

*John Storeck*  
69 Perry Street  
New York City 14  
January 27 1944

Mr O K Dorn  
500 Prospect Avenue  
Mount Vernon New York

Dear Mr Dorn:

Do you really think it was either wise or fair to write me as you did? If you wish me to share whatever views you may have about Henry George, was it wise to antagonize me? And was it fair to attribute "trivial acquaintance" with him on the basis of what you know about me? Is disagreement with a Georgist impossible? If so, I for one would want to disagree. I doubt whether Henry George himself would act so foolishly as do all too many of his disciples.

I have carefully read the material you sent me. It fails to increase my previous knowledge of Henry George to any marked degree.

Perhaps you did not notice that I referred only to Lord Wedgwood's espousal of Henry George's tax proposals in my review. His other excellences or defects were not under scrutiny. And certainly you must agree that there is not the slightest chance of their being put into general practice. That is why I called them "unthinkable." They may be ever so nice as schemes to satisfy the mind, but what's the good of that? If I have learned one thing, it is that ideas are not exhortations or dream pictures -- they are programs of action, and get their meaning from what they tell us to do. Henry George's tax schemes have only instructed a comparatively few illuminati to get together and comfort themselves on their superiority to their fellows. I find that Judge Seabury agrees with me that Henry George's ideas are not for our actual world.

Sincerely yours,

*John Storeck*  
John Storeck

# Practical Democracy

## TESTAMENT TO DEMOCRACY.

By Lord Wedgwood. xix + 355 pp. New York: American Chapter, Emergency Council. \$3.75.

By JOHN STORCK

THE late Lord Wedgwood was another in that great line of English "eccentrics" who so brilliantly and usefully combined apparent incompatibles. A wealthy man, he helped to organize the Labor party. An old-fashioned Victorian individualist and "specialist in freedom," he was a staunch friend of Stalinist Russia. Usually skeptical of ambitious political or economic programs, after the war or at any other time, he nevertheless ardently endorsed Henry George's proposal that all increases in land values should accrue to the state, and the perhaps equally unthinkable proposal of an immediate federal union between Britain and the United States which might also include the Scandinavian countries. Although democratic to the core, he was opposed to proportional representation, defended the House of Lords as a valuable institution, and was suspicious of the party system which has everywhere accompanied the rise of democracy. With his head full of his own ideas—a very unusual condition today as always—he somehow managed to be not a curiosity but a very wise and practical man.

Many of Lord Wedgwood's ideas are touched on in this, his last book. But it is primarily (at one and the same time) a lyrical defense of the British parliamentary system, an almost cynical analysis of its shortcomings, and a grave warning of the dangers that lie ahead if we increasingly allow government to do things for us, rather than use government to develop the ability to get along without its help. Although it deals almost entirely with English political institutions, it is so sound psychologically and philo-

sophically as to be of great use to Americans.

To Lord Wedgwood democracy is not majority rule, but government by debate and explanation. It is to be found in the constant consideration of public questions by a progressively larger and better informed group of citizens—who educate themselves for modern living by carrying on the process. Its philosophical basis is belief in human beings—a belief that is perfectly consistent with awareness of human weaknesses.

That is why he can so hilariously point out the stone walls, the evasions, the myths (and even the hypocrisies) of parliamentary custom—and can even hint that many of them must always be unavoidable. In spite of them, and sometimes because of them, we can carry on the long process of discussion, and in doing so learn to live better. Like old Socrates, who so seldom was satisfied either with his questions or with the answers he received to them, and yet grew so wise through argument and discussion, we can improve living almost without knowing how it has happened. Democratic discussion is to our world what the dialectic process was to the Greek.

The fact that some of Lord Wedgwood's notions are crusted with the patina of days that are gone (perhaps forever) detracts no more from their essential worth than from their charm. The discerning mind can translate them into the requirements of our new conditions without much difficulty. Undoubtedly government will have to do many things in the days to come that would greatly disturb the good Lord. But if we can view its acts, and our own, with that combination of faith and suspicion in mankind which he possessed, we shall be admirably equipped to meet our day as he met his.

January 25th, 1944

Mr. John Storek,  
Book Reviewer  
New York Times,  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

Quite regardless of whether Lord Wedgwood's book, "Practical Democracy" has any merit, it is nevertheless unfortunate that the reviewer of this work in the New York Times Sunday Book Section did not show at least a trivial acquaintance with Henry George as indicated by the reference "equally unthinkable".

May I suggest that you read the enclosed copy of an address on Henry George by Judge Seabury.

Sincerely yours,

Otto K. Dorn