

little candle—long beam

IN Toronto in 1897 three men met together every week in a downtown office and wrote news reports which eventually converted the editors to their point of view. They started the first single tax club and might have won Toronto as a single tax city had not the World War intervened bringing with it a "temporary" income tax.

This trio consisted of Arthur Wentworth Roebuck, once a poor farm boy, now Canada's senior and most honored senator; Ernest Farmer, who has just retired as president of The School of Economic Science (HGS), Toronto; and his brother, Arthur Farmer, who is remembered by Archibald McColl as the most convincing speaker he ever heard and the one who introduced him to the philosophy of Henry George.

Arthur Roebuck started a weekly, *The Single Taxer*, in those early days, and later spent several years in newspaper work. *The Single Taxer* re-emerged as *The Square Deal*, edited then and now by Ernest Farmer. Senator Roebuck says of it to this day, "I receive it with pleasure and read it carefully. Ernest Farmer's ability as a political and economic thinker, writer and publisher has been outstanding, and his devotion and industry have been admirable."

When Arthur Roebuck's 90th birthday was celebrated recently, he was amazed and pleased to see so many of the single taxers, workers and companions of the 1900's among the hundreds of invited guests. Everyone received a cordial invitation to a party on February 28, 1978, when the Senator will be a sprightly 100. To talk of age before that would be premature, says the man who still plays golf as often as possible though he habitually keeps office hours from ten to ten. As a second hobby he has painted more than 100 pictures.

He recalls pitching hay on the farm at age 12, when his father used to speak of the Rt. Hon. J. A. Roebuck, a great-uncle and Liberal MP who participated in many reform victories. "I decided then and there to go my great-uncle one better," he said. "It's been on my mind ever since. That is why I am today an intense Liberal* and reformer."

Archie McColl, as a boy of ten delivering papers, once overheard a plot to put Roebuck "under the ice of Lake Temiskaming" for the single tax views he was expressing publicly. They were considered "worse than socialism." He escaped that fate however, and having saved his money he went to law school at age 37, reached the top rapidly and became the most brilliant of courtroom lawyers.

He served in many important capacities in his country's service. Arch McColl mentions especially that as Minister of Highways he started the first all-lighted super-highway in North America. The Senator himself thinks the most important thing he accomplished was the Industrial Standards Act of 1934, when he was Minister of Labor and held the first permanent wage arbitration court in Ontario. This was hailed as one of the most advanced pieces of labor legislation ever put on the statute books.

Ernest Farmer, meanwhile, was dedicating himself to music and to furthering the ideas of Henry George. Elizabeth McKay has written of him: "for many years there would not have been any organized group or Georgist paper in Canada if it had not been for the faithful and dedicated work of this busy and versatile man. During the

* As used in the early 1900 sense "liberal" bears little resemblance to the term as used today.

depression years, 1941 to 1956, he kept The Square Deal going almost single handed." He studied French and German when he entered McMaster University in 1899 and later went to Germany to study piano theory and composition at Leipzig Conservatory.

Ernest and his brother Arthur came naturally to musical gifts and insight. On finding *Progress and Poverty* in their father's library, Arthur, the younger, was the first to take it up with enthusiasm. This led to his becoming the lucid and powerful speaker Mr. McColl remembers. When he went to McMaster in 1901 he brought up Henry George's ideas frequently in class with this curious result. On graduating from the first class in Honor Political Science his professor encouraged him to continue post graduate studies with a view to taking the chair which it was proposed to establish, warning, however, that he would have to give up some of his "radical ideas." Arthur Farmer declined and charted his life in other important paths which did not inhibit his espousal of the HG philosophy. He became Canada's leading handwriting expert and an authority on related subjects.

Ernest Farmer, besides continuing to produce The Square Deal, with its high standards and wealth of facts not available elsewhere, is still connected with the faculty of the Royal Conservatory of Music and teaches piano lessons to students fortunate enough to enjoy this privilege. A member of the Speakers Federation, he is a charming, witty and wise after-dinner speaker who delights his audiences. Hence ever steadily the candles shed their glow though more than half a century has passed.

Canada's tributes paid to its senior Senator, Arthur W. Roebuck, have brought his particular achievements to wide attention. Students of Henry George love him for his personality and charm and are grateful that he has

always accepted invitations to give an address at their conferences in Canada or the U. S. He felt encouraged last year in Montreal on finding younger members present, and says his faith is strengthened as he meets with Georgists of today.

