

# THE ILLINOIS GEORGIST

Volume 5, Number 3 - - Fall 1993

Newsletter of the Henry George School of Social Science

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## Anna de Mille, Agnes de Mille: Recollections

Jack Schwartzman

Agnes George de Mille Prude, aged eighty-nine, died October 5, 1993, in New York, the city of her birth. When I heard the news on the radio, I sat for a long while--remembering the times when she and I were cordial to each other. long before the "freeze" set in. I also recalled her mother, Anna George de Mille, that wonderful woman, the daughter of Henry George.

I have been involved with the Henry George philosophy for fifty-five years, as teacher, speaker, writer, co-founder of Henry George School extensions in Seattle and San Francisco--and in many other capacities. The day after Agnes died, I checked my files and came across the postcard where Anna de Mille congratulated me on the founding of the San Francisco branch.

Anna George was a remarkable human being. Writer of books and articles about her famous father, she was, in her own right, a magnificent asset to the Henry George School. How often she used to visit my classes; how often after class, we used to sit in the school cafeteria, animatedly discussing the various tenets of the Georgist philosophy! One of her letters, written to me after I came back from military service in World War II, reminded me of those days. This one read:

It was most heartening to see your big group last night--and to note the capable way you handled them.

You showed real skill in breaking down, in the very first lesson, the usual reserve and fear by getting newcomers to offer to read to the crowd!

The whole affair was most encouraging, and I was grateful to have my friend from Hollywood get such a fine sample of what the HGSSS can mean.

The letter was dated April 11, 1946, less than a year before her death on March 17, 1947. In paying tribute to her memory, Samuel Seabury declared:

Henry George's daughter had many of his attributes, for which we honored and esteemed her. There was no more valiant fighter for the principles for which Henry George stood than Anna George de Mille, who dedicated her life to that great cause.

Sidney Mayers and I regarded Anna George with much affection. We were present, at one "tea" in her home, when young Agnes walked in--a few brief years away from her own fame and world recognition.

As a young artist, Agnes struggled to be (and later became) a great dancer, choreographer, and director. She overcame actual deprivation and

many other obstacles--without much (if any) help from her celebrated multimillionaire uncle, Cecil B. de Mille. She finally achieved her success by sheer will power and "rugged" self-reliance. It is no wonder that a number of people found her difficult and imperious. However, she knew what she wanted, and her determination permitted no compromise. In a mediocre world, this is rare indeed!

In June, 1973, Fragments magazine (of which I am editor--de Mille, continued on page 4)

in-chief) honored Agnes with a "fabulous" dinner, attended by more than one hundred guests. I asked the well-known graphologist (and member of the Henry George School), Dorothy Sara (Agnes' close friend, and mine) to "introduce" Agnes to the group.

Agnes de Mille received a tumultuous welcome from the audience. Her address was sparkling, concise, witty. She spoke about her own life, about her mother, about her father (whom she worshiped), about Henry George, and (bitterly) about her Uncle Cecil. She autographed her books with much graciousness, one of the treasured autographs in my collection being a flattering "representation" of me as a "stout and loyal worker in the cause we believe in-admiration..." This inscription is especially ironic in view of subsequent developments.

In her letters to Dorothy Sara at the time, Agnes de Mille fretted and complained about the "unsatisfactory conditions" at the Henry George School, urging a change and a different "climate."

For the Centennial Georgist Conference, held in San Francisco in 1979, Agnes sent me a letter, asking me to read it to the assembled Georgists at the very opening of the convention. I did what she requested. The letter read:

Dear Jack Schwartzman:

Greetings to Loyal Georgists!

I hope you have fruitful and stimulating meetings and are able to talk out some of the tremendous issues that face us at this time and rack our lives...And the time cries aloud right now, right this minute, in this place, for a clear voice, for simple eloquence and passion. Somebody must step into the void and make sense, point out a hopeful plan, point out a manner of progress. It had better be a Georgist! And it had better be a Georgist right now! Godspeed you.

Alas! I was the Georgist who stepped "into the void," and who, after the conference, wrote what Agnes called an "abrasive" letter to the Board of Trustees of the H.G.S.S.S. I have always opposed opportunism and self-perpetuation (seeds of monopoly), especially abhorrent in a movement dedicated to justice, and even though the Board is composed of some members who are my closest friends, I have not changed my opinion. It is too late, at my stage of age, to change, anyway;

and I certainly have no desire to do so.

As for Agnes, she was angered by the tone of my letter. Even though she claimed that she was still "fond" of me, my "clear voice" of "eloquence and passion" ended our relationship.

Conceivably--possibly--we "made up" in March 1992, on my eightieth birthday. I addressed a group of twenty-two Russian patriots of mine, as well as many noted Georgists, at the Henry George School in New York. The topic was: Henry George and Leo Tolstoy. Agnes was present for the occasion. I was surprised, at the end of my talk, by the presentation to me of a large cake (shared by all) and the singing of Happy Birthday to me (in Russian and in English). When the time came for Agnes to leave, I kissed her on the cheek, as in the old days, and she told me how pleased she was to see me again.

That was the last time we met.

Since this reminiscence is an "offering" to the memory of both Anna and Agnes de Mille, I shall close by quoting a note written by Anna George de Mille (and reprinted in Agnes' book, *Speak to Me, Dance with Me*):

I, who have always been known as the daughter of my father, and the wife of my husband, pray that some day, I will be known as the mother of my daughter. □

(Austrians, continued from page 1)

Land is passive in the production process. By itself it does nothing to satisfy men's desires. It is only when man mixes his labor with the natural resources that value is created.

George fully supports the Lockean homesteading principle, whereby the right to ownership is earned through improving land. Property is established through productive work. George, by separating and distinguishing the factors of production into land, labor and capital, provides a clearer understanding of the production process and the economic problem than do the Austrians that lump together land and capital.

Dr. Israel Kirzner objects that under the land tax sites would no longer be put to their highest use. In his words, "Downtown Manhattan could have a chicken farm next to a high rise." Most people who have thought about the land tax have come to the exact opposite conclusion. Some fear overdevelopment. They're

concerned there will be no parking lots because they don't generate enough revenue to pay the tax. One can rest assured, however, that developers will take into account the needs of the car owner when the value of their offices, stores and apartments could not be realized if there was no way of reaching them.

It is true the land tax would spur development as those with prime locations would have to put them to their best use to pay the taxes. Holding property off the market would be difficult in that the owner could be paying as much tax as his neighbor with a fully developed lot. The chicken coop owner would surely be bought out by a more ambitious competitor.

This highlights the difference between a land tax and land nationalization. Under the land tax, individuals would still hold the titles in land, and land would still trade. One would simply lose the privilege of receiving the benefits of holding out of use the best site or the land richest with natural resources. These benefits would be distributed evenly through the taxing mechanism. When the land tax is used to replace taxes on incomes and interest it becomes the ultimate supply side solution to spurring economic growth. The active elements in production, labor and capital, have the right to keep all they earn, while the benefits of the passive element, land, are distributed back to society. It is society progressing in population and improvements that causes the value of land and natural resources to increase. The land tax returns these increases to their source.

Some authors believe that a land tax would be impossible to implement because of the difficulty in separating the value of land from its improvements. The answer to this problem has already been solved by the real estate appraisal profession. Through their three pronged approach to estimating value, the cost approach, the comparable property approach, and the income approach, they describe the methods of approximating a value for lands. The comparable properties method can be applied to valuing two sites. After adjusting for differences in the building and improvements the remaining value is attributable to the site. If we're dissatisfied with the

(Austrians, continued on page 5)