

HENRY GEORGE COMMEMORATION

London, 17th November

The largest and most successful Henry George Anniversary Dinner that has been held in London for a number of years took place in the St. Ermin's Hotel, Westminster, on 17th November. A triple event was made of this occasion: to commemorate the home of Henry George, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Committee, and to welcome the new edition of *The Science of Political Economy*, just published by the Henry George Foundation. The dinner, held under the auspices of the United Committee, gave the opportunity also to pay a special tribute of esteem and regard to Mr W. R. Lester, as the chief guest of honour.



W. R. LESTER

Mrs Anna George de Mille and her daughter Agnes were the other two guests of the evening, for the sake of whose presence the actual date of the dinner had been fixed to fit in with their travelling arrangements on a special visit to Europe.

Messages to the Anniversary were received from friends overseas, and from many at home regretting inability to attend.

From Charles O'Connor Hennessy (New York): "I am happy to note that our old friend, Mr Lester, is to be specially honoured at this Dinner. This is a most appropriate and deserving recognition of the constant fidelity and highly valuable services rendered to your Committee and the cause for many years by a fine gentleman, whose friendship I deem it an honour to enjoy."

From Antonio Albendin (cable): "Greetings from Spanish League to the Henry George Dinner."

From Spencer Heath (Baltimore): "Your work is splendid. I am watching your situation with great interest and much hope. I look forward to your flourishing in every way."

F. Folke (Copenhagen), cabled greetings on behalf of the Danish Henry George movement.

From Willy R. Scholz (Oslo) (with receipt acknowledged of 27 copies of *The Science of Political Economy* ordered by him): "The pamphlet, *The Master Motive of Human Action*, has also reached me. The stirring passages from *Progress and Poverty* reprinted here most aptly serve to rekindle one's faith in the Single Tax, showing its bearing not only on the material but also on the ideal aspect of life. . . . The eyes of all Single Taxers are focused on the gallant fighters for our cause in London. We look to them with full confidence. We know them to make the most of every opportunity."

From Mrs Roswell Skeet, Junr. (New York): "That will be a choice occasion when you have your Anniversary Dinner, with Mrs de Mille and her daughter in your midst. I had much pleasure in again meeting her in the spring, before I came away to this other side of the continent."

From Viscount Snowden: "It will not be possible for me to be present, but I send you my best wishes for the success of the function."

From Charles E. Crompton (Newbie, Annan): "No man that I know has ever worked harder or done more for the Henry George movement than W. R. Lester. I should like to associate myself with all the nice things you are going to say to him, including the hope that he will long be able to continue the good fight for that justice, liberty and social well-being that only a Single Taxer can conceive."

From A. D. Haxton (Fife): "I remember Mr Lester in Glasgow when he first came into the movement. He has been a good soldier since. I was impressed from the first by his sincere and genial personality, and since then I have looked affectionately on him as one of the sheet anchors of the movement."

Dr H. Chellev (London): "I should have been glad to meet Mrs de Mille, for some of her friends are mine out there. Of all the gospels preached to-day, economic and otherwise, yours is the only good news—and the only way out of world evils."

Among other letters received were from Sir Percival Perry, Mrs W. B. Cosette (Mass., U.S.A.), J. Crabtree (Keighley), E. J. McManus (Liverpool), Rev. J. Burns (Hadleigh), Miss L. Brown (London), C. Wright (Birmingham), J. H. Humphreys and Hugh Stewart (London), A. N. Batty (Oxford), and W. J. Cadman (Portsmouth).

Mr ASHLEY MITCHELL, President of the Yorkshire League, presided, and having given the toast, "To the Immortal Memory of Henry George, coupled with the name of Mr W. R. Lester," spoke of the eminent ability, the zeal and the unswerving loyalty of their guest throughout all the years he had upheld the Henry George cause. To it he had devoted a life's work, and among the testimonies to his activity were the many simple and clear pamphlets with which he had enriched its literature. By these contributions, by his articles in *Land & Liberty*, Mr Lester's name had long been a household word in the movement, not merely at home, but all over the world. There was a certain attractive touch about all his writing that never failed to appeal; and it was no wonder that a pamphlet like his latest, *Unemployment and the Land*, had proved so popular as to exhaust three editions within a couple of years. Mr Lester had endeared himself to the readers of his word at a distance, but those who knew him more intimately, his immediate colleagues and co-workers, had the affection for him that was impelled by most happy contact. His generous and unfailing support for the cause, his readiness and competence to serve it at any time by pen or voice, his wisdom in their counsels, placed him among those who most deserved to be named disciples of Henry George. They were happy that despite his well-known modesty, he had allowed them to pay their respects on an auspicious occasion like this anniversary dinner. In token of their good will, Mr Mitchell, in behalf of the United Committee and the assembled company, made presentation to Mr Lester of a specially bound and inscribed copy of *The Science of Political Economy*, the first delivered from the printers that day. The presentation included also specially bound copies of the other works of Henry George and a souvenir of the occasion signed by all the guests present.

