

the Henry George News

MAY, 1957



Arthur Wilhelm Madsen

(1880-1957)

by

V. G. Peterson

"WHAT, on our bended knees!" With his last breath, Arthur W. Madsen flung this scornful challenge at state paternalism, an evil he had fought unceasingly for half a century. Death came moments later, as the result of a heart attack. It happened on Sunday, April 7, 1957, the second day of a week-end conference sponsored by the Henry George School of Social Science (London) at Shornells, Bostall Heath, Kent, during a heated discussion of the Labor party's proposal to acquire compulsorily 6,000,000 rented homes. The suggestion had been made by the guest speaker that if cases of indiv-

idual hardship occurred, the help of the local Member of Parliament should be enlisted. Madsen thundered his now famous reply.

The day before, April sixth, had been his seventy-seventh birthday and he had traveled from London with his wife, Lily, and his niece, Miss Jean Ewart, to open the conference as the school's principal. A celebration followed in which he joined enthusiastically, happy to meet old friends and greet new converts of the school's work. Although he had been ill since November, he seemed to have regained much of his former health and

(Continued on page three)

Arthur Wilhelm Madsen

(continued from page one)

nothing in his appearance warned of the approaching end.

Arthur Wilhelm Madsen was born in Edinburgh of Scottish-Danish parentage, on April 6, 1880. He was a student at the Royal High School in that city, and graduated B. Sc. at Edinburgh University in 1902. He also attended lectures at Marburg University in Germany.

Soon after receiving his degree, Mr. Madsen emigrated to South Africa where he worked for Dun and Company, a large importing house, until 1909. It was during this period that he met Mr. E. J. Evans from whom he learned of Henry George's teachings. Together with other young men they created a public sentiment that laid the foundation for the final introduction of land-value legislation in that country.

On his return from South Africa, Mr. Madsen served briefly as secretary to the Edinburgh League for the Taxation of Land Values before going to London where he helped to organize the great 1909 Hyde Park "Land for the People" demonstration. The visit was to have been a temporary one, but he could no longer content himself with standing on the sidelines. He therefore joined the staff of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values and Free Trade and, in 1933, upon the death of John Paul, succeeded Paul as secretary to the Committee and editor of its journal, *Land & Liberty*.

His only visit to the United States was made in 1935 when he attended the Tenth Henry George Congress in New York. On this occasion he took active part in the three-day discussions, and at the close, in behalf of the English followers, placed a wreath on Henry George's grave in Green-

wood Cemetery. "He [Henry George] is alive with the spirit of those who are alive with his thoughts," he said. Bright in the memories of hundreds are many other such international gatherings in various countries, organized and managed by the indefatigable Mr. Madsen. The most recent of these were held in Derbyshire, England, in 1949; in Odense, Denmark, in 1952; and in St. Andrews, Scotland, in 1955.

Widely traveled, speaking several languages fluently, an able speaker and accomplished writer, Arthur Madsen was internationally recognized as a leading exponent and authority on the taxation of land values and related subjects. In *Land & Liberty* he wrote sharply of many of his government's policies. His masterly analyses of the Town and Country Planning Acts introduced by the Labor government and continued in modified form by the Conservatives, are but one illustration of his cogent, forceful criticism. "The finest example of polemic writing I have ever seen," is the way an American admirer described these articles.

One of his last major undertakings was editing an excellent condensed version of *Progress and Poverty*, published by the Hogarth Press, London, in 1953. A German translation of this book was undertaken following the St. Andrews' conference, to be financed by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation (New York). At the time of his death Mr. Madsen was editing this translation, then nearing completion, and it is a matter of sincere regret that this mammoth task undoubtedly hastened his end. The extra burden was too great, and it is small compensation that when the German volume is published, it will be dedicated to his memory.

Many who never met him regarded him as a friend. Through a broad and active correspondence, he kept in

touch with people in all parts of the globe. The lone Georgist in Tangiers, the isolated worker in Pakistan, the man who read *Progress and Poverty* beneath the palm trees of some Caribbean island were linked, through him, to the main stream of Georgist activities, and made a part of it. These, too, will miss him.

Arthur Madsen was a man dedicated to the principles of truth and justice, freedom and equal opportunity for all. He upheld these principles throughout a long and useful life, and with his last words defended them. It is fitting that we should pause at this time, hat in hand, and pay tribute to his memory.

