

The AMERICAN JOURNAL of ECONOMICS and SOCIOLOGY

Published QUARTERLY in the interest of constructive synthesis in the social sciences, under grants from the Francis Neilson Fund and the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation.

VOLUME 25

JULY, 1966

NUMBER 3

A New Hearing for Henry George?

By CHARLES A. BARKER

ALTHOUGH THIS WORK¹ did not take long to write—three years, part time, Dr. Cord tells us—the author's thinking began more than a decade ago, while he was lecturing on "Henry George and His Critics" at the Henry George School in New York. From first to last, underlying all the particularities of the argument, the author is committed to the (I think) sound proposition that Henry George has not been justly appreciated by intellectuals, and especially not by academic men.

There have been waves of partial appreciation. This was true in George's lifetime; it became true again during the later years of the Progressive era, in the persons and writings of Gustavus Myers, Benjamin De Witt, Peter A. Speck, Arthur N. Young, and others; and there occurred another rise around 1930, when estimations of Henry George were offered by such various scholars as Vernon Louis Parrington, John Dewey, Harry Gunnison Brown, Glenn Hoover, and George Geiger.

Though ordinarily the *argumentum ad hominem* is something to be avoided, in this case I had better say that my own *Henry George*² of eleven years ago enters Dr. Cord's calculations. He finds merit in the book, and also finds academic anemia, "a paucity of evaluation of the single tax idea. Is Barker for it or against it? What reservations does he have?" This is more than a personal question, which is my own justification for quoting it. If I understand Dr. Cord's problem—"Dreamer or Realist?"—it is to protest that Henry George's single-tax "remedy" was and is essentially right, and that scholars who do not see and acknowledge this cannot come

¹ *Henry George: Dreamer or Realist?* By Steven B. Cord. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965. 272 pp., index, biblio., \$6.

² [New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.—Ed.]

sympathetically, logically, and deeply, to terms with the man, his ideas, and the movement he generated.

Such a sense of intellectual injustice, done over the years by economists and historians principally, to a grand spokesman for social justice, has impelled Dr. Cord to do much the best job which has ever been done to identify Henry George's American critics, and then examine them for their adverse, middling, and friendly comment, and arrange them in categories according to time and type. He has little to say, and practically nothing to add, in respect of English, continental European, and antipodean comment. He by no means blinks the hard finding that the tougher-minded economists of two or three generations, Seligman and others of early twentieth-century creativity in our universities, and the Keynesians of thirty years later, came up either with maximum resistance, or with maximum disregard for George. The arguments and counter-arguments are amply reproduced.

The element in the argument which sticks with me is the attribution of frailty to scholars who—all the way up the scale to Dewey—have withheld a latter-day vote on George's program of taxation. To speak by a personal analogy: I once wrote on eighteenth-century colonial-assembly resistance to British authority in America. No one asked (but conceivably someone might have), was the author of that book for or against colonial autonomy? I admired these assemblies: I paid them the only compliment I had to pay, some years of my life in studying them. What were my reservations? Nothing essential, in respect of events of the 1750s and the 1760s, though I certainly did find the assembly of Maryland to have been sometimes short-sighted, and often all too "human." Is not colonial autonomy a perennially good idea? Indeed yes, while perennially we have colonies.

Latter-day scholarship on Henry George, it seems to me, pays honor to a good man and—let's use approving words which seem truthful—to a gifted, logical, informed, dedicated, and pure man, when it identifies Henry George with convictions and currents which have proved bigger than his tax program of 1888 and after. I cannot vote for colonial assemblies today, nor can I vote against them. I do not vote for or against land-value taxation until and unless it turns up on my ballot. And, since the invitation to write this review was perhaps a kind of dare from the present journal, and since accepting the invitation was a kind of acceptance, I offer a counter-challenge. In 1966 would not Georgists do well to put new stress on the second main branch of their Georgism? Land-value taxation in George's thought had a Siamese-twin conviction: free trade, the right of all men to equal access, under law, to the resources of earth. Is not the international,

one-world part of George's message, now the more important part—for today's dreamers and realists, both, of Henry George inspiration and loyalty?

The Johns Hopkins University

Freedom, the Key to Peace

FREEDOM IN ASIA is, indeed, the key to world peace. For the end of communism in Asia will eventually bring about the collapse of communism everywhere. But, I submit, freedom, confined to one or another part of the world, does not provide the complete answer.

Peace, in our days, requires freedom everywhere and more particularly in all those countries which, owing to their actual or potential technological maturity, are able to forge the weapons of absolute destruction. The threat to peace and even survival does not come, indeed, from the inanimate tools of warfare, however fearsome. It comes from unbridled and powerthirsty men, unrestrained by any moral law and caught beyond return in the dilemma of expanding or perishing. The problem of peace is, therefore, not that of abolishing or controlling inanimate weapons, but that of checking the power of governments capable of dragging mankind down the road of its doom. The key to world peace is not the non-proliferation of certain engines of destruction, however awesome, but the proliferation of freedom under law.

If free men will recognize this simple but basic truth, they will come to establish their policies on the clear and solid proposition that, in this nuclear age, peace and totalitarian communism are incompatible. Then, and only then, will the free nations begin to assert themselves to the full.

Parochialism is one of the bad habits of thinking among free men. When the mainstay of the free world, American power, gets committed in Asia, Western Europe is prone to become jittery. Free men must learn that in the struggle against communism there are many battlefields but only one war, and that victory or defeat anywhere is bound to affect all for good or ill. This is how the war in Vietnam must be viewed. Its outcome will be felt by all free men—a good enough reason to help or at least abstain from obstructing the heroic effort of those who do the actual fighting.

A second bad habit is *false realism*. Differentiation is alongside polycentrism one of the pet concepts of both theoreticians and practitioners in the free world. We now have various grades of good and bad, tolerable, evolving and dangerous Communists and Communist regimes. Soviet Russia is depicted as bland and unventuresome, the tough-speaking Red Chinese as warlike. And these hasty judgments prompt some to appease or