

Portrait of Lancaster M. Greene

Webster's Collegiate defines the word "vital" as "full of life and vigor," so when one refers to the vital statistics concerning Lancaster M. Greene, the adjective is quite appropriate. Since his birth in 1901, his vim and energy have been among his most characteristic qualities. Happily, a considerable portion of these years have been devoted to teaching and otherwise promoting the philosophy of Henry George.

As early as 1919, when he was Standard Bearer at East High School in Rochester, New York, Mr. Greene had already shown a bent toward the field of banking and investment. He worked for a time at the Livingston County Trust Company even before entering Williams College, where he took his B.A. in 1923, and made the varsity ski and soccer teams. In 1922 he and his brother Norvin started a Chase National Bank college training program, and after graduation they began their careers. The investment firm of Lancaster & Norvin Greene was formed in 1927, and still continues actively, though its emphasis nowadays is on investment counseling.

George Rusby, an investment client Lancaster M. Greene met in 1925, discussed Henry George every time the two got together, and in 1934 persuaded him to take a course at the Henry George School, which had been founded two years before by Oscar Geiger. Mr. Greene recalls that at his commencement dinner he urged other class speakers to address their remarks to land value taxation, not only to their fine teachers. He was then invited by Otto K. Dorn to attend the teachers' training course, and in 1935 he began teaching classes at the School.

Mr. Greene taught two or three days a week for seventeen years, during which time he developed and inspired many teachers. His teaching ability has always been highly esteemed, especially by his fellow faculty members, because of his skill, his enthusiasm, and his knowledge of the subject. Anna George DeMille proposed him for the Board of Trustees, and Leonard Recker, his training teacher, convinced him he should accept the office. Charles O'Connor Henessy, president of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, prevailed on him to attend an international economic conference in London, to recommend Henry George Schools to people from the United Kingdom, Australia, Holland, France, and Germany. The effort was a success, and when Mr. Henessy died, he left his estate to the Henry George School, as he had promised Mr. Greene he would do.

Lawson Purdy, the new president, asked Lancaster

M. Greene to join its Board, and to help George Rusby and Thomas A. Larkin to rebuild its finances, which has been crippled by the depression. Mr. Greene accepted, and soon became vice-president of the Henry George School and of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. During his tenure, the School has successively been headed by Directors Otto K. Dorn, Frank Chodorov, Margaret Bateman, and Robert Clancy; President Arnold A. Weinstein, and Acting Director Stanley Rubenstein.

When the growing Henry George School needed more space than was available at its 79th Street quarters, Gilbert Tucker pointed out it would be wiser to buy a building than to rent one. Accordingly, a small building was acquired on East 29th Street in 1938, which the School occupied until 1944, when it was sold and the present East 69th Street building purchased. Mr. Greene, who with his colleagues on the Board took part in these transactions, observes that interestingly, perhaps intriguingly (for obvious reasons), the School sold the 29th Street premises for \$40,000 more than it had paid, and has been offered many times the purchase price for its 69th Street building.

Early in its history, John C. Lincoln became deeply interested in the Henry George School, and for many years supported it actively and generously, becoming its president in 1947, when Anna George DeMille died.

In 1937 Will Lissner started The Freeman, which later became the Henry George News, with Lancaster M. Greene as Chairman of its Publication Committee. A frequent contributor to its columns, Mr. Greene believes enthusiastically in filling the need for communication with past students and others interested in the philosophy of freedom.

Mr. Greene has attended most of the annual Henry George School conferences, including those hosted by various School extensions, as well as many conferences sponsored by the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. He has worked closely with each management of the School in an endeavor to improve its educational thrust. In 1969, at that year's Henry George School conference, he received the first annual achievement award, which reads: "Presented to Lancaster M. Greene for distinguished services as an officer and trustee." The award and its sentiment were well-earned and well-deserved, and still are, for "Lanc" Greene is an extraordinary Georgist.

- Sydney Mayers HGN - March, 1974

Where Is That Margin?

Westward the pioneers pressed, seeking virgin land, new and free land to which they might apply their labor, and thus produce the wherewithal they needed to satisfy their needs and their desires. It was the 19th Century, and the Federal Homestead Act of 1862 aided them greatly in their quest, by providing a means to occupy, use, and enjoy such acreage as they could claim, at little or no cost.

The history of America's western migration is too well known to require repeating. Every schoolboy has learned that as the movement west grew, the country grew, attaining development and prosperity theretofore unknown.

