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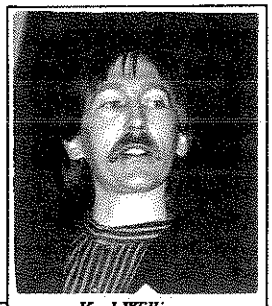
Henry George News

Volume 57, Number 6 November - December, 1993

The 1993 Australia Conference: Spark & Strategy for Collecting the World's Rent

Part 2 *by George Collins*

The economic essentials for a just and wholesome society were addressed in two papers: "Mabo" by Philip Anderson and "The Greens" by Karl Williams. Phil, the organizer of the conference, and Karl, are two of the young hopefuls of Tax Reform Australia. Aboriginal rights is a major issue in Australian life and politics and "Mabo," the name of an Aborigine whose case concluded in the landmark decision, has become a celebrated controversy. This decision, which recognizes native land title, struck down a concept called *Terra Nullius* under which Australia and its islands belonged to no one when Europeans arrived. The new ruling has left miners, farmers and other landholders uncertain of the security of their titles. In this paper, Georgism comes to the rescue, providing the mechanism whereby the rights of the Aborigines and equal access by non-Aborigines are merged. The Georgist remedy equitably satisfies the rights of individuals and the requirements of society, by ensuring abundant opportunity and free alternatives. This would be preferable by far to paying the currently inflated market value of the land to the descendants of those who met John Batman at the entrance to Port Philip Bay, Victoria in 1835. However, there was one proviso: traditional tribal land rights would be recognized where the native people still possess and exhibit an authentic relationship with the land.



Karl Williams

Justice Rae Else-Mitchell

Karl Williams, a University lecturer, demonstrated an attractive, if debatable argument to win the support of Greens. In addition to compact land use concentrated in centrally desirable locations (a widely-lauded environmental benefit of LVT), Williams proposes two measures aimed at further relieving the countryside from urban pressures. Rural land could be assessed on "maximum sustainable yield," fostering organic farming. The wilderness, on the other hand, could be spared the rush of industry to the free margin by computing all the externalities, assessing on the basis of "social costs."

No prescription for achieving "Employment for All by the Year 2000" - the title of his paper - was more challenging than that put forth by Bill Pitt of Melbourne. Henry George missed the mark with imprecise words and phrases, Pitt argues, and Georgists have slavishly followed him. He was led into errors of thought by, for example, John Stuart Mill's use of a misnomer like "unearned increment" - which, he declared, is not unearned, but stolen from labor. George blundered in describing land as a factor of production. "Land and capital produce nothing." Such terminology failed to capture the imagination of people in Russia, Denmark or Australia. The reform "was not in the common, everyday commercial terms that it... should have been." George was a great scientist - but his theoretical flaws, imperfect wordings and the political weakness of "land value taxation," a mere municipal reform, have held us back. But the opportunity is again open in Russia and it is now recognized by Fred Harrison and others working there that rent is the word. "Site Rental Revenue," says Bill Pitt, "must become the slogan."

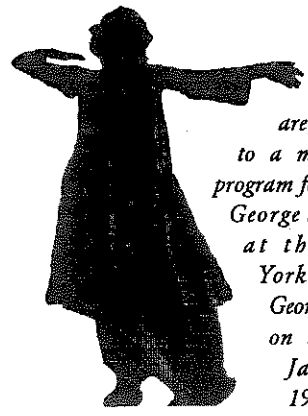
The mid-conference Henry George Commemorative Dinner on Wednesday evening was an elegant affair, befitting the character of the Victorian Gothic dining hall in which it was held. Mr. Ian Baker, Member of Parliament and a Georgist, delivered his banquet speech before dinner in order to return to an official meeting. With unassuming ease and a ready wit he spoke of the challenges to land value taxation and the importance of continuing espousal by members of the organizations gathered there. With time to spare after dinner, a parade of talent crowned the *(Continued on page two)*

Seminar Examines "Highest and Best" Land-Use Concept

By David Domke

On Saturday November 6th the School hosted a seminar entitled "Land: Its Highest and Best Use," presented by Professor Stephen Sussna. Professor Sussna is a member of the law faculty at Baruch College and has worked as an urban planning consultant for the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, the People's Republic of China and many American cities. He began his remarks by saying that it is impossible to pick up a real-estate text without coming across the terms "highest and best use." Moreover, these terms are defined, across the country, by federal and state legislation and by city ordinance. The terms encompass a "complexity of variables, because they refer to much more than the maximum profit that a real estate owner may obtain."

Professor Sussna went on to say that "under zoning, which is the workhorse, the chief tool used to define American land use, case after case has made the point that the owner of real estate is not necessarily entitled to the highest profit that could be made from mere ownership." Such things as community and political interest are almost invariably interwoven into land use decisions and these decisions are in turn partly based on existing principles of land use, the impact on infrastructure and environment, and the consequent effect upon socio-economic factors. "What we're really talking about is optimization" of land use, Sussna said. Zoning, then, is an attempt to reach some reconciliation between *(continued on page seven)*



All are invited to a memorial program for Agnes George deMille at the New York Henry George School on Sunday, Jan. 9th, 1994, from 2 to 5 PM.

Please call (212-889-8020) for information.

