kansas; Alice Hasler and Alice Solbert of Chicago; and Esteban Manuel of New York City, who stopped over enroute to his home in the Philippine Islands. J. Craig Ralston, of Madison, Wisconsin, author of *The Shovelcrats* came down for the banquet, a brilliant climax to the three-day meeting.

Buzz Sessions

The six sessions in which those present exchanged ideas, were conducted as round tables, allowing maximum participation for all. Delegates homeward bound looked back upon these as a new experiment which would be followed more frequently in the future. To further encourage over-all participation, an interesting technique known as the "buzz session" was introduced by Arthur Lea of New York.

This consisted of a quick call during a discussion for people to turn their chairs around and form in groups of four or five, to consider a given question. Each group appointed a chairman and then "buzzed" merrily along for about five minutes, to come forth later with another group question. These, when compared, were found to fall into two or three categories, and proved more conclusive than results usually obtained in a large group discussion. Many leaders will probably be introducing buzz sessions to their home extensions in the coming months.

Among the subjects discussed at work sessions were the school's place in the community, the teacher's role in presenting the fundamen-

tals, the importance of volunteers, and the necessity for wider financing.

The Henry George Women's Club of Chicago was represented by Mrs. Emma Hildebrecht, past president, who made a convincing plea for women's clubs in connection with each extension—these to combine eventually into a national organization. This club offers a varied program and donates its yearly surplus to the Henry George School. It is affiliated with Chicago's Federation of Women's Club and shares in the General Federation program on a national basis.

Looking at Ourselves

At a luncheon at which William E. Hoefflin, treasurer of the St. Louis extension presided, Robert Clancy of New York gave the audience a delightful picture of the George movement *from the moon*.

He said that he liked to get far away sometimes and take a long view, and he reported that even from this distant vantage point Mr. George's proposal made sense. The lunar view showed a growth—a force that kept moving. His sights have not yet told him just where we are going, but all present would certainly agree that something has been set in motion which is far too advanced to be turned back, or to stop.

Miss Violetta G. Peterson, secretary of the Schalkenbach Foundation also spoke at this luncheon and after revealing certain aspects of the foundation's program she voiced hearty confidence for the future and said, "I think with faith and strength and hope we can go forward—let that be our watchword—*forward*."

Miss Peterson mentioned that *Economics Simplified* was being translated into French and would soon be available in that language, having been especially requested by the French speaking population of Canada. The year book which we are awaiting eagerly will be a source book of facts for students and others, and is promised for next year. Tax information is being gathered from all over the world for this important volume.

The Schalkenbach secretary also revealed that a committee with Alexander M. Goldfinger as chairman, is now conducting a research among university professors which throws light upon an old and much debated problem. Judging from a few of the many encouraging letters received from educators, it would seem the attitude toward us is not hostile, as we thought, but rather cooperative. With the results of this study it was pointed out that the Schalkenbach Foundation hopes to lift the stigma of propaganda by showing that our field of interest is much wider than is generally supposed.

While the foundation is primarily regarded as a publishing firm, Miss Peterson said they preferred to think of themselves as a reservoir of strength behind the Henry George School which others could tap. She has reason to believe there is a reawakening in the colleges to the importance of the land question and said, "we stand upon a threshold—all around us are signs of hope—signs of an awakening that must come."

Ethics vs. Science

Hiram B. Loomis, president of the board of the Chicago school, spoke at the opening luncheon after an address of welcome by Mrs. Elizabeth Angell (who is leaving her position soon to be married).

Mr. Loomis opened his address by saying,

"the land question has been *the* question from the beginning of history, and it is *the* question today. We're the only ones who have anything on the ball, and what is it that we *have* on the ball?"

Referring to John Locke, he added, "the earth is common to man, but every man has a property in his own person—the labor of his body and the work of his hands. The issue between Russia and us," he said, was the matter of whether or not the products of labor were individual property. Mr. Loomis believed we were "playing soft" on the ethical side of our problem, whereas if we stood for the ethical basis we could sidestep nearly all of the economics including those technicalities upon which adherents of Henry George do not agree—interest, for instance.

While the conference was primarily a practical get-together for directors in order to grapple with school management problems, a number of provocative controversies helped to hold the interest of those who could not boast executive titles.

Mr. Loomis' well considered view that the ethical approach should be emphasized was contended by Mr. Goldfinger, dean of the Newark school, who said, "I would rather appeal to reason than to conscience or morals." Mr. Goldfinger further believed that while we could perhaps not hope to make economists of all our students, we should seriously attempt to make economists of our teachers.

Newark has taken the lead in this by instituting a series of lectures, for instructors only, to conduct a thorough inquiry into the teachings of Keynes, Adam Smith, Marx and others who have helped to influence the present economic trend. This was found to be every enlightening.

With regard to the criticism which followed, as to whether we were attempting to "force" our definitions and concepts onto students, most of those present doubted if we were doing that, since, as pointed out recently in New York, the very method of class instruction used at the Henry George School automatically contributes to free inquiry into our subject.

Noah D. Alper of St. Louis, felt we would be spreading ourselves too thin if we attempted

to do anything more than clarify the problem of land tenure—this being the basic facet of economics which is being overlooked in most university courses.

With regard to knotty teaching problems, John Monroe of Chicago suggested that "the way to teach definitions is not to begin with the word, but with the concept." He illustrated how delightfully this could be done by using a "separator" with pockets arranged in columns. Members of the audience were asked at random into what columns various items should be placed. Another equally entertaining game was introduced by John Tetley of Newark. Both should certainly have wider circulation, considering the present vogue for quizzes.

