

# Coordinating and Promoting the Georgeist Movement

By WILLIAM W. NEWCOMB

## II. Practical Promotional Techniques

SOME institutions enjoy a consistently good press; some a sporadic press that is never bad; others a consistently unhappy mention; a fourth group will have fun poked at it; and some get no press at all.

The only accredited movement which can marshal a thousand luminaries to its banner and suffer the last two afflictions above, is the Georgeist movement. Fun has been poked at it, because its publicity agents were zealous reformers; not knowing the tenets of good journalism, they could not aid the movement in securing the right press. Georgeism's scarcity of press reference in magazine, radio, motion picture and newspaper can be attributed to the fact that not one of the groups affirming its thesis since George's death has ever hired a press agent or public relations counsel.

Yet monopoly concerns, with all the odds in their favor, dare not deny themselves public relations. Consider the following:

John D. Rockefeller, despite his tithe to the church, found it increasingly difficult to withstand the odium that his oil machinations had developed in the public mind. Courts, legislatures, and society in general were harassing him. Ivy Lee sent him to his grave an honored man—despite the disclosures of Ida Tarbell. Rockefeller did not have to change his methods of refining and selling oil; he did have to spend more than his tithe, and see to it that his philanthropies were publicized.

The Hartford brothers had built a remarkable grocery chain. Independent merchants, grocery wholesalers and consumer cooperatives brought such penalizing legislative pressure, that the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company was forced to reduce the number of its stores, while increasing the size of them in each community. But drastic legislation, sponsored by Senator O'Mahoney, was pigeon-holed after Carl Byor had convinced real estate, Chambers of Commerce, and educators that the great A & P was a boon to the consumer.

Henry Ford has been a more successful opponent of the New Deal than any irreconcilable of the "Old Order." It's true that the courts and the labor boards finally made him give in. But Ford found, prior to conversion, that his dealer agencies had suffered untold sales resistance because of Ford's alleged anti-Semitism and his labor policies. His radio spokesman, William Cameron, had delivered a set of stuffy, generalized speeches over the air, but even that, sweetened with 45 minutes of magnificent music, did not make the hour's radio program justify the advertising department's expenditure.

Recently, Steve Hannigan, the man who may call Florida's high-school girls from the classroom to pose for the Gulf State's press department, has been made Ford's public relations counsel. Perhaps Hannigan can even reconcile the public to Ford's indisposition to war housing projects adjoining his new Willow Run plant.

And what of the Georgeist movement?

A useful form of public relations was dispensed with in 1938 when the New York Chapter of the Henry George Fellowship was disbanded by the Henry George School administration. It provided opportunity for inexpensive public relations; it was a potent morale factor to School graduates who wanted to engage in research and creative work in the interest of Georgeism. A good accounting of the Fellowship's contribution was given by Robert Clancy in a brief talk at the June 30 meeting of the Activities Forum, now held monthly in the School. This Forum offers an excellent opportunity to pick up the broken strings of the defunct Fellowship, but the Forum machinery tends to discourage consistent membership action. Miss Margaret Bateman, present Director of the School, and Miss Jean Lackey, the School's Advertising Director, are no doubt getting a great deal of excellent data from the discussions that occur at these monthly meetings. But a more concrete program of committee action is needed, and projects must be undertaken that will give the students—who do not know that their services are needed—a chance for constructive work.

I questioned a dozen people attending the last Forum meeting and found they wanted a loose organizational program. These people wanted assignments—some to dig deeply into data, so that others could put their creative energies to work. They did not want to be called together simply for the purpose of having their brains picked, or told that they could stamp envelopes if they wanted something to do.

Five men held conferences recently in the hope of developing an authoritative Newsletter of acute Georgeist analysis. There are now three outstanding unprejudiced Newsletters emanating from Washington; another goes out from New York; and over fifty Newsletters, sponsored by pressure groups, are sent from various key cities of the country. These Newsletters range in annual subscription from \$1 to \$100. Some of the expensive Newsletters do have reporters who get the gun on the newspapers, and the subscribers find that the information, gathered speedily, and presented succinctly, is worth the cost. One Newsletter, established many years ago by David Lawrence, the columnist, has within the last

few years become a magazine. With a weekly circulation of 170,000, and selling at 10 cents a copy, it still maintains its Newsletter function; a quick summary of hot news appears on four to six pages of each issue.

