

## Both feet on the ground

In this essay, first published in the May 1957 issue of **Land&Liberty** as part of the article series 'Personally Speaking,' **Vic Blundell** describes how 80 years ago he first came into contact with the ideas of Henry George.

If my early environment had been the deciding factor in the formulation of my philosophical and political outlook I would have been a Socialist. My friends and associates were nearly all Socialists and all around me was 'evidence' of the failure of capitalism. There was bitterness and anger among the working classes as they lost their independence in the dole queue and their self-respect under the "Means Test." They took it for granted that because unemployment and other social ills existed within the framework of free competitive enterprise, the latter was responsible for the former. Private enterprise, they were told, produced the wrong things; instead of houses, clothing and food for people in need of them, there were motor cars, smart hotels and all kinds of luxury goods for the rich. It was necessary to plan so that the right things were produced. The factories, machinery, shops, etc, were built by the workers and, therefore, it was argued that they should be nationalised. My would-be political educators believed that not only was this a matter of simple justice but that it would end the exploitation of man by man.

In the late twenties, while still in my teens, I was a regular visitor to open-air meetings in Finsbury Park, North London, where audiences filled and overflowed the large recreation ground. Squeezed in among the main political parties were small groups battling for attention and when I grew tired of listening to the mob orators, I would invariably finish up as one of a small group around JW Graham Peace, leader of the Commonwealth Land Party. From him I learned of the rights of man, economic rent, land speculation, free trade and all the ramifications of free enterprise and social justice. Urged on by my elder brother, Stanley, I began to read *Progress and Poverty* and as I came to understand the philosophy of Henry George more clearly the defects of Socialism became more apparent.

I addressed my first public meeting at the age of 18 and felt the keen edge of



**Vic Blundell**  
**1911-2003**

Vic Blundell has died at the age of 92. For nearly half a century Mr Blundell ran the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values - the predecessor of the Henry George Foundation. He became the vital bridge between the roots of the movement which grew around Henry George at the turn of the last century, and those who are carrying forward the inspiration and ideas into the twenty-first century.

In the thirties Mr Blundell trained as a salesperson and then became the manager of several branches of Littlewoods shoe shops in London. After the end of World War II he came to work with Arthur W Madsen, secretary of the United Committee.

Mr. Blundell was a driving force behind the Henry George School evening classes, where many later reformers found their cause. He became Mr. Madsen's successor in the late fifties - and held that post until his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. He was also one of the longest serving editors of *Land&Liberty*.

Mr. Blundell was tireless in his debating of economic arguments, and steady in his championing of the truth virtues of the reform which had been set out by Henry George.

Mr Blundell is survived by a son, Jon, who lives and works in Japan.

the tongue of the experienced heckler. Often I got into arguments that left me the loser. It hurt, although I knew that my case was sound. Then I remembered my training as a salesman. The first thing a salesman has to learn is his stock. He must know every line thoroughly and be able to recite its qualities, construction, advantages, etc. As a young and raw economist the trouble with me was that I 'did not know my stock' In the years that followed I had to learn the answers to many questions on the economics of Henry George. The moral basis and the clear logic of the Georgist case were the twin forces that maintained my faith in what many tried to tell me was a lost cause.

I shall always remember one of my early mentors, Mr EO Edwards, dealing with an obstinate heckler. Patiently, tactfully and with great skill he demolished one by one every argument his opponent put forward. In the end the questioner, shrugged his shoulders and turning away said: "All right, but you will never do it." Then I saw the fire blaze in the eye of the speaker who up to that moment had maintained his remarkable self-control. Pointing an accusing finger at his heckler, he cried: "You will never do it, but don't you dare tell me I will never do it!"

The question that worried me most was not an economic one. It was "Why is so fundamentally simple a proposition difficult to 'put over'?" I came to realise that one cannot sow seeds in a garden overgrown with weeds and expect them to take root. Much of the work of those who seek to influence others lies in pulling up the weeds of prejudice. After all if we were right then all political parties were wrong! An over-simplification, no doubt, but not an easy position to escape from and not a good point at which to start an argument.

I moved to Liverpool and there met the late Mr EJ McManus from whom I first learned of the existence of study classes based on Henry George's