

Henry George School of Social Science

CHARTERED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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Remarks by GEORGE H. ROYAL, Dean of the Henry George School of Social Science, New York, at the Annual Conference of the School, Boston, July 4th, 1953.

The administrators of the New York School have been wholeheartedly cooperative in encouraging me to develop any type of program that would work for the Henry George philosophy. They say "Go ahead and do what you think would be of benefit to the Georgist philosophy". As a result, we have built on the early foundations and have arrived at the present program.

During the year we generally have from two to three 10-week Teachers Training courses. The sessions usually last about two hours. It so happens at times that the people are so enthusiastic that they ask to be permitted to stay an extra hour to discuss and consider problems, and sometimes the sessions, which are supposed to be ten in number, last up to fifteen weeks.

I like to give the course, if possible, to at least ten prospective teacher candidates who are well-qualified, well-recommended, and have taken all the basic courses, who have presumably a high potential (educationally and emotionally), and who have the personality factors and the other qualities that will be requisite and desirable to make them good teachers.

Each trainee is given ten assignments, one for each evening until he has ten assignments. The program will not work satisfactorily unless each person is responsible, accepts his assignments and does his job, as everything is in sequence and related to everything else. So you now have ten sessions, ten people, and one hundred assignments for the entire program. What do the assignments consist of? Political Economy, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, and Logic. It is rather democratic in nature, as we shall indicate. Each cooperator will select a number and every selector will have an equal opportunity to do what everyone else has done. No.#1 will accept chairmanship of the first session. The second session he will probably bring in a news clipping from a periodical, something that is pertinent to the Georgist philosophy, whether it agrees or disagrees with the Georgist philosophy. We take it, consider it, tear it apart, and then get back to basic fundamentals and principles. We see how the economy is going and what the prevailing thought is in the national situation. Then we seek to ascertain what would happen if we applied the Georgist philosophy and consider whether the problems and maladjustments as evidenced in society today would continue. The next thing that we have is the special assignment, and this deals more or less with the idea of giving one a particular topic to discuss. We start our program one week before the current term starts and we brief the prospective student teachers on exactly what is expected of them. Each student is required, upon assignment, to visit the classroom of an instructor who is teaching the current lesson. Upon his return to the Teachers Training class the next session, the student will give a resume of his impression of the evening's work.

4-786

Each student teacher will introduce himself to the teacher whose class he will visit; will sit and say absolutely nothing during the session and take in everything in order that he might tell us what we want to know. This has the double merit of enabling us to find out not only how ably the student can report, but also what the instructor is teaching, whether he is teaching the Georgist philosophy or his own brand of philosophy, whether he is mutilating or destroying it or attempting to sabotage it, because we find all types of individuals in any particular movement. It is physically impossible for any dean or any one person to cover all of the classes, but this is a sort of spot check and it goes on all term continuously. We find out, according to these reports, what these people are teaching, the method employed, their approaches, their tact; in fact, all about them. This enables us to ascertain so much information about the general cultural and intellectual level and the background of the individual, and to see whether that person would be a credit or a discredit to the Georgist movement. This system also has the merit of "learning" through observation of what and what not to do if one is to become a successful and an effective teacher.

Then, we have a book review that is most interesting. People who have taken the Teachers Training course told me later that they had thought it would be a lark! They had thought that they were to come and listen to a series of lectures, go home and, through osmosis, absorb the whole thing perfectly. They thought that all they had to do was to come and sit, listen drowsily or dream, and then go away and automatically they would be made good teachers! I inform these candidates that we can't make teachers; we can only advise, we can only direct, we can only suggest, but teaching per se must come from them. At this particular course, people have told me that they worked harder than they had worked in any college course or in any graduate course because not only are they supposed to know the Georgist philosophy and to know it thoroughly, page by page almost, and the interpretation of the Georgist viewpoint, but they are supposed to know much more than the Georgist philosophy. They are supposed to know something about the other schools of economic thought and each person is required to read a book and report a five-minute summary of the book. Now, for instance, a person might take a book and say, "It's ridiculous! How in the world can you give a summary or a report on any particular work in five minutes?" Students soon learn that the ability to do such reporting is an evidence of careful reading, based upon the ability to remember salient points as the work is covered. You must be familiar with the writings of other political economists, some sociologists and philosophers.

