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The People and The Land

IT is taking the world a long while to realize the irrefutable truths that lie in the principles enunciated by Henry George, but there are signs that the pace is quickening. The Conference that is meeting in Edinburgh this week, therefore, will be listened to with a patience which was not particularly discernable when the author of "Progress and Poverty" was himself alive. It is a great opportunity to make a worth-while contribution towards the solution of the international problems of today, and the Conference president, the Hon. Charles O'Connor Hennessy, of New York, gave a brilliant lead yesterday in his address from the chair. It seems a remarkable thing that our creed in land values and free trade should be taken from the most keenly protectionist country in the world, but there is really no paradox in it. The fact of the matter is that America's tariff policy is no longer held to be an unalloyed asset. It is becoming unwieldy and burdensome, a bit of a Frankenstein, and though America might never officially suggest the abolition of all barriers, she might not break her heart if abolition were forced upon her. To make America—and the world—swallow the complete pill of the taxation of land values may not be so easy, however. But by all laws of equity it must come to pass some day. There is nothing but the old feudal respect for the landed proprietor to say against it; there is certainly no argument in logic with which to defend the present system. It is of some moment to remember that both Labor and Liberals in this country are pledged to the taxation of land values. They may not achieve the full reform at the moment, but they would be failing in their faith if they did not use their chances to educate the people a little more towards this great ideal.

EDITORIAL, EDINBURGH *Evening News*.

Single Tax After Fifty Years

HALF a century has elapsed since a San Francisco man, a printer at the case, who occasionally tried his hand at editing, put forth a book on the land question, with the paradoxical title, "Progress and Poverty." The name of Henry George at that time was little known. He had written somewhat for obscure publications, and occasionally had spoken in meetings of laboring men. But neither as author nor orator had he attained any wide reputation. He had neither money nor influence wherewith to force his book upon the attention of the public. Indeed, when he endeavored to obtain its publication, he found publishers doubtful of the value of a work on economics, and unwilling to issue it unless he would pay the cost of making the plates. After a prolonged search he found a man willing to assist him in meeting the latter essential, but it is interesting now to recall the fact that so slight were the means with which the two embarked upon the undertaking that the author himself went back to the case and stick and set a very considerable portion of his own book. It was not long after he thus turned again to the tools of his trade that his name as an economist and propagandist was known in every quarter of the globe; more than 3,000,000 copies of his book had been issued, and it was translated into almost every known tongue. And last Monday, after the lapse of fifty years, Single Taxers from all parts of the world met at Edinburgh to celebrate this semi-centenary and to honor the name of Henry George.

Perhaps one hears less today about the Single Tax than one did when such magnificent propagandists as Tom L. Johnson, Louis F. Post and Henry George himself were preaching it in and out of season. But the reason why its praises are no longer heard over the clamor of various schools of economists is that the measure of truth in it has become accepted as a commonplace of economics, and it is no longer necessary to beat the tom-tom in order to call attention to it.

More and more the justice of taking for the public a considerable share of the unearned increment attaching to real estate as population grows is being accepted, although it is only in a comparatively few special colonies that the full measure of the Single Tax is applied, and the whole profit taken out of real estate speculation. Everywhere, however, the community recognizes the fact that its growth confers upon the owners of land within its borders profits which they have had but the slightest share in earning, and an increasing proportion of those profits is being taken for public uses.

Thoroughgoing Single Taxers hold that the taking of this entire increment would make it unnecessary to exact any other taxation whatsoever; would free industry from the burden of taxation; would do away with tariffs, and the international complications they produce; would

eliminate the economic causes of war, and, by preventing the holding of land out of employment for speculation and profit, would stimulate agriculture and home building, and thereby decrease unemployment. It is a glowing tribute to the permanence of an idea that after fifty years the publication of this book should be celebrated by a gathering of 600 Single Taxers, representing twenty-three different countries, in the Scottish capital some 6000 miles from the spot where the doctrine of single taxation first had its birth.

