

The Ladies of the Movement

by ROBERT CLANCY

AN anthropologist, Marvyn Jeffreys, says that women are stronger, smarter and more durable than men. Even if they are not, there is a great reservoir of potential to be tapped if the Georgist movement made more use of the unique endowments of women. Our movement would not be complete without their contribution.

The first of the "Georgist ladies" may be said to be Henry George's own wife. Annie Fox may not have been her husband's intellectual companion (as was John Stuart Mill's wife), but she was a source of strength to him. Without her loving loyalty he might not have weathered the many crises he endured. At the end of his life, when it was a question of his entering a campaign that might end his life, she agreed that he must do his duty regardless of the cost. The campaign of 1897 did cost him his life—and Annie bore up more courageously than many of his friends and supporters.

Their daughter, Anna George de Mille (who died in 1947) is remembered by many of us. She may not have fully inherited her father's mental capacity, but she had his dedication and fervor, and she was an inspiration to us Georgists. The book she wrote about her father, *Henry George: Citizen of the World*, is an admirable work, rounding out with a womanly point of view, the portrait of her father that was partially given in the biography by George's son.

Anna George's daughter, Agnes de Mille, is still with us, and perhaps she has inherited more of her grandfather's intellect. Besides being a genius in her own field of the dance, she is a brilliant speaker and writer, and has often enhanced our meetings with her verve and culture.

Among other women of our movement one of the first that comes to mind is Helen Denbigh, one of Oscar Geiger's earliest students. When he died in 1934 it was she who was most active in helping to bridge over the gap and continue the Henry George School which he founded, in his tradition.

Miss Denbigh was a gentle woman—and some of our ladies may have been a little more forward, such as Helene Mitchell McEvoy (alias "Alaska Jane"), but she left us a valuable record, the *Concordance to Progress and Poverty*.

It would be a long and distinguished list indeed if I were to mention all the Georgist ladies still with us and actively working, but I should like to name at least a few: V. G. Peterson, who has been Executive Secretary of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation since 1936; Dorothy Sara, founder of the school's Speakers Bureau in 1938 and still its "godmother"; Strehel Walton, who has kept the Montreal School going since 1939; and a relative newcomer to our ranks, Irene Hickman, who has recently demonstrated the feminine potential by getting herself elected as assessor of Sacramento County.

We should mention women's groups, too. There was the Women's Single Tax Club of Washington, D.C. which was the center of Georgist activities in the nation's capital for many years. In 1940, when the Henry George Foundation held its conference there, the Women's Club saw to it that the delegates got an official reception at the White House where they were greeted by Eleanor Roosevelt.

The Washington club is no more, but in Chicago the Henry George Wo-

men's Club is very much alive. They, too, have been a rallying point for Georgist activities for many years, and one of their leaders, Mina Olson, is Executive Secretary of the Henry George School's extension in Chicago. The Club helps the School greatly.

Henry George offered a rigorously logical analysis of the economy—perhaps this may symbolically be called the "masculine" side of his philosophy. But there is also a "feminine"

side, and that is the underlying philosophy, the sentiment, the morality of it. We cannot do without this side, even though it may not be set forth as conspicuously as the other. Just so, we cannot do without the ladies of the movement, though they are sometimes in the background. The less forward feminine side is still our guiding spirit. In the words of Goethe: "Das ewig weibliche zieht uns hinan" — the eternal woman-soul leads us onward.

"Strictly Personal"

From coast to coast helpful readers sent clippings of a widely syndicated column by Sydney Harris, "Strictly Personal." He states that when he puts expensive improvements on his house the property tax goes up, but if he let the property deteriorate it would go down. He can't imagine "a more inefficient and illogical way to run a community or a government," and he blames the deplorable urban blight on this "topsy-turvy state of affairs." It is hardly surprising, he says, that "any program of urban rehabilitation, construction and development is hamstrung from the beginning. But what if we took the tax off the improvements and put it on the land? Then nobody would be penalized for improving his property and adding to the value of the community; contrariwise the incentive to speculate in land would be removed, and both the urban slums and the suburban sprawl would no longer pay rich dividends."

With living space becoming more cramped, more and more people from little towns are moving into the cities, and suburban slums are now springing up. America grew strong and prosperous, he notes, by encouraging people to own and cultivate their property, to make improvements, and add to the wealth of the community. Taking the tax off improvements would prevent the land grabber from "sitting on his property" until it would command almost any price, and the speculator would no longer profit from squeezing the most housing into the smallest space, as so many shoddy suburban development firms have been doing.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stirlith of Wilmington took heart when they again saw a statement from Edwin P. Neilan in the Evening Journal similar to those mentioned in previous issues of HGN. Mr. Neilan, president of the Bank of Delaware, and chairman of the mayor's advisory committee on revenue, has expressed himself several times regarding assessment of property and called attention to the fact that taxation based on land value is being used with success elsewhere.

In proposing the "best use" of land, Mr. Neilan pointed out that both land and the structures on it are now being assessed and the same rate is fixed to both — a system which penalizes owners for making improvements. A proposed revision would apply the tax rate on the basis of the most profitable use that the land can be put to. This, in theory, would encourage property owners to attempt to make the best use of their land, and if necessary improve existing properties.

The State Chamber of Commerce has also heard a recommendation to inform city residents about the aspects of such a tax system.