

From Arthur Madsen to Agnes de Mille

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4 Great Smith Street,
London, S. W. 1.
7th October, 1955.

Dear Agnes,

Your letter July 24th from the "Ile de France" arrived all right. It was most unfortunate I could not "make it" that one evening in London when you were free for a talk, being myself engaged. You sorry and Lily sorry and me sorry. When can we make up for it?

You told me how Jonathan at camp had had a broken arm - he is thoroughly recovered, long since, I trust - and how for other reasons also you had to hurry home from your all too short but miraculous trip.

How grand if you could have come to the Conference. You would have been pleased, I am sure, for it went well. Everyone found St. Andrews an ideal place, because it has so many attractions, chief among which was that the Conference had the use of the University buildings. Now you will be waiting for "Land & Liberty" with its report of the Conference. For one or other reason, this "September/October" issue has taken a long time to complete; it should be ready not more than 10 days hence. I hope that by this big double number, readers may feel rewarded for their patience.

Will you be coming to London soon again? Do let me know in advance and "give me a date" so we can meet for sure. There's so much to chat over!

I am about midway in the reading of Prof. Barker's book, after having first read the final chapter - like the impatient novel reader who wishes to see just "what did happen". The Prof has not been at all well posted on developments outside the USA in the latter days. He is guilty of a real "gaff" in this statement: "After the war (the 1914-1918 war) nearly every change was adverse to Georgist growth of any kind Perhaps the one specific instance of Georgism cropping out in the new policy of great nations in recent days is the dilute variety that the British Labour government wrote into its Town and Country Planning Act of 1947". My goodness, after all that was explained by our movement - that that Act contained measures directly opposed to the principle of land value taxation. Repeatedly in "Land & Liberty" it was exposed. The worst of this foolish statement by Barker is that it has been taken up by reviewers in this country, the cynics who are opposed to L.V.T. and they make capital of it at our expense.

On same page (634) Barker writes like this: "The Georgists in the government (of USA) at the end of the Wilson administration had no role in the Republican victories of the 20s. And if any later Georgists had the opportunity to introduce ideas into the New Deal or Fair Deal (as if Georgists would have any truck with that kind of thing - AWM) in a way that at all compared with the work of the introducers of Veblen, Keynes and even Henry C. Carey, they are indeed the forgotten men and ideas of those epochs of our history". And with that humbug also, Barker has handed material to our opponents on a plate.

True enough there are many excellent stories in the book about the personality of Henry George, much interesting detailed history, fulsome tribute to Henry George's character and courage and consistency. Yet running through the book there is a tone of superiority and of patronage which almost amounts to impertinence. The reviews of George's works are inept or ill-judged, especially that of the "Science", with the suggestion that H.G. had not the capacity to grasp the new economics, and so on.

The reviewers in the "New Statesman" and in the "Economist" have not failed to make use of just what they want to use in this book, where they were able to find passages that seemed to belittle H.G. as an economist or a philosopher; great and good a man as he was admitted to be.

It will be difficult for me to review the book without pointing out its defects and I would almost be inclined to say that Barker had to have his eyes on the professional fraternity, so that in whatever he said he could still keep sweet with them.

Barker is admittedly a fabian socialist and he reveals that in his repeated reference to laissez faire the real meaning of which he either does not understand or deliberately obscures. I have already marked nine examples of that, running through the pages. The worst is in Barker's review of H.G.'s address on "The Study of Political Economy". Attributed to H.G. is the statement that "economics had arrayed its laissez faire ideas against improvement and reforms on behalf of the working classes". Again H.G. is declared to have demanded that "working people should be deluded no longer by too much laissez faire". Well H.G. never used those words and could not possibly have done so, with that interpretation!

Barker says that what he calls the "International League for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade" (calling it the League instead of the Union) was an organisation that took over, as it were from the English League for the Taxation of Land Values. Wherever did he get that from? The International Union was formed in Copenhagen in 1926 at the International Conference which had been organised by the United Committee - and is now an organisation parallel to the still existing

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English League as well as of course the United Committee.

H.G.'s Protection or Free Trade is said ~~to~~ not to have been published in England till 1903. Nonsense, the English edition came out in 1886 immediately after it was published in USA.

Fact is that Barker ought to have spent even a week or so over here and in this office, looking at the files of "Land & Liberty" to get some impression of the British movement and the men and the personalities who are heading it in the years succeeding H.G.'s death. He could not then have omitted John Paul, the man on whose shoulders the mantle of Henry George fell, so far as Great Britain is concerned.

As for the literary style of the book, it has given me some irritation. Here and there it descends to journalese. But then, perhaps, I am hypercritical and I may be unjust since terms and phrases differ as between American and England. Yet I wonder why it is, or by what change of fashion, the little word "to" is constantly omitted after the verb "help". Is that now the learned style in the USA? If so, why not omit it after the synonyms "aid" or "assist"; or let there be a general omission after verbs like "attempt" and indeed many others, to save space and time. However, here are some examples from Barker, who as a writer of elegance "ought do better" --- has helped me use - helped make Turner an interpreter - Hasson was helping her plan the trains - It helped boil the pot - George's background helped justify distaste - They will help capture.

Do forgive me if I have tired you with this long screed; but I am disappointed with the book, taking it as a whole. If it had not contained the patronising touches and the, to my mind, rather shallow treatment of the main works - "Progress and Poverty", the Perplexed and the Science particularly - it could have been a book that could really have "helped advance the movement". Sorry - I also have omitted that little word "to".

Warmest regards and affectionately,
Yours ever,

Arthur