Not too long ago, however, there occurred a re-birth of the old pioneering spirit, engendered by the awakening of a previously rather dormant Alaska, now become a new star in the national flag. "Free Land" again became a cry, and hundreds of letters began to pour into the Bureau of Land Development. This agency still exists, keeping track of the 762 million acres of land currently publicly owned. The letters ask one question: how to acquire free government land. Alas, the BLD answers them all in most discouraging tones.

In fact, the Bureau bluntly states there is really no such thing as "free land from the government," though it is possible even nowadays to get a tract free or for \$1.25 an acre. The "catch" is that most of the available land is in remote Alaska, reachable only by foot after flying to the nearest airport. While the homesteader pays only a \$10 fee to settle on the land, the law requires him to develop it, and to live on it not less than seven months a year for three years. Moreover, the cost of erecting a house and outfitting a farm can reach many thousands of dollars.

In 1972, about 22,000 acres of public land were turned over to 182 homesteaders, of whom only 68 actually "moved in." So the pioneers of the 1970's, who hoped to find a new and fertile "margin of cultivation," were disappointed. But all hope should not yet be abandoned. The Government Printing Office still publishes, at \$2 a year, a quarterly called "Our Public Lands." Who knows where the margin is now?

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The Land of Iran

Iran and its people are fortunate in having as their ruler so enlightened a monarch as their Shah, Reza Pahlevi. He is intellectually gifted, strong in character, and ambitious for his country's development. "We intend," he has said, "to attain a standard of living equal to that of Europe." Iran's average per capita income has already reached over \$500 per year, which is high for a developing nation, and its goal is to reach \$1000 per year per capita income within five years.

This interesting country, which centuries ago enjoyed great glory as Persia, is blessed with a mineral potential geologists describe as "fantastic," including enormous oil deposits and what may prove to be one of the world's greatest deposits of copper. The exploitation of these natural treasures, hopefully for the benefit of all Iranians, should raise Iran to a high place among all nations. But the development of these resources, and of the land, was preceded by a long struggle to break the powerful hold of the "Thousand Families," the traditional establishment of Iran, who owned the land and thus the bulk of all the country's wealth.

After a bitter political conflict, the Shah wrested their holdings from Iran's feudal landlords, and turned them over to 2,500,000 rural families. As a result, agriculture has been given top priority in the current five-year economic plan. "Under our sweeping land reform," says the Shah, "no peasant in Iran today works for a landlord. We have introduced cooperatives, our own unique farm corporations, and modern business practices." Among other national assets regained from the landlords were the rich oilfields and the petroleum industry, one of the most productive in the Middle East. A stable supply of oil for 20 years has been assured.

With the best of intentions, however, it is questionable whether the plans the benevolent Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlevi has made for his people will come to fruition. In distributing land to them, he helped them mightily — but for how long? By making them landowners, replacing the "Thousand Families," he has "sown the dragon's teeth." Inevitably, by fair means or foul, the farmers' lands will be gradually absorbed by clever operators, and future generations will be in rent thrall to the survivors. This can be prevented only if Iran's lands are made common property, under a system of location value taxation.

—L. M. G.

"How Heavy Our Tax Load?"

Sylvia Porter, financial columnist for the New York Post, in an informative news article, expresses concern that if Congress approves a rise in Federal income tax rates, "the hike will hit us directly in the pocketbook or cash-register, almost surely will compel us to reduce our buying of scarce goods and services — and it well might tilt an economic slowdown into a full-fledged recession."

But Ms. Porter finds consolation of a sort in two concomitant findings. First, notwithstanding these "unpleasantnesses," she points out that tax increases are among the most effective of all anti-inflation measures. This circumstance, even if true, as claimed repeatedly by government leaders urging national austerity, brings to mind the concept of the cure that is worse than the disease.

Her second rationalization is the revelation by Ms. Porter that "even after a tax boost, we still would rank way down on the list of industrialized nations in the total share of our income we pay in taxes to government." Here too the harried taxpayer must find dubious solace at best. It does not alleviate a person's hurt just to learn that others are hurting more than he.

In any case, although their recommendations are rather late in coming, according to Sylvia Porter, "some of our nation's most renowned economists are calling for anti-inflationary tax increases." This procedure, to be sure, would willy-nilly curb purchasing power, and thereby lessen economic demand, and thus reduce market prices. That it would also result in denying to the consumer the ability to satisfy his

desires for countless goods and services is apparently a fact not worthy of consideration.