The outlay for the physical production of a Newsletter is less than \$50 an issue. Reporters who have an inside track on events in Washington and other points, now working for other agencies, could supply such a Newsletter with our specially required data, and the market price for their services must be paid. The Washington Newsletter having the largest circulation today is said to have started on \$1,500, and now grosses over \$150,000 annually.

There is not a single communication medium today representing Georgeist analysis prepared for the non-Georgeist public. A Newsletter that attained the circulation of ten thousand, at a price of \$15 a year, would have an excellent backlog of subscribers to launch into a magazine. The *Reader's Digest* was started on DeWitt Wallace's \$1,000 World War bonus. The magazine's circulation today is five million plus.

Another field worthy of investigation is the college field. In a period of eight days I called on several universities for the College Committee of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. It was between the spring and summer terms, and the professors of such huge institutions as Columbia and New York University were taking a breathing spell from their college offices. Despite the disadvantage of this test period, I obtained interesting results. I saw instructors or administrators at Princeton, Rutgers, City College, Manhattan, Fordham, and the New School for Social Research. Two classes will use "Protection or Free Trade" next fall. Four classes will use "Progress and Poverty" this summer. Follow-ups on some of the men I interviewed will result in more classes using either of these books and the college lesson Guides published by the Foundation.

Perhaps you will be interested in some notes that resulted from my interviews: (1) Professors who do know Henry George decry the ignorance of those (many of them with Ph.D. degrees) who do not. (2) Most of those who have had contact with George's works were introduced to them through post-graduate study. (3) A young crop of instructors were highly sympathetic, despite their acknowledged limited familiarity with George, and suggested that a course in "Progress and Poverty" be given them. (4) One school was interested in securing a teacher from the Henry George School, provided the teacher had a college degree. (5) Several professors said that their jobs depended upon the willingness of students to enroll in their classes, and that instructors using books more than five years old were boycotted by the students. (6) One professor, amongst the last group, said that to overcome this situation, a scholar of George should write a long introduction to "Progress and Poverty"; this would offset the time-wasting bickering that goes on between

student and instructor over correlatives of 1879 and 1942. (7) Only one professor threw me out. He was dean of a college in Mayor Hague's domain, and as his secretary said, I would not find him on the campus. Where I located him, and whom he was with, had better remain unsaid.

The field is fertile. A grand opportunity is awaiting a half-dozen representatives who should cover every major university in the United States. Simultaneously, however, there should be an advertising campaign to speed up the college "salesmen's" coverage. American enterprise must certainly have proven that advertising must accompany a selling program. And our advertising must be slanted to appeal to the college material of today who will be the leaders, entrepreneurs and government men of tomorrow.

There is no form of promotion so successful as a contest—with cash prizes. There is no segment of people more eager for social reform, and who seek an opportunity to say something about it, than college students. There is no group of people with such unlimited desires, such boundless energy—and with so little money—as college students. Q.E.D.: Stage a national college essay contest.

Public relations must be accompanied by advertising. I gave attention in this article to projects that have actually been blue-printed within the last month and have been given a great deal of study by promotionally minded fellow-Georgeists. All the projects are considered sound in method, and while the cost is greater per project than is usual in Georgeist circles, each one is slanted to a receptive audience—and not scattered to Tom, Dick and Harry. They can all be coordinated as part of a big promotional campaign. The fulfillment of these projects will draw (1) students; (2) money now being hidden from the Georgeist movement; (3) creative volunteer services from the School's inactive graduates.

We are told that there is a money problem in the Georgeist movement: Public relations, conducted by a professional office, will always draw greater sums of contributions than are ever spent. The money spent by us will be repaid in two ways—increased mass acceptance of Georgeism and more money to Georgeism.

Nor should Georgeists overlook the comparative costless opportunities that present themselves. For instance, what did the extension division of the Henry George School in your community do when your city recently held its big War Parade? New York's parade was seen by a million people. A float and truck for the School would have cost less than \$75. An audience of a million for \$75!

[Mr. Newcomb will welcome comments and suggestions from readers of his present series of articles. In his next article Mr. Newcomb proposes to discuss what outstanding authorities on public opinion say of the Georgeist influence. He is now polling the authorities, and requests readers to send him questions that might be used in this poll, to determine what public opinion is on collectivism versus free economy. Address communications to William W. Newcomb, care of LAND AND FREEDOM.—Ed.]