
Henry George: The '86 Mayoralty Campaign

Author(s): Anna George deMille

Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Jan., 1946, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Jan., 1946), pp. 247-260

Published by: American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3483589>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*

JSTOR

Henry George: The '86 Mayoralty Campaign *

By ANNA GEORGE DEMILLE

1

The Campaign

IN THE SUMMER of 1886 Henry George was waited upon by a committee representing 165 labor organizations, asking him to be their candidate for mayor of New York.¹ He refused the nomination, explaining that he did not feel it wise to interrupt the work he had planned. In a few days the committee returned and repeated the request. George was in sympathy with their platform but Tammany held New York in its political grip. The showing the labor organizations had made at the polls in the previous year had been so poor that he did not wish to risk his cause being made ridiculous by a triflingly small vote. Again he declined the nomination.

For the third time the request was made; this time the assurance was given that whereas the labor organizations, in previous years, had not been in agreement, they were now entirely in accord, and it was a truly democratic and representative offer of support that was being made. It was not to be lightly brushed aside and George wrote in formal reply:

My personal inclinations are to say "No." I have no wish to hold office and my hopes of usefulness have run in another line. But there are considerations which under certain conditions, would compel me to say "Yes." . . . In this great city, the metropolis of the Western Hemisphere, municipal government has reached a pitch of corruption that, the world over, throws a slur and a doubt upon free institutions. Politics has become a trade and the management a business. The organizations that call themselves political parties are little better than joint stock companies for assessing candidates and dividing public plunder. . . . It is time for a body of citizens of New York to take some step to show that they have a deeper interest in the government of this great city than whether this or that set of politicians shall divide the spoils, and to demonstrate their power in a way to make their influence felt in every branch of administration.²

He explained that while his sense of duty would not permit him to refuse a part consistent with his principles and demanded of him by earnest men,

* Copyright, 1945, by Anna George deMille. A section of a previously unpublished study, "Citizen of the World," see *AM. JOUR. ECON. SOCIO.*, 1, 3 (April, 1942), p. 283 n.

¹ For a detailed account of the 1886 campaign, see "The George-Hewitt Campaign," compiled by Louis F. Post and Frederick C. Leubuscher, New York, John W. Lovell Co., 1886.

² New York, Aug. 26, 1886; see "The George-Hewitt Campaign," *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11, 13-5.

yet failure would harm the cause they wished to help. If, however, thirty thousand citizens should express their desire that he be a candidate, over their signatures, he would accept the nomination.

He expected this letter, with its difficult demand, to end the discussion. Instead it was received with enthusiasm by the labor groups. They promptly set about collecting the petitions, and invited him to review the annual Labor Day parade,³ with the Mayor, William R. Grace, from the stand in Union Square.

The Tammany Society, which had come into being a hundred years before with Jeffersonian ideals, had degenerated into a group of professional politicians out for power and graft. It had been formed after the American Revolution to resist any growth of aristocracy. In ridicule of certain earlier associations proclaiming fealty to King George III, and calling themselves Sons of this or of that Saint, a group of liberals had adopted a contemporary and very good Indian, Tammanend, as their patron. They took the name "Sons of Liberty or of St. Tammany," and adopted Indian titles for their officers. Down the years the society went through various phases; it took an active part in electing Thomas Jefferson President; it became a charitable body, and later it returned to politics and in time degenerated into a nest of grafters whose high peak culminated in the reign of "Boss" Tweed. Inheriting the technique of benevolence from earlier members, these later ones, with an added craft, had made it a practice to meet incoming ships bringing bewildered immigrants, to whom they held out the hand of welcome. This kindness blinded the new comers to their grafting ways and made for them thousands of uncritical friends, giving them almost impregnable power. As a protest against the rule of Tammany, a party calling itself the County Democracy was formed. This in time became corrupted and New York City, in the seventies and eighties, was a byword for crooked politics.

Both the Tammany and County Democracy groups saw in the proposed nominee, Henry George, a menace to their undisputed dominance. They sent a joint emissary, William H. Ivans, Chamberlain of the City, to talk to George.

The two men met in a private room in Seighortner's restaurant, on Lafayette Place, and smoked while the Chamberlain insisted that the economist could not possibly be elected Mayor of New York, no matter how many men might vote for him. That being the case, he urged George to refuse the nomination and, on behalf of the two groups he represented, offered

³ Sept. 6, 1886.

him the nomination for Congress from a city district where nomination by the Democrats was tantamount to election. He explained that George might go to Europe—or anywhere he desired—and on his return he would receive a certificate of election to the House of Representatives.

