

A Page of History

WE turn to books for a record of the past when often we could gather first-hand stories from witnesses who have retired from active participation. In California where "time does not wither," we find two Los Angeles men who were pioneers in the HGS movement.

Harry H. Ferrell, who was a very successful teacher and secretary of the HGS from 1935 to 1941, turned out 300 graduates during those years. Clyde W. Silvernale was the first secretary of that extension in 1935 and is the same age, 78. He has much historical material and is, as his friend W. E. Pereira remarked, "a very alert man." He has survived all members of his executive committee of those days.

Mr. Silvernale moved his family to Los Angeles from Fargo, North Dakota, nearly 45 years ago, after the collapse of the entire northwest country. The location and climate of Los Angeles assured its future prosperity, but he admits he could not have envisioned the extensive development of the present.

With the astute penetration of a Georgist, Mr. Silvernale has watched the rapid rise since 1941 and believes it has been supported largely by "phony industry," and by employment based on so-called defense contracts to the tune of billions of dollars in "value." As a result of such false economics he predicts an eventual collapse of some sort, since in fact "we are continually in a state of collapse. One needs only observe the desperate attempts to keep the ball rolling by artificial and unnatural activities by the political state."

Believing that we have gone a long way down the wrong road since 1789, the veteran Georgist concedes that perhaps the victims of our mistakes and injustices will have to be helped until

economic justice is established. But he believes that general benevolence has no place in politics, economics, law and government, since all are relations of justice and equity and not of benevolence. In his opinion there should be no compromise with the welfare state and the national spending spree, so far as fundamental economics and the true purpose of government are concerned.

When he was asked for a comment on the election of Dr. Hickman to the County Assessor's office in Sacramento, he said he feared that pressure groups would be able to thwart or circumvent her plans to a considerable extent, since pressure groups are protected by many laws, court decisions and established practices. He has noted more assessment frauds and questionable procedures than reforms over the years, in fact he knows of no real assessment reform as yet.

Has a long life devoted to Georgist principle made a difference in his outlook? Yes. He believes he is wiser, and in some respects richer, because of it. Also it has afforded much more understanding than he would otherwise have had. He was able to understand what caused the collapse in the northwest during the 20's and in the Dakotas from 1909 to 1923. He also could sense something of what his ancestors had to contend with in Albany and Columbia Counties in New York from the time they arrived from Bingen on the Rhine in 1722, and the terrible and unnecessary hardships suffered in Minnesota and elsewhere by western pioneers.

Eliminating the double talk of legislators and public officials and the use of such collective and indefinite terms as income and inheritance, we find there are only two basic sources of revenue for government expenses —

wages and site rental values, he wrote recently. The value of all services performed by government as population grows is reflected only in ever increasing site values—values that should be collected to pay for those services. Commodities never receive any increased values for services rendered by government.

Incomes and inheritances of any considerable amount are nearly always a mixture of site rents and other privilege funds and possibly some economic wages. To use commodities of any kind as vehicles for computing revenue for government is unjust to the nth degree of injustice. There is no connection whatever between the cost and value of government services and the value of commodities. Site rental values are public values. Commodity values are private values, he said.

If Mr. Silvernale has a message for Georgists today it is "hold fast to fundamental economics. Iterate and reiterate basic facts and principles and never deviate from them." When the time is ripe for people to listen, Georgists will be in a position to offer solid constructive service.

Another Georgist, Fred W. Workman, now in the 80's, who refers to himself as "an old frontiersman" lives in Pacific Grove on the Monterey Peninsula. He too had struggled and suffered in other parts of the U.S. before discovering California as a favorable place to live. Thirty years ago when he went west California, like the rest of the country, was in a deep depression. Everyone hoped the new deal would bring a return of good times. But the public is slow to learn. Mr. Workman thinks if we don't wake up to the truths taught by Henry George, the trend of the future will be to socialism and worsening conditions. As population increases economic and social problems will mount. Present welfare policies, he predicts, will not cure them but will more likely make them worse.

Mr. Workman recalls that around 1910-20 Georgists worked with labor groups — in fact he reminds us that Samuel Gompers was a Georgist. No such rapport seems to exist today.

His advice? Give all possible support to homeowner associations and the Henry George School.



Henry George made a unique contribution to political science by delineating the tax reform that must take place if our economy is to survive. The evil has been with us a long time, and the longer a vice is permitted to linger on the more difficult it is to abolish. It is well to stand firmly for the rule of law, but in social science we must follow the natural law as it applies to nature's wonderful gift of the land. Thomas Jefferson said changes would be necessary in the laws, but those changes should be guarded against which impair inherent rights.

Some people think we followers of Henry George strike at the very foundations of government. Just the opposite is true. We would strengthen government by protecting the freedom of individuals to improve the general landscape. Across the centuries others besides George have defended this individual freedom: Moses, Baruch, Spinoza, John Locke, William Blackstone, Adam Smith, Tom Paine, Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, Abraham Lincoln, Leo Tolstoy, Sun Yat-Sen and Winston Churchill. The present also is not without noteworthy advocates whose names will appear in the annals of time.

— John R. Fuchs