

The Henry George News

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The First Seventy-five Years

By ROBERT CLANCY

ONE night in March, 1879, a man of forty laid down his pen, fell on his knees and wept. He had just finished writing a book in fulfillment of a secret vow.

The man was Henry George and the book was *Progress and Poverty*. The vow, nurtured for ten years, had been that he would not rest until he had found the cause—and if possible, the cure—of involuntary poverty. Did the young man who made that vow realize what a tremendous undertaking it was going to be?

Frazer only wanted to find out the origin of the King of the Woods and was led on a world-wide hunt resulting in the monumental *Golden Bough*. Dante only wanted to climb a mountain and had to go through hell, purgatory and paradise. Henry George "only" wanted the remedy for poverty—and his quest led him to probe and probe farther and farther until he had touched the very heart of the human condition.

The First Twenty-Five Years

Henry George, on completing *Progress and Poverty*, printed an author's edition of 500 and sent a copy to his father with this prophecy: "It will ultimately be considered a great book, will be published in both hemispheres, and be translated into different languages. This I know . . ."

How did he know? What inner awareness revealed the future of his book?

It took time for *Progress and Poverty* to catch on. For long months after his author's edition, he tasted the bitter tea of delay and discouragement. Eventually it was published by D. Appleton in New York. For more months it was ridiculed and neglected—but finally it caught on, and within a few years George's prophecy about the book was fulfilled.

Soon the author, now world famous, was making lecture trips throughout the world, stirring people, sparking up a movement to forward the ideas contained in *Progress and Poverty*. George created a sensation everywhere he went and with everything he did, whether it was making a speech, writing a book, running for mayor or answering a critic.

This went on for eighteen packed years—then the illustrious and beloved Henry George died. But the momentum continued, and in a preface to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of *Progress and Poverty*, Henry George, Jr., could write: "A conservative estimate is that, embracing all forms and all languages, more than two million copies of *Progress and Poverty* have been printed to date."

The Second Twenty-Five Years

The single tax movement spurred by *Progress and Poverty* was on the march and seemed to be moving forward on many fronts. New York City's tax department made a distinction between land and improvements. Pittsburgh and Scranton taxed its land at twice the rate of its improvements. Single tax "enclaves" sprang up. Cleveland's best mayor, Tom L. Johnson, and many of his co-workers, were staunch Georgists.

There was a strong single tax nucleus in Congress. President Wilson filled his cabinet with Georgists and near-Georgists. Joseph Fels, the millionaire soap manufacturer, launched systematic state-by-state campaigns to put over the single tax. Things were humming abroad, too. In England, Winston Churchill, Lloyd George and other top statesmen, were working determinedly for a national land valuation. Though defeated by the lords, they tried again. In Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Denmark and elsewhere, advances in land value taxation were made. Tolstoy in Russia, Sun Yat Sen in China and other world figures were preaching Henry George.

Then . . . what happened?

Was it World War I? Was it that the direct-action approach had reached its limit? Was it that other beguiling philosophies and newer "isms" were crowding the single tax off the stage?

Whatever it was, by the 1920's the tide had reached low ebb.

Just a moment. We are talking about *Progress and Poverty*—so let us look around. Scarcely a copy in sight. In the raucous 1920's the book was—out of print. Yes; while heaven was being stormed, the root of the movement was being neglected, almost forgotten. Is this not one of the reasons why the movement withered?

Then came 1929—the fiftieth anniversary of *Progress and Poverty*—the year that will be remembered forever as the year of The Crash. It was a time not to forget *Progress and Poverty*.

The Third Twenty-Five Years

The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, formed in 1925, brought out a fiftieth anniversary edition of the book. *Progress and Poverty* was in print again! Copies were sent to numbers of prominent persons and many fine testimonials were received.

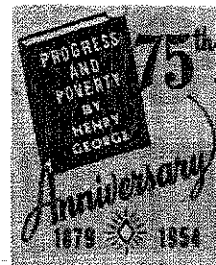
The depression widened and deepened. The air was filled with many new and strange voices. Why didn't *Progress and Poverty* get more of a hearing in those dark days when people were ready to listen to anything? Why didn't it receive more serious consideration by the government which was ready to take almost any action that might alleviate conditions?

The answer is not far to seek. "How can I, except some man should guide me?" There were simply not enough people around who understood enough to put it across to the rest of the people.

But if the single tax wasn't put across, one thing did happen which gave a new life to the George idea. That was the founding of the Henry George School of Social Science in 1932 by Oscar H. Geiger.

