

Fifty Years a Georgist

By JOSEPH JESPERSEN

In 1938 I received in the mail a circular from the Henry George School on 29th Street in Manhattan. That September I started attending classes. Progress and Poverty at once became an inspiration to read and a part of my life and has remained so through the years. In September 1941 I started teaching. In addition to the basic courses I taught History of Economic Thought, Political Philosophers and a course based on Jefferson's writings. In January 1967 I was given a certificate saying I had taught 37 classes. After that I taught two classes, the last one being a course based on Steven Cord's book, Henry George: Dreamer or Realist?

Most rewarding have been the speakers I heard at the School; among them were Salom Rizk, Waldemar Kaempfert, Roy Foulke, Harry Gunnison Brown, Albert Jay Nock, Broadus Mitchell, John C. Lincoln, James F. Lincoln, Raymond Moley, Albert Pleydell, Knud Tholstrup, and Lawson Purdy. At 29th Street, Anna George de Mille helped with the School cafeteria; when not busy she would sit and talk with me. My copy of her book Henry George: Citizen of the World is autographed by her daughter Agnes.

When the School was on 69th Street here are some events I remember: a trip to the grave of Henry George in Brooklyn; several trips to Philadelphia and Arden; a march by forty of us in the Columbus Day parade up Fifth Avenue in 1957. Also the popular Friday-at-Eight programs. My wife Mary and I gave many slide shows there of our travels.

Here are some Conference memories: In 1964 (New York) a group of us went to the World's Fair at Flushing Meadow; at the Hawaiian Pavilion, Vi Peterson gave a talk on that State and was presented with a grass skirt. In 1975 (Bryn Mawr) the late John Kelly of Scranton gave an outstanding talk. Some copies were made and I was fortunate to get a copy. In 1981 (Rindge, New Hampshire), Slow Turtle, one of about 300 American Indians living on Cape Cod spoke on the Indian land question. At his suggestion we formed a circle on the lawn and joined hands while he offered a simple Indian prayer. Another memory of that Conference was the Cathedral of the Pines, an outdoor memorial for World War II victims. In Atlanta (1988) I was glad to see a good representation from Fairhope, a colony in which I am interested.

I have also enjoyed the special events at the International Conferences. During the Cambridge Conference in 1984 we were taken to see Ely Cathedral, a wonderful Gothic structure. My wife Mary and I did much travelling and met Georgist friends. We visited London headquarters and talked with Arthur Madsen. In 1967 Gustav Bohnsack entertained us at Hanover, and Mr. and Mrs. Erich Zincke took us for a ride in the Harz Mountains right up to the Iron Curtain. In Vienna we saw Philipp Knab, and we visited Siebe Sevenster in Holland.

In Denmark we visited K. J. Kristensen who was the official land valuer. An outstanding personality was Dr. Viggo Starcke. For 20 years he had been in charge of a large hospital. He resigned in 1945 to become active in politics as leader of the Georgist Justice Party. He was a member of Parliament for 15 years and was in the coalition government, 1957-1960. He had written a number of books including one that covered that period, which I reviewed for Land and Liberty.

Since the organization of the Henry George Institute in 1971 I have been its Treasurer and one of its Directors. I work with correspondence students and translate articles from the Danish publications Vejen Frem and Grundskyld.

Through the fifty years it has been a pleasure and a privilege to be associated with the many stalwart Georgists past and present. To Henry George my tribute of appreciation and affection.