

## A Living Monument To The Man Textbooks Ignore

By GRACE ROSENTHAL

**H**ENRY GEORGE, according to his disciples, is the forgotten man of economics. The 19th century economist, who developed the single-tax theory as a remedy for poverty in industrially prospering nations, has been given such short shrift by professors and rival philosophers that a school in his name was founded 30 years ago to tell the public about the man the textbooks ignore.

The Henry George School of Social Science, now celebrating the thirtieth anniversary in its regal Manhattan East mansion, 50 East 69th Street, considers itself successful in its campaign to perpetuate the ideas of the American economist. The school conducts free courses each year both at the national headquarters and through branch school and correspondence courses around the world.

"Practically everyone who takes the trouble to go through our course," director Robert Clancy says, "comes out with a favorable impression of our ideas."

"Often the student gets all fired up about the single tax theory, then looks into economic text books and finds that George is written off in a sentence or two," Mr. Clancy continued. "I suppose this was why the school was founded."

Serious students, however, may take any number of advanced courses given by the school, which branch out into general economic topics such as "Money and Credit," "Social Philosophy" and "Capital at Work." Advanced volunteers are trained in teaching methods and join the Henry George faculty, disseminating their knowledge to new "freshmen" at the school.

Through this process of academic in-breeding, the



Henry George

Henry George operation has grown from a one-man organization begun by wool factor Oscar Geiger in 1932 to the thriving enterprise it is today.

George himself was not merely an ivory tower philosopher but a political activist as well. Born in 1839, his theories, as expounded in his book *Progress and Poverty*, gained enough public favor in the late 19th century so that George campaigned for mayor of New York as an independent candidate. He lost in 1886; when he ran again in 1897, his popularity was such that many believe he might have won the election had he not died of overwork a few weeks before election day.

Translated into several foreign languages, *Progress and Poverty* is used as the basic text for the Henry George School course. It asserts that poverty in the midst of plenitude, as

well as recurring depressions, are caused primarily by the speculative increase in land values.

### Basic Tenet

George proposed that governments should abolish multiple tax systems, instituting instead a single tax on the value of land, irrespective of the improvements made in it. The plan would make land common property without actually taking it away from the owners.

The great Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, a fervent admirer of George, once remarked that detractors of Georgist theories simply do not understand them. "He who becomes acquainted with it," he declared, "cannot but agree."

Most of the opposition, Mr. Clancy explained, rested on the grounds that a single land tax would not raise enough revenue to support a government. Others attack George's theory as being too simple to adequately analyze complex economic society.

Nevertheless, the director pointed out, a number of scattered communities in the U. S. and Canada, such as Fairhope, Alabama, were founded and are thriving on the single tax system. The Georgist tenets have taken a solid hold in Denmark, where progress is being made toward the abolition of all taxes except the land tax.

In England, such eminent statesmen as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill campaigned for the institution of Georgist ideas before their efforts were

cut short by the first World War.

Employing a Socratic, give-and-take classroom procedure, the Henry George School today instructs about 400 students each semester at its Manhattan East building on 69th Street, with 100 additional pupils participating in discussion groups around the city. Almost 200 initiates continue in advanced courses each year.

### Extensive Library

The institute's library, containing works on every phase of economics, is popular not only with the school's students but with professional researchers who are referred to it by the New York Public Library as being one of the most complete collections on the subject.

Mr. Clancy reports that students come from all walks of life, ages and backgrounds. Among the present semester pupils are a dentist, a high school student, an insurance salesman and a journalist. To encourage youthful interest in the single tax system, the school offers an Ezra Cohen Memorial Prize to the high school graduate who, after completing the first course, writes the best essay on what he has learned.

Friday night lectures, films and a speaker's bureau supplement the school's scholastic efforts. Henry George may not be taught in American colleges, but with the missionary spirit of his academic namesake, his followers are determined to spread this economic gospel to every part of the globe.

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