The impression made by Henry George upon the consciousness of mankind is a striking illustration of the power of thought, backed by a good purpose. He never stopped urging acceptance of his doctrine upon men of the most widely separated nationalities, and of every class of society. Nor was he in any sense a man of one idea, but he gave as liberally of his strength and his ability to the interest of good government and human liberty as he did to the agitation of the Single Tax. When, in the latter days of the nineteenth century, New York City seemed confronted with a peculiar menace of evil government, Henry George was drafted to lead the forces in opposition to Tammany. Warned that it might mean the sacrifice of his life, he nevertheless undertook the task. The warning was but too well founded, and like a soldier on the battle field he gave his life to his cause. That his followers are animated to so great an extent by a like devotion to the economic panacea which he preached shows impressively the enduring power of a devoted and self-sacrificing ideal.

—*Christian Science Monitor.*

All Wars Alike

THEY talk of Crusades, said Arnold, stopping to face the young man. They talk of sending hundreds of thousands of Christian men to die every death under God's sun in Palestine—for what? To plant good that good may grow? They go for none of these things. The sign in their breasts is a cross, the thought of their hearts is the thought of all your ruthless race—to take from others and add to your own stores; to take land, wealth, humanity, life, everything that can be taken from conquered man before he is left naked to die.

FRANCIS MARION CRAWFORD'S *Via Crucis*.

"WHEN I sit and warm my hands, as best I may, at the little heap of embers that is now political economy, I cannot but contrast its dying glow with the vainglorious and triumphant science that once it was."

—STEPHEN LEACOCK, Professor of Political Economy.

BEFORE an effectual renovation can take place we must efface the abuse which has grown up out of the transition from the feudal to the more modern state—the abuse of land being held as absolute property.—

—HARRIET MARTINEAU.

Extracts from Opening Address at the Edinburgh Conference by Charles O'Connor Hennessy

IT was fifty years ago that Henry George first revealed the insidious forces and tendencies that seemed to him to threaten the progress of any civilization which aims at the elevation and happiness of the human family. At the very heart of the way of the life of the organized peoples of the world he found ominous signs of the canker of decay. He demonstrated the cause and proposed the cure for what was and is the matter with the world. He vividly delineated the enigma of the persistence of poverty amid increased and increasing wealth. Where civilization was manifesting itself in vast accumulations in the hands of individuals, in great institutions devoted to learning or to religion, in stores of the book knowledge of the ages, in the progress of the arts and sciences, in the inventions and discoveries designed to magnify the effectiveness of labor, to improve communication and facilitate co-operation between peoples, to lighten toil and brighten human lives—there, where these things were most in evidence, he pointed to the anomaly of millions of people in every country struggling for a living, or steeped in degrading poverty. To the widespread social and economic dislocation which he revealed, it was not difficult to trace the unspeakable slums of great cities, the warfare of classes, the prevalence of vice, crime and preventable disease, as well as most of the ills, material and spiritual—even unto the curse of War—from which the world has suffered and is suffering.

We are here from many countries to bear witness that a half-century after the first appearance of Henry George's fearful diagnosis of a vast social disease, the symptoms still persist. The cure remains to be applied. The social anatomist who today would strike below the surface of the body of human society as it exists in all civilized countries, must find there a conflict of forces that may well be taken to foreshadow disintegration and disaster to the social fabric. As in 1879, when this book was written, we can discern widespread social unrest in the world. Industrial depression and unemployment are common to many countries, and even in the nominally "prosperous" United States great numbers live in poverty, or close to its border line, and remedies for unemployment are now being sought in still more restrictive immigration laws and in prohibitive tariff taxes.

Henry George predicted that the enormous increase in the power to produce wealth which had marked his century, due to invention and discovery and the improvement of communications, would continue to go on with accelerating ratio. This has come true to an enormous extent in all so-called civilized countries—most especially in the United States of America. But without the estab-