George pondered for a moment and then asked: "You tell me that I cannot possibly be elected Mayor of New York. Why, if I cannot possibly get the office, do you want me to withdraw?"

Ivans replied: "You cannot be elected but your running will raise hell!"

To that, George retorted: "You have relieved me of embarrassment. I do not want the responsibility and the work of the office of the Mayor of New York, but I do want to 'raise hell'! I am decided and will run."⁴

"If I go into the fight" he wrote privately to his friend, Dr. Taylor, "the campaign will do more to bring the land question into practical politics and do more to popularize its discussion than years of writing would do. This is the only temptation to me."⁵

The nominating conference of the trade and labor organizations was marked by unusual harmony and enthusiasm. It chose George by an overwhelming majority, accepting the platform which he wrote and which asked for the taxation of land values, for the abolition of other taxes, for municipal ownership and for a reformed ballot system.

But the interest in his nomination was not confined to the labor unions. Intense enthusiasm was voiced in a crowded meeting held in Chickering Hall, at which Rev. Dr. John W. Kramer presided and Rev. R. Heber Newton, Prof. Thomas Davidson, Dr. Daniel De Leon, Charles F. Wingate, Prof. David B. Scott and Rev. Edward McGlynn spoke.⁶ Resolutions endorsing George's nomination were adopted by the Trade and Labor Conference with tremendous acclaim.⁷

A few days before this meeting, Dr. McGlynn had had word from Archbishop Corrigan, expressing disapproval of the priest's association with the mayoralty nominee or his even appearing to "coincide with socialism."⁸ At the suggestion of Dr. McGlynn, George called on the Archbishop so

⁴ The episode was recounted by George in a reply to a statement made in the newspapers by Abram S. Hewitt in October, 1897; quoted by Henry George, Jr., "Life of Henry George," New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1944, p. 463.

⁵ Written from 16 Astor Place, New York, Sept. 10, 1886; in Henry George Collection, New York Public Library (hereafter abbreviated as HGC); Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 464.

⁶ The hall was then at Fifth Avenue and Eighteenth Street.

⁷ Oct. 2, 1886. See "The George-Hewitt Campaign," *op. cit.*, p. 16; Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 465.

⁸ *The Standard*, New York, Vol. I, No. 1, Jan. 8, 1887, p. 1. For wider study of the McGlynn affair see *The Standard*, Vol. I, HGC; Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.* (see index); and "Rebel, Priest and Prophet," by Stephen Bell, New York, Devin-Adair Co., 1937.

that the latter might learn, at first hand, something about the economist and his teachings. The prelate was courteous but, giving his visitor no chance to explain his doctrines, stated that Dr. McGlynn had violated an understanding made four years previously that he would make no more political utterances. He stated further that he had called his consultors to meet at noon to consider the case of Dr. McGlynn.

George told the result of this interview to Dr. McGlynn, who replied that his understanding of the promise he had felt obliged to make in 1882, was that he should cease speaking on the Irish question. He had kept that promise but had spoken on behalf of Grover Cleveland and there had been no remonstrances. Even should he be forbidden to speak at the Chickering Hall meeting "he could not, now that he had been announced to speak, refrain from doing so, consistently with his own self-respect and without publicly renouncing the rights of an American citizen."⁹

Close upon the heels of this, Dr. McGlynn received a letter forbidding him to speak at the Chickering Hall meeting or at any other political meeting whatever, without permission of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. (The United States was then a missionary country.) The other priests who had planned to be present, having been forbidden, remained away, but Father McGlynn went as he was scheduled to do and spoke superbly. No one knew—not even George—that on the following morning the priest received word that he was suspended for two weeks. Later, when George took him to task for his silence concerning this punishment, the priest replied:

"Why man, telling you would only have worried you. Why should I add to your worries?"¹⁰

The formal nomination for the mayoralty had been made by the Trade and Labor Conference, at Clarendon Hall,¹¹ and was endorsed by professional and business men at the Chickering Hall meeting. The formal acceptance¹² took place at Cooper Union.

