The Last Campaign

Charles Ingersoll and William McNair Died "In the Line of Duty"
Mr. McNair's Office Will Be Headquarters of Henry George School

ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1948, at the age of eighty-two, the colorful career of Charles Henry Ingersoll was ended. He died in Memorial Hospital, Orange, New Jersey, from a skull fracture sustained the night before when he alighted from his car to inquire directions and was hit by a passing motorist. With him at the time of the accident was Mr. J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco. The pair had attended the Decentralist Conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and were bound for Llewellyn Park, New Jersey, where Mr. Ingersoll had made his home with Mrs. Joseph D. Scheerer, one of his four remaining daughters.

Born on a farm near Delta, Michigan, in 1863, the son of Orville Boudinot and Mary Elizabeth Beers Ingersoll, the deceased came to New York as a boy of fourteen and went into business with his late brother, Robert. At first they manufactured and sold rubber stamps. Then, in 1892, they launched "the watch that made the dollar famous." This cheap, loud-ticking timepiece caught the fancy of the public and a hundred million of them were marketed before the firm, operating as R. G. Ingersoll & Bro., sold out to the Waterbury Clock Company in the late 1920s.

Mr. Ingersoll liked to reminisce that it was at his home in South Orange that Woodrow Wilson, then president of Princeton University, met William Jennings Bryan. The friendship ripened and Bryan nominated Wilson for President at the Democratic Convention which selected him. In 1934, Mr. Ingersoll, himself, made a bid for public office, running for Governor of New Jersey as an Independent, on a platform advocating reform "of our senseless tax system which punishes those who employ labor and capital."

For many years Mr. Ingersoll was director and president of the National Jewelers Board of Trade. Later he became associated with Industrial Tax Relief, Inc., the United States of Europe Association, the Joseph Fels Fund, the Henry George Foundation of Pittsburgh and the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation.

A chance street-corner conversation in 1880 led Mr. Ingersoll to the study of *Progress and Poverty* and thereafter he was in the forefront of Georgist activity. His first vote was cast for Henry George in the mayoralty campaign in 1886. An early member of the Manhattan Single Tax Club, founded in 1888, Mr. Ingersoll took a lively part in the club's work and in 1931 became its president. Although the club was dormant in recent years, Mr. Ingersoll continued to maintain an office at 1165 Broadway, New York, from which location he also published sporadically, a four-page paper called "democracy." During his lifetime, Mr. Ingersoll spoke over thirty radio stations and delivered hundreds of lectures in the United States and Canada, all on economic subjects.

Well known and admired throughout the ranks of those who labor for the advancement of the Henry George ideas, many will mourn with this writer the passing of an old friend.

—V. G. PETERSON

We opened our morning newspapers in New York on September 10th totally unprepared for the headline, "W. H. McNair, Ex-Pittsburgh Mayor, Is Dead." Under the St. Louis date-line we read, "He was scheduled to address a dinner audience here," and well we knew this referred to the St. Louis Henry George School Commencement on September 9th. It was probably the first appointment he ever made that he didn't keep.

Mr. McNair was mayor of Pittsburgh from 1933 to 1936, during which time he administered the Pittsburgh Graded Tax Law, with the result that Pittsburgh enjoys a distinct advantage over numerous multiple-tax cities. Because his associates during his term of office could not understand what he was trying to do, he introduced classes in fundamental economics to which public officials were invited. Richard Howe is one of many who came under the mayor's influence during that time and who has continued to work for the same ideas.

"McNair's death was a great shock to us, especially those of us who saw him frequently," wrote Richard Howe. "There was no effort too great for him to exert for our cause. He knew his heart was weak and he kept it to himself. Even Mrs. McNair did not know."

William McNair was elected to the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1944 and was a candidate for re-election to that body. He was a lawyer by profession, but he will be remembered by Henry George News readers as the motivating center of Pittsburgh's Georgist group. In "The Pit of Pittsburgh," an article which appeared in this paper in November, 1946, Mr. McNair stated that about three million dollars of taxes had been shifted from the small home-owner to the large downtown land speculator. In the same article he wrote, "Efforts have been made by the speculators to adopt the wage tax as Philadelphia and Toledo have done lately. A sales tax is also advocated. Why does Pittsburgh keep away from all these taxes so prevalent in other communities? Call it our folkway or custom or what you will, we steer clear of all of them."

Shorter articles have appeared in the News since, and always his ability to detect injustice and to reveal a hopeful solution, has been clearly evident. Often encouraging postals addressed to the editor in his familiar handwriting, would contain some such comment as, "the reading matter in your last issue is exceptionally good." On these was printed the warning: "Untax industry by taking community produced rent for community needs. Read *Progress and Poverty* by Henry George."