Robert Clancy, referring to the New York School's friendly connection with the Adult Education Council, said it had been pointed out that whenever you can stimulate people to think they are learning something, you can keep them interested. He wondered, in this connection, whether it might not be better in our classes to give more definite instruction and encouragement to the students at the beginning where the conflicting terms and definitions are introduced.

At a final Evaluation Session presided over by Robert Tideman of San Francisco, a fine summary of the conference was enunciated. Aside from cheers for Show Boat and the Municipal Opera (Robin Hood, tax rebel of the Sherwood Forest), most visitors applauded the conference program and pointed to definite achievement and valuable new ideas.

After visiting directors had turned in their evaluations John Monroe was invited to report on the Commerce and Industry program which he has been developing for the past few years. Mr. Goldfinger praised this worthy endeavor and said, "the ground work has been done in Chicago. It seems to me we should do the same work nationally, since one door has opened already." Some of the industries which have conducted classes in Fundamental Economics for the employees within their plants, are national in scope, and it would seem to be quite a simple matter to extend this proposal to other branches of the same industries; thus the Commerce and Industry program could function on a national scale, though all other work of the school would still be conducted according to local needs and preferences.

Mr. Monroe, who pointed out that this program was made possible by a great deal of cooperation by friends all over the country and by encouragement from New York headquarters, consented to write the following brief report, especially for readers of The Henry George News.

Commerce and Industry

Building on 15 years of community classwork in Chicago and three years of preparation through individual conferences and monthly Commerce and Industry luncheons for Chicago executives, the first year of actual classes conducted within industry closed in June with 30 companies having participated either through classes in their plants or through executives in special exploratory classes.

The program, as developed so far, indicates that:

1. Top level policy-making management can be reached favorably for presentation of the teaching program of the school in industry.
2. Top management is interested and cooperative.
3. The general personnel of industry in office and factory responds strongly for study on a voluntary basis.
4. The machinery is readily available, through the personnel and training departments of the various industries, for perpetuation of the classwork in industry on a systematic, low-cost basis.
5. The work can be carried on successfully under a Commerce and Industry Division of the Henry George School of Social Science with *Progress and Poverty* as the basic recommended reading, and with full treatment of all concepts developed by Henry George in the inquiry.
6. Substantial financial support can be generated by this program as it progresses, as indicated by the contributions and pledges which were forthcoming during the initial venture.
7. The work can be extended on a national basis because of the interest of companies introducing the classwork through their nationwide network of plants.

Industry is finding in this program the answer to a long-felt need owing to the fundamental character of the school's approach to the problems of industry, the individual and the whole community. Particularly appreciated are: the school's conference-style method of inquiry conducted by volunteer instructors on the employees' own time, which readily lends itself to rapid expansion; and the school's policy of support by voluntary contributions to cover not so much the cost of the classwork in the contributing company as expansion of the classwork throughout all industry.

Hoyt P. Steele, vice president of Benjamin Electric Manufacturing Co., sponsor of the pilot class, expressed himself as follows: "Obviously, and selfishly, the company cannot help but benefit if the overall level of understanding of fundamental economics among its employees is improved. From a broader point of view, if classes in fundamental economics could generally be accepted and participated in by the employees of American industry in general, then we would have little fear for the creeping socialism that concerns us all so much at the moment."

Looking ahead to expansion of this program

for the next year, four questions arise: (1) How quickly will the substantial support come? (2) How can the Commerce and Industry program most effectively be geared in with other functions of the school? (3) How can the machinery of the school be set up to meet the nation-

wide demand which has already expressed itself, and the vast market as yet untapped? (4) How can the teaching methods, materials and leadership be brought up to the high expectations and exacting requirements of industry?

Perhaps we can best take leave of the St. Louis Conference with the following synopsis of a luncheon address by Alexander M. Goldfinger, which many felt was a significant expression of our present position.

Looking Backward and Ahead

The Henry George School is now 18 years old. It might be well to look backward and review our work to see if all the effort spent by all the volunteers has been justified—then to try to anticipate the future.

Just as a human being must creep before it walks and walk before it runs, and run before it achieves maturity, so this school has had to pass through the creeping stage to reach maturity. Today it is known by many because so many prominent persons are affiliated with it, and because so many of our graduates have enthusiastically endorsed it.

But our efforts have produced only a few thousand graduates, far too few to be of great influence in bringing about a reform in land tenures. If our future efforts are to be confined to the education of the few thousand individuals each year which our extensions are now equipped to handle, our progress, though faster than heretofore, will still be slow in view of the immensity of the task.

Events compel us to try to hasten the fruition of our plans. Collectivism is gaining support and adherents at so rapid a pace that it behooves us to combat this influence by pointing out the only policy by which private enterprise can survive. The very fact that collectivism has threatened our freedom can be used by us to our advantage. Most business leaders are so worried by the inroads of collectivism that they are spending millions of dollars in a futile effort to defeat it.

If on a national scale we can convince business leaders that our school is the one organization which offers a constructive way to combat collectivism we can surely obtain the finances, the leaders and the resources to aid our educational program. On a national scale we would then use such media as radio, television and the press. In this way we might educate enough leaders to guide or control public opinion so that our goal, the adoption of a just land-tenure system, might be realized in our lifetime.

So, having emerged from swaddling clothes, our school is in its early adult stage. The next decade may witness the Henry George School as the most influential organization fighting for freedom and private enterprise. The initiative lies with us to plan intelligently to utilize the opportunity which confronts us. This will be richly rewarding to all whose unselfish efforts and money have been contributed thus far to insure a just economy for us and our progeny.

[The 1951 Conference will be held at one of the California extensions.]