Among Ms. Porter's interesting statistics is a showing that in only four countries (Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Australia) do taxpayers pay a bigger share of taxes in the form of income taxes than Americans do. They pay 19 per cent of total taxes in taxes on goods and services, placing the United States last in a list of 23 key nations, and in this 23-nation list, the United States ranks 16th in terms of how much of its gross output is "contributed" to the tax-collectors. The figures cited come from a report prepared by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in whose opinion the USA "comes out well" in the share of gross income that is paid in taxes, but must take some anti-inflationary tax action.

Overcoming inflation by means of increased taxation is about as logical as reducing the family food budget by cutting down on eating. Either action will no doubt be effective — for a while. But a cut-back in eating will ultimately affect one's health, and a cut-back in economic demand (and production) will in time adversely affect the economic health of the nation.

One way to discourage inflation is to encourage production, thereby increasing the supply of goods and services vis-a-vis the supply of money. To do so clearly requires the elimination of impediments to production, chiefly insufficient returns to labor and capital. And such maldistribution can be remedied through the application of Henry George's proposals.

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NEWS

Conference to Convene in California

Official announcement has been made, and full details have been revealed regarding the 1974 Henry George School Conference. The annual gathering will be held in one of the sunniest areas on the sunny West Coast, the sponsors of this year's conference being the Henry George Schools of California.

The conference, which will constitute the first "Conference of Inquiry," will extend from Tuesday, July 9, through Sunday, July 14, 1974. It will gather at the new Francisco Torres Conference Centre, located at 6850 El Colegio Road, Goleta, California 93017, which is close to the campus of the University of California in Santa Barbara. The site of the conference is about a fifteen-minute ride from Santa Barbara, which lies 100 miles north of Los Angeles, and is served by major airlines and excellent highways. There is convenient transportation between Santa Barbara and Goleta. Incidentally, those booking on United Airlines need pay no extra fare from L.A. to Santa Barbara.

The atmosphere and surroundings at Francisco Torres are extremely pleasant, and the facilities are exceptionally varied, appealing to both outdoor and indoor enthusiasts. One may choose to immerse in the Pacific Ocean or in the heated swimming pool; and one may wield a cue at the billiard tables or elect a more strenuous activity on the tennis courts. The food is good and "the prices are right," full board being available for as little as \$16 a day.

The cost of accommodations during the conference is based on the length of stay, working out in general as follows, assuming that the guest or guests will remain until Sunday, the final day of the conference. For those arriving on Tuesday, the rates are \$115 for single occupancy, \$95 for double occupancy, and there is a family rate of \$135. For those arriving on Wednesday, the charges are \$95 single, \$78 double, and \$135 family-rate. For those arriving Thursday, \$75 single, \$61 double, and \$105 family rate. For Friday arrivals, the rates are \$55 single, \$44 double, and \$75 family. Further information with respect to accommodations, reservations, transportation, or other data relating to the conference, may be

obtained by writing to: Conference Committee, Henry George School, Box 655, Tijuana, California 91042; telephone: (213) 352-4141.

The novel theme of the Conference of Inquiry will be an endeavor to discover and delineate economic and social problems, rather than simply to observe effects and seek solutions. Harry Pollard, president of the Los Angeles Henry George School, reports that when friends gathered at the death-bed of Gertrude Stein earnestly asked her "What is the answer?", she archly replied "What is the question?" This is precisely what the conference will try to determine. As Darwin once remarked, solutions are simple but finding the problem is difficult.

The unusual nature of the conference theme, which (to say the least) reflects an intriguingly provocative approach, should certainly result in a series of extremely interesting meetings. Participants in the many programs being scheduled will represent an international assemblage, and a wide-ranging diversity of discussion will be heard. There will be talks, perhaps a "lecture" or two, seminars, panel discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and possibly a few surprises. In addition to the representatives from various Henry George Schools who will take part, it is expected that a number of guest speakers will address the conferees and join in the discussions.

It is also anticipated that directors of HGS extensions and of associate schools will meet and confer with Arnold A. Weinstein, president of the Henry George School in New York, and members of its Board of Trustees, to discuss past activities and future plans.

As always, no effort is being spared to try to make the 1974 Conference a truly enjoyable and worthwhile affair. Every year the host school does its best to make its conference "better than ever," and this year is no exception. The Henry George Schools of California, under Harry Pollard's enthusiastic leadership, are going all out to assure a successful event. It should be a great gathering, one that everyone who can get to California ought to attend.