This hall, dedicated by Peter Cooper to free speech and the scene of Abraham Lincoln's first address before an eastern audience, was a fitting place for the challenge by a poor man to the forces of graft and corruption. The auditorium was so jammed that Henry George himself had difficulty in entering. (An immense overflow meeting was held outside, where from

⁹ *The Standard*, Vol. I, No. 1.

¹⁰ Told to the writer by her mother.

¹¹ At Thirteenth Street, between Third and Fourth Avenues, on Sept. 23; 175 labor organizations were represented by 409 delegates. See "The George-Hewitt Campaign," *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹² On Oct. 5, 1886.

trucks stationed in different spots, the candidate had afterwards to make short speeches.) Rev. John W. Kramer presided and John McMackin, chairman of the executive committee of the Labor Party, tendered the nomination. Large bundles containing the signatures of close to 35,000 voters who had pledged their support to George, were placed on the edge of the platform. The enthusiasm was tremendous and the nominee was given an ovation.

In his speech of acceptance he began by saying that he was not taking the nomination lightly; that he had first regarded it as not to be considered.

I did not desire to be Mayor of New York. I have had in my time political ambition, but years ago I gave it up. . . . Another career opened to me, . . . that of the men who go in advance of politics, the men who break the road that after they have gone will be trod by millions. It seemed to me that there lay my duty and there lay my career.¹³

He went on to say that if elected he would endeavor to destroy political corruption. "Without fear and without favor I will try to do my duty. I will listen as readily to the complaint of the richest man in the city as I will to the poorest."¹⁴ His aim was social reform—the equal rights of *all* men. His fight was against privilege.

Look over our vast city, and what do we see? On one side a very few men richer by far than it is good for men to be, and on the other side a great mass of men and women struggling to get a most pitiful living. . . . What do we propose to do about it? We propose, in the first place as our platform indicates, to make buildings cheaper by taking the tax off buildings. We propose to put that tax on land exclusive of improvements, so that a man who is holding land vacant will have to pay as much for it as if he was using it, just on the same principle that a man who should go to a hotel and hire a room and take the key and go away would have to pay as much for it as if he had occupied the room and slept in it. In that way we propose to drive out the dog in the manger who is holding from you what he will not use himself. . . . The value of the land of this city, by reason of the presence of the great population, belongs to us to apply to the welfare of the people. . . .

I am your candidate for Mayor of New York. It is something that a little while ago I never dreamed of. Years ago I came to this city from the West, unknown, knowing nobody, and I saw and recognized for the first time the shocking contrast between monstrous wealth and debasing want. And here I made a vow, from which I have never faltered, to seek out and remedy, if I could, the cause that condemned little children to lead such lives as you know them to lead in the squalid districts. It is because of that that I stand before you tonight, presenting myself for the chief

¹³ "The Cooper-Hewitt Campaign," *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

office of your city—espousing the cause, not only of your rights, but of those who are weaker than you.¹⁵

The George headquarters were in the Colonnade Hotel on Lafayette Street near Astor Place. Funds were collected for the most part at meetings. They were meager indeed to fight the combined organization of the two powerful factions, the County Democracy and Tammany, which under the banner of the Democratic Party selected for their candidate Abram S. Hewitt.

Hewitt, who, back in 1880, had engaged George to do some private work on a Congressional report, now took upon himself the rôle of one saving society from "the ideas of anarchists, nihilists, communists, socialists, and mere theorists."¹⁶ He felt it his duty to be the "candidate of the citizens who are in favor of law, order and progress"¹⁷ and "against the advocate of the policy miscalled progress, which can only lead to universal poverty and general ruin."¹⁸ He advised his fellow-citizens to "distrust the men who make it their business to prate of the rights of men. It is a very convenient stepping-stone for such people to the property of other men. It pays to be a demagogue."¹⁹

He seemed to expect that the Republicans should join the Democratic machine, get behind the Hewitt banner, and make common fight against the wild agitator out of the West. But the Republican Party had other schemes; they nominated a candidate of their own—a young man of ability and private means named Theodore Roosevelt.