With the new edition of *Progress and Poverty* and with the new school which gathered people together to really study that book, a new way was opened up.

People listened—studied—became converted—explained it to others. A vehicle had been



"Will it at length prevail? Ultimately, yes. But in our own times, or in times of which any memory of us remains, who shall say?"—Henry George, in "Progress and Poverty."

developed on which to move forward. There were problems ahead—there were setbacks. But the educational work moved forward, more and more people became involved, it spread far and wide.

Other editions of *Progress and Poverty* appeared here (Modern Library, Classics Club) and abroad. New translations were made and printed. The circulation picked up. It was not as spectacular as in George's day—but the roots went deeper.

World War II broke out in the year—on the very day—of the 100th anniversary of Henry George's birth—September 2, 1939. The Prophet of Civilization was destined to have some significant anniversaries!

During the war the work ebbed as it had done during the first war. But at the war's end it picked up again. The movement was not shattered this time! *Progress and Poverty* was there this time! And the study of it kept moving forward—keeps moving forward.

It is now 1954—seventy-five years after the book was written. The Henry George School movement, based on the study of *Progress and Poverty*, keeps going with undiminished vigor, through stress and strain, heartache and back-break. New people and new ideas are coming along and grouping themselves around the central core of the Georgist philosophy.

The issue of communism is uppermost in the public mind today. More and more people are coming to the Georgist philosophy as not only the answer but the effective antidote to communism; because it stirs up a conviction and a faith in freedom that matches the fanaticism of Communists. But communism, though it is very much around today, hasn't any future. The Georgist philosophy has.

If only one could look to see what the next seventy-five years will be like! or even the next twenty-five!

There is a tempting comparison I'd like to make:—Seventy-five years after the promulgation of the Sermon on the Mount, the spread of Christianity had struck a rather steady stride. The heroic period of the Apostles lay behind. There seemed to be no giants left—but almost imperceptibly new converts were being added, issues were being met and decided, new conditions and ideas were being assimilated—and the way was being paved for many more giants as well as ordinary mortals. Christianity's best days still lay ahead. I make so bold as to say the same for the new world that lies within the pages of *Progress and Poverty*.

OVER

APPRECIATIONS OF HENRY GEORGE

Newton D. Baker—I am inclined to believe that no writer of our times has had a more profound influence upon the thinking of the world (than Henry George).

Louis Bromfield—I am in complete agreement with the basic philosophy of Henry George. As the world advances, the recognition of this philosophy becomes increasingly evident and important.

Louis D. Brandeis—I find it very difficult to disagree with the principles of Henry George.

Nicholas Murray Butler—It may be said at once that so far as Henry George pointed to privilege as unbecoming, an unfair and indeed disastrous accompaniment to progress, his teaching has passed into economic theory everywhere.

Clarence Darrow—Henry George wrote a profound book, the first book on political economy that men may read; the first and perhaps the last that was readable to plain, ordinary men.

John Dewey—It would require less than the fingers of the two hands to enumerate those who, from Plato down, rank with Henry George among the world's social philosophers.

Albert Einstein—Men like Henry George are rare, unfortunately. One cannot imagine a more beautiful combination of intellectual keenness, artistic form, and fervent love of justice.

Dwight D. Eisenhower voted for Henry George for the Hall of Fame in 1950.

Henry Ford—We ought to tax all idle land the way Henry George said—tax it heavily, so that its owners would have to make it productive.

Aldous Huxley (Foreword to *Brave New World*)—If I were now to rewrite the book, I would offer a third alternative . . . the possibility of sanity . . . Economics would be decentralist and Henry Georgian.

Helen Keller—Who reads shall find in Henry George's philosophy a rare beauty and power of inspiration, and a splendid faith in the essential nobility of human nature.

John Kieran—No one should be allowed to speak above a whisper or write more than ten words on the general subject (economics) unless he has read and digested *Progress and Poverty*.

Raymond Moley—The basic assumptions of Henry George are sound. Nothing could be more useful than to bring these fundamentals to the attention of perplexed Americans.

Franklin D. Roosevelt—Henry George was one of the really great thinkers produced by our country . . . I wish his writings were better known and more clearly understood.

Samuel Seabury—To very few of the children of men is it given to act the part of a great teacher who makes an outstanding contribution . . . This Henry George did.

Philip Snowden—There never was a time when the need was greater than it is today for the application of the philosophy and principles of Henry George.

Sun Yat Sen—I intend to devote my future to the promotion of the welfare of the Chinese people as a people. The teachings of Henry George will be the basis of our program of reform.