Frequently he made suggestions for wider promotion of the News, and though modesty prevented us from following up these suggestions or printing the commendatory statements, that did not deter him from keeping up a one-man campaign for new subscriptions. It is quite likely that we are indebted for nearly all our Pittsburgh readers to the Georgist who believed in backing up convictions with deeds.

A year ago, speaking to a small group in New York, Mr. McNair said, "A man does not need to sacrifice his business to take public office . . . he does not need to be a lone eagle, he has the truth with him and if he learns how to talk the language of the people and not use strange words, that truth will get people on his side.

"This is a democracy," he reminded us, "and some one has to hold public office. Other things being equal, a trained economist is the best man for running the government. If you believe that government should be run by natural laws, what harm is there in going to the legislature and voting for that kind of law, even if you stand alone? You are alone because those who think as you do, who believe in your ideas, bury themselves in a cloister and have a pleasant time contemplating the wonders of natural law and let others go out and take the knocks. Let us get away from the kindergarten concept and take our place in the battle line."

This willingness to give his strength and spirit for the thing in which he believed has characterized Mr. McNair's whole career. His untimely death came at the age of 67.

Letters from the ex-mayor, frequently undated, had an effervescent, hastily-conceived, hastily-executed quality. A recent one without date, is typical:

"If you use this do not mention my name, as my Mennonite friends do not believe in collects. [We are sure no one will mind now]

"The following new collect has been suggested as an addition to the prayer book:

"Almighty God, who hath revealed to us the laws of production by which we are sustained, grant us, we beseech Thee, such wisdom that we may understand the laws of distribution from the common fund to supply our common wants, so that we may live in peace and plenty.

"I submit this in all due reverence," wrote Mayor McNair, "for since the last revision of the prayer book, much new knowledge has been acquired as to the fundamental laws of living together, which if used would abolish poverty and war. It is unbelievable that an Omnipotent and All Wise Father would have established laws of chemistry, physics, aeronautics, etc. by which our production has been so greatly expanded—would have revealed these laws to us and made wealth so plentiful—and not have established laws for the just distribution of

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these goods. Henry George discovered this law that the common fund should supply the common wants. We should be thankful for this revelation and pray that more would have the wisdom to understand it."

This, we believe, constitutes a fitting epitaph for our beloved friend who can no longer be reached at 725 Bakewell Building, which now becomes the address of the Pittsburgh extension.

A temporary committee, meeting in Mario L. Bove's office adjoining Mr. McNair's, arranged shortly after his death, to rent the ex-mayor's office and convert it into headquarters for the Henry George School in Pittsburgh, as a memorial.

No more fitting tribute could be paid to William N. McNair by those who feel they owe him an undying debt of gratitude. The person who is making financially possible the continuation of Mr. McNair's office as school headquarters, wishes to remain anonymous.

Friends of the deceased, both new and old, in Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, New York and other cities where he was well known, extend sympathy to Mrs. McNair—also to members of the Hungry Club and other inner circles where the smiling, friendly personality of "Bill" McNair will be sorely missed.

St. Louis

MAYOR WILLIAM NISSLEY McNAIR addressed the second Commerce and Finance luncheon in St. Louis at the Mark Twain Hotel on September 9th, where he discussed the "Pittsburgh Plan of Public Revenue." Three daily newspapers carried stories of this address and all stressed the theme: "Pittsburgh Plan of Heavy Tax on Land Urged for St. Louis."

Present in the audience were vistors from St. Louis industry including a representative from one of the world's largest shoe manufacturing concerns, an outstanding manufacturer of electrical equipment, executives from a small steel fabricating company, a large chemical company, and the printing business; as well as members of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce and of the city government's comtrpollers' and assessors' department. B. M. Nevins presided and introduced the Ex-mayor of Pittsburgh.

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat quoted Mr. McNair as saying: "Adoption of the plan in Pittsburgh has encouraged new construction, discouraged speculation in land and increased the purchasing power of hundreds of thousands of residents."

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch took this from Mayor McNair's talk: "The Pittsburgh graded tax, as it is called, encourages new building, discourages speculation in land and helps shift the tax burden from small home-owners to wealthy landowners."

NEXT MONTH

Henry George and the Problems of Our Time

By GLENN E. HOOVER

Professor, Economics and Sociology Mills College—Oakland, California

An Address at the
HENRY GEORGE BIRTHDAY DINNER
Los Angeles, September 2, 1948

The St. Louis extension of the Henry George School planned to celebrate its formal opening of the 10th year of school work with observance of the 109th Anniversary of the birth of Henry George at a dinner meeting on September 9th. The guest speaker for this occasion was also to have been the Honorable William N. McNair.

Some eighty friends and graduates of the school assembled at the St. Louis downtown Y. M. C. A. with R. E. Hansen as chairman for the meeting. Certificates were handed to members of St. Louis' first summer session in basic economics.