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Detroit's Bitter Irony

There are no jobs to be had in Detroit these days. In addition to the standard list of urban problems - crime, poverty and decay - it is faced with a sluggish national economy and an automobile industry that expands only into lower-cost labor markets. Last year when the Post Office offered three hundred new jobs, people camped out and waited in two-block long lines. This November 11th, reported the *New York Times* on November 12th, 11,000 citizens of Detroit filled out applications for jobs in a brand-new casino.

The promised 4,000 jobs may never materialize, however. The want-ads warned that no one would be hired **unless the casino project was approved.** That would seem unlikely, since the citizens of Detroit have repeatedly voted against having casinos in the city. So why were hundreds of people waiting in line to apply?

An odd consortium of Greek-American businessmen and Chippewa Indians from Northern Michigan have hit upon a way to open a casino despite Detroit's legal objections. For this to happen, the site would have to be under some jurisdiction other than that of the City of Detroit. It could be granted in trust to its original owners: the Chippewa. Specifically, the casino site would become part of a reservation, the main body of which is 350 miles away. The businessmen would operate the casino; the Chippewa would collect the rent - and provide the all-important sovereignty needed to make the casino project legal.

Mayor-elect Dennis Archer opposes the plan, and said that the job offer was cruelly raising false hopes. Nevertheless, the plan sounds attractive in a city where little else is happening. It calls for the Chippewa to administer only the casino site itself; surrounding services, which could spawn an estimated 11,000 jobs, would be run by local businesses.

The bottom line: some 15,000 more people will be employed in Detroit, over the next two or three years - but only if some of the land is returned to the Chippewa. - *L. D.*

Australia International Georgist Conference *(from front page)*

evening with a warm sense of universal comradery. Prof. Seyeul Kim from Korea sang *"O Sole Mio"* in a ringing tenor voice; Prof. Bob Andelson recited a long, amusingly expressive monologue; Pat Aller led the audience in rounds of "Kookaburra Sits in the Old Gum Tree;" Frank Pinder of Sydney sang stanza after stanza of "Waltzing Matilda" and he and I lent our voices to "Old Man River."

On day four of the conference, the eminent Australian jurist, Justice Rae Else-Mitchell, former judge of the Land Value Taxation Court and Supreme Court of New South Wales, presented a detailed history of "Land Taxation in Australia: The Influence of Henry George." Not only was *Progress and Poverty* serialized in Australian journals in the very year it was published, 1879, but land reform groups had been formed eight years earlier when its predecessor, *Our Land and Land Policy,* was published and the first land tax was imposed in the state of Victoria in 1877. This was a reaction to an 1860s law which gave free unsurveyed selections of land at a flat sum, and vast areas were obtained through free grants. Landless laborers and disillusioned miners looked to the land tax to nationalize land, "burst up large estates" and provide revenue. By the time George visited Australia in 1890, taxation of land values had become the official policy of the Australian Labor Party and a platform plank of the International Trade Unions. After the establishment of the Australian Federation in 1901, unimproved land value became the basis of taxation in most states and for the Commonwealth. And although there has been reduced reliance upon it and considerable increases in taxes on labor, unimproved land values continue to be recognized as "the proper basis for comparing and assessing the revenue capacities of states and local government bodies for the distribution of commonwealth funds...."

A perfect complement to Justice Else Mitchell's treatise was Douglas Herps's "Economic Rent in Australia: The Capacity to Replace the Taxation System." Mr. Herps is a former Deputy Valuer General of New South Wales, and until 1991 a consultant to the Commonwealth Grants Commission on the land tax capacity of Australian states and territories. Lobbying by opponents over the last 100 years has riddled the system with so many exemptions that it has become extremely inconsistent and unpopular. The revenue-raising land value tax in Australia is "a pale shadow of the Georgist concept." Despite these problems, administrative improvements have been seen. "Efficient centralized state valuation authorities to determine and maintain the revenue base," have been developed in each state - and it is well recognized that frequent revision is required. In the increasingly competitive world economy, productive failure and widespread evasion of direct taxes could threaten the survival of the *(continued on back page)*

Agnes George de Mille

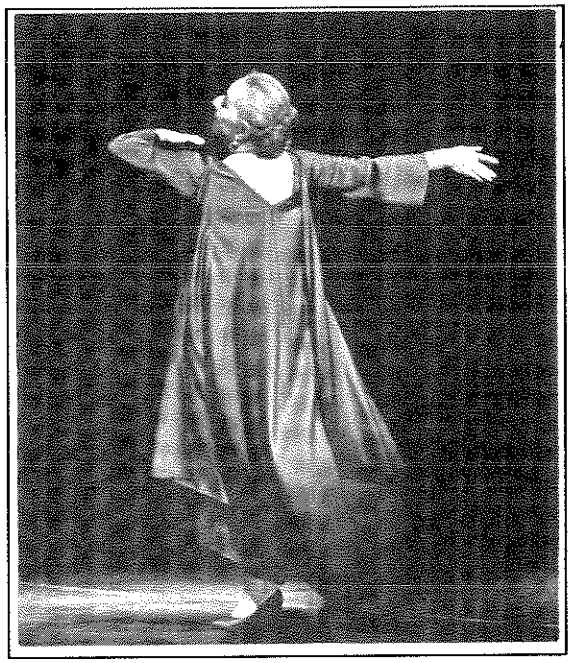
by David Domke

"I have been searching all my life for the intrinsic American, Anonymous.... he has many faces and many names, but we all know him: humorous, salty, bold, original, independent certainly, at times persnickety and stubborn, neighborly and commonsenical... it is to become him that every immigrant has crossed the green water."

