

Seeker After Truth

By ROBERT V. ANDELSON

WE HERE celebrate the centenary of Henry George's masterwork, *Progress and Poverty*. But the United States Postal Service has reminded us, by means of a commemorative stamp, that 1979 also marks the centenary of the birth of one of George's strong admirers - Albert Einstein, whose very name has come to be a virtual synonym for intellect.

Understandably, the Postal Service has made no effort to commemorate the fact that, in addition, two other history-making individuals were born one hundred years ago: Iosif Vissarionovich Dzughashvili and Lev Davidovich Bronstein, better known as Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky. (Its failure to commemorate the centenary of *Progress and Poverty* is less understandable!)

In Stalin we see an odious mixture of low animal cunning and brute force. Although books appeared of which he was ostensibly the author, there is no reason to suspect that he ever had the slightest interest in abstract ideas, or, indeed, in any ideas not directly pursuant to his own acquisition and retention of absolute political power. Around himself he sedulously encouraged the development of a "cult of personality," the hollowness of which became apparent shortly after his death, when his remains were moved unceremoniously from their place of honor next to those of Lenin to an inconspicuous spot outside the Kremlin wall.

The case of Trotsky is more interesting, yet no less repulsive. For Trotsky was a gifted intellectual - an able critic, a brilliant orator and writer, and a man of genuine philosophical and scientific inclinations, which he betrayed. This is what makes his case at once so pathetic and so reprehensible. In a review of the latest biography of Trotsky, Ralph Raico says of him: "He was a champion of thought-control, prison camps, and the firing squad for his opponents, and of forced labor for ordinary, non-brilliant working people . . . To the last, he never permitted himself to glimpse the possibility that the bloody, bureaucratic tyranny over which Stalin presided might never have come into existence but for his own efforts." In 1940, the head that plotted terror, justified forced labor, and dreamed of collective biological experiments was bashed in by an ice ax wielded by an agent of the monstrous system he had helped create.

What a contrast to these two was Henry George!

"And you will see the remedies. Not in wild dreams of red destruction nor weak projects for putting men in leading-strings to a brainless abstraction called the state, but in simple

The Four Corners of the World

By ROBERT CLANCY

FREQUENTLY IT happens that a discovery is made simultaneously by two different people unknown to each other. It may be argued that the subject in which the discovery is made has developed to the point where it is ripe for the new discovery.

In that case, the land question must have been quite ripe around 1879 - for similar considerations on the subject were put forth not just by two but by four pioneers of thought in widely scattered parts of the globe. Their discovery was that the land question is basically a land rent question, and they developed similar proposals about it.

Henry George put the finishing touches on his opus, *Progress and Poverty*, in San Francisco after experiences and studies in New York and California. He showed that the basic economic problem was the land question and that the right way to solve it was via the "single tax" - the community collection of land rent and the untaxing of labor and labor products.

At about the same time in Ireland, Thomas Nulty, Bishop of Meath, issued a diocesan letter entitled "Back to the Land." He proclaimed that the land belongs to all, that the laborer rightfully owns what he produces and should be untaxed, and that land rent is rightfully community revenue.

In faraway New Zealand, there was a new Premier, Sir George Grey. In 1878, he introduced a proposal for the taxation of land values, a tax "on the capital value of land after deducting the value of all improvements thereon."

And in South America, Dr. Andres Lamas of Montevideo wrote a book on "The Agrarian Legislation of Rivadavia." He harked back to the first President of Argentina who had introduced a law half a century earlier forbidding the sale of public land but granting short term leases with payment of rent to the government, with periodic revaluations. This law was actually put into effect and worked very well, but

Rivadavia was driven from power by large landed interests. Lamas revived the idea and urged its renewal.

How did this quartet of thinkers make out?

Bishop Nulty's ideas were taken up by George and his followers, and the two men became acquainted when George visited Ireland. However, the Irish question was diverted from a land question to a political question, at first for home rule and then for independence from England.

In New Zealand, powerful opposition drove Sir George Grey out of office. Meanwhile, he and Henry George became acquainted through correspondence. Later, Grey became influential again and successfully introduced his land value tax proposal. Though on a modest scale, New Zealand is one of the few countries in the world that has a national land value tax.

In South America, Dr. Lamas' work was ignored. But later, in 1913, Dr. Manuel Herrera y Reissig, revived the ideas of both Lamas and Rivadavia in his own work, *El Impuesto Territorial* (The Land Tax), and this work was widely read throughout Latin America and Spain. It launched a Spanish-language single tax movement which made contact with the movement in other countries.

And what of Henry George? As we know, his book, *Progress and Poverty*, became widely read and discussed and was translated into many languages. Famous converts were won; movements in many countries advanced his ideas; and some gains were made. The movement continued for about twenty years after George's death in 1897.

After World War I, however, the movement ebbed. But still it persisted, and Georgists continued the work through various educational, political, and publicizing efforts.

Today, 100 years after *Progress and Poverty* was written, the book is still read and discussed, the ideas still live, and a new vigor is being put behind the movement for land value taxation. The movement is far from sweeping the world, but at least it is still alive.

Sometimes, when a discovery is made by two different people, there is a fierce wrangle as to who deserves the credit. However, Henry George was broad-minded about it, and was pleased to hear that some of his contemporaries had hit upon the same idea. "When we see a star," he said, "we are surer it is there when others see it, too."

Henry George, Bishop Thomas Nulty, Sir George Grey, and Dr. Andres Lamas all saw the same star independently. May that star be seen by many more and be mankind's guide!

measures sanctioned by justice. You will see in light the great remedy, in freedom the great solvent."

"In light the great remedy, in freedom the great solvent." These words, spoken more than two years before *Progress and Poverty* was first set in type, encapsulate the spirit of its author, the spirit of one who would wish today, not to be enshrined as the object of a cult, but to be remembered as a seeker after truth.