Fundamentally, Georgists oppose all forms of monopoly. In accordance with this idea, I do not believe that any Georgist instructor has a monopoly insofar as knowledge is concerned. A monopoly by its very nature retards progress and tends to inhibit creative thinking. If you, as an instructor, presume to have a corner on a certain type of knowledge and behave accordingly in your classroom, you mistakenly tend to create for yourself a monopoly in which you ignore some of the others and don't give them an opportunity for the fullness of their expression. Remember, there are people in the world who are very shy, who are very retiring, who are actually self-effacing, and who are not aggressive, and are of the introvert type who will sit back. They have a wealth of information; they have

plenty to give, but you must draw them out. You must make them feel that they are part of it, that there is a need for them to participate in the class discussions. We want their thoughts and we want their information, and it is up to you, as teachers, to make them feel that not only is it desirable, but their full and complete class participation is necessary. It should be compelling that they have their say, whether you agree with them or not. If there are any errors, then you can correct the errors, but if you take an individual and inhibit him by your actions, you can't tell what he is going to think or what is in the back of his mind. If there is anything wrong there, if there is anything subversive, contrary to American concepts, if there is anything that is contrary to the philosophy of Henry George, you really don't have an opportunity to discern it - you can't detect it. You can get class participation, and you can get group participation, and in so doing you are so far ahead of the game.

It is important for each person who is to act as chairman of a session (and each person in numerical order is going to act as chairman), to know what is going on in his class and to be familiar with the entire subject matter and everything else that is going to be talked about at that session, but it is also important to get the idea in his mind and convey it to everybody else as well, that the success of that session, or the entire sessions of ten or fifteen lessons, depends entirely on him. If he can get that attitude and that religious fervor and conviction, there is every reason in the world to believe that the awareness and the recognition of this responsibility will prove him successful in his endeavors.

We have individuals who are emotionally immature, though they may be fine and delightful people as conversationalists. In dealing with each other, individually sometimes they do very well, but they have not the faculty nor the ability to have good personal or group relationships, due to a defect in their personality. It might be some tension; it might be some frustration that you must discern. You must recognize that characteristic; you must discover the weakness and strength of the individual. This is one method that I use in finding out whether a person is normal in the sense in which we speak - not scientifically normal, because we don't know what that is, we just can't define it, but normal for all of our intents and purposes. In the first place, I have the students come at least one-half hour early and I get around and I talk with them. I establish rapport with each and every individual. I learn his name. I learn his occupation and the things in which he is interested, and my conversations with him at the sessions and elsewhere will be directed primarily according to his interest and intelligence level. Remember, we all have a common interest in this philosophy, but other people have particular interests, and if you can be interested in the other person, you have captured something that is very vital and very important. One example of that is a truism that is so trite it hardly needs mentioning: "If you are interested in my children, you are interested in me". You don't have too much resistance with anything if you are interested in other people's interests, and you can do a very good job in that respect.

I don't like the idea of Georgists (or anybody else) being too dogmatic. At some of the sessions I gained the impression that there was an exchange of opinion, which is always healthy and desirable, but I also got the impression that there were some people who are so dogmatic that

they are the victims of an unhealthy state of mind. What is this dogmatism but a manifestation of a closed mind? I wouldn't say that it is basically due to ignorance, but there is fear there to the reception of new ideas in some way, shape or form. It seems that those people had their own jigsaw puzzle solved and somebody threw in another idea and this upsets them emotionally. They just can't take it! They can't understand it! Immediately there is a mental blocking so they are going to assert their power and force. They brook no opposition. They say "It has to be this way". They become dictatorial. We can't become good teachers by being dictatorial. Everybody has a point of view. Listen to the other person's viewpoint. It is important that you listen to the other person's point of view so that you may learn a little bit yourself. You may learn what the other fellow is thinking about. There isn't anyone who is so low or so stupid or who is so immature or who is so ignorant that we can't learn something from him. There may be some gem or jewel that might be dropped at some time. Listen to what the other fellow says because at times he might give us a clue regarding his problem. Then capitalize on that particular clue. We should be in a position to make a suggestion to resolve that problem and substitute something of validity, of personal worth, which will make that person in harmony with himself and also with the thoughts that we have in mind. I don't like the idea of people being too dogmatic and too arbitrary because, to me, it conveys the impression that all of their ideas are encyclopedic in nature and in origin. I deny that anyone, particularly in this group, and we are typical representative human beings, is a symbol of the Delphic Oracle. We do not know it all and let us make up our minds that we do not know it all. We can always learn something.

