

Stanley Bowmar



A LIFE-LONG single taxer, Stanley Bowmar, born in New Zealand in 1881 shortly after Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* burst on the world, reached the end of a worthy career on October 18th in New York State.

During the first fifteen years of his life in New Zealand a political debate raged between those who favored and those who opposed Henry George's ideas. It culminated in 1896 in a statute which gave the electors of every unit of local government the right to choose by majority vote whether the revenues to support local functions would be levied on the capital or annual value of real estate, or by a tax on the capital value of land exclusive of improvements. Mr. Bowmar was not eligible to vote until six years after this statute was passed, and he probably would not have known at what point he became, like many others, an advocate of Henry George's philosophy.

In his youth he developed a curiosity about the world and a desire for travel which took him eventually to England, the United States, China and Japan. He earned all his money by working variously in each country he visited. His mother had warned him never to let his reserve fund drop below ten pounds before looking for another job. On his first trip away from home, in England, he selected shorthand and typewriting as skills which would prove most useful — and his proficient court reporting sustained him well on several occasions.

On reaching the United States a motorcycle manufacturer offered him a free machine if he would ride it from Buffalo to San Francisco. There were then no transcontinental highways, in

fact in some areas west of the Mississippi highways of any kind were non-existent. He completed this dangerous journey, having

written enroute a series of articles for a bicycle trade journal. These made him such a hero in the eyes of readers, that on reaching the West Coast he was given a commission on all motorcycles sold in certain California agencies, by arrangement with the manufacturer.

On a second voyage to England from New Zealand he met "by chance" a young art student from his home on the South Island, who later became Mrs. Bowmar. The passion for travel then shifted to more stable living, and his interest in Henry George found expression — especially on a meeting, also "by chance" with Joseph Fels, then living in England. At that time Mr. Fels was spending about \$250,000 a year of his personal income through the international Fels Fund Commission, in support of Henry George's tax method. Following this meeting the Bowmars were urged by Mr. Fels to move to Philadelphia, and there Mr. Bowmar served as stenographer for the FFC.

Some time later, Chicago was coming into the forefront as a center for single tax activity. The Public, a "weekly journal of opinion," was being edited there by Louis Freeland Post and his wife Alice Thacher Post. Mr. Bowmar went to Chicago under Mr. Fels' direction and came to know well such leaders in the movement as the Tideman family, Otto Cullman, John Z. White, Sidney Evans (now of San Diego), and others. After Mr. Post became Under-Secretary of Labor

in the Wilson administration, Mr. Bowmar continued *The Public* for a time as business manager. It had attained prominence and prestige but lost ground when Mr. Post resigned to take the post in Washington which he held for eight years.

After the sudden death of Mr. Fels the responsibility for the Fund fell on the shoulders of Mrs. Fels who brought together in New York all the activities started by her husband, and from that

time the Bowmar family has lived in the East.

During a long and successful business career there have been many who valued the friendship of the expatriate from New Zealand. "I used to think of Stanley Bowmar as our Abraham Lincoln," said one of his associates. "He was straight and tall . . . as honest as the day is long. The world has lost a really good soul in his passing."

—Philip H. Cornick



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