

But we are unworthy to be his disciples if we are satisfied merely to pay lip service to his memory. "Come with me," said Richard Cobden to John Bright, as he turned heart-stricken from a new-made grave,—“Come with me. There are in England women and children dying of hunger,—of hunger made by the laws; come with me and we will not rest till we repeal those laws.” So despite rotten boroughs, a hereditary aristocracy and vested interests which seemed all-powerful, the Corn Laws were repealed.

Yet, here in free America, most prosperous of nations, with boundless wealth and opportunities beyond the powers of the imagination—even here are women and children dying of hunger, of hunger made by the laws. To all here, to all in the wide world, we say—

“Come with us and we will not rest till we have repealed those laws.”

## What Henry George Taught

Address of Joseph Dana Miller at the Banquet of the Henry George Foundation, Sept. 3d, 1926.

IT requires a good deal of temerity to address a body such as this on the subject of “What Henry George Taught.” Most of you are as well informed as I am on the subject—better perhaps. But because there has been a recent tendency to emasculate or attenuate the doctrines of the Master, perhaps what I have to say may not be inappropriate to this occasion.

It is one of the misfortunes of our movement—inseparable perhaps because the method we propose for its adoption is to use the machinery of taxation—that the attention of our friends has been focussed on its obvious fiscal advantages. These have intrigued some of us into confining ourselves too greatly to the simplicity and attractiveness of its fiscal method while ignoring the end that is aimed at. This end is so tremendous in its social consequences that to treat it, as it has so often been treated, as a change in the method of taxation is to fail in impressing the minds of men with the true import of our message.

It is this too great emphasis laid upon the method of achieving our end rather than the end itself—this over-accentuation of the fiscal side of our programme—that led Robert Scott Moffatt in his work on Henry George to speak of “those who may not be prepared to believe that the ills of society are to be remedied by a change in the incidence of taxation.”

It is this over-emphasis on the taxation side of our proposals that has led our socialist friends, failing to apprehend its profounder implications, to reject it as “A middle class reform.”

It is because he early divined the danger that might overtake the movement that Lawson Purdy counselled with Henry George on the advisability of a separation in our preachments between the great purpose in view and Taxation per se.

Again it is because of this attenuation of our movement to a so-called Single Tax movement that the Commonwealth Land party, formerly the Single Tax party, was called into being with its more definite declaration of our aims and purposes. This was a natural and, as I take it, a wholesome reaction.

No one has spoken more strongly on this point than Henry George himself. Had we always borne in mind this truth, there would have been no occasion for the misunderstandings and the differences that have crept into our movement; these would not have appeared. What Mr. George says contains all the gospel of our teaching method, all the light we need to walk by.

Here is what Mr. George wrote:

“The reform we propose, like all true reforms, has both an ethical and an economic side. By ignoring the ethical side, and pushing our proposal merely as a reform of taxation, we could avoid the objections that arise from confounding ownership with possession and attributing to private property in land that security of use and improvement that can be had even better without it. All that we seek practically is the legal abolition, as fast as possible of taxes on the products and processes of labor, and the consequent concentration of taxation on land values irrespective of improvements. To put our proposals in this way would be to urge them merely as a matter of wise public expediency.

There are indeed many Single Tax men who do put our proposals in this way; who seeing the beauty of our plan from a fiscal standpoint do not concern themselves further. But to those who think as I do, the ethical is the most important side. Not only do we not wish to evade the question of private property in land, but to us it seems that the beneficent and far-reaching revolution we aim at is too great a thing to be accomplished by ‘intelligent self-interest,’ and can be carried by nothing less than the religious conscience.”

When Henry George had completed his great task, he wrote: “The truth I have endeavored to make plain will not find easy acceptance. If that were so, it would have been accepted long ago. But it will find friends—those who will work for it, live for it, if need be die for it.” Now I do not think anybody is willing to die for a change in the incidence of taxation. I think few of us would be willing to face the Grim Reaper before the appointed time merely for the sake of getting rid of the General Property Tax. And troublesome as the Income Tax is to many of you, I am quite sure you would rather continue to pay it than to avoid it by dying even though your death could furnish a splendid example. Evidently—quite evidently—Henry George had something very different in mind.

I think, and all of us here think, that what he referred to was his purpose to set free the earth for the use of mankind. He has said: “Do what you please, reform as you may, reduce taxes as you may, you cannot get rid of widespread poverty as long as the element on which and from which all men must live is the property of some men.” The system that makes private property of fixed portions of the planet, that shuts men out from the reservoir of the

earth, or charges men for permission to use it, was what he set out to destroy. He aimed at no mere change in taxation—he aimed to get the land for the people, and his method was to take the economic rent of land, through and by the present tax gatherers, through and by the machinery of taxation that he found conveniently at hand.

