

Paul Beach

# The Freeman

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Mr. Otto K. Dorn  
c/o Henry George School of Social Science  
30 East 29th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Dorn:

You will remember that on the occasion of the recent faculty meeting Mr. Chodorov, in the course of his farewell remarks, gave it as his opinion that my appointment to the Freeman editorship was, in common parlance, a "phoney" -- that the trustees intended to make me a dummy or stooge editor.

I attended a meeting about a month ago at which several of the trustees were present, and at this meeting my appointment to the editorship was discussed. I tried to make it abundantly clear then that I did not seek the editorship, indeed, that I should prefer not to have it, and that if the proposed change were being made with the idea that I would consent to be a rubber stamp or figurehead editor, I would flatly refuse the appointment. I do not think that there was any failure at the time, on the part of those present, to understand my point of view.

This point of view has not changed. If I am to assume responsibility for The Freeman, I must have the authority to edit it free from interference. Those of you who know me well know that I am always hospitable to criticisms and suggestions, particularly from those who speak with authority in a particular field. But I need not tell you that there is a line at which even the most well meant helpfulness becomes officious interference; and I am sure you will all realize from your own experience that the person who offers the suggestion is not invariably best fitted to judge whether that line has been crossed.

Last week Miss Bateman handed me a contribution from the pen of Dr. Aiken. I decided that this was not suitable for inclusion in The Freeman unless certain changes were made -- changes along lines which I suggested in a letter to Dr. Aiken.

Since the manuscript had come to me through Miss Bateman, I thought she would be interested in knowing my reasons for rejecting it, and thus sent the letter and article upstairs so that Miss Bateman might read it and then have it mailed.

It appears now that Miss Bateman continued to interest herself in the matter to the extent of sending my note, or a copy of it, to Mr. Lissner. At any rate, I now have a letter from Mr. Lissner to Miss Bateman in which he confirms my judgment in rejecting the manuscript. Mr. Lissner adds a number of observations, one of which is "If Mr. Peach tries to fasten a party line on The Freeman, he will be unacceptable as editor." In another place, "This is once more an educational institution, not a hot-house for party-line propaganda." In another place, "Party-lining is out. A Christian Scientist is just as acceptable to us as an individualist-anarchist."

I am afraid, looking at it from the standpoint of a logician, that the theory that The Freeman should not have any "party line" is a little easier to state vaguely than to define specifically. I suppose that Mr. Lissner meant to say (and as a professed writer should have said) that The Freeman should not be closed to expressions of legitimate differences of opinion. But you will note that even here the question is begged by the word "legitimate". Who is to decide what is a legitimate difference? I do not believe any of you feel that The Freeman, as a matter of journalistic fairness, is bound to give space to the Georgist-Socialist school, or the Georgist-Communist school, or the Georgist-anti-clerical school, or the Georgist-Townsendite school. Or (if there is such a thing) to the Georgist-anti-Semitic school. In other words, then, no set of rules can be laid down that will take the place of the judgment of the editor.

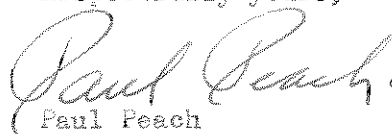
As a professional journalist in matters appertaining exclusively to journalism, Mr. Lissner speaks with authority; at any rate, I do not question his authority. As a Georgist, as an arbiter of good taste, as a judge of propriety, he does not impress me to the extent that I am induced to substitute his judgment for mine. If he will help me in those ways in which his help is most valuable, I shall welcome his cooperation. The same is true of everyone; I am glad to submit to the judgment of anyone in those fields in which he is my superior.

But Mr. Lissner's language does not strike me as being as tactful or as courteous as it might be. When he says that if I try to fasten a party line on The Freeman I will be unacceptable

as editor, all he really means ( for this statement is purely subjective and says nothing about the extensional world) is that if I do things he does not approve of, he will disapprove. In his observation "Party-lining is out" he appears to assume a sort of pontifical responsibility, which also fails to impress me. With your permission, I will take my orders from the trustees.

One thing more. I was able to work in harmony with Mr. Chodorov for over a year because he allowed me to do my work with a minimum of interference. I trust that Miss Bateman will see the wisdom of continuing this policy. I think it will make for a much more cooperative spirit if each of us respects the dignity of the other in his own special duties.

Respectfully yours,

  
Paul Peach

P.S. If these views are unacceptable to the trustees, I remind them once more that I did not solicit the editorship, and urge them to secure a new editor as speedily as possible.

P.P.S. I have discussed this communication with Miss Bateman, and am glad to say that we have found ourselves entirely in harmony with each other.

PP:bp