

An Educational Experiment at Fairhope

One of the most formidable obstacles to the growth of ideas is the closed mind. Every Single Taxer has met this and has marveled at the inability of many people to grasp the fundamental truths of this philosophy. After all, when one considers our educational process from kindergarten clear through college, is it any wonder that one meets with so many closed minds? The plan of assigning lessons from books and then having children recite these lessons develops the ability to grasp the thought of the book and hand it back to the teacher without any real analysis or thinking. This develops the tendency to take truth on authority and gives no opportunity for the development of the power to question, analyze and form conclusions. With an examination ahead of them and success depending on their ability to pass that examination, children and youth form the habit of accepting facts and opinions ready-made and of believing that success lies in meeting the demands of the authorities. Is it any wonder that there are so many undeveloped thinkers?

The school at Fairhope, Alabama, conducted by Mrs. Marietta Johnson, has been in progress for twenty years. It has all groups from kindergarten to college. It has been kept free to the children of the town that it might be of value to the public schools. It is a demonstration of the principle that education is growth and that the school programme to be educational must minister to all-around development and must especially provide conditions for the development of the finest thinking power. Believing that self-consciousness and stultification of mind result from the marking system, this school has eliminated all grades, marks and promotions. It does not even assign lessons nor hear lessons. There is no such thing as a recitation. Children are not asked questions to see if they know but are questioned to help them to understand. Each class is a discussion group, furnishing opportunity for the freest individual expression of the subject in hand. If this school could be made a permanent center for demonstrating this idea, no doubt the public schools would eventually come to see not only the undesirability of the grading, marking system, but would also see how absolutely unnecessary such a system is. The graduates of the High School at Fairhope, have entered many colleges and have done well.

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Equality of opportunity is one of the fundamental principles of democracy and of the Single Tax philosophy. Many people believe that our present economic system provides equality of opportunity or that we have a just system and that success or failure depends on individual ability. One of the greatest obstacles to acceptance of the Single Tax philosophy lies in the fact that many minds are unable to see the fundamental injustice of our present

system. Why is this? When we look at our educational system we need not seek far to find a cause. We often boast of our free educational system which provides equality of opportunity for the poor as well as for the rich to go straight through school from kindergarten to college. But is this true? While schooling may be free financially, is it true that every child has equality of opportunity with every other child for his highest development? We find that the intellectual requirements of the school are of such a nature that some children are fore-ordained to failure and others fore-ordained to success. The standards of attainment and achievement for promotion to the next grade are of such a character that some children, although making honest and strenuous effort, may never hope to succeed. This is not due to subnormal mental conditions, but rather to development, interest or special tendencies. The child who does not grasp thought readily from the printed page, but thinks through action is at a great disadvantage, in fact he is a failure before he really begins. Very often these failures possess the finest of minds.

All conceptions come through experience. These children *experiencing injustice*, which is called justice, are by that much incapacitated to recognize just or unjust conditions. The child who succeeds in school thinks his success is due to individual ability. The child who fails in school thinks his failure is due to his personal limitations or inferiority. Not many of them are able to see that their success or failure was determined by the conditions imposed. These children all reach maturity after experiencing injustice which was called justice, and are incapable of recognizing unjust economic conditions. Arguing from their own experience, they believe and insist that the successful business man is successful because of his superiority and that the business failure is so because of personal limitations or inferiority.

The school at Fairhope, Alabama, is designed to give every child *experience in equality of opportunity* that he may develop a conception of justice. The principle on which the school is working is that no child may fail, that all must succeed; that every child must have equality of opportunity with every other child for the development of his highest powers. Development is education and while all children may not reach the same external standard of knowledge, attainment or achievement, still the school sees to it that every child uses his mental powers to best advantage; that every child is kept un-selfconscious and joyous and that every child is well and strong during the growing years. Thus children develop a conception of equality of opportunity or justice. This conception enables them to understand and to appreciate the fact that economic failure or success is not due to individual prowess or ability but inheres in the very conditions resulting from an unjust social system.

Seeing these unjust conditions, the greatest impulse of their lives will be to throw whatever influence they may

have to changing these conditions. If the school at Fairhope could be made a permanent center for the demonstration of equality of opportunity in growth and education, no doubt all public and private schools would eventually accept these principles. They would see the evil of any system in which one child may languish and another flourish.