2

The Election

THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE in the three-party contest made a feeble fight, hardly to be considered. Not so the two others: they made many public speeches and wrote open letters to each other which were published in the press. Practically every newspaper in New York, during the campaign, was arraigned editorially against George, except *The Irish World* and the German *Volkszeitung*; for the latter, Louis F. Post wrote the English editorials. By now George was fairly well used to being erroneously reported. Three years previously he had written to Josephine Shaw Lowell, who had been worrying about the twisted statements quoted as having come from him:

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

What you say about not being able to agree with all I say everywhere makes me think it probable that you have in mind something you may have read in the papers, of my speeches, interviews, etc. But do me the justice (if this is so) of remembering what filtration through the brain of the average reporter and then excision by a local editor means. I have thus been made to say all sorts of things I never dreamed of saying. It is useless to try to get correction. I can only trust that there are some people who know I am neither a crank nor an idiot.²⁰

And a year later he had written again to her:

I expect to be misrepresented and misunderstood by very many and care nothing for it except in the case of those I esteem; but I don't like your father's daughter to misunderstand me. Please don't think I have taken leave of my senses until you see the evidence in something written under my signature. I am constantly represented as saying things I never said and never dreamed of saying. In part this comes from deliberate intention, and in part from the inability of the ordinary reporter to summarize or condense on such subjects as those on which I speak.²¹

Misrepresented he constantly was, for many editors evidently agreed with James Gordon Bennett, when, in a letter to Poultney Bigelow, he wrote:

In my humble opinion Henry George is a "humbug" and a "busy-body." . . . If *The Herald* does anything it will be either to ignore Mr. George and all his nonsense, or if he should happen by chance to become dangerous, pitch into him roundly.²²

During this New York mayoralty campaign George evidently was considered "dangerous" for "pitch into him" the New York papers did. In a note to Mrs. Lowell, George said:

I think of you every night as I read the lies of *The Evening Post* and have been wondering how much you believed. The best reports will probably be in *The Leader*, the newspaper started today.²³

This little daily, edited by Louis F. Post, was an attempt to give George's cause honest representation. It jumped immediately to a circulation of 35,000 and was self-supporting, as the editorial and reportorial work was contributed free. Many of the copy editors and reporters on the big papers, which were attacking the Labor Party candidate, were personally his devoted admirers and after doing their daily stint would donate long hours of work on *The Leader*. This generous contribution from the work-

²⁰ Brooklyn, Oct. 28, 1883, HGC

²¹ London, Nov. 15, 1884, HGC.

²² From 120 Ave. de Champs Elysees, Paris, Nov. 17, 1884; quoted by Poultney Bigelow, in "Seventy Summers."

²³ From 16 Astor Place, New York, Oct. 19, 1886, HGC.

ing newspapermen was continued, without pay of any kind, through the campaign.

George tried in vain to meet Hewitt on the platform in debate. Failing this, he lost no opportunity to put his own position before the voters of all degrees, in all places, at all hours, making as many as twelve and fourteen speeches a day. He was not campaigning to win votes but to win converts to what he believed was the truth. Fearlessly he attacked ignorant prejudices and vested interests as well as dishonest policies. It was one of the bitterest mayoralty contests on record and every influence that could be arrayed against him was used. He was not only called a "demagogue" and a "revolutionist," an "enemy of civilization and of social order"²⁴ but was accused of attacking the sacred rights of property and of preaching anarchy and destruction. Calumnies are hard to bear; but, as he wrote, a year later:

I have something more important to do than to spend time in denying falsehoods that may be circulated about me. If I were to deny that I had ever been a pirate, I would next be called upon to deny that I had ever been a horse thief or a bigamist. I have never bothered myself with denying any such personal charge and never propose to. I can safely leave my reputation in the hands of those who know me.

Falsehood and abuse are ever the weapons employed against truth, and the man who attempts to do battle against a great social injustice must expect them, and will, if he be wise, learn to be careless of them, content with knowing that—

. . . never yet
Share of truth was vainly set
In the world's wide fallow.²⁵

But although he was slandered, he was also commended, and by men representing different factions, such as T. V. Powderly of the Knights of Labor; the Rev. James O. S. Huntington, head of the Episcopal Order of the Holy Cross; George Inness, the painter; and Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, the agnostic. One of the biggest contributions made to the campaign fund was a check of one hundred dollars given by a manufacturer, August Lewis, until then unknown to George.

Born in Germany in 1811, Mr. Lewis, after some years in London, had come to the United States at the age of twenty-five. Settling in New York, he had taken out citizenship papers and had in time become successful in business. Tall, slender, dark-haired, and with quiet, conservative manners, he was a man of great dignity and gentle charm. A patron of

²⁴ "The George-Hewitt Campaign," *op. cit.*, pp. 41-2.

