

Rugged Individuals

IT'S OVER 50 YEARS since Henry George almost got elected Mayor of the City of New York, and over 40 since he passed to his reward. Most New Yorkers remember him only as the deviser of something called the "single tax" and blithely presume that his ideas are as extinct as the great Auk.

That's where the joke comes in. His ideas are not only not dead, but they are being constantly spread far and wide by the most extraordinary school you ever heard of—the Henry George School of Social Science. In 6 years this school has graduated over 21,000 thoroughly expert "Georgists", and done it with less money than it takes to send the average boy through college.

It all started back in 1932 when a man named Oscar Geiger started a class in social science, à la George, in a back room. Although he wasn't anybody very important in the world of pedagogy, he had a Heaven-sent gift for teaching, and his students passed the word around that here at last was a guy who could give you the low-down on the whole George set-up. In 1934 Mr. Geiger died, but in 2 short years he'd done the trick; he had started something that wasn't going to stop.

Now the school owns its own building in East 29th St., free and clear of all mortgages, has branches in various parts of the U. S., has a faculty of 84, and has just started a new semester with an enrollment of over 1400. These 1400-odd students will go through a 10-weeks course in the political philosophy of the Master. When they get through some of them will take a further training course to become members of the faculty, either here or in some other city.

What they study is no longer called the "single tax"—that's an over-simplification that Mr. George permitted himself in the interests of practical politics. Instead they study a planned economy that is based on rugged individualism rather than any form of collectivism.

Instead of a single tax, they actually advocate the abolition of all taxes. Just how they propose to do this is something that can't be described here—the Henry George faculty can do it a lot better—but its essential principle is a sense of responsibility on the part of the individual. According to the "Georgists", that's why "Georgists" get along so well.

This sense of responsibility has created a school in which the faculty members not only don't get so much as a plugged nickel for their work, but actually contribute to the support of the school from their earnings at some other job. They're bond brokers, lawyers, business men of all sorts, accountants, labor leaders, newspaper men, WPA chemists. Some of them are even traveling salesmen who come in at night, when they're not on the road, and correct the papers of some of the 5,000 correspondence course students.

A lot of the clerical staff operates the same way. Stenographers who have already put in a good hard 8-hour day, eat their suppers in a hurry and go down to 29th St. to spend 3 or 4 hours getting out necessary correspondence or typing up examination papers.

Present director, is Mr. Frank Chodorov. A pleasant, burly man of 52, with a wife, a son, and a daughter, he's about as good a sample of a "Georgist" as it would be possible to find. Born in New York in 1887, he graduated from Columbia in 1907 and went into the prosaic business of being a schoolteacher. This didn't seem to be getting him anywhere, so he gave it up and worked for several years as advertising manager for a now defunct Chicago mail-order house. When that institution folded he came back to New York and went into the clothing business.

Somewhere around 1915 Mr. Chodorov happened upon a copy of Mr. George's *Progress and Poverty* which (though he'd studied economics at college) he'd never heard of. He was impressed. About

the same time he met Mr. Geiger and discussed the heretical "Georgian" doctrines with him.

Meanwhile, in the pursuit of a livelihood, Mr. Chodorov began selling underwear. When Mr. Geiger died, Mr. Chodorov left the road and took on the job of promotion man for a photo-offset firm in New York so that he could be near the school. Gradually he worked into the position of director without portfolio, authority, or salary.

Now his position is regularized. He has thrown up his other job and is doing what he admits he wanted to do for 20 years or more—passing on the principles of Henry George.

If all this sounds like the fanatical work of another pressure group that wants to change the fundamental system of U. S. government, don't worry—it isn't. So insistent are Mr. Chodorov and his associates about this that they do everything they can to prevent any sort of organization of their alumni. They maintain that they are in the business of teaching economics—not politics—and disclaim any political ideology whatever.

Therein they are faithful to the last dot on the "i" in the dicta of their beloved master—whose "single tax" was a scheme for using existing machinery of government to produce new results.

—GRINNELL VAN RENSSELAER



This is the founder of Georgism and the patron saint of all good Georgists.