

# the Henry George News

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## The Bell Tolls for a Hero

by V. G. PETERSON

A CHAIR will be empty at the Tuesday luncheons where San Diego Georgists gather for their weekly chats. Sid Evans, who seldom missed a week, is dead. He passed away on February 26, the victim of a stroke.

Sidney Griffith Evans was born in Hastings, Nebraska, in 1886, the only child of Griffith Evans, a cigar manufacturer, and Frances Burno Evans. He attended public and high schools in Hastings and then went on to the University. Here he came under the influence of a physics teacher, L. B. Tuckerman, a friend of Tom L. Johnson, the reform mayor of Cleveland and co-worker of Henry George. Guided by Professor Tuckerman Sid studied *Progress and Poverty* and after that subscribed to *The Public*, a weekly edited by those famous Georgists, Louis F. and Alice Thatcher Post. With this background he graduated from the University convinced of the truth of George's teachings, and dedicated to that truth.

It was a good ten years before young Evans could begin seriously what was to be his main endeavor. During that period he worked as a newspaperman on the Hastings Daily Republican (of which he was the publisher for four years), on Scripps papers in Los An-

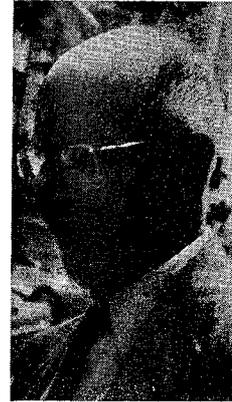
geles and Sacramento, and on papers in Chicago and Washington, D. C.

It was while he was in Washington that he accepted an invitation to join the Committee on Public Information in an expedition to Russia. The group landed in Vladivostok in 1918 and were still there when the First World War ended in November of that year. "There was lots of vodka," said teetotaler Evans, "very good food, and much shouting."

After leaving Russia Sid toured the East, landing finally in China where he spent six months. In Shanghai one memorable Sunday afternoon, he paid a visit to the famous Chinese leader, Sun Yat-sen. "I was headed for a band concert," he would tell you, "when I bumped into a news photographer I knew, who was on his way to get some pictures of Dr. Sun. He let me tag along."

Shortly after his return to the United States, Sid's father died and he and

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his mother moved to La Jolla, California, where they made their home until her death. After that Sid established himself in San Diego.

It is not known exactly when Sid joined the Henry George School, started in San Diego in the Nineteen Thirties by Judge C. N. Andrews (who held classes in his courthouse) and Major-General Joseph Pendleton for whom the West Coast military base is named. But the School was one of Sid's early loves and he remained devoted to it. He taught many classes, and during the Forties bought a building which he gave to the School to provide a headquarters. Later this building was exchanged for one near the campus of San Diego State College. When this, too, was sold, a house was purchased at 3627 30th Street, closer to the heart of town. Here, in addition to a meeting room and other facilities, a front porch provided space for a book shop and one was started by Roy Davidson as a means of interesting passers-by in the School's activities.

In 1959, with the help of his close friend Henry Cramer, and a few others, Evans established Basic Economics Education (BEE) for the furtherance of Henry George work in California. Out of this grew the Committee for Incentive Taxation and then the California Homeowners Association, now known as Statewide Homeowners Association. This group is fighting to reform assessment practices in California, which have long been a scandal (in the past two years two assessors have been jailed for malpractice and one has committed suicide). A sizable, well-ordered office is maintained at 953 Eighth Avenue, San Diego, with John Nagy in charge. Last June Dr. Irene Hickman, a member of the Homeowners group, was elected assessor of Sacramento County.

As regards his personal affairs, Sid

was a cautious, even frugal man but during the 1965 session of the California State Legislature, his impatience to "see something happen" got the better of him and in a daring splurge, he ordered full-page ads in five California dailies. These ads asked people to support a bill which would give cities and counties the option of eliminating taxes assessed on personal property and improvements. When the bill failed, he took it philosophically. "We reached millions of new people with an idea they might not have thought of before," he said. "The important thing is, what do we do next?"

One of the "next" things was to join with Harlan Trott, late of the Christian Science Monitor, in the relaunching of a monthly magazine called Business Digest, from which it was hoped a column would eventually be syndicated. At the time of Sid's death, the first three issues had appeared.

Always looking around for new and better ways of doing things, in 1956 Sid approached the Rober Schalkenbach Foundation (New York) with two proposals. The first was that a 16mm. motion picture be made. The second was that the Foundation's college program be enlarged to include personal visitations. Both projects were undertaken with gratifying results. The picture, "Land—and Space to Grow," had its first showing in July 1962 at the Henry George School conference in Pittsburgh. Since then it has been shown to audiences now totaling well beyond a million. The visitation program, directed by Weld S. Carter, was enlarged to include the holding of annual three-day institutes attended by leading economists, on the campus of the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. It was like Sid that when the visitation program was being discussed and Mr. Carter's name was proposed he said, "Let us get him here this afternoon." That Carter lived more than a

hundred miles away and that a blizzard was battering New York, were trifles to this dedicated man whose prime consideration was that what was good for the Movement should not be delayed.

It took longer for some of Sid's other dreams to materialize. During his travels he had spent some time in Seoul, had liked the Korean people, and had decided that his gift to them should be *Progress and Poverty* in their own language. Early efforts to get a translation made and published were unsuccessful, but when Mrs. Eva Maxwell went to Seoul in the late Fifties to join her husband, a government employee, hope was revived. In time, Mrs. Maxwell was able to arrange for the translation through Yonsei University and to line up a local publisher. A political upset in the country interfered with the work, and the edition that was finally produced was less perfect than

might be hoped for. And it was short lived. A fire destroyed the books a year after they were printed. Once more Sid's endurance was being tested. "Too bad," he said, when he received the news, "next time we will do better."

Sid Evans (no one called him Sidney) was a modest, retiring man for all the drive that brought his success in business and in his Georgist work. He wanted no credit for himself, and sought no personal advantage. His purpose was singular: to spread the truth as he saw it, the truth of Henry George. As Dr. Jack Ensign Addington expressed it in his eulogy, delivered March 4 at memorial services held in the Unitarian Church, "Sid Evans was not only dedicated to the Georgist Cause—he was consecrated to it." He left behind many friends to mourn him, and a memory that long will be revered.

### **We're Sorry March Was Late**

**Because of zip code difficulties your March Henry George News reached you very late, but we hope it *has* reached you. Please help us on future subscriptions by including zip codes.**