

The Answer to Poverty

Russel Conklin—to Graduates in Calgary

THIS is no simple tax reform program—it is a way of life. You'll never be the same again. You'll read the newspapers, listen to the radio, watch TV, hear the speeches of politicians and partake of conversation with new ears and eyes; and you will speak with a new eloquence born of an understanding of human affairs given only to a few people—those who have become Georgists.

This is not a new religion or a new political party. We are not out to change the nature of man or to alter the form of government. All we want is to free man economically so that his natural efforts to better himself will lead also to the collective good.

Some will say the single tax is no panacea, but I believe it is. Let me tell you why. We have the answer to the misery of the slums and to the starvation in Asia. We know the causes of unrest in Latin America. We have seen the communists use the natural hunger of man for land to gain the support of struggling peasants in China and Vietnam. But we can do nothing for the rest of the world until we take care of the economic inequality at home. I've heard it said that there are no slums in Canada, but I very much fear that in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Edmonton, and maybe even here in Calgary, the signs of urban decay are already evident if you look for them. Our job is to start right at home to fight the sales tax, resist the income tax, seek the abolition of all personal property taxes, and get the tax reduced if not removed from improvements. We must try at every opportunity to work toward the collection of the economic rent for public purposes.

When we propose true tax reform we are met with silence, not arguments—we are simply ignored, and that word

reflects ignorance. So we must seek opportunities to be heard and to get attention. People do not understand economic justice but they all know about taxes, and everybody is interested. They never heard of economic rent and they're not concerned about the laws of distribution, but taxes, taxes, taxes—that's something to talk about.

The query the California Homeowners print on all their literature is; "Why should you be penalized for improving your property?" And after all, why should you? When you start out to explain to the homeowner or businessman that present tax laws penalize the builders and reward the speculators, they listen. And when you get attention you begin to have interest. Not all will take courses in basic economics from the Henry George School, but many can become advocates of land value taxation, and some will even read the book. I've distributed over 100 copies of Professor Arthur Madsen's abridged edition of *Progress and Poverty*. Have you seen it? You can call attention to tax inequities in your letters to the editors and to tax assessors. You can start discussions by asking questions at public meetings, and in various ways you can spread your influence far beyond your present horizon.

Hardly a day goes by but someone tells me he has heard of my tax plan, probably because he has seen a letter of mine to the newspapers or heard a speech at a service club. I'm in politics, and that gives me a forum. As a candidate I am frequently contacted by reporters and asked to attend meetings of organizations, and it is not hard to throw a little land tax into the discussions. On one tour of the eastern district in Montana as a candidate for

(Continued on next page)

Books

HENRY GEORGE, by Edward J. Rose. Twayne Publishers, New York, 1968. \$3.95.

Here, in a fairly brief volume of 175 pages, is a good summary of Henry George, his life, his teachings, his background and influence. Professor Rose has gathered together a great deal of material and presented it in a concise and readable style, making this book a satisfactory answer to the question, "Who is Henry George?"

Besides citing sources and narrations already familiar to those who have read about George, the author has included several interesting items that are not repetitive. For instance, there is a little known poem by Emma Lazarus on "Progress and Poverty"; allusions to Thoreau, Emerson, Martin Buber and other thinkers; and an evaluation of George's influence.

In relating the life of George, Professor Rose pauses at each point when George writes a book to give a summary of its contents, thus giving a representative view of his teachings as well as his life.

This book is one of a series by the publisher on American authors. Profes-

sor Rose teaches English, and although this is intended as a study in literature, it offers an attentive exposition of the social and economic philosophy of Henry George. As a literary man, Professor Rose feels that George's style is half his message.

The most serious flaw in the book is the opening sentence, a question, in the preface: "Was Henry George the most important and most influential spokesman we have had for the non-Marxist left?" The author implies he was. But even though this is undoubtedly intended as a compliment, Georgists certainly do not regard the author of *Progress and Poverty* as a leftist of any brand, standing as he did for free private enterprise and the free market. In fairness, however, it should be said that, once over this initial hurdle, Professor Rose pretty faithfully expounds the philosophy and understands George's penchant for a free economy. Also, Professor Rose has explained that what he means by "left" is "radical" in a Jeffersonian sense — a term which George would surely not reject.

An interesting set of notes and a selected bibliography round out a very useful introduction to Henry George and his philosophy. R.C.

Another "new" book just off the press is actually a reprint of a classic, out of print for many years: *Rebel, Priest and Prophet* by Stephen Bell. This is the absorbing story of Father Edward McGlynn, friend and follower of Henry George. Reissued by Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, it is priced at \$3. Both books will be available to HGN readers.

(Continued from previous page)

Congress I didn't even talk about what were supposed to be the issues. I just kept talking about the economic opportunities that would open up if we had the right kind of tax reform.

I've yet to meet a serious protagonist in debate. Frequently there are somewhat antagonistic questions but never a downright argument about the merits

of our cause. You know it is so logical, so fair, so right and so just that there isn't any argument against it. Now that you have finished the course have you the crusading spirit and desire to improve the world?

You read or hear almost daily about the dire possibility of the whole world starving in another century or so.

(Continued on Page 12)