

The Robert Tideman Story

Robert Tideman, who recently retired as executive vice president of the Northern California Henry George School of Social Science, had devoted twenty-four years of service to the School in the San Francisco Bay area. Previously, following his graduation from the University of Illinois in 1941 with a degree in electrical engineering, he had served the School for six years as a volunteer in New Jersey and Illinois, then as education director of the Henry George School in Chicago. It was he who recruited a Board of Directors which included the late Joseph S. Thompson, president of Federal Pacific Electric Company, and J. Rupert Mason, a retired investment broker.

Mr. Tideman came to San Francisco and started the Henry George School there in 1949, first with a small office on Kearny Street, eventually moving to 833 Market, the School's present location. As executive secretary, and later as executive vice president, he led the School through the establishment of five Bay Area branches. He pioneered the concept of giving School volunteers the opportunity for creative leadership, and set up the policy of having as many as ninety individuals serve at one time on the five branch School Boards, plus a thirty-member Central Board of Directors.

Since the inception of the Bay Area School and its branches, Mr. Tideman and a host of volunteers have taught ten-week basic economic courses to some 3500 Californians, the School's aim being to teach as widely as possible the economics a person needs to know to wield influence as an informed citizen in public affairs. The basic courses, as well as such advanced classes as Money, the Science of Political Economy, Free Trade, and Social Problems, are free and are supported by the voluntary subscriptions of the 400 members in the Bay Area. In 1973, through Mr. Tideman's efforts, a number of prominent citizens and legislators joined the Northern California Advisory Board of the School, including Assemblyman Willie Brown and newspaper columnist Charles McCabe.

Mr. Tideman has sought assessment reform research on tax issues and on measures proposed by the State legislature, representing civic groups interested in recouping some of the increased land values cre-

ated by community projects such as BART. He has many times spoken against granting property tax exemptions for land held by private schools, and has opposed every sales tax proposed during his residence on the West Coast. He has consistently urged reform in property tax assessment, pointing out that among the extravagances of the government is the non-collection of community-created ground rents, and that reducing taxes on land is itself inflationary.

Though surrounded by enthusiasts for Henry George's ideas, Mr. Tideman always maintains he speaks not as a Georgist, but only for himself and his own convictions. This is a reflection of his endeavor to develop a spirit of open-mindedness in the School, based on an understanding of Henry George's concepts, and on his belief that through the educational process, people should be enabled to think for themselves.

For fourteen years Mr. Tideman was secretary of the Government Finance Section of the Commonwealth Club, in which he has a lifetime membership. He has written a column on economics for the Pacific Sun; was a commentator on Radio Station KPFA for about ten years, and is the author of numerous articles in the field of taxation, appearing in the Hastings Law Journal and other distinguished publications.

Mr. Tideman and his wife, Meighen, have ten children, aged from four to thirty-two, one of whom (Nicholaus) served on the President's Council of Economic Advisors. Aside from education, Mr. Tideman has other interests and hobbies. Calling himself "a home repair man," he owns a collection of power tools and does everything from laying floors to repairing the roof. He delights in reading his children such "grown-up" works as *The Odyssey* and Plutarch's *Lives*, claiming children will sense it if an adult enjoys the stories read.

Though his interest in Henry George will no doubt continue, Robert Tideman is now the president of Tideman Montessori Schools, Inc., and is developing a chain of Montessori Schools in the Bay Area. Mrs. Tideman is the director of their two existing schools, and their daughter Cynthia Alexander will be head teacher at their third school, to be opened in Fremont in the fall.