Agnes George de Mille was the granddaughter of Henry George and an institution in the world of American dance. Her career spanned six decades. An innovator in both American ballet and the Broadway stage, Ms. de Mille was also an author of some fourteen books, including a recently published biography of Martha Graham. The Los Angeles Times once said of her "[she's] a gutsy lady, a pioneer, an iconoclast, a charmer, a writer of rare insight and fascination..." Part of her creative genius was her ability to translate and blend her vision of American commonality into her art, bringing traditional American themes such as the Old West rodeo onto the legitimate stage. In fact her best known ballet, choreographed in 1942, was called just that - *Rodeo* - widely considered the first ballet with an exclusively American theme. She was one of the first to combine what are now called "low" and "high" art.

When she began her career in the late 20s there was no tradition of American popular theatre dancing apart from vaudeville show houses. Her family was less than enthusiastic about her pursuing a career in dance, a profession deemed not respectable in those days, especially for a woman. Undaunted by her family's resistance (they had sent her off to college in an attempt to dissuade her from her chosen pursuit), she made her debut in New York in a 1927 production of Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera.* Two years later she was choreographing her own dances with a company in New Jersey.

Her first Broadway hit was *Rodeo* in 1942. Combining the basics of classical ballet with a foregrounding of traditional American dances, and an original musical score by Aaron Copeland, *Rodeo,* whose setting was Western ranch life, told the story of a tomboyish girl who rises above her outcast status with the typical American virtues of pluck and goodwill. In 1943 her most famous work, *Oklahoma!* made its debut. Based on the Lynn Riggs play *Green Grow the Lilacs,* with music and lyrics by Rodgers and Hammerstein, *Oklahoma!* ran



for more than five years. What was particularly impressive to American audiences in the 40s was that De Mille integrated dancing into the narrative structure of the play rather than using it for merely diversionary or ornamental purposes. John Martin, Dance Critic for the *New York Times,* said in a review: "Miss de Mille has turned her back entirely on the established procedure of making 'routines.' She has selected some delightful young people ... and has built her dances directly and most unorthodoxly upon them. As a result, they emerge as people and not automata - warm and believable people made larger than life and more endearing..."

Agnes de Mille continued molding her characters and narratives through dance, making American dance an expressive story-telling form. As she once said, reflecting critically on her life's work: "Works of art are the symbols through which men communicate what lies beyond ordinary speech ... this is true of all art and it is true of dancing, which, because dependent on human habits and action, is the most malleable and changeable. It is also the oldest art. It is the mother or germinal form... Before man can do anything, he must draw breath, he must move. Movement is the source and condition of life."

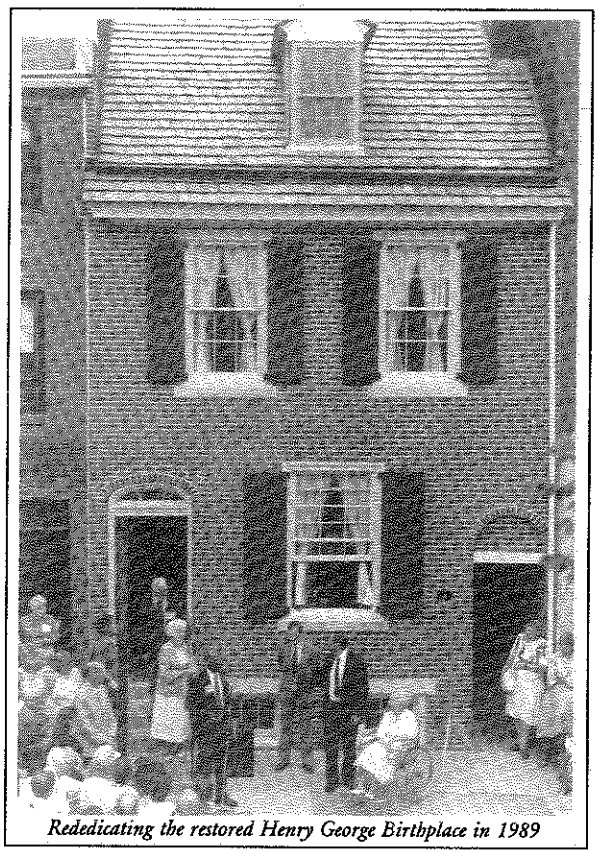
Ms de Mille continued to create inspired work for the next fifty years. She choreographed such hit shows as *Carousel, Allegro, Brigadoon, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,* and *Paint Your Wagon,* and did extensive work with the American Ballet Theatre. She was also much in demand on the lecture circuit, where she often gave demonstrations of dance history (some of which were transposed for educational television) and frequently appeared before Congress, arguing for increased Federal spending for the arts.

Like her mother, Anna George de Mille, Agnes de Mille was an enthusiastic supporter of the philosophy of Henry George. She wrote an eloquent preface to the centennial edition of *Progress and Poverty,* and spoke at a number of Georgist conferences. She also addressed the opening ceremony for the New York headquarters in 1989. In the preface she wrote: "We have reached the deplorable circumstance where in large measure a very powerful few are in possession of the earth's resources, the land and its riches and all the franchises and other privileges that yield a return. These monopolistic positions are kept by a handful of men who are maintained virtually without taxation... we are yielding up sovereignty... Henry George was a lucid voice, direct and bold, that pointed out basic truths... There never has been a time in our history when we have so sorely needed to hear good sense, to learn to define terms exactly, to draw reasonable *(continued on page six)*

A Complete Agnes

By George Collins

Except perhaps for the dance, nothing engaged Agnes de Mille's interest as did the philosophy of her grandfather. She was committed to it. She was a Georgist. The stories she has told of being dragged by her mother to Georgist meetings and conferences when she was a child might have been expected to produce an adult with a strong aversion to a force-fed prescription for an idealized world. That is a reaction frequently observed by many Georgists who have despaired at the disinterest shown by their own children and family.



