

## **JOHN DONALD SHEDDEN 1917-1992**

Don Shedden had established himself as one of the best-known Commonwealth public servants in Ballarat when I met him in 1966. He had served in the RAN, worked in real estate and had an intuitive feel for mineral exploration and small scale mining. He was also active in the Congregational church and, dearest to his heart, he was a Georgist.

In 1966 I started work at the Commonwealth Employment Service office in Ballarat and was at once attracted by Don's generous nature. I was fascinated to watch him interviewing depressed and unemployed workers and to see how he built up their self-esteem. I soon learnt that he was explaining to them how our society worked; how the economic and social forces acted without feeling or favour, and how the unemployed should not feel guilt or resentment toward any individuals for their situation. Don's talks had become well known in Ballarat and one of the city's leading doctors would send some of his patients to Don to talk through their problems.

Like many Georgists, Don saw only too clearly all around him manifestations of the maldistribution of wealth, opportunity and power which comes from society's failure to collect the economic rent of land. Don was a member of the Henry George Foundation and his Georgist activity included press letter writing. His great strength was his open and humane nature and his ability to convey Georgist ideas to others in discussion. Fresh from High School, I had never had an unconventional thought in my mind until I met Don: so I found it richly rewarding to talk with a real thinker, to someone who had answers to questions I had never dreamed existed.

In later years Don, always interested in man's spiritual nature, and always questing intellectually, became involved with a dedicated Christian community while retaining his faith in Georgism. He maintained his active life, taking up bee-keeping with the same rare commitment and search for understanding that he brought to his many interests.

Others will remember Don as a family man and a fine citizen; I shall remember him as the gentle Georgist, as one who shared Henry George's own grand vision of what might be, if only . . .

Keith Thomas.