

Recent Conference at Springfield, Ohio Was Notable Success

THE city manager of Springfield, Harold Cheek, opened the Fourth Annual Ohio Henry George School conference on the Wittenberg College campus August 13. Fifty persons attended the three-day conference, including out-of-state visitors from Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, New York, Ft. Mitchell, Ky., St. Louis and Washington, D. C. Verlin Gordon is the Ohio director with headquarters at 807 Citizens Building, Lima.

Dr. W. Emerson Reck, vice-president of Wittenberg, also welcomed the delegates with a statement on the importance of solving the economic problem in an ethical way. His quotations and statements indicated a wide acquaintance with the writings and philosophy of Henry George.

The opening session featured Leonard Garver Jr., a Cincinnati attorney who presented a talk and slides on Mexico. The speaker, a leader in the Goodwill Industries which gives handicapped persons a normal, productive and respected place in society, touched on the economic problems of extreme poverty and wealth and the stories of advanced civilizations—Aztec and pre-Aztec—which are now known only through archaeological remains.

Excellent conference arrangements were completed by Vaughn Peelle, Ray Cozad, C. Wobbe, Louis Bookwalter, Gwenn Spielman and other associates of the school extension in Springfield. In appreciation of the fine food, beautiful accommodations in the new dormitory and other services and courtesies, the delegates donated funds to present an inscribed copy of the new 75th anniversary edition of *Progress and Poverty* to the Wittenberg library. It was given to Dr. Reck by Miss V. G. Peterson, executive secretary of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, in the final session of the conference.

Miss Peterson came to Ohio to commemorate, as she has already done in San Francisco (Henry George News, August), and in New York, the 75th anniversary of the writing of *Progress and Poverty* by Henry George.

In her introduction, Miss Peterson recalled famous Ohioans who have contributed valuably to the George movement. She mentioned Louis F. Post who held classes in Cleveland and developed the charts illustrating the law of rent, still widely used. She spoke of Peter Witt who led the famous Tax School in Cleveland to educate assessors and others involved in city management. Others named were Brant Whitlock, Frederick C. Howe, Golden Rule Jones and Billy Radcliffe, colorful patent medicine salesman who, between sales, songs and stories under a lamplight on a street corner managed to give lectures on the single tax.

Why the book has lived, what its influence has been and what its future may be were answered inspiringly by Miss Peterson.

Wrestling With Problems

Provocative questions, taken largely from the writings of William Graham Sumner, were used by Robert Clancy, national director of the Henry George School of Social Science, for group discussion in one of the conference sessions.

For instance: If you want to collect the unearned increment of land value, why not also collect the unearned increment of a painting which becomes recognized as a masterpiece?

Typically, this particular question revealed a wide divergence of opinion that gives the lie to the occasional criticism that Georgists have a dogma. Some pursued the differences between land and labor products. Others said both were equally unearned increments and both should be collected by society. Some said the picture exchange was a matter of private economics while land, by its nature, was in the realm of public economics.

Finding Our Way

Harry E. Kuck of Cincinnati, honorary dean of the Ohio Henry George School, known to many for his development of teaching aids, spoke to the conferees on "Finding Our Way."

"It was said jokingly by another speaker that there was nothing unusual about Columbus finding America—it's so big, how could he miss it? Seriously, if he had not known his navigation instruments and his stars and kept on a westerly course, he could have missed America. We in the Henry George School must also stay on our course.

"The reason I urge the importance of staying on the course is my own experience in trying to interest others to consider the philosophy of Henry George. I was only trying to be a guide, not a know-it-all teacher. After a number of years I was convinced that it was no use to talk about the subject until I could get acceptance of the fact that there is a significant difference between nature and man-made capital.

"I made up a list of 14 points. I thought it was a clincher. I thought, now who can deny these 14 points of differences? A number of people agreed with me, but they were Georgists. The others could not agree.

"So I learned something. Few people are interested in hearing something unless they already agree with you. So you must start talking about something in which they agree, and then they will do the talking."