Mr W. R. LESTER said: "I have no words to say how deeply I feel the honour you are doing me to-night, and that I am your guest at such a great gathering as this. I am overpowered by all the kind things your Chairman has said and by receiving at your hands in presentation the first copy of the new edition of *The Science of Political Economy*."

"When I read the original edition of *The Science*, now thirty-two years ago, followed by a second, third and fourth reading, the conviction grew upon me that this was a work of the first magnitude; that the author had brought into existence a new political economy. In this work he appealed from beginning to end, not to the laws of man, the enactments of Parliaments, but to the everlasting laws of nature, and on that he based his whole philosophy."

"In rummaging through my papers in view of this function to-night, I came across a little pamphlet by an old friend of mine, Dr William Smart, the Adam Smith Professor of Political Economy in Glasgow University. It was an attack on the Single Tax. In his preface, he quoted from Aristotle: 'When you have no case according to the law of the land, appeal to the laws of nature'; and that was the burden of Prof. Smart's criticism of Henry George. Well, surely it should be the strength of any political economy worthy of the name that it does appeal to the laws of nature and not to the laws of man. As Henry George himself points out in *The Science*, the ancient philosophy of the Greeks failed just because it was unable to recognize the laws of nature. The Greek State was based on slavery and it never occurred even to the greatest minds, such as Plato and Aristotle, to challenge the institution of slavery. The reason, whether

conscious or sub-conscious, was that if they had probed any economic philosophy to the bottom they would come face to face with slavery, and would have to denounce as a horrible form of robbery the very foundation of the Greek State. This they were not prepared to do, so they simply closed their minds to any such examination, though without it there could be no true Science of Political Economy. Just as those philosophers took slavery for granted, so Henry George points out how the political economists of to-day take land monopoly for granted. It never occurs to the economists to challenge the iniquity that some men should own the very gifts of nature, exact tribute from their fellow men for permission to use these gifts, or withhold them from use altogether. So modern economics are emasculated too.

"The influence that Henry George's writings has had on me calls to mind a passage in *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*, where Oliver Wendell Holmes tells us that every now and then a man's mind is stretched by a new idea or sensation, and never shrinks back to its former dimensions. He tells us that after looking at the Alps he felt that his mind had been stretched beyond the limits of its elasticity and fitted so loosely on to his old ideas of space that these had to be spread out to fit it.

"Such a sensation as this is produced by this book. I venture to say that no one can feel the same after reading George's *Science of Political Economy*. It not only teaches you to think right in the abstract, but its teachings have an extremely practical application to what is going on to-day. If you think wrongly on first principles, if you have a wrong conception of the laws of political economy, then you are bound in practice to pass wrong enactments through Parliament, which instead of helping society will injure it.

"A short time ago the President of the British Association, in his inaugural address, spoke of the tremendous command we now have over the powers of production with more than enough for the well-being of every man, woman and child in this country—while side by side with that great power of production we have millions in poverty. He put this question to himself: 'What is the remedy?' and candidly replied, 'I do not know.' Here is a prominent man, eminent in his own sphere, but a child in the sphere of public well-being, having to confess ignorance as to the cause of distress and the reason why wealth accumulates in the hands of the few; and I venture to say that if he had read this volume he could not have made such a shameful confession.

"The question of unemployment is uppermost. In the light of this book, let us glance at some of the proposals now being made for its cure. Here are three of the principles Henry George drives home—first, that all employment comes from labour applied to land; secondly, capital does not employ labour, but labour employs capital; thirdly, that men seek to satisfy their desires with the least exertion. If all employment comes from labour applied to natural resources, then the first and most vital essential is to open natural resources to labour. Accordingly the logical cure for unemployment is to remove all barriers that stand between the would-be worker and access to the land. Until you have done that, all else is mere tinkering and cannot avail.

"Lately there has been raging a keen controversy among reputed economists whether we ought to save more or to spend more. One school says spend as much as you can and so increase the demand for labour; the other school says do nothing of the kind, because unemployment has been caused by extravagance, and it is therefore our duty to economize. Remarkably enough, these authorities are about equally divided. It is a strange sort of political economy that cannot resolve a problem of this kind. The discussion seems to me to be quite irrelevant so far as employment is concerned. Why on earth, under natural conditions, should it matter if anyone chooses to spend or chooses to save; what has that to do with either employment or unemployment provided the free gifts of nature from which all employment comes are open to use? If land is open to them for self-employment, why should men stand idle because others will not buy? Saving or spending could then no more matter to us here (so far as employment is concerned) than it did to the Pilgrim

Fathers when they landed on the New Continent. The problem—shall I save or shall I spend?—never troubled them, and if our island was as open to us as their continent was to them neither would it bother us.