Be a little like Socrates when he went around. He admitted that he didn't know, but he was always seeking information. He was constantly going around asking and interrogating. He admitted his ignorance but he was always anxious for you to prove that you knew something yourself. By your admitting that you don't know it all, you don't have a closed mind. That, to me, is always important. Another important thing is this: the very moment that you admit you don't know it all you are on the road to maturity because you are intellectually honest with yourself. The person who knows that he doesn't know it all and is intellectually honest can afford to admit that he doesn't know it all. Human nature is so strange and so peculiar. The average individual has so much ego he feels he is going to be deflated the very moment he admits that he doesn't know the answer to any particular question. Instead of being deflated, it appears to me that you rise in one's estimation when you admit, "I really don't know it all. I know part of what I am supposed to know, but I don't know all the answers to all the things at all times". You see, as an instructor you have a responsibility if you admit that you do not know the answer to every question - then you must go and get the information and come back and say to the person, "I did not know the answer the other day, but I sought the information from competent sources and source material. Here is the best thought along that particular line. Take it for what it's worth". Now, look at the other side of the picture. Rather than admit that you didn't know, suppose you gave an erroneous answer and the person realized, through investigation, that you made an error, and concluded that you deliberately misled him. Doesn't it seem as though you could lose caste with that individual? Isn't it easier and better to admit that you don't know it all, that you can learn as the other fellow can learn, and that is exactly why he is here.

Teachers, I think it is extremely important that you have a sense of humor; that you have the ability to laugh at yourself as well as the other fellow. It's a saving grace. I looked at Joe Stockman last night. Who has more humor than Joe? He can laugh at himself, he can laugh at anyone else. He is mature; he can adapt himself to any situation (and he is no dope!). In having a sense of humor I realize it is also important to have a great deal of patience, because people who are not as fast intellectually as the others need to be dealt with with patience. You must go along with the retarded individual; you must go along with people who have complexes; people who are willing to learn but, through some difficulty that is not of their own making, are a little behind schedule, behind the times. Don't be impatient with people. It might even be necessary to take them after class sessions and explain some point to them or to assign to some particular individual something to show that you have an interest in him so that he might catch up with the group. That person might be invaluable to you, to your movement, and to everything that is important.

One of the greatest indications as to whether or not you know your subject and can put it across is that you will be able to simplify it. Generally, I have found that people who know the least about things are the most garrulous. They use ten-syllable words to explain something that can be explained in words of one syllable, very succinctly and very briefly. When you get the idea that any idea you might have, no matter how complex, can be said so simply and so beautifully that the person of a low-grade mentality can understand it, then you understand your subject matter and you will be able to put it across.

Now what good is it if you have all this information at your disposal and you aren't able to impart it effectively to make people understand and realize it? Not to just intellectually grasp it, but to go a little bit further than that - to emotionally grasp it so that its motivating power will actively dominate you, resulting in a well-balanced religious fervor. The creation of this attitude takes time. First, be sure that you know your philosophy of Henry George, and then proceed. However, use discretion in conversation. Prepare people for new ideas and when they see the need and validity of your proposals, they become receptive and very interested. You can find an opportunity to talk about the principles of the Georgist philosophy. You certainly can talk about it and talk about it so astutely and so cleverly and do it so subtly that people will be accepting your principles before they know it. After they accept your principles, then you can just introduce them to the label, to the package: - the philosophy of Henry George. But first get them to accept your principles. That, to me, is particularly important.

Again, as teachers, it is important to recognize fatigue curves in the lives of individuals. If you make a scientific study you will find that youngsters will be able to concentrate for a period of thirty-five minutes. They are at their maximum development during that period and are receptive to the highest degree for a period of thirty-five minutes. Then the curve begins going down - down - down! Therefore, if you have a two-hour class without any breaks or recesses, you will find that during the first hour you will do very, very well, but in the second hour you will observe restlessness. You will find people not operating at their maximum capacity. You may feel as though you had a two or a three-hour

session which went on without a break and people were tremendously interested and enthused and did very well, but you haven't compared that with anything else. How would those people have done had you considered the fatigue curve in their lives? That fatigue curve is always very, very interesting. You can always have a recess by a joke, a moment of relaxation, or any way that you care to do it, but recognize that fatigue curve!

Now, teachers, you must realize that there is another important thing, and that is your responsibility as teachers. If you say that you will accept an assignment, you must accept your responsibility. Be a responsible individual. Don't say that you are going to take a class and that you are going to be there at a given time and then come late or call up and make an excuse and not come at all. Lateness at times is unavoidable, but hardly commendable. Responsible people avoid such criticisms. If I say I am going to accept an assignment, the only thing that will keep me away is the fact that I am physically ill or it is physically impossible for me to be there. I think all of us should accept that responsibility.

Just as you are here appraising me now, and appraising me quite critically, you must realize that your students are going to appraise you the same way when you are talking to them, particularly at the first session. They want to know "what kind of a human being is this - what kind of a fellow is this - what kind of a woman is this - what is her background - what does she know - what does she do - what is the extent of her education - what is her cultural development - where does she go - with whom does she associate - what about her grooming - what are her 'habits', and so on and so forth". (Being well-groomed and personal habits are important in making a good impression as a teacher.)