Dorothy Thompson—Henry George is the only economist I ever read with whom I could find no fault.

Leo Tolstoy—People do not argue with the teaching of George; they simply do not know it. He who becomes acquainted with it cannot but agree.

Woodrow Wilson—The country needs a new and sincere thought in politics, coherently, distinctly and boldly uttered by men who are sure of their ground. The power of men like Henry George seems to me to mean that.

PROGRESS AND POVERTY

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSE OF INDUSTRIAL DEPRESSIONS AND OF INCREASE OF WANT WITH INCREASE OF WEALTH

THE REMEDY

BY

HENRY GEORGE

Author of "The Science of Political Economy," "Protection or Free Trade?" "Social Problems," "A Perplexed Philosopher," "The Condition of Labor," "The Land Question," "Property in Land," etc.

PRESS OPINIONS

From the 10th edition—1882

NEW YORK TRIBUNE
The received principles of political economy are here submitted to a fresh examination by a courageous thinker, who, though familiar with the learning of the books, follows the conclusions of his own reasoning rather than the instructions of eminent teachers.

NEW YORK HERALD
"Progress and Poverty" is not merely the most original, the most striking and important contribution which political economy has yet received from America, but it is not too much to say that in these respects it has had no equal since the publication of "The Wealth of Nations," by Adam Smith, a century ago, or, at least, since Malthus formulated his theory of population and Ricardo his theory of rent. A more aggressive, not to say audacious, book was never written.

POPULAR SCIENCE MONTHLY
One of the most important contributions yet made to economic literature. It is full of vital thought, is written with earnestness and power, and is a work hard to lay down when once begun.

NEW YORK SUN
Let us say, at the outset, that this is not a work to be brushed aside with lofty indifference or cool disdain. It is not the production of a visionary or a scoldist, of a meagerly equipped or ill-regulated mind. The writer has brought to his undertaking a comprehensive knowledge of the data and principles of science, and his skill in exposition and illustration attests a broad acquaintance with history and literature. His book must be accounted the first adequate presentation in the English language of that new economy which has found powerful champions in the German universities, and which aims at a radical transformation of the science formulated by Adam Smith, Ricardo, and J. S. Mill. Few books have, in recent years, proceeded from any American pen which have more plainly borne the marks of wide learning and strenuous thought, or which have brought to the expounding of a serious theme a happier faculty of elucidation.

THE NATION
Although we have to consider Mr. George's positions essentially unsound, we find many admirable passages, and a notable spirit of candor pervading his work. The style is for the most part engaging, and often eloquent. So far from being a work of communistic tendencies, the reader will find in it arguments to overthrow nearly all the communist theories of the present day.

NEW YORK EVENING MAIL
A book that can neither be ignored, nor sneered down, nor laughed down.

PHILADELPHIA EVENING STAR
Mr. George has written a book which is not only a bold and exhaustive examination of the whole question of our modern civilization, but which charms as from a style which rivals the genius of Newman and Macaulay. We are not surprised to know that it has excited more attention among thinking men in Europe and America than any book since Mill's "Essay on Liberty" and Buckle's "History of Civilization."

CHICAGO TRIBUNE
This book is welcome because it will cause a discussion of a subject the magnitude and importance of which none will deny; because it is a bold and frank exposition of theories now forcing themselves upon public notice; because the writer is in earnest, and because he is also original.

WASHINGTON CRITIC
We do not hesitate to pronounce this one of the greatest books yet contributed to the literature of political economy, and one which no public man can afford to omit reading. It is the work of a well-trained mind, possessing thorough literary culture. Vigor and clearness of thought are impressed upon every page, but what is most striking is the originality and boldness of the views advanced, and the radical character of the remedy proposed. Though in respect to property in land Mr. George proposes a very radical change, going even further than John Stuart Mill, yet he supports his proposition with such powerful reasoning and such a formidable array of facts that he compels respectful hearing. The reception, given to the book by the press is, in view of its radical character, something phenomenal, and best proves its power.

LONDON ECONOMIST
The chapter describing the manner in which civilization is exposed to danger through the increase of the inequality of wealth is powerful, graphic, and instructive. But while we feel the danger we can not admit the remedy proposed.

PROFESSOR EMILE de LAVELEYE, in REVUE SCIENTIFIQUE
A remarkable book, that has not only interest but has instructed me.

AGATHON de POTTER, in PHILOSOPHIE DE L'AVENIR, OF PARIS
This remarkable and most interesting work is indeed worthy of careful and elaborate review.

Henry George School of Social Science
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