²⁵ *The Standard*, Vol. II, No. 15, Oct. 15, 1887.

the arts and a friend of writers, musicians and painters, he was one of the founders of the New York Oratorio Society and of the Philharmonic Orchestra and had given money to help build Carnegie Hall.

As a member of the Society of Political Education, he had received through Francis G. Shaw, in 1882, a copy of "Progress and Poverty." He did not read the book, however, until this mayoralty campaign of 1886 had brought it prominently into discussion again. With the reading came a change in his mental and spiritual outlook and he gave to its author both moral and financial aid. These two seekers after "the more abundant life" became intimate friends and fellow-workers. After years of close co-operation George was able to epitomize Lewis's outstanding characteristic in a sentence: "Your delicate kindness is as obvious in what you don't say, as in what you do."²⁶

Within that same twelvemonth,²⁷ while George was busy with the publication of "Protection or Free Trade?" a stranger had called on him—a Kentuckian, Tom Loftin Johnson. The visitor was thirty-one years old, average in height but so heavy as to be termed "fat." His face was handsome and his smile so beguiling that it charmed even his enemies. He looked like an adult cherub.

At the age of fifteen Tom Johnson had started to retrieve his family fortune, lost in the Civil War, by selling newspapers. Later he became a streetcar conductor, made some small but highly successful inventions, gradually achieved wealth through more inventions and the acquisition of street-railway franchises and the production of steel rails until he was by way of becoming a very rich man.

On one occasion when he was traveling between Indianapolis and Cleveland, the train boy recommended a book called "Social Problems." Mr. Johnson turned it down with a remark that he was fed up on sex stuff. The conductor, overhearing the conversation, urged him to buy, explaining it wasn't sex stuff and offering to refund the half dollar if the book wasn't interesting. So Johnson, the millionaire, was practically shamed into buying it. He read it, almost without stopping. Soon thereafter he read "Progress and Poverty." Its arguments converted him and it was against his interest to be converted. He took the book to his lawyer, L. A. Russell.²⁸

"I want you to read it," he said, "and point out its errors to me and save me from becoming an advocate of the system of taxation it describes."

²⁶ From Rome, Italy, July 20, 1890; in the private collection of the writer.

²⁷ Tom L. Johnson, "My Story," New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1911, pp. 49-52.

²⁸ A prominent attorney in Cleveland, Ohio.

But the lawyer, although he was paid to do so, failed to convince him of the fallacies of the book. Whereupon he gave a copy to his partner, Arthur J. Moxham, president of the Johnson Steel Rail Manufacturing Co. of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, who read it, "carefully marking all the places where, in his opinion, the author had departed from logic and indulged in sophistry." Moxham read it a second time and erased some of the marks. He went through it again and then reported: "Tom, I've read that book for the third time and I've rubbed out every damn mark."²⁹

The two partners then proceeded to work on Mr. Russell, who was still a bit hazy on the subject. Whether they converted him to George's social philosophy I do not know; it matters less than the fact that their discussion with him clarified and strengthened their own understanding of "Progress and Poverty." And Johnson's opinion having been thus reinforced, he mustered courage to call on the author. George immediately put the young man at ease—placed him in a comfortable chair, stretched himself on his lounge, close by and smoked. Johnson recounts the visit:

I was much affected by that visit. I had come to a realizing sense of the greatness of the truth that he was promulgating by the strenuous, intellectual processes which have been described, but the greatness of the man was something I felt when I came into his presence. Before I was really aware of it I had told him the story of my life, and I wound up by saying: "I can't write and I can't speak, but I can make money. Can a man help who can just make money?"

He assured me that money could be used in many helpful ways to promote the cause, but he said I couldn't tell whether I could speak or write until I had tried; that it was quite probable that the same qualities which had made me successful in business would make me successful in a broader field. He evidently preferred to talk about these possibilities to dwelling on my talent for money-making.³⁰

Johnson became enormously interested in the new book, "Protection or Free Trade?" and ordered two hundred copies, to be sent to lawyers and ministers in Cleveland.

The two men—Tom L. Johnson and August Lewis—both finding "Progress and Poverty" at about the same time, found also each other. Ten years difference in their ages, great differences in their heritages and personal tastes, did not affect their friendship; they held in common a love for Henry George and a dedication to his cause that bound them together in their life-long careers as social reformers.