When the speaker, Mr. McNair, failed to appear, B. M. Nevins and Edward B. Case set out to find him. They were told at the hotel that word had been received of his death at Union Station where he had taken his wife to catch a train for Houston. The Mayor suffered a heart attack while leaving the train. Unfortunately it was not known by those seeking to aid the stricken man, that Mrs. McNair was on the train (which did not leave the station for some twenty minutes following). Mrs. McNair received the news by wire at Bismark, Missouri, though from a description given by a woman who had tried to aid him, she knew it was her husband.

Following receipt of this tragic news, the announcement was made of Mr. McNair's death and at the suggestion of Joseph Widmer the audience stood for a few moments of silent communion and tribute, and the meeting adjourned.

All St. Louis papers published accounts of the Ex-mayor's passing, and the Post-Dispatch reported: "McNair's death caused the cancellation of the observance of the anniversary of Henry George, whose single tax proposals were enthusiastically advocated by Mr. McNair throughout his long political career."

We are sorry to lose him. I am sure all will feel he died on a battle front fighting for principles to which his life had been devoted. It's one of life's little ways of letting us know just who is boss. —NOAH D. ALPER

Chicago

"TODAY is New Year's Day," said Mrs. Edith Belle Matts, daily volunteer at headquarters, referring to the day after Labor Day. And she was right, for at that time vacationing graduates came back to work in earnest for the school's "new year" of classes opening October 4th. The graduates launched a double-barrelled campaign for enrollments and funds on September 8th, starting a program of 1,000 personal calls over the Chicago area. The calls involved a request for financial support but were also an effective means of distributing the class literature. Each graduate called was asked to hand out five of the new fall '48 bulletins to his friends. Leaders of this campaign had previous valuable experience in two campaigns in June.

The drive for students has been fortified by a series of three newspaper advertisements in two metropolitan papers, and by free newspaper publicity. A story on the campaign in the Sunday Chicago Tribune brought Walter Tefo, West Side regional chairman, nine telephone calls from friends and business associates inquiring about the campaign and classes.

A new venture in class promoting is under way at Milwaukee, which is serviced by the Chicago school. Klaus L. Hansen, engineer-inventor, is seeking enrollments by a direct appeal to pastors of the more than 200 churches in Milwaukee. Basis of his appeal is the report on "the church and disorder of society," submitted at the World Council of Churches meeting in Amsterdam recently, and "commended to churches for their serious consideration and appropriate action."

An advisory council of thirty-one members of the Commerce and Industry group met at a luncheon on September 8th, to discuss and make recommendations for the year's program. In a poll of the members, 14 expressed the wish to participate in a bi-weekly seminar. Selecting from seven texts suggested as a springboard for discussion, the group showed a preference for the works of Dr. Harry Gunnison Brown, particularly *The Economic Basis of Tax Reform*. His talk before the group in June left many with a desire to know more of Professor Brown's economic analysis.

Featured this term for the first time is an advanced course, "The Thought and System of Henry George," a downtown seminar to be taught by Gustave Carus, attorney, teacher and trustee of the school. This seminar will include selected readings from Henry George's writings, from *The Philosophy of Henry George* by George Raymond Geiger, *The Theory of Human Progression* by Patrick Edward Dove, and other outside reading.

Honors have been coming to school folk and their families. Jane Leslie Monroe, headquarters volunteer and 14-year-old daughter of John Monroe, in September won the annual Senior Ballet Award of the Edna L. McRae School of the Dance, after a competitive exhibition in the Fine Arts building. A seven-month student of ballet, Jane competed with advanced students ranging in age from 14 to 20. Receiving honorable mention in a photographer's beauty contest recently was Carol Frenzel, four-year-old daughter of faculty member Herman Frenzel.

The Chicago school, his frequent host, is saddened by the death of Pittsburgh's William N. McNair, who, until the last, fought for legislation and practices based on the principles of economic justice. When McNair came to speak, it always meant "good box office" for the school. The earliest memory is of his address at its first commencement in 1934. This year he addressed the Commerce and Industry luncheon in March, and in May spoke at a special hearing arranged for him before the Commission on Revenue Laws of the State of Illinois, under the provision of the General Assembly.

Dan Brink, a former Chicago resident, who is in Oak Ridge for construction work, recently wrote in a letter published in the News, of his lonesome but persistent attempt to introduce the book *Progress and Poverty* into the public library. He now has succeeded in including in a local extension course sponsored by the Division of Oak Ridge Schools and the University of Tennessee, a series of free courses dealing with the philosophy of Henry George in social science, or *Fundamental Economics*. Four books by George serve as texts in this course which was listed in a prospectus mailed out to 10,000 persons.

"The principles of the text, *Progress and Poverty*," we read in this prospectus, "are applicable for study today, though the book was written in 1879. The subtitle indicates the importance of this study: 'An inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions and of increase of want with increase of wealth; the remedy'."

For this particular Oak Ridge experiment, you can best learn of results by watching future copies of The Henry George News.