

11. Barbuto

Henry George School of Social Science

Chartered by the University of the State of New York

5 East 44th Street, New York 10017
697-9880

May 26, 1987

Morty Silverstein
c/o WQED
509 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10022

Dear Morty,

I am enclosing part of the proposal I will be making to the Trustees of the School on June 13. As soon as you have a chance to read it over, look forward to discussing it with you.

I hope this direction makes the play more realizable. Thanks for your continued interest.

Sincerely,



Richard Barbuto,
Trustee

encl/ memo May 26

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5 East 44th Street, New York 10017
697-9880

May 27, 1987

To: Edward Dodson, President
Stan Rubenstein, Director

From: Richard Barbuto, Trustee

Re: Two projects for Saturday, June 13 discussion

- (1) Agnes de Mille -- commissioned play concerning Henry George
- (2) Towards a Henry George Community College in New York City

(1) Henry George Play

Following the latest of the uneventful attempts to respond to Ms. de Mille's interest in a play based on the life and works of Henry George, I took it as a project to "make it happen." I think that the progress I've made to date is important enough to warrant the Board's attention and re-commitment.

Stan, you have already met with one of the writers, Roscoe Gilliam. I spoke yesterday with Morty Silverstein; he encouraged me to put the proposal for a "dramatic musical" into a letter which he would then discuss with his associates and Ms. de Mille. (Will send this part of the memo to Mr. Silverstein "for comments" as soon as possible so that we can have feedback before June 13th.)

I have in mind a musical production. One that has dance and song at its center. With Ms. de Mille's contributions in this art form, a theater event would be most appropriate.

The precedent of "Fiorello!" comes to mind about former New York City Mayor La Guardia. Henry George's mayoral forays and the wonderful response of our city's working people to his candidacy suggest wonderful images of hope and solidarity. The timing soon of one of New York's most noteworthy mayoralty campaigns (Koch vs. ?) can be a most important setting for the opening of the proposed play.

I think that George's relationship with Catholic priest "Dr." Pastor/Father Edward McGlynn would also be most appropriate. The church/state issue, as well as the role of the church's clergy in "revolutionary" movements, is a powerful theme. The fact that Father McGlynn was such an electrifying speaker would put our contemporary electronic preachers in an interesting light of contrast. The book Rebel, Priest and Prophet would be an excellent source for material. The play "Evita" would be in the shadows, with another contrast: Henry George as world renowned speaker, especially in the efforts both he and Father McGlynn made to deal with the land question for the Irish people.

Recently, I heard a great metaphor for people living with so much obvious difficulty, yet repeating each day's walk through life tripping and following and being exhausted by the "problems." Where the remedy? Someone pictured such a life as similar to continually getting onto a dance floor strewn with marbles. The use of George's Social Problems book, with each "problem," and the dozens of related issues that derive from each that he identifies, is "seen" by me as constituting the hundreds of "marbles" on our socio-political floor. The vast, clean sweep that could be accomplished with the comprehensive remedy of land (or site) value taxes (or charges) is the first for not only a well-choreographed dance extravaganza on a Broadway stage, or better on the field of Shea Stadium, but for a movie that suggests Henry George's remedy applied for economic freedom of no less a result than had Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. wrought for their people. Again, because Henry George spoke to the global realities of progress and poverty, dictated by the continued dominance of land monopoly and its disastrous effects on individuals and their communities, his story and his global remedy suggests no less than a setting which would even overwhelm the movement of people that was pictured in the movie based on Tolstoi's War and Peace.

To put this all into a script, I have enlisted three artists. All have been willing to work with me on a speculative basis, so as to have an opportunity to make a proposal which they could be commissioned -- for pay -- to write and to dance in and to choreograph. Theirs will be a team approach. I selected each of them for their unique skills. (A profile and credits data will be send under separate cover to Morty Silverstein.) Briefly, I've asked Roscoe Gilliam to coordinate the writing project and have introduced Roscoe to Barry Popick and Paul Langland. Roscoe danced in "Chorus Line" from the opening and for four years on Broadway; he is also a playwright. Barry is a playwright and has especially focussed on socio-political and historical figures; Paul is a Professor at NYU, a professional dancer and choreographer. Roscoe has been informed of our Henry George Library and the research capabilities of Mark Sullivan and Bob Clancy for source material (Of course, to enlist these services for this project, I await further direction from the Board.)

Through certain contacts and references, I have also aimed to enlist the participation of the lyric writing and musical arrangement expertise (and "feel" for the Henry George "gism") of Clarence Clemons/ Steve Van Zant/ Bruce Springsteen. Their socially-focused music would be a most powerful contribution. Their appeal to the young people of the world would alert this generation to the absolute crisis of mankind's quest for political and economic liberties, a quest that has not had a new tool for change since the Adam Smith and Karl Marx contributions. Our play would go back to the same period and bring forth a political economist and writer/advocate who would talk today as he did yesterday about a remedy to be used to sweep the marble-strewn floors at the capitalists' stock exchanges and at the commissars' planning offices. More than ever, mankind needs to hear about the work of land value taxation's Henry George.

In closing, one will have no doubt as to my conviction that Agnes de Mille's play project should be put onto a visible and dynamic course of implementation. My own personal commitment to forward the action is real. I've produced two plays, one in college: a graduation comedy spoof on our faculty (1962); the other, twenty-five years later, on March 15, 1987: Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People." I am thoroughly excited and dedicated to the possibility that this production could offer to the City of New York ... yeah, for mankind. "Imagine: Peace."

(2) Henry George Community College

We have heard talk of Oscar Geiger's vision of a Henry George University. Let's start ASAP with a study and plan for a two-year community college, located in New York City's Manhattan section of Harlem, Spanish Harlem, or the Hispanic Lower East Side. In setting this direction and objective, we would first aim to increase student enrollment in Henry George-centered courses of relevance to working people with either a citizen/tax payer interest or a consumer/investor interest. The academic focus would be in two broad fields that Georgist thought and action are most directly related to: real estate (from architecture to zoning), and law (from assessment to zoning).