With the approach of the '86 Mayoralty election, the political battle

²⁹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–50.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

grew more intense and enemy newspapers more hostile. It having been reported that Dr. McGlynn had ceased to support the labor candidate, the priest, at the risk of another reprimand from his ecclesiastical superiors, stated to the press that, on the contrary, "Each day, more and more earnestly, I desire to see his triumphant election." Father McGlynn added: "I know of no man I admire and love so much. I believe that he is one of the greatest geniuses that the world has ever seen and that the greatness of his heart fully equals the magnificent gifts of his intellect."³¹

Even McGlynn's closest friends had been kept ignorant that the priest had been "disciplined" for having disobeyed Archbishop Corrigan in speaking at Chickering Hall. Evidently his real crime had not been taking part in politics but in supporting George, since Monsignor Preston, Vicar General of the Archdiocese, did not find it incompatible with his own priestly status to step into the campaign. While not daring openly to champion Hewitt, the candidate of the corrupt Tammany machine, he wrote a formal letter condemning the candidacy of George, declaring his principles "unsound, unsafe and contrary to the teachings of the Church" which would, if adopted, "prove the ruin of the working men he professes to befriend." He added naively: "And although we never interfere in elections, we should not wish now to be misunderstood at a time when the best interests of society may be in danger."³²

But those who previously had feared the power of George had far more reason for dreading it after observing the demonstration in his honor on the Saturday night before election. Working men—variously estimated as numbering as many as sixty thousand and as few as twenty thousand—without uniforms, without brass bands, without the usual political trappings, but carrying torches and trades union banners and transparencies—paraded through the cold and soaking rain, holding their rhythm to their own chant: "George! George! Hen-ry George!", "Hi! Ho! the leeches—must—go!" or "George! George! Vote for George!"³³

No "reds" these, but hard-working men, endeavoring through the peaceful method of the ballot to bring about better conditions. And as they marched by their candidate, standing in the small wooden building that was then the reviewing stand in Union Square, they gave voice to one continuing cheer of salutation that lasted during the two hours of their passing.

Monsignor Preston's letter had been given to the papers, and on the

³¹ "The George-Hewitt," *op. cit.*, p. 129.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

morning following the parade, the Sunday before Election Day,³⁴ it was distributed at Church doors and made the subject of sermons. Thundered from Catholic pulpits, the denunciation of Henry George and his evil work had great weight.

Indeed what chance had a poor man, with unorganized followers, against the powerful Church, the rich conservative group backing the Republican candidate, and the almost invincible Democratic party machine? What chance had he at the polls? Although for long years he had been endeavoring to establish it, there was as yet no secret Australian ballot. The whole voting system was slipshod and conducive to fraud and it was a common practice for the unscrupulous to sell their votes several times over to one or other of the "machines." Under the election rulings, each party had not only to print its own ballots and distribute them to voters but it had to supply its own booth outside each polling place in every election district. This made for heavy expense and put the new, unorganized party under cruel disadvantage. The counting of the votes proceeded as carelessly as the voting. The ballot boxes were opened and the ballots counted in piles on a table. How easy for those bits of paper to travel from one pile to another!

The George men were desperate over their own inefficiency. In some voting places there were no Henry George ballots. As best they could, the committee arranged to have watchers at the polls from opening till after counting time, but although it was not yet Greater New York there were very many places to watch, and it happened that some districts had no United Labor Party representation.

Early on election night, a Puerto Rican named Antonio Molina, one of the staunchest and most loyal of Georgists, called on Mrs. George. He was in a state bordering on frenzy. From his dark blazing eyes tears of anger streamed as he told how he had been watcher at a polling place. There he had seen some twenty ballots "for the Prophet" counted as having been cast for Hewitt. Out-numbered by ward politicians, Molina had been helpless. Unfortunately this was not an isolated case; as Gustavus Myers has related:

On Election day groups of Tammany repeaters . . . filled the ballot boxes with fraudulent votes. . . . But the vote of the labor forces was so overwhelming, that even piles of fraudulent votes could not suffice to overcome it. One final result was left. This was to count out Henry George by grossly tampering with the election returns and misrepresenting them. And this is precisely what was done, if the testimony of numerous eye-witnesses is to be believed. The Labor Party, it is quite clear, was deliberately

³⁴ Oct. 31, 1886.

cheated out of an election won in the teeth of the severest and most corrupt opposition.³⁵

Henry F. Pringle recounts:

Frederick P. House, a Republican who became a city magistrate and who watched the 1886 campaign, left a memorandum before he died, stating that he had "always felt certain that Henry George won."³⁶

Says Charles Edward Russell:

Such election laws as we had in those days were loose and gave every loop-hole for manipulation. . . . Anything was a ballot that was found in the carelessly-guarded boxes. Registration was haphazard; repeaters were always handy when needed. . . . When the last vote had been deposited that day, Henry George was elected Mayor of New York. In the next three hours he was deprived of his victory by the simple process of manipulating the returns. Twelve years later Richard Croker, speaking to an intimate friend, admitted the manipulation. His version of it was simple but sufficient.

"Of course," said he, "they could not allow a man like Henry George to be mayor of New York. It would upset all their arrangements."³⁷

And on that 2nd of November, when the polls opened at six o'clock in the morning and closed at four in the afternoon, the official vote was:

90,552 for Abram S. Hewitt

68,110 for Henry George

60,135 for Theodore Roosevelt

The next morning the defeated candidate was back at his office at the Henry George Publishing Company. "I shall buy a bottle of ink and some pens and again go to writing,"³⁸ he announced cheerily to a *Sun* reporter.

Letters of congratulation on the size of his vote came from all over the world, and a crowded meeting was held in celebration at Cooper Union.³⁹ In his speech at this gathering, George demanded the Australian ballot system for the United States. He had written articles urging its adoption as far back as 1871, but now he introduced it actively into American politics and continued subsequently to hammer at it on every fit occasion until it was adopted.

The press gave much space to the discussion of the campaign and election. *The New York Times* said the George vote surprised even those who did not make the common mistake of declaring his following to be made up of cranks and Anarchists.⁴⁰

³⁵ "History of Great American Fortunes" (1909), New York, The Modern Library Inc., 1936, p. 358.

³⁶ "Theodore Roosevelt, a Biography," New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1931, p. 114.

³⁷ "Bare Hands and Stone Walls," New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933, p. 47.

³⁸ Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 482.

³⁹ Nov. 6, 1886.

⁴⁰ Nov. 4, 1886.

The Baltimore Sun remarked:

When we remember that he was not well known in the politics of the city, having been principally before the public as a writer upon economic subjects as related to the labor element, and that the machinery of both the old parties was against him, to say nothing of Wall Street and property interests generally, it is remarkable that he should have succeeded in bringing to the polls nearly sixty-eight thousand supporters.⁴¹

The New York World commented:

It is an extraordinary thing for a man without political backing, without a machine, without money or newspaper support, and without any logical, fixed, practical principles to have polled 67,000 votes for Mayor of this city. It was something that no man has ever done before, and the achievement carries with it a great compliment to the integrity of Mr. George's character and to the aim of his life. Mr. George's energy in the canvass has been almost phenomenal, and his capacity for leadership must henceforth be admitted to be equal to his ability in purely intellectual work.⁴²

It was Henry George himself who had sounded the keynote of his "defeat," when, late on Election night, he spoke to the group of tired and disheartened men collected at headquarters, bitter in their disappointment over failure and despairing ever of winning against graft and injustice; it was the vanquished contestant himself who gave them courage:

Friends and Brothers: I am prouder tonight in your greeting, in your support, in your friendship, in the devotion to a great cause that you rendered to me as an exponent of your principles, than I would be if, by ordinary methods, I held in my hand the official returns making me President of the United States.

I congratulate you tonight upon the victory we have won. . . . I did not accept your candidacy for the office nor did you nominate me for the office. What we sought was to bring principle into American politics. . . . The future is ours. This is the Bunker Hill. We have been driven back as the Continental troops were driven back from Bunker Hill. If they won no technical victory, they did win a victory that echoed round the world and still rings. They won a victory that made this republic a reality, and thank God, men of New York, we in this fight have won a victory that makes the true republic of the future certain. We have lit a fire that will never go out. We have begun a movement that, defeated, and defeated, and defeated, must still go on. All the great currents of our time, all the aspirations of the heart of man, all the new forces of our civilization are with us and for us. They never fail who die in a good cause. . . .⁴³

⁴¹ Quoted in *The New York Herald*, Nov. 6, 1886.

⁴² Nov. 3, 1886.

⁴³ "The George-Hewitt Campaign," *op. cit.*, pp. 169-70. Quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 481.