And, finally, if you are going to be a good teacher, it seems to me it is necessary for you to earn the respect of your pupils, not only the respect of your pupils because you are a good teacher, but first as a man or as a woman - as a human being. They like you because they like you as a friend. And they like you as a teacher because they respect your knowledge. They admire you as a personality. You have the qualities that they would want to emulate in all respects. Don't make any mistake and think that because the only contact you have with these students is in the classroom that they don't know anything about you. People have ways of getting information about you if they are curious and interested, and if they can admire you and want to emulate you, be grateful that you have done a good job. It will carry over, not only for you in recommending other instructors and courses, but they will want to come and take other classes with you. That has happened in so many institutions and it happens very often in the New York School.

Now I would like to talk about five minutes more about some of the negative factors and aspects - some of the "don'ts". I have indicated that, as a teacher, it's never desirable to talk too much. Let other people do the talking. Be a good listener. Don't be too garrulous. Some years ago I attended a listening clinic in New York, which was most fascinating. Listening is an art and if you learn how to listen (as I indicated before) you will not only learn a good deal, but you will gain some techniques that will enable you to be a good instructor. How can you

learn until you listen - how can you lead until you are able to follow? and so it does follow that you first must learn how to listen before you learn how to talk.

and then - I never argue with students, because it doesn't pay. If we argue with students we defeat the very thing we are talking about. A student will often become obsessed with an idea. He may be very sincere in his thoughts about a particular thing. He may disagree with some theory you are expounding. What's the difference - suppose he does? If you know how to skillfully direct your questions you will throw these questions out to an individual or some members of the group and stir up a conversation with them. In such a discussion the group will take and carry the ball and answer the questions amongst themselves. You might be adept enough to so channel the questioning that the people will feel as though they have found the answers themselves. If they have done that, what's the difference? But the very moment you start arguing with them you lose sight of the thing about which they are talking and you get into personalities. The issue then becomes obscured. That is a very worthless thing to do. Don't make the mistake of engaging in personalities because that is what argumentation will lead to. Redirect your questions. Throw your questions out to other people. I generally ask leading questions and I'm sure that Mr. Goldfinger, a lawyer here, is a skilled trial examiner and cross-examiner and he can teach some of us how to ask the questions and he can ask the same question in ten or fifteen forms to get the answer that he desires. You can do the same thing. Don't forget that asking questions is a particular art.

Now this idea of correct thinking. George makes a statement in his works that with right thinking comes right action. That is one of the things that might be open to discussion, but if with right thinking comes right action it means there must be some activation somewhere along the line. It's up to you, as teachers, to have people so see the idea of right thinking and right action that they will feel impelled to follow such dictates by applying that which they know and in which they believe.

I never waste time with a negative approach. Why not take a positive approach? Let me give you an example of what I am talking about for the purpose of illustration. The marginal utility theory, as expounded very briefly and not in detail by Mr. Goldfinger yesterday, is that the last produced thing has a marginal utility value, it doesn't matter what it is. Should we try to disprove this theory because Henry George didn't belong to this school of thought? In the Georgist philosophy you are talking about the nature of wealth and the laws of production and distribution. And Henry George did say that everything depended upon the law of supply and demand. Now if you can later build up refinements (never mind whether you have the analytical approach or the bookkeeper approach or any other approach) you find basically that the law of supply and demand is the thing that will determine what is the cost and value of an article - of a thing, to a person, as measured by what he is willing to pay for it in terms of labor (labor expended or labor saved). That, to me, is a positive approach. So I seldom, if ever, waste any time on negative approaches, but I try to be conversant with all the other schools of thought. Therefore, the very moment that someone talks about the other ideologies or the other philosophic or economic systems I reply "Oh yes, that writer says such and such a thing, but here is what George says. Let's compare them". When you spend your time in a positive way, constructively, proving that something is worthwhile, I think you will have done a very, very, satisfactory job.

