



**THE ANNOTATED WORKS OF HENRY GEORGE:  
SOCIAL PROBLEMS & THE CONDITION OF LABOR Vol III  
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This is the first fully annotated edition of *Social Problems* (1883) and *The Condition of Labor* (1891), two important works by one of America's most eminent social economists.

*Social Problems* grew out of a series of articles Henry George (1839-1897) published in Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* entitled, "Problems of Our Times." In his passionate, journalistic style, George described in graphic detail the horrific conditions facing large sections of the American people and described how, by returning to first principles, society could remedy these conditions for current and future generations.

*The Condition of Labor* takes the form of an open letter to Pope Leo XIII responding to the pontiff's famous encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. Echoing the religious themes dominant throughout all of his works, George argued that poverty is not part of God's natural order and therefore could be eradicated through political action.

Both *Social Problems* and *The Condition of Labor* demonstrate George's deep commitment to the reconciliation of ethics and economics in a way that makes the world richer ethically and better off economically. ■

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## A LITTLE GLASGOW PERSPECTIVE

By John Bell

When I heard the other day that the government of New Zealand had banned home ownership to foreign buyers living abroad, I felt like shouting Hallelujah. Such a move has been a long time coming and it's something which other nations might emulate. Because not just in Auckland, but in London, Toronto, New York, even Glasgow, home ownership is increasingly passing from people who want to live in the city and pay a reasonable rent or mortgage to people who see a house in an urban location as an investment.

Though the doors might never be opened and the lights never go on, the property will soar in value. In Auckland they claim that house prices have increased by 75% in the last four years.

Meanwhile in such cities, homelessness increases, and people – like an old friend of mine in Amsterdam – are told that the property they have rented for years is going to be 'renovated'. So they are offered alternative accommodation; in my friend's case in a village 10 kilometres away from the neighbourhood in which she had lived all her life.

Every city needs a range of economic drivers; but when you have a surfeit of absentee landlords, other things tend to happen: local shops may close because fewer people patronise the stores. What should be neighbourhoods with a concern for the common good become dormitories for the affluent who have little reason to care for local amenity.

So some blind people I meet, who know the area well, are constantly walking into hedges. These hedges are in the front gardens of Glasgow tenements where the absentee owners fail to ensure that they or their tenants keep the pavements clear of obstruction.

Where there is a preponderance of non domiciled owners, it should, among other things, fuel both the prayer life and the politics of believing people. For while the Bible may begin in a garden, how to live comfortably and affably in a crowded city gradually becomes a major concern. A gracious encouragement in respect of civic pride is found in an injunction in the Hebrew Scriptures that citizens should:

*'seek the welfare of the city,  
for on its welfare, your own depends.'* (Jer 29:7)

This is what Jesus did, who not only prayed for the city and questioned local injustices, but also wept for it because it didn't recognise what made for peace.

As long as the growth of non domiciled ownership causes concern for local people, then those in civic authority might ponder whether the predations of absentee landlords guarantee or threaten the city's welfare and its peace. ■

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