

## Henry George: Citizen of the World



"I SPEAK with great fervor and sincerity," said Agnes de Mille at the dinner on March 18 at Town Hall Club honoring the publication of *Henry George: Citizen of the World*.<sup>\*</sup> "I was with my mother a great deal of the time she was working on the book—which covered a period of sixteen years. She started with scattered notes which gradually began to take shape. She wrote it out in longhand, with great energy and dedication. She was not a professional writer; she didn't know how to write, but she had to learn. She was not a practiced researcher; she had to learn that, too. In going through her papers we have found the most remarkable collection of letters—trunks and boxes full. She wrote to everyone who had ever met or spoken to Henry George. It was an extraordinary case of documentation.

"She hounded the publishers but they were not interested. Finally, with God's help and in the course of time, Don Shoemaker [a nephew and newspaper editor] offered his services. He undertook to collaborate with her and she, pressed with deep compulsion, drove him, us and herself. Her health failed—she was dying. Even in the hospital, in her last illness, she called for 'that book.' One day I brought along a package of manuscript. She couldn't read; her eyesight was gone, but she had to have 'that book' on the table. Then a letter came from Don Shoemaker saying the University of North Carolina Press would publish the book, and to be of good heart. Six hours later she died. I learned something from this. If you do your utmost, with absolute passion, with God's help, there are living spirits that will carry on, if it is worthy. I am not sure she knew this. I never told her I would help with the publication of the book, but Don Shoemaker did tell her and he had that happiness. I know my mother was

then she would say, 'don't just sit there, do something.' Many of you are teachers, many more are not. We can't all teach. There are hundreds of us just lying around rotting; waiting to be told what to do. I ask you very seriously to think how we can be put to use. There are civic enterprises and reader forums. I know the school can't do anything political, but there are opportunities around us. Henry George said we cannot make the wind, but we can sail by it. We must sail on; we can't sit in the harbor and rot."

Don C. Shoemaker, who was also present, read a warm-hearted and most engaging message which he had hastily composed coming up on the train. We are sorry to deprive our readers of the entire text but must content ourselves with only this brief excerpt:

"We are here tonight to honor a great person and a great personality. It is a tribute to Henry George that half a century after his death, a university of the first rank in America and in the world, should find his story so fresh, so pertinent and still so inspiring, that its Press should bring forth a new life of this man with all the garnishments which only the fine art of printing can add to the ennoblement of a name so well celebrated wherever economics is taught and wherever the conscience of mankind is willing to grapple with the social problems of his day. It is a tribute, also, to Anna George de Mille, that this company assembles to honor her long perseverance. God bless her! . . .

"As a newspaper man I have a particular affection for this man whom we honor. It is not always profitable to espouse, in print, causes which may be unpopular. Henry George had a deep sense of morality. It is possible, I think, to reduce that statement to the trite but pregnant axiom that he knew the difference between right and wrong. All through his life he put that knowledge to work. In California he could have become and could have remained, to the enrichment of himself and all who followed him, a newspaper tycoon of inestimable wealth and power. But always he held facts and personalities to the fierce glare of that ultra-ray: 'what is right?'

"He was punished for it in his lifetime. He was revered for it in the long bright afterglow of his memory. He said: 'I am for men.' No newspaperman ever composed a finer obituary.

"On our scene today as a newspaperman Henry George would, I think, hold to that same principle. He would lay about him at the arrogance of labor where it clashed with the public interest. He would assail capital where it stooped to the inhumane uses of unbridled power. He would be a staunch defender of our civil liberties and he would direct the cool wind of his logic upon hysteria and suspicion.

He would stand for one world, both as an idealist and as a practical man, wondering, perhaps, as we wonder today at the wreckage of a world infested by 'practical' men who debase idealism in the pursuit of tyranny, and dictatorship. And I think that he would be tickled to death that down in North Carolina, the Old North State, men somewhat likeminded would decide to publish his glowing story once again. Indeed, if offered it I am confident that he would today accept a professorship of economics at the place called Chapel Hill. And he would be offered it!

"If the courage and conviction of Henry

George were present today there would be at least one great voice raised for self-evident truths. I think, therefore that this work has a mission to perform as it is sent forth from the pen of Anna George. It is timeless, but it is timely.

"He was one of the really great—pure of heart, loving his fellow-men—a citizen of the world," said Father Dawson of Dublin. That is the last sentence of Anna George's book. Let its meaning sink into the conscience of men and it will become a message of social resurrection everywhere."