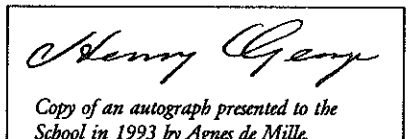
Rededicating the restored Henry George Birthplace in 1989

But Agnes survived that auspicious baptism to become a link for us in the unbroken line of contact with a person, a personality and presence that was a major force in the world. Whether or not personal appreciation of George, the man, is seen by some as redolent deification, it remains a truth, I believe, that as earnestly striving human beings we are elevated toward the best in ourselves when we feel a kinship to greatness. Anyone who has ever experienced the pride of ancestry or origin knows the sentiment.

Agnes revered the memory of her grandfather. I had the extraordinary privilege of being the Curator of the Henry George Birthplace Museum in Philadelphia for twenty-five years. Agnes was the Chairwoman of the Birthplace Committee, an essentially honorary position. But she did not take it lightly. She originally provided the major artifacts that are on display, adding other items through the years. She persuaded her good friend, the famous Black opera and concert artist Marian Anderson, herself a Philadelphian, to become a member of the Birthplace Committee. She was extraordinarily pleased when the Birthplace won landmark status with a listing in the National Registry of Historic Places in 1984. She was with us for its original dedication in 1957 when the School acquired the building and she was with us to celebrate its rededication in 1989 after restoration to its original architecture - that of the 1830s, when Henry George was born.

Of course, she was more than a sentimental preserver of memorabilia. The economic and social philosophy of Henry George was her creed. She spoke and wrote of it in vivid cadences, proclaiming the validity of the analysis and urgency of the reform. It was not her field. She was an artist - among the best this country has produced. But she shared with George the gift wherein words were not just the tools of communication but jewels in their elegant renderings of emotions and ideas.

It might seem that it would be easy from someone of Agnes's prominence to take the Georgist movement much farther along the way to acceptance than it has gone. It might be thought that she could translate her celebrity into public, or at least influential support for a principle that she so strongly espoused. Things, however, are all too often unlike what we think them to be.



Copy of an autograph presented to the School in 1993 by Agnes de Mille.

She served and worked in all the ways that she could from the earliest years of her professional importance. In 1949 she organized and danced in what was described as a "Star-studded Recital" for the benefit of the Henry George School. She was a member of the Board of Trustees for twenty-four years, continuing after her *(continued on page six)*

A Dancer - and More

By Susan Klingelhoefer

My initial exploration into the life of Agnes de Mille was through her book, *Speak to Me, Dance with Me.* As an author, she was fiercely honest, often giving candid assessments and dangerously frank opinions of her peers - mostly, the people in the world of the performing arts. Agnes criticized with courage, an attribute, in my opinion, that epitomized her career.

After reading *Reprieve,* I realized the multifarious de Mille was a more complex person than I had originally thought. (This revelation is comparable to my learning one summer in France that Leonardo da Vinci, as architect, designed majestic towers for the chateau Chambord, in addition to being a world-renowned painter, and inventor.) Never again would I think of Bert Lahr in a lion's costume when I heard the word, "courage." I would always think of Agnes first. Courageous was what she had to be to endure the horrible medical ordeals in recovering from her paralyzing stroke.

I met Agnes for the first time at the Henry George Sesquicentennial conference in Philadelphia. I desperately wanted her to know how much *Reprieve* had moved me, especially the end of the memoir, when Agnes described her appearance on stage after a Joffrey performance of "Conversations About The Dance," which Agnes choreographed. She was alone on stage with roses at her feet and a bouquet in her hand. In the applause and excitement, Agnes extended her arms, then raised her right arm high, unwavering. She did not drop the bouquet. On that street where her grandfather lived, I told Agnes de Mille how much that scene touched me. She looked up at me from her wheelchair and replied, "I can still raise that arm." And she did.

That arm, undoubtedly, had been used many times previously during Agnes's illustrious life in writing thirteen books, in choreographing numerous musicals and dances, in directing performers across a stage, in lecturing to audiences about the arts, and gracefully, in her own dancing. In a 1987 television interview, Agnes had been quoted as saying, "I would like one word on my tombstone - Dancer." Prolific artists are always much more than their modesty admits. Agnes de Mille - a dancer and more - was a dazzling mosaic of special talents.

From Portrait Gallery

Agnes de Mille's 1990 book Portrait Gallery is a reminiscence of "artists, impresarios, intimates" from her entire career. This concluding chapter on New York, however, describes her girlhood in Harlem, and assesses the sweep of history from her uniquely acute and refined perspective.

Our lovely streets in Harlem are now neglected and festering. Morningside Park is today one of the most dangerous spots in this city, and after dark no sane person would venture into it, or even pass close by. The neighboring houses are broken and filthy. On occasion there have been tales of rats attacking the children....

Street boys no longer play marbles or build innocent bonfires in the gutters; they mug old ladies and trade crack. All the police carry guns and use them.