Mr. Kuck proceeded to demonstrate on the blackboard, borrowing from Professor Pinkney C. Walker, of the economics department at the University of Missouri. He made three headings for possible means of distributing wealth—"equal sharing," "according to need," and "according to contribution." Then, using the delegates as a class, he asked which they would prefer. Also, he had them locate particular proposals, such as income tax and farm subsidies, under the appropriate headings.

"It is in deciding on several objectives and seeing alternatives that students begin to get important implications," Mr. Kuck said. "They begin to sense direction. And they begin to understand what Henry George called 'forces of known direction'."

To emphasize the need for finding direction, Kuck quoted Albert J. Nock on Henry George: "Here you have a man who is one of the first half dozen of the world's creative geniuses in social philosophy. . . . Yet in this capacity he is today preeminently the forgotten man of Anglo-American civilization. He is also unknown, unremembered."

The direction of certain authors and critics also should be detected, Mr. Kuck said. "There are certain key words which indicate their bias. If they employ certain words we know they are

not friend but foe. Words like utopian scheme, panacea, dogma, creed, cult are fighting words."

Along those lines, Kuck said there should be an effort to make critics of George stick to facts. As an example, he pointed to a recent article in the American Journal of Economics and Sociology in which the author supposedly finds fault with Henry George. "Check the footnote and find the page, and one discovers that the author is not quoting George directly, but rather George's explanation of a point of view in which he disagrees!"

Doctrine of the Mean

Joseph A. Stockman, director of the Philadelphia extension, explained fundamental Chinese philosophy to the Ohio conference.

Taking his text from the book of history, dating back some 6000 years, Mr. Stockman said the Chinese believe that a study of a people's land tenure system will automatically reveal their religion, customs and way of life.

Using Chinese symbols, he explained the fundamental relationship between land, man, woman and progeny. The family is all-important. Therefore, put your own house in order first. Man and woman are incomplete without each other. The extremes in society vary from private land ownership to common land, in the sense used by Henry George. The Chinese were urged to try to find the way between the extremes.

The Chinese are the first to admit that these are not Chinese principles, but universal or natural relationships.

These fundamental relationships determine freedom or slavery, a religion that emphasizes heaven or the good life, a psychology that is tranquil or full of frustration. The Chinese, however, do not judge as between good and bad. Everybody is basically good. However, some try to arrive at good objectives by non-good methods. There is no one true way. Every way has a certain degree of truth.

Technique of Presentation

How to prevent students who have come to classes from dropping out before completion was the problem presented by Robert D. Benton of Delaware, Ohio, director of the Detroit extension.

He described certain ways in which beginning students are insulted, embarrassed, made to feel ignorant, investigated, overwhelmed with a mass of details, frightened by methods borrowed from compulsory schools, and diverted from his main interest in coming to the class.

"Money in the pocket, not philosophy of economics, is usually the principal interest of students. Philosophy comes later," Mr. Benton said. He said the student first wants to be told something, not quizzed.

He advertises his course as a lecture-discussion method. The session in which he explained this method was, in itself, a demonstration of his technique. Beginning with a lecture, he gradually draws out questions and discussion. He encourages this by a change of pace, sitting down, nodding in the direction of somebody who opens his mouth as if to say something.

Mr. Benton does not believe there should be an argument as between the merit of lecture method, Socratic question-and-answer technique, group discussion or conference method. "Use them all." The important thing is to be considerate of the student.

From a merchandising point of view, he urged not trying to tell everything at once. "The best shops do not put all their goods in the windows, do they?"

Not So Very Wild!

In a "Wild Ideas" session Vaughn Peelle, Springfield chairman of the conference, suggested delegating chairmen and committee members to the newer graduates instead of letting the old-timers assume all the responsibility. Miss V. G. Peterson of New York told of the fruitful weekly luncheon meetings in other cities and suggested a local cafeteria might serve this purpose.

Ray Cozad of Springfield reminded those present that in any group there were always just a few leaders to do the work and take the responsibility. Neva Bianco of New York described the activities of S. A. G. E., the alumni group. Woodrow Williams of Columbus Grove (well known for his frequent letters to newspapers), thought that more graduates could participate in this matter and also check the names of other people who write letters and invite them to classes.