In our milieu where politics often has dreary connotations, it is refreshing to meditate upon the striking fact that no shadow has fallen across his path during 23 years in the Senate. He would no more be expected to deflect from his high principles and unfailing courtesy than he would be expected to appear without his sartorially elegant wing collar. He has lived to exemplify the man who thinks and who, as Henry George said, "becomes a light and a power." His influence is beyond measure. The country is rich which honors such a man.

What a great day it must have been in the Senate at 3 p.m. on February 27th when one colleague after another expressed "felicitations for the 90th birthday" of Arthur Roebuck on the morrow. "His capacities, his enthusiasm, his mental alertness, remain undiminished. He is a remarkable man, an outstanding Canadian," said the Senator from Ottawa West.

Another, speaking with admiration and affection, said, "attaining the age of 90 years is in itself quite an achievement. To do so while still enjoying perfect health is even more extraordinary. But it is without parallel when you do it after such an interesting public career as that of our colleague whom we honor today. . . . He is still an eager and untiring worker and shows a vitality that most of us must envy."

"He is known throughout the country as a pillar of Parliament," said one, "because of his wisdom, which is a virtue, and because he has had the gift to keep his heart young. Old age does not apply to him. He hears well. He sees so well that he can read between

the lines. His step is brisk and he misses nothing. We are all proud of him because his presence brings more prestige to the Senate."

And of this "lawyer, statesman, raconteur, Canadian extraordinary" a strong critic said, "in my mind and heart I bear no ill will. I say to Senator Roebuck that if he acted like an old man I would never criticize him. That is the greatest compliment I can make. To do otherwise would be ungallant. It is because he has all his faculties and is in fighting trim at all times that I

look on him as a young man — like myself. He will go down in the history of Senate as the father of this very modern, up-to-date divorce act, which is an achievement of no small significance."*

It has often been said that the study of Henry George engenders a proclivity for logic. Could it not be assumed that early saturation with George's books aroused the mental ability and strength of purpose later reflected in the lives of these three remarkable men?

* HGN March 1968, p. 13.

READERS CLIPPINGS

Professor Robert V. Andelson of Auburn University, Alabama, noticed an article in The Birmingham News stating "To Save on Taxes Stars Sink Dollars in Mother Earth." Pictured is the handsome Roek Hudson who paid \$474,000 for a 158-acre sugar farm in Riverside County, California, that he had never seen. A Beverly Hills realtor handles many such deals and is constantly on the alert for this hard-to-find property to be bought by the "land hungry stars" on advice of their business advisers. If the conditions are right the purchaser can lay out most of his purchase price for the following five years. All the interest is tax deductible. "Thus he is using 'soft' dollars, money that would go to taxes if not invested to buy property. The investment of 'hard' dollars, capital savings, can be quite small. A half million dollar purchase might involve no more than \$10,000 to \$20,000 in 'hard' dollars," the realtor said.

A Land Conservation Act passed in California sounded innocent enough, observed Clayton C. Bauer of Spencerport, New York, but it contained one of those gimmicks we often read about. An owner of prime vegetable land could get assessments reduced from the fair market value of \$25,000 an acre to \$2,400 an acre if he agreed to convert a 40-acre minimum to agricultural purposes for 10 years. The tax break would benefit owners of all kinds of farm and dairy land. In a short time 104 applications had been received covering 36,000 acres.

But to implement the act the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles had to approve it, and they did, after a heated debate. Three of them declared publicly that the act ought to be repealed but that local supervisor option placed Los Angeles County farmers under a handicap as compared to neighboring counties that okayed it.

Public reaction was immediate and not to be denied. Accordingly The Herald Examiner reported on February 9th that the supervisors had reversed their decision and canceled public hearings on the 104 applications.

This measure would have placed an additional burden on small homeowners and, as Supervisor Ernest E. Debs pointed out, would have crippled school districts. He introduced a motion to rescind the act and was supported by Frank C. Bonelli, Kenneth Hahn and Warren M. Dorn. Credits are also due County Assessor Phil Watson who instituted reforms but not quite enough. He said his checks revealed that special tax relief would have gone only to large owners.