And another "don't" is - don't lecture too much. Don't be the professional. I'll relate the experience of a friend of mine, a graduate of the New York School, as he told it to me: "I had studied the Henry George philosophy fairly well, long before I ever came to the School, so when I came to the School I felt I had an advantage over some of the people who had never studied the Henry George philosophy at all. But my impression of my first instructor was that - in the vernacular - he wasn't too bright, he didn't really know his subject, he didn't use the techniques, he didn't do anything satisfactorily! And if it hadn't been that I already had a conviction, I certainly wouldn't have returned but, you see, as a student or instructor, you take what you get! As prospective teachers we think that people have the mentality, the background, the interest, the enthusiasm, etc. Next I ran into a dynamic individual who was very aggressive, who was talking all the time and nobody else had a chance to say a word. That individual actually drove students away. First, he didn't know his subject. Some people came and they slept, while others failed to prepare their assignments at home. A few felt they could have stayed at home or gone to the movies; they could have done anything else, but they came here to learn - or out of curiosity. Different people have different reasons for coming to these courses. The first instructor lost students, the second one drove them away because he was an exhibitionist primarily. He wanted to be seen; he wanted to be heard; he would lecture; he would do all the talking; he was over-aggressive. But later on I met what I considered an ideal instructor. He was a person who wasn't too intellectual; he was a man of average ability; a person who had the milk of human kindness; who was decent and honorable; a person whom I would want to make a friend of mine; whom I would be happy to invite in my home and say 'At least I admire him as a man, and surely I admire him as a teacher'. That individual did a very good job." Being warm - being human - and being understanding is, to me, particularly important. Don't try to create the impression that because you are an instructor in the Henry George School you are overly bright or overly intelligent or that you have all of the answers to all things. Let's realize that we are just normal human beings, and if we do that, I think we will have gone a long way.

Now, there are positive factors that I would like to talk about. It's taken for granted that every Georgist instructor knows his subject, and he should know his subject thoroughly. If he didn't know his subject backwards, he wouldn't be recommended as a candidate for the Teachers Training course. Unfortunately, we find at times that some people need refresher courses as they have the wrong interpretation and need some re-education in some phases of the philosophy, but we believe that can be done and it should be done.

We do have a manual. I insist that you should study your lesson and also do the collateral reading. This is one way to keep abreast with current affairs. After having studied your lesson and manual you should discard your manual and say to yourself "What does this chapter, this lesson, mean to me in terms of asking questions of students; to interrogate and elicit from them the information that is desired?" You find out then whether or not you know your subject - whether you can formulate desirable questions and whether the students know the subject. Now there is no lesson in the Henry George philosophy that I have discovered that has more than four or five salient points. Some lessons may have two or three, and out of a series of questions you may find one or two points worthy of full

development. Those are the points you will develop, and develop them beautifully and brilliantly. It might be necessary for you to work out some system of twelve, fifteen or twenty questions to develop one particular point, but you should work out your questions. It doesn't make any difference how you do it.

And then, I always insist that each instructor work out a series of illustrations to submit to his pupils, and each person in the class should also work out a series of illustrations, or an illustration on a particular point. Give the student the first opportunity to present and explain his illustration. If your illustration excels his, then give an illustration that will be pertinent to that particular question, and by that exchange and that cooperation of ideas and efforts we will all learn, will refine our techniques and do a much more thorough job. I have also encouraged the creative aspect (the idea I mentioned in the very beginning) of self-expression. Two years ago I had in my Teachers Training class three draftsmen and an architect, who worked out a series of slides to illustrate the rent law different from anything I had ever seen before. Those teacher trainees did all sorts of things. I have a folder with many things that they have done that might be utilized as visual aids. Now I say that visual aids are necessary or desirable at times and yet, paradoxically, they may or may not be necessary. It all depends upon you, the teacher, what you have to bring and what you have to offer. If you need some support from that particular area that will aid you in developing your subject, by all means use it. I haven't found it necessary.

I am careful, meticulously careful, at all times to always relate things to fundamental principles. If you ask and redirect your questions toward the idea of getting back to fundamental principles, you can never stray too far.

At the end of each lesson a student trainee has for his assignment the evaluation of work done during that session. His remarks are always constructive and in general are favorably accepted by his colleagues.

We believe in the Henry George system - in the incentive system. We believe it is a desirable system and we believe it with our heart and soul and we imply that in our course. We have an incentive motivation. We start out with not less than ten - and if we have twenty or thirty it doesn't matter - but at the end of the course, through evaluations that are kept secret, we select an individual who, according to the students, will show the greatest possibility of making a successful teacher on all of these counts that I have indicated this morning. They select, in their opinion, the individual who is most likely to succeed, and at the end of the last session they give him some autographed book or have him as their guest at a luncheon or give him some token of achievement. As a general rule, we find it works very, very well.

These are some of the things we do in the Teachers Training course in New York City and I submit them to you for your earnest consideration.

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SUGGESTED READING:

"The Art of Teaching" by Gilbert Highet. Publishers, Alfred A. Knopf.

"Lancelot's Handbook of Teaching Skills" by W.H. Lancelot (Iowa State Teachers College) Publishers, John Wiley & Sons