"Again, there is the question of labour-saving machinery. It is freely suggested that here is the cause of unemployment—that machines put men out of work. The fact is that the machines make it possible for us to satisfy our wants with less labour; they allow us leisure to develop the spiritual and intellectual side of our nature. Why, then, do they appear to many as a curse? The reason is that land monopoly shuts out a landless people from the opportunity to enjoy the benefit of these marvellous inventions. The worker to-day is robbed of alternative self-employment.

"Restriction of every kind is another pseudo-remedy that has had amazing vogue in recent times. Our Minister of Agriculture made it clear the other day and our Chancellor of the Exchequer supported him, that the deliberate policy of the present Government is to limit supplies of foodstuffs, like beef and bacon, and that they are doing that with a view to increased prices. So they wander round in a vicious circle: increasing prices, checking demand, reduced demand, lowering prices, lower prices, checking supply and reduced supply again raising prices, till we all go down in scarcity and famine. How the primary maxims of political economy are outraged in the highest counsels of the nation!

"Then we have had the recent debate on Unemployment. The Leader of His Majesty's Opposition wants £300,000,000 spent on Public Works, never suggesting where the money is to come from or realizing what a stimulus this vast expenditure would give to land speculation and land withholding. One Member of Parliament, proposing a cure, wished to develop our overseas markets; another wanted still heavier tariffs on imports, forgetting that such a policy would destroy the overseas markets; another urged 'the organization of industry,' meaning more State control; another would have shorter hours, in order to spread out employment, or raise the school age with the same illusory end in view. Another would subsidize ship-building and other industries out of the taxpayers' pocket. And so on. It was a lamentable demonstration. Not a single word from the beginning about breaking down barriers and setting industry free.

"George Bernard Shaw was once asked what the Christian Church could do in giving a lead to humanity, and his reply was: 'Why not try Christianity?' So we, in this economic crisis, say: 'Why not try economic liberty'; and I think this can be said to be the message of this book.

"In thanking you once more for this splendid testimony of your friendship, I hope for this new edition of *The Science* and for all the publications so well produced by the Henry George Foundation a large circulation. I wish for all who are going to read them that they will glean as much enlightenment, inspiration and assistance as they have provided to me."

Rt. Hon. GEORGE N. BARNES: "It falls pleasantly to my lot to propose the toast, 'Our Friends across the Seas, coupled with the name of Mrs Anna George de Mille, whom we are all so glad to see here to-night with her daughter, for whom we wish that success in her artistic career that I am sure she must deserve. We shall always welcome Mrs de Mille in our midst for her own sake, not only as the daughter, but also as the disciple, of Henry George. She brings us into spiritual contact with that man, who, 53 years ago, issued a book that is going to transform this old world of ours.

"In the preface to the *Science of Political Economy*, his last book, Henry George said: 'Not only where the English tongue is spoken, but in all parts of the world, are arising and will arise men who will carry forward to triumph the great movement which *Progress and Poverty* began.' All over the world to-day men and women are rising, many of them separated from others, in the great open spaces of the world, in the great cities, in the fields, factories and workshops, men and women, a great army without colour or class, breaking down the barriers and making the road easy for the rest. Let us think of these friends, kindred spirits with us to-night and we with them

in London, New York, Denmark, Australia, and in so many countries. In regard to us here at home. I want Mrs de Mille not to allow the people with whom she comes into contact to be too much depressed by events here. As our Chairman has pointed out, three times our House of Commons has passed measures with an embodiment of Henry George's principles. Let Anna George assure our friends over there that we here are still determined to carry on under the banner raised for all time by her distinguished father."

The Chairman, before calling on Mrs de Mille to respond, handed to her on behalf of the Committee and in memory of the events they were celebrating, presentation copies of *The Science of Political Economy* and of the other works of Henry George, published by the Foundation.

Mrs. ANNA GEORGE DE MILLE said: "I have been fortunate in making friends of the movement in many parts recently—last month, for example, in France, where M. Sam Mayer and his group are working as gallantly and magnificently as ever. It is uphill work in his territory. He needs very special mention, and I bring his greetings to you. What can I report about my own country? The whole world is ill, but it seems to me the illest place of all is the United States of America. The spectacle of that great country, a country blessed with extraordinary natural opportunities, having one-tenth of its people reduced to the bread line, is too appalling. It is a frightful impeachment of civilization. Of course, every Single Taxer knows what is the matter with this body politic of ours. It is a complication of illness mostly in its unearned increment, inflammation of its land values, and it is just because we know that our remedy is practical, wise and just, that have hope and confidence in the renaissance."