When the grading marking system is eliminated and the schools concentrate on the task of preserving the open mind throughout the growing years, and when all children experience equality of opportunity in growth, we may be sure the fundamental injustice of our economic system will be readily recognized.

—MARIETTA JOHNSON.

Lecture Tour of G. H. Duncan

DURING November and December George H. Duncan, field lecturer for the Henry George Lecture Association, has filled fifty-one engagements in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas, the audiences comprising seventeen clubs, eighteen schools and colleges and fifteen churches, forum and special meetings and numbering over fourteen thousand.

In the Twin Cities, Minnesota, Mr. S. A. Stockwell, of Minneapolis, was exceedingly helpful in making arrangements, his long experience in public service causing people to give courteous and interested attention to a speaker for whom he vouched. It was also a pleasure to meet such Single Tax veterans as Robert Seibert, St. Paul, and Dr. Leonard, Minneapolis.

The tax system of Minnesota, although the usual conglomeration of unreasonable tax principles, contains several rays of light. Most Single Taxers are familiar with the 6 per cent ore and royalty tax, the result chiefly of the work of the late Carl Buell; also the assessment of various classes of property at different rates recognizes the restrictive effect of wrongly imposed taxes, while economic pressure forced the recent Legislature to exempt growing timber from taxation under certain circumstances.

In Wisconsin it was a pleasure to learn of the organization of the State League of Single Taxers, with Herman Reel, president, and Cornelius Leenhouts, secretary, both of Milwaukee. Former Judge Charles B. Rogers, Fort Atkinson, is also an interested worker.

A visit to Fairhope, Alabama, afforded an opportunity for a close investigation of this Single Tax experiment station, and an opportunity to become acquainted with such patriots as E. B. Gaston, A. E. Schalkenbach, Emil Knips, Fred T. Burnham and others. The experience of Fairhope reveals some aspects of the practical operation of the Single Tax which never occur to us who have been concerned chiefly with the theoretical side. To the shrewd, good-natured common-sense of Mr. Gaston and those associated with him we owe a debt which can hardly be appreciated.

The Texas Single Tax League, with Mr. William A. Black, San Antonio, as secretary, is doing a state-wide work for the cause second to none in the country except that of the Henry George Foundation in Pennsylvania. There has been built up a favorable public sentiment which, with a reasonable expense fund, could be translated into legislative enactments which would give Texas the largest measure of Single Tax of any state. Unfortunately however, here as elsewhere, the movement is cramped for lack of available funds. Already there are in effect a series of occupational taxes in such form as to closely approach the true Single Tax principles embodied in the Minnesota ore and royalty tax. A slight change would result in vast relief to active industry.

Activities of the Henry George Foundation

THE lecture service of the Henry George Foundation is being rapidly extended and promises to become an important department of its educational work. Secretary P. R. Williams, and William M. McNair, the latter of whom is both a zealous worker and an effective speaker, are now engaged in lecture tours that will cover every corner of Pennsylvania, and the campaign will probably be carried into neighboring states as soon as the present speaking schedule is completed. The significance of Pittsburgh's practical experience in land value taxation is being featured by the speakers in many of their addresses, but the "unadulterated" gospel of Henry George is presented where the opportunity is afforded.

During recent weeks Secretary Williams has addressed the Kiwanis Clubs of Altoona, Erie, Corry and Titusville, the Lions Clubs of Warren and Erie, and the Rotary Club of Titusville. Usually these meetings are attended by city or county officials interested in the taxation problem and everywhere the newspapers have given generous publicity to reports of the addresses.

Keen interest in land value taxation is now in evidence in Erie, where James B. Ellery is cooperating actively in arranging meetings, and is now planning to revive the Erie Single Tax Club. In this city officers and members of the Lions Club are seriously studying the tax problem and, in addition to their regular luncheon meeting, devoted an entire evening to round-table discussion with the speaker, following a dinner at the Shrine Club. In Warren, A. G. Beecher, veteran Single Tax worker and publisher of "Truth Seeker" literature, has been fighting the battle alone for many years, and is encouraged to see evidence of interest on the part of local newspapers and civic organizations.

William N. McNair, for years a prominent figure in political campaigns, both local and state, recently addressed the Lions Clubs of Reading, Lancaster and Pottsville and the Rotary Clubs of Slatington and Mahanoy City, on the