

A Word With You

HENRY GEORGE may be credited with formulating two important laws of society—the correlation of the law of wages with the law of rent; and the law of human progress, association in equality.

There is another observation George makes in *Progress and Poverty* which is so penetrating and so condensed that it could also be called a law. "One of the strongest—perhaps with many men the strongest—springs of human action," he says, is "the desire for approbation, the feeling that urges us to win respect, admiration or sympathy of our fellows."

When I first read that, I felt George was being a little disappointing and superficial. But as I have had more of a chance to observe people, I keep thinking of this "master motive of human action," and am the more impressed by George's astuteness in singling it out. In fact, I am inclined to call it "George's third law of social dynamics."

George referred to it in "Effects of the Remedy" to show how the desire for admiration in today's society leads men to amass wealth, since it seems to be a great and difficult thing to accomplish. But in a society such as he visualized, where making a living came as naturally as breathing, men would seek other and higher ways of winning the approbation of others.

He was undoubtedly right in this—

and his "third law" also works for a greater number of situations both great and small. It explains much that is puzzling in human behavior. Try using it as a key, and you will see.

When people behave in a way that seems absolutely perverse and maddening, look for this hidden motive. When De Gaulle, for instance, seems intent upon winning everybody's ill will, it is esteem and respect that he has in mind, above all—impressing the world with France as a power and with himself as her leader.

On the smaller stage of personal affairs you will find that pests, gossip-mongers, leeches, loud-mouths and other impossible people just want to be noticed, recognized, justified.

A friend carefully avoids all the meetings of your organization and never responds to notices. But one day you get a phone call from him. He has received your invitation for next Thursday and would love to come, but he has to be out of town that day. Why did he phone? Was it not to eke out a little good will while he can safely do nothing? Many and varied cases can be cited—noble as well as ignoble cases.

It would be possible and profitable, I think, to pull all three of George's laws together into one generalization. This would result in a wide-ranging view of all human society.

—Robert Clancy

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The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

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