

THE LAST OF THE RADICALS, Josiah Wedgwood, M.P. By C. V. Wedgwood. Macmillan Company, New York, 1952, 245 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by Susan S. Donahue.

Winston Churchill once stopped Josiah Wedgwood, M.P. on the street to say, "I've just been reading your Henry George, Wedgwood, and I must say I can't see the catch in it." "Thank God," replied the member of Parliament. He was always enthusiastic about a new disciple.

After reading this colorful account of the life of a great single taxer, by his niece, the historian, one might be tempted to say that Josiah Wedgwood was a follower of Henry George from his birth. Through a long life in which he championed many causes, all were based upon the success of the single tax.

"Jos" Wedgwood was not only a true radical, he was practically the only one in his own political company. He was the first to introduce in South Africa the Unimproved Values Rating. This was in 1902. At that time Lord Milner appointed him Resident Magistrate for the districts of Ermelo and Carolina.

Wedgwood liked the life in South Africa for he always enjoyed a "benevolent despotism." Generations of Puritan ancestry — as Miss Wedgwood puts it—"warmed his blood to this Old Testament patriarchy. His political convictions were, of course, of quite a different color. The registration of land and fixing of rates was going forward. Josiah had not yet read *Progress and Poverty* . . . But his brother Ralph, writing from home, urged him to have the rates levied on land values alone."

Josiah followed his brother's advice and the system worked well. But he had a serious disappointment at this time. "He had hoped for universal municipal suffrage; it was not granted. Indians (and of course Kaffirs) were excluded. From this exclusion, he always believed, the yet unsolved troubles of South Africa have all come."

Regarding Wedgwood's activities in Northern Nigeria Miss Wedgwood writes "The land for all the people, regardless of race, creed, color; the Colonial Empire was the proper place for the exercise of the doctrine of Henry George, as in the home country. About this time Josiah played an important part on the Northern Nigeria Land Laws Committee. They prepared a report on the principles of Henry George, setting down in firm and coherent form the basis of colonial policy which would enable the native to hold and develop his own land. The London Times described this document with justice as 'the most far-reaching measure of constructive statesmanship West Africa has ever known.' The legislation based on the report has in fact secured the natives of Nigeria from being turned into landless proletariat as has happened in so many other primitive communities."

It was in 1904 when Henry George and *Progress and Poverty* were both enjoying a great popularity that Josiah Wedgwood fell in love with both to remain a stout and incendiary Georgist to the end of his life. Nearly forty years later he wrote a matchless tribute to his leader, the greatest single influence in his life: "From those magnificent periods, unsurpassed in the whole of British literature, I acquired the gift of tongues. Ever since 1905, I have known there was a man from God and his name was Henry George. I had no need henceforth for any other faith."