The streets don't look the same, but this we expect. The fire horses are gone, together with the parlor maids, the white wings, and the ambulatory street vendors, who couldn't be heard even if they were here and still trying. Gone are all the newsboys, the trolley lines, the double-decker buses, the els (...torn down beginning in 1938, and the scrap iron was sold to Japan, which returned it to us in the bodies of our soldiers).

The church spire in any Manhattan neighborhood is barely visible, dwarfed and belittled as it is by business enterprises. These days one looks up to office buildings, and the towers of New York have nothing to do with intellectual or religious ideas. In fact, the entire island has become a remarkable conglomeration of stone monoliths, gravestones dedicated to greed.

Nothing is so picturesque, as pleasant-sounding, as personal, or as friendly as it was. We know we must expect changes; architecture and customs change with time. Always have. Must do.

On the other hand:

....There are no laboring children on the streets, no delivery or mail boys. They are in school, learning it's hard to say what. People are older now, and healthier. The present generation has probably never seen a pockmarked face, for smallpox has been wiped out; tuberculosis, syphilis, meningitis, and infantile paralysis have diminished. Childhood disease is no longer rife nor fatal; the majority of children live. Although cancer, heart disease, and now AIDS seem virtually untouched, we have taken giant steps toward health. There are fewer one-armed or one-legged cripples. Most people, even elderly ones, have all their own teeth, something that was unheard-of in my youth. And there is no glint of gold when a person smiles. Only the indigent and the homeless smell. Most people can bathe. Even the poor have running water, generally hot. ....on the shelves of our supermarkets all the produce of the entire globe is displayed handily at the same time, year-round, despite the season. Most of the food is wrapped in plastic and is untouchable and sterile, and although the goodies seem devoid of attraction, there are no flies and no contamination. The fact of butchery is screened away as in an operating theater, and only the results are displayed,

composed and laid out in their transparent shrouds. One does not now have to wait to choose and supervise the cutting and wrapping. This saves sensibilities and time. It also saves lives. Everything we buy is sealed up, protected, prophylactic. It's dull and frequently a nuisance. But we stay alive.

We have reached the moon, have broken the atom and harnessed atomic power. We have preserved the sound of dead voices and the look of dead people and their actions. Space no longer exists, nor time lapse. There is really no such thing as foreign or far-flung people. We see and hear instantly. Yet we have not succeeded in settling the basic, immemorial problem: our daily bread.

There are as many beggars on the street, as many indigent, hopeless, and insane people, as when I was a child. The need and the terror are the same. None of that has changed one bit. The drugged criminals frequenting Morningside Park are desperate people. I do not think they care particularly about the adventure on the moon.

"The poor ye have always with you." Was Jesus Christ, our savior, a profound economist or a hopeless pessimist?

But one group is better off, and the history of this century is distinguished chiefly not by mechanical or scientific advancement in medical research and the attendant blessings but by the emergence of one half of the human race from bondage. Women have come out of the closet - all women, poor as well as rich.

There are today only very few professions women cannot enter. They share in medicine, law, academics, government, building construction, weightlifting, policing, firefighting, garbage slinging. I do not know about cattle slaughtering. Women own their own wages. They have first claim to their children and an equal voice in divorce.

Domestic service has been greatly reduced. In fact it has all but disappeared, discommoding the housewife, certainly, but eliminating the slave class. Servants today make a decent wage - better than that, a good wage. Devices for saving the mistress's knees and back have been invented (and notice that they were not invented until it was the back and knees of the mistress that were involved), so ladies can still have sufficient leisure. But so can their servants. This is new.

As a symbol of the great evolution, women have discarded their corsets, for the first time in three hundred and fifty years. For the first time in two thousand years they are choosing their garments for reasons of practicality - all women, not just day laborers. They have gone into pants. Considerations of comfort have won out over sex, which is as drastic a choice... as though women had altered their skeletons - which as a matter of fact they have also done, finding slim hips more suitable to trousers than the wide pelvises of their grandmothers.

These astonishing changes have occurred in an unprecedentedly short period, historically speaking, and within my lifetime. Who made the revolution? Not wayward, militant, or flamboyant spirits, although they were present, calling attention to themselves and their triumphs. No, the revolution was made by those unknowns, with effort and patience, patience and endurance, with trying and with tears, by our aunts and our cousins, our nurses and teachers, our cooks, our mothers.

And by us, unceasingly, endlessly trying.

Discipline as Well as Love

I first met Agnes de Mille when I was a student at the High School of Performing Arts, in 1974. Ms. de Mille was the guest speaker at the school's Honor Society assembly. I remember her stressing quite eloquently that we as students should love what we are training for, and if this wasn't the case, then we should find some other career path. She also made the point that whatever we did finally decide to pursue in our lives, the discipline as well as love of studying music, dance or drama would stay with us forever. And in my case, it has. - *Pia DeSilva*

A Complete Agnes (from page four)