Mrs de Mille gave an interesting account of what the many organizations and groups were doing in the United States to promote the propaganda. The work continued there as everywhere. Rather than feel any discouragement, let them be fired by the resolve and the dauntless spirit expressed in such words as these: "All that concerns me is to do my best, for no matter what the set-backs may be, no matter what the temporary defeat, in the long run the good will triumph."

Warmly acknowledging the gift of the books, Mrs de Mille recalled how she had given assistance in typing the manuscript of *The Science of Political Economy*, and how her remark was received that the chapters she was at were as interesting as a novel. She was afraid she had overstepped, but her father was as pleased as if some big person had made a magnificent criticism. "I cannot say how grateful I am to see this new edition or how I bless the memory of Mr Jacobs that he made it possible. I feel close to this book and am proud to have my name gold-lettered on the cover, because, after all, I did have 'two fingers' in it."

Miss AGNES GEORGE DE MILLE, in a brief speech, vivacious and frank, appealed to her own generation to play their part in public affairs and hasten the day of social regeneration.

A third specially bound copy of *The Science of Political Economy* was presented, the recipient being Mr A.W. Madsen, in recognition of the care and attention he had given throughout to its production. Mr Madsen suitably responded.

The Menu Card of the Dinner was illustrated with one of J. W. Bengough's cartoons explaining the Law of Rent. A number of copies have been retained as mementoes of the occasion, and we shall be glad to post one to any reader making application—so far as the supply lasts.

The meeting concluded with a hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman, and with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

Unemployment and the Land

By W. R. LESTER, M.A.

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THE CITY PLANNER'S CONCERN WITH TAXATION

By Harold S. Bутtenheim

(Editor, "The American City," in an Address to the Westchester County Planning Federation, 30th March, 1932)

There are 250 American cities having a population of over 30,000, with an aggregate assessed valuation of \$80,402,335,256 of property subject to general property taxes for city purposes. During the twelve-months' period covered by this report, the total levies on this property for the governments of cities, counties, States, school districts, and all other governmental units for all purposes amounted to \$2,492,866,040, or an average for each person of \$56.25. Of this *per capita* cost \$43.68 represented the operation and maintenance of the general departments of the city governments.

A discussion of the taxpayer's concern with city planning would be quite inadequate without some reference also to the city planner's concern with taxation. Every wise and honest expenditure of public funds confers public benefits at least equal to its cost. But our trouble is that, under existing systems of real estate and property taxation, every city or county government collects from the owners of land in the community much less than the benefits which public expenditure and the growth of population confer upon such landowners. At the same time we handicap home building and local industry and trade by imposing needless taxes on improvements, machinery and personal property.

A hypothetical example will make this clear. Suppose that in the pioneer days some far-sighted settler with a few hundred dollars had purchased the entire area of Westchester County. Then suppose his son had married the daughter of an impecunious French count or English earl, and had taken his title deeds to Europe; and that he and his descendants had never parted with the land, but had continued to lease it to your citizens. Under these conditions, is there any doubt that you would be paying to the foreign descendants of this lucky pioneer an annual tribute to which they would have no *moral* right—and to which they would have a *legal* right only as long as your present tax laws continued in force?

If this condition existed, you would probably have sense enough to impose a land tax on the entire area of Westchester County substantially equivalent to the annual ground rent. This would be ethically justifiable for the reason that land values exist or increase almost invariably not because of any public service rendered by the owner as such, but because of bounties of nature, the growth and character of population, the progress of invention, and the services of government.

A striking imaginative article entitled "A Pragmatic Experiment with Taxes," by Mr Bутtenheim, appeared in the *Survey Graphic* (New York), December, 1932. It occupied five pages and is a convincing plea for land value taxation. The *Survey Graphic* had the article reprinted separately and kindly sent copies for members of the United Committee.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The new edition of *The Science of Political Economy* by Henry George has been placed in all the 20 City Libraries in Liverpool; in the Public Libraries of Wallasey, Bootle, Great Crosby, Cambridge, Brighton; in the Lyceum Library, Liverpool; in the Sailors' Home, Liverpool; in the Library of the Hawick Liberal Club; and in many other Libraries. In most cases these Libraries already have the other works by Henry George and this service of making the books available to readers is by favour of or on the recommendation of subscribers and friends. We cordially invite others to follow suit by purchasing one of the "Sets" of the books as advertised in our columns and directing that they be sent to a local Library, Club or Reading Room. We will gladly inscribe them "The gift of —," if desired; but in all cases the Librarian should first be interested in the receipt of the books, so that they come to him as literature really in demand by his public.