If there had been some other method than the use of the taxing machinery, depend upon it he would have adopted it and would never have referred to taxation at all. For what he sought was no reform in taxing methods, but the restoration to mankind of their right to the use of the earth.

And now we come to another matter that appears to be troubling our friends—whether this shall be a gradual process or whether it is possible for it to be done all at once. I do not know whether the “inevitableness of gradualness,” to adopt a happy phrase of James A. Robinson, is inescapable or not. But I do know this: It is a fatal weakness of any propaganda to stress, out of respect to the feelings of the timid or conservative, the slow and gradual approaches to its accomplishment. We bring a glowing message of hope to mankind. We promise them a vision of the New Jerusalem. But we add, “Stay, good people, do not be alarmed that we shall get to the promised land too soon. We propose to go step by step. It is true that the rent of land belongs to you, but any suddenness about taking it is not thinkable.” What sort of an impression do we create? Who is thrilled by it? Who is even convinced? What was Henry George’s reply to the question, “When would you put your system in operation?” His answer was: “Nine o’clock tomorrow morning.”

The stressing of the purely fiscal part of our programme has led us away from the spiritual essence of our teachings. The Hebrew prophets sought not merely the physical liberation of their people. They saw that their spiritual liberation was bound up with their material freedom. In the same way it was something more than the unjust distribution of wealth that was the impelling force back of the writing of *Progress and Poverty* and the great task Henry George had set himself. He saw, and we may see it, too, that the old prophecy is the true one that links the freedom of the spirit with the absence of earthly tyranny and oppression. Let us in the language of the poet William Blake find something that may fittingly inspire us:

“I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall the sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In all this green and pleasant land.”

Do not all of us know that we have seen a star? Henry George has shown it to us. And again the lines of another poet occur to me—Tennyson this time:

“I saw a star, and there behind the star  
I saw the spiritual city and all its spires.”

Can we not see it, too? And it is not by limiting our propaganda to taxation, or by timid or hesitating proposals that we shall lay the foundations of that spiritual city.

We need not concern ourselves with the probable course of this movement. Ours the task to deliver the message, knowing no compromise, preaching the full doctrine without jot or tittle of qualification. The rest is in the lap of the gods.

Now I want to strike a note of hope. We are met to celebrate the birthday of a man who wrote a book nearly fifty years ago. During those fifty years perhaps thirty thousand books on political economy have been written and published. Most all of these have been consigned to the dustbin of oblivion. This one book alone survives. We have heard a great deal of the Pittsburgh Plan today, yet in New York we take more economic rent than is taken in that city or any other in the United States. That is due to the influence of Henry George and in great degree to administrative measures fathered by those who derived their inspiration from the work written by an humble California printer. Nearly ten thousand miles from where we are seated, the Federal capital of Australia, Canberra, has adopted the system taught in that book. Henry George has directed changes in the fiscal systems of centers of industry and population as widely separated as New York and Sydney. Is there anywhere in any language a book whose influence in so short a time has girdled the globe?

I know the social effects of these partial applications have been very small. I know the arguments used to put them over have been purely fiscal ones. But never mind that now. They are the thoughts of Henry George made articulate in municipal legislation. And I hope and trust that the Henry George Foundation organized here today will carry this great message further, abating nothing of its implications, and bringing to the men and women of our land the great truth of their inalienable right to the resources of the earth.

## For Local Option in Taxation in Pennsylvania

Resolution presented by Harold Sudell and adopted  
unanimously Sept. 4th, 1926.

The following resolution addressed to Hon. Franklin Spencer Edmonds, Chairman of the Pennsylvania State Tax Commission, was presented to the delegates on Saturday, the last day of the sessions, after submission to the Resolution Committee, and favorably reported by them.

The Henry George Congress assembled in Philadelphia, September 2, 3, and 4 to celebrate the 87th birthday of the author of “*Progress and Poverty*,” resolves:

That we respectfully ask the Pennsylvania Tax Commission to incorporate in their coming report on taxation a recommendation that the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania be given local option or home rule in taxation as suggested by Harold Sudell in his letter to you under date of November 14th, 1925.

We commend your Committee for the recommendation that real estate now exempt from taxation be taxed on the land value, and only the improvements be exempted.