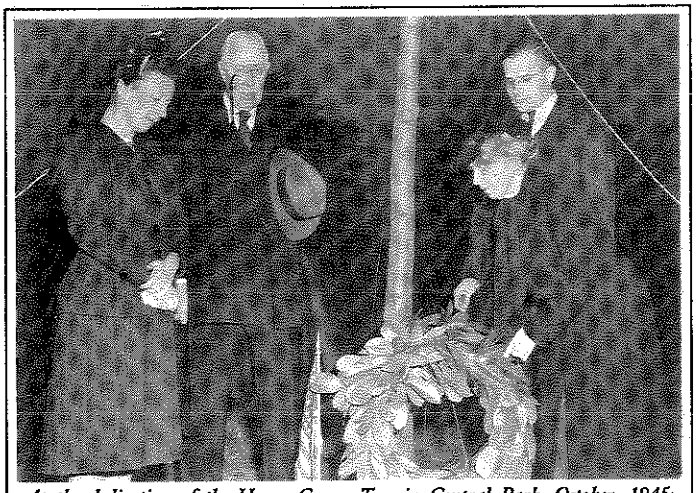
crippling stroke until her resignation in 1977. During all that period and since, she has appeared and spoken at functions and conferences. How many times there were that I personally knew she had called to have quantities of books sent to her which would be distributed to friends and acquaintances. Over the last four years I visited her often. She would invite me to lunch, and our conversation would always include a discussion of who among her acquaintances, persons in the spotlight or with clout, she might get to listen if she invited them to lunch. At this stage she rarely went out. Rehearsals and revivals of her dances and Henry George functions were her main excursions.

Among the people we had spoken about was Bill Moyers. Then earlier this year she called to say that Moyers was going to tape an interview with her, to be aired in 1994, and she wanted to be briefed: how many cities in Pennsylvania and how they are doing; what about Denmark these days; Australia; the Russian initiative. On the day of the interview, she called again for a last-minute brushup. But, the subject never came up in the interview; they ran out of time. Even Bill Moyers goes first with what sells best: in her case, the dance.

Agnes was disappointed at not getting more people like Bill Moyers to respond over the years. But she was always hopeful that her next quarry would think and act. She was keenly interested in what was taking place in Russia. In 1992 she came to the reception at the School given for the Russian economists who came to study with us. She had several of them at her home for cocktails and had even offered to house someone if needed. Each time we spoke or met she wanted to know the latest developments - who was now in Russia, what kind of reception they were receiving, and what was currently being done.

I last saw her in August. She was excited about the legislation in New York allowing Amsterdam to adopt LVT. Her appreciation was such that she made an additional contribution to the School, putting a check in my hand then and there. I wrote her on August 11th, welcoming her back from the country and inviting her to the Henry George Day celebration of September 2nd. She could not come. She sent flowers. On the 9th, she called to say she was sending me a batch of Henry George signatures. "Take care of these," she said, "they are the last." I'm sure she meant they were the last in her possession.

Agnes used her talent and status in the service of our cause as she was able. If more could have been done she would have done it. But she was not just an icon of the Georgist movement and an artist of world renown. She was a wife, a mother and a grandmother. She was good with words and she did not mince them. She would tell you precisely what she thought, favorable or unfavorable, in private or in public. And although I came to know her best in the last few years, that propensity was clearly not the privilege of age but an element of character. She loved her flower garden in Merriwald and regretted no longer being able to tend and enjoy it, but with no sense of self-pity and no invitation to sympathy. She liked camembert cheese, hearts of palm was a favorite at lunch and she enjoyed strawberries and cream with dark brown sugar for dessert. I'll remember a complete Agnes.



At the dedication of the Henry George Tree in Central Park, October, 1945: Agnes de Mille, Lawson Purdy, Albert Pleydell, and Anna George de Mille

Brave Enough to Try

Miss de Mille was a member of the Board of Trustees if the Henry George School for a number of years in the 1970s. She was present at the Board meeting at which I was elected President, and played an important part in that event.

The previous President had been transferred by his employer, so he had to resign. When nominations opened to elect his successor, [I was] nominated.... The prospect was not attractive. The School was without an executive Director, and the Board was sharply divided as to what the School's objectives should be.

I wasn't at all eager to leap into this situation. So I said, "I decline the nomination." Miss de Mille was sitting across the table from me. She impaled me with a glare such as I had never experienced before and hope never to experience again. "You **cahn't** decline." My bones turned to jelly, and I wanted to slide under the table. I surrendered, of course, and ultimately was elected.

In the following years, dissensions abated, and progress was made in several areas. This was due primarily to the efforts of the executive directors, but I believe that I helped. Had it not been for Agnes de Mille's withering glare, I would never have been brave enough to try.

- Paul Nix

Agnes George de Mille (from page four)

conclusions.. We are on the brink. It is possible to have another Dark Ages. But in George there is a voice of hope."

It was this sense of hope that in large part accounts for her tremendous drive. She was felled by a stroke in 1975, leaving her almost completely paralysed. She fought back, teaching herself to walk, talk, and choreograph dances again. Indeed she continued up until the end; her last ballet, *The Other,* premiered with the American Ballet Theatre in 1992. She once recounted some of her experiences of wartime London during the blitz. Many Londoners had been bombed out of their homes and were sleeping in subway tunnels. "But everyday at noon," she said, "in London's National Gallery, empty of the pictures that had been stored away for safe keeping, "they sat on the ground and Myra Hess played on the piano. Bach, Liszt, Chopin Brahms. This gave them the strength to see where the verities are: What are we trying to live for, what do we need, what do we hope for?"

Our Dear Colleague

Agnes de Mille our dear colleague's greatest passion was *la danse,* not economic theories. I was grateful to see her use her great talent to strengthen the bond among people everywhere. While her focal point was human happiness through art and beauty, Agnes was never detached from the sad condition of the less fortunate.

