

## Liberty—Shall We Not Trust Her?

THE Henry George School of Social Science is holding its tenth annual conference all day in the Jade Room, according to an announcement in the lobby of the Bellevue Hotel. And so it is. The year is 1954, seventy-five years after the publication of *Progress and Poverty*. The place is San Francisco, the city in which it was written.

Oh precious jade!

To some it is the imperial jewel. Others regard it indifferently as something to be looked at in museums, not something to be made their own.

Henry George met the same extremes in his day. Various aspects of this problem held the attention of directors and representatives from a dozen extensions day after day as they sat around the table sharing their experiences.

That great old mandarin, Joseph S. Thompson, author of *More Progress and Less Poverty* was on hand at the first session to extend, as president of the San Francisco school, a gracious welcome to visitors. Some thought there was encouragement, especially for teachers, in the fact that it took Mr. Thompson 27 years to finish reading *Progress and Poverty*. He started to read, reached "the remedy," closed the book and hurried out to tell his neighbors what he had found. More than 25 years later, he said, he took it up again and read to the end.

In the three conference days there were six "work sessions" devoted to the routine problems of extensions. Various directors who presided were Joseph A. Stockman, Philadelphia (The School and its Public Relations); Strethel Walton, Montreal (Trends in Teaching); James A. McNally, Hartford (Getting and Spending Money); Noah D. Alper, St. Louis (After Graduation—What?); Sidney G. Evans, San Diego (the "catch-all" session); and John T. Tetley, New Jersey (Special Reports and Evaluation).

Fred Workman of Pacific Grove, California; Wallace Kibbee of San Francisco, and Dorothy Sara of New York were chairmen at the luncheon meetings.

The conference ended formally with a banquet on Saturday evening at which J. Rupert Mason, a trustee of the Henry George School in San Francisco, spoke particularly for the International Union of Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, of which he is president, extending an invitation to attend the next conference of the International Union in St. Andrews, Scotland in 1955.

Joseph S. Thompson, matchless toastmaster, presided with skill and good humor, over this pleasant occasion at which, following two interesting addresses, Miss V. G. Peterson made a formal presentation to Anne Farrell, head librarian in charge of public relations of the San Francisco Public Library, of the second book in this 75th anniversary edition. The first was presented on May 15 to the New York Public Library. The second will repose in the first free library in California, of which Henry George became a member in 1878. He was the first secretary of the board of directors of this San Francisco library, and the minutes of the meetings for that period are in his handwriting.

Looking back over these pleasant discussion periods the variety of methods reported stands out—but equally impressive was the consistent

and general harmony in the midst of the diversity. Though there were nearly as many methods and approaches as there were directors present, it was clear that the truth was with all.

There was on the part of all, a willingness to change, and willingness to welcome a new voice. But no voice is ever really new—truth cannot belong to anyone. Whoever claims it for himself degrades it. The truth has existed from the beginning. A note that was stressed many times was that students are people, even as you and I, which is tantamount to saying that if you don't happen to be a jade fancier we respect your right to delay in your acceptance and we will resist the temptation either to pity you or pressure you.

Some teachers need to follow closely both the text and a carefully prepared manual. Other teachers, it appears, can throw away the book

and still develop graduates who can answer all questions associated with both. It all gets back to individuals again. We can no more cast teachers in a mold than we can expect students to fit into a uniform pattern. We must allow for free will and infinite variation in ability, temperament and maturity.

*Progress and Poverty* is used by some extensions. Others prefer abridgements. Some teachers use the texts only after they have aroused interest, possibly after the seventh lesson. The Chicago extension lets each student write what amounts to his own text, filling in a very general outline as the course progresses.

The *P & P* manual is followed religiously by some. Others modify it, and still others do without it entirely. It was generally agreed, even by the latter group, that the present manual should be revised, eliminating too-obvious questions, avoiding too much repetition in some places and filling in gaps in others, bringing questions up to date and increasing the breadth of supplemental material. All teachers were urged to review the current manual, pencil in their suggested changes and mail immediately to New York headquarters where a revision committee will conduct the project.

Many different teaching techniques are in use. In Boston they have been trying to give "the whole story" in the first session, with the remainder of the course devoted to answering the questions raised. In St. Louis the teacher attempts through general questions to draw from the class members in group discussion the fundamentals of economics, without appeal to any text or authority. In San Diego, wide use is made of visual education, with a 15-minute movie used each session to illustrate some economic principle. Some lecture, others ask leading questions, still others moderate discussions.

Teachers were generally enthusiastic about their own methods. But although the question, "How successful is your method?" was asked, no criteria were proposed to measure this success factor. For their own purposes, the New Jersey school hired an education expert to review techniques.

This raised unanswered questions: Are we trying to educate better citizens, political economists, or people who will put their learning to immediate use?

Some mention was made of the outstanding student. It was agreed that if he were given an opportunity—through a sort of silent under-

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standing with the teacher — to help the class through difficult points, this student would not be discouraged.

Because of the great diversity, it was hoped that an improved manual might serve as a guide or check for teachers who would want to be certain they were covering the core of the subject matter.

Do graduates lose interest? This question elicited various comments, among them, from Dorothy Sara, a handwriting expert, public speaker and Fundamental Economics teacher, "it ain't necessarily so." John Nagy of San Diego felt "very few ever lose the actual interest."

The group members, all alert to participation, came up with a long list of proposed activities which might sustain student interest, such as lectures, movies, social affairs, women's clubs, alumni associations, publications, advanced classes, letter writing groups, exchange visits with other adult classes (Boston), economics bus tours, a lunch club (San Diego) and conferences (like this).

Some of these activities prevail in all extensions but undoubtedly the pooling of ideas gave many a desire to put into effect some of the experiments tried by their colleagues in other schools.

Various extensions reported many different ways of raising money. For example, Los Angeles and San Francisco have an annual calling campaign, and visitors were invited to listen in on a meeting of San Francisco's fund raising campaign meeting Sunday evening. Director Verlin Gordon, of Lima, told of support on the local level offered by friends of the Ohio extension.

Success was reported from Boston when special drives were made for special purposes. New York offers memberships from \$1 on up with varying benefits. A budget was also suggested as a helpful device. It was hopeful that all leaders realized as much care and caution were required in spending as in getting the money for class promotion and administration.

In the Evaluation Session so many grateful blessings were showered upon modest Robert Tideman, the local director, that he complained somewhat sadly that San Francisco land values