When I visited her in June, 1991 she said, "How sad I was when I visited Catherine Dunham in Port-au-Prince, Haiti to find that not enough was being done through the arts to improve the lot of the poor." Agnes, in her zeal to improve the human condition, was a committed Georgist.

- Fryda Ossias

Highest and Best Use...

(continued from front page)

the often conflicting interests of real estate developers and the community.

Professor Sussna gave an example of the conflictual dynamics of zoning and land use and the various political and economic interests involved by citing the case of the city of Newark, New Jersey in the 1960s, when he was Planning Commissioner for that city. The 1960s was a time of "urban renewal," a term that encompassed many ideas proposed to revitalize American cities. In Newark there were two opposing ideas suggesting the best way to go about renewal. One side, represented by Sussna, wanted to rehabilitate existing buildings, a proposal said by its proponents to take into account existing land use and areas of distribution to improve, but preserve, the character of the neighborhoods. The other side, made up of various political and real estate interests, wanted to "bulldoze" entire sections of the city in order to rezone and build anew. This second proposal "involved a lot more land speculation and political graft," according to Professor Sussna, and it won out in the long run. There is a perpetual "tug of war," Sussna says, between competing interests whenever land use is at issue. "Zoning has many times degenerated into a game of political football," Sussna said.

Professor Sussna ended on a more optimistic note. He sees hope in a number of factors for the future of land use and urban life. Real estate developers are being forced to listen to a broader range of community views. Growing concerns for the environmental impact of various city projects, along with the increasing participation of the citizenry in urban planning and development, provide a better climate for "optimization" of land use.

Literally translated, the title of this handsomely-bound Booklet from the Henry George Association in Korea is "Know Thoroughly of Land." That is good advice - and a good motto for Y. W. Choi's translation of the school's course in Fundamental Economics, *complete with all its familiar diagrams and supplements. Classes in Georgist economics have been underway in Seoul for the last two years, under the leadership of Mr. Wong-in Koh.*

TEACHERS' CORNER

by Lindy Davies

"I have this one student who comes up to me after every class to hold forth. I mean, the guy must just love to hear himself talk! He acts like he's arguing, but he's not really arguing - sometimes he's just repeating the ideas the class has just discussed. I find it annoying - almost arrogant - as if he has to come up to me and display his mastery of the material..."

Does this sound familiar? That sort of student, whose classroom experience seems incomplete until he or she can spend those five or ten minutes telling the lesson back to the teacher, may try our patience. But don't be too quick to judge this behavior as arrogant or argumentative. It may be that the student's classroom experience really is incomplete, without that chance to talk it out.

That may even have something to do with the behavior of that know-it-all student who **just won't shut up!** There could be more motivating those students than a mere desire to make your life a living hell. They might be people who learn best by talking.

Teachers (and education researchers) have long known that different students have different **styles of learning.** The researchers tend to call them "learning strategies" and define them in long and psychologically significant words. There's nothing wrong with that, of course, but to make use of these useful concepts one is forced to delve into cognitive research. Teachers, however, can do a bit of common-sense research of their own, and benefit from the insight that different students have different methods for processing ideas. A good beginning would be to identify these four broad categories of learning styles: **listening, talking, reading** and **doing.**

Listening is the most familiar; indeed it is the basis of the classic lecture-hall format of a classroom. Many people actually do process information quite effectively in this manner. (I, for example, find I retain less if I try to take notes in class - go figure...) Listeners are also the easiest to teach - all we need (beyond our understanding of the subject matter) is a clear voice and gift of gab! One problem that can arise, though, is that those who want to learn by listening resent the disruptions of those who do not!

For it is true, like it or not, that some students learn by **talking.** There is often something in the act of expression that makes difficult concepts come clear - perhaps because of a perception that talking is more fun than thinking! In any case, if one is to talk intelligently about ideas, one **must** think. Perhaps we teachers shouldn't be quite so hard on those motor-mouthed students of ours. Isn't it, after all, a truism that one never fully learns a topic until one is called upon to talk about it?

Like listening, **reading** is right in line with classical paradigms. The "information revolution" notwithstanding, human society has not yet beaten the book as a versatile and comprehensive means of purveying ideas. But perhaps a little more can be said, because the textbook is not the only thing our students need to read. Some people are adept at processing information **spatially.** For them, diagrams and charts are indispensable. (Incidentally, the teacher need not be good at drawing to use diagrams effectively. I remember one professor whose chalkboard after a lecture would look like a work by Jackson Pollock. But **during** the lecture, none of his students doubted the relevance of all his squiggles and slashes!)

Last but not least, there are those who learn by **doing.** For many students, too much reliance on abstract reasoning can be irritating or confusing. They are the ones who will key into an activity or a simulation. They aren't unable to grasp abstract ideas; they simply have an easier time of it if they can see the ideas in context. Indeed, they have an advantage over the abstract reasoners in being able to see principles behind action. They come up with the best examples, relating ideas to real-life events.

Any class you teach will have a mix of these four types of learners. In the standard classroom situation, the listeners will do just fine - it is practically impossible to slight them, because of the overwhelming practicality of public speaking in this context - but the talkers and doers and spatially-minded folk will feel frustrated. Students, however, tend not to give much thought to theories of learning styles & such. They simply feel frustrated. Other pupils listen attentively and understand the lecture; why can't they? We owe them a bit of consideration.

No single technique will suit all the students in a class. The best way to raise interest and lower frustration is to present a mix of diagrams, activities, simulations and discussions. *(Next time: mixing it up in P & P, or, 1001 ways to teach the Law of Rent!)*

Australia '93: Spark & Strategy... (continued from page two)

Australian economy. Such a collapse might result in: "massive indirect taxation of locally produced goods and services and/or collection of economic rent - which cannot be evaded."

The valuable lessons to be learned from and by each country were clearly evident throughout the conference. Godfrey Dunkley emphasized that collection of land rent for public revenue has a long history in South Africa. However, blacks had been deprived of the land long before Apartheid was imposed. There is wide application of Site Value Rating (LVT) at the local government level. But, further advances of Georgism in the Republic of South Africa "will be greatly influenced by events in the rest of the world, particularly Russia." David Chester, an engineer from Israel, laid out a structure for pursuing macroeconomic analysis as an engineering discipline. The six entities for a satisfactory econometric model would include (along with government, house-holder, producer, capitalist and finance institution,) the landlord - "a matter to which most macroeconomic texts give scant attention."

Mary Rawson's commentary on assessment practices in British Columbia could well be seen as a "do & don't" checklist of assessment administration and policy. As a member of the Board of British Columbia Assessment Authority, she monitors a market value assessment system operated by a well-trained professional staff using up-to-date technology, achieving "high statistical correlation between assessed value and market sales and attracting a minimum number of appeals." Yet it engenders strong dissatisfaction among the public. The reasons? A classification schedule for taxation based on use, exemption of some property from assessment and some from taxation and lack of public knowledge of these deviations. Whatever else is done, the public must be fully informed of all official measures that affect land values and assessment.

Robert Keall, Secretary/Treasurer of the New Zealand Land Value Rating Association, gave a picture of how the pressure of politics, environmental concern and shifting economic philosophy have created conditions for Georgism that reflect the title of his paper, "New Zealand - Crucible for the World." Like Australia, New Zealand began its experience with LVT in the late 1870s when Sir George Gray, a man with whom George shared a mutual admiration, was its Premier. The Labor parties were initially inspired by Henry George and as late as 1922, 10% of the national budget was derived from land rent. The late Roland O'Reagan was the chief architect in this century of the spread of land value rating (LVT) in New Zealand. Aided by the educational work of Betty Noble, active promotion has made it, in the words of Bob Keall, "an article of faith among New Zealanders." Nevertheless, attacks by profiteering real estate interests and general submission to Keynesian concepts of economic management caused, by the time of O'Reagan's death in 1992, a drop in federal revenue from land rent to only 0.4%. "The income tax," says Bob Keall, "may readjust uneven levels of income but it cannot adjust unjust levels of wealth." Three major cities - Doneden, Christ Church and Wellington - have abandoned municipal land value taxation. The opponents make strange bedfellows. The mayor of Wellington engineered the change by council despite a commission's support for land value taxation after hearing from the public. The Greens gave their support to the Mayor on the grounds that land value rating would lead to overdevelopment. "The fiery furnace of economic reality," as Bob Keall sees it, will continue to burn in New Zealand, revealing to emerging Georgist communities what they will encounter and what they must overcome.

There were many other notable contributions to the challenging work of Georgists everywhere. The venerable Arthur Dowe, now in his 90s, submitted a paper titled "Georgism and Land Value," which was admirably read by Bernard Rooney of Sydney. Betsy Harris, a farmer from Kimba in South Australia, reminded us of the primacy of natural law and cited the freedom from suffering and degradation among the Aboriginal societies of Australia, where they did not "own" the land. Richard Giles, Secretary of Association for Good Government in Sydney, looked at "Georgism and the New Right," on issues such as free trade and an unregulated economy - finding in the Georgist philosophy a harmony between equity for workers and freedom for entrepreneurs. With "Land Luddites and Lemmings," Philip Day, a lawyer, Town Planner and University Lecturer who is preparing a report on town planning and the land market for the Russian government, emphasized that the starting point of economics is not taxation or anything else, but land. Town planning is the most persuasive determinant of land value; developer contribution to public improvement is rarely related to the land value increase obtained from up-zoning. Because of this the current system is "an invitation to those with devious minds and devious morals." George, Phil Day believes, did not appreciate the importance of community land use decisions. A new book that would treat Georgist ideas in terms of town planning and land use is needed. "True appreciation of the nature of land can provide a moral basis for a sound economy." Quoting a Nigerian chief, Phil Day said, "Land belongs to a vast family of man, many are dead, some are living and countless millions are yet to be born."

To conclude the program, Geoff Forster, the Editor of *Progress*, gave a brief history of the magazine which is approaching its 1000th publication, and recounted some of the approaches that have been taken to propagate Georgism in Melbourne. Phil Anderson's conference summation was a stirring statement of the need, challenge and opportunity for Georgism accompanied by an impressive computer-generated video.

For all of us contemplating **Employment for All: Total Tax Reform by the Year 2000**, this epigram delivered by Geoff Forster should be our watchword: "Changes take place in two processes: 1) steady, slow, constant growth or movement of change and 2) the sudden, striking apocalyptic change that occurs unexpectedly. We need to be involved in the first, and prepared for the second." ■

Editor's notes: In our last issue, two men were identified incorrectly. Ian Leys is President of the Georgist Council of Australia; Morris Williams is President of Tax Reform Australia.

Thanks to Susan Klingelhoefer for help with photos from the Schalkenbach Foundation archives!

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