

A Word With You

ONE of the criticisms levelled against Henry George's economic analysis is that things have changed since his day, poverty is not what it used to be, the lot of the common man is much better.

That "things have changed" is undeniable. Whether "things have improved" is another matter which bears closer scrutiny. Today we enjoy, as Artemus Ward might say, "a different life—not necessarily better, but different." If you look at it, you will find that "progress *and* poverty" is an apt way to describe what has taken place. We have gained in some ways and lost in other ways.

In the old days, you could buy fresh food off the pushcart for pennies—a little dirty, but good. Now, in the supermarket, we buy packaged food untouched by human hands (progress) with all the living goodness processed out of it, and at much greater cost (poverty).

In the days of the family-sized farm, "working" meant doing all the house and farm chores during the week, and Sunday really was a day of rest. Nowadays, "working" means going to the office or factory, and weekends are spent doing household chores.

Bear in mind, too, that many (maybe most) observers and commentators in George's day were quite satisfied with the progress that was then being made. The squalor and wretchedness that came along with progress had to be looked for, it was not readily apparent in the busy marts and the bright hotels, any more than it is today.

The poverty in the old days—in a big city like New York, where George first felt the impact of it—was mostly prevalent amongst the newer immigrants. In George's day, it was the

Irish. Later, it was Italians and Jews who immigrated and became the bottom level, pushing up the Irish a notch. With natural opportunities restricted by land monopoly, this was the way each group advanced, and it seldom occurred to anyone to question its rightness.

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free," were the words inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. We have since changed our minds, and we now say to the world, "Give me your rich and well-born." Call it progress if you like.

But if we have discouraged the tired and poor from coming over, we still have relatively free migration within these United States. Negroes migrated to northern cities from the South and created a new bottom level. More recently, Puerto Ricans have moved in and helped keep poverty a going concern.

While modern buildings of aluminum and glass change the skyline of our cities, teen-age gangs roam the streets making it unsafe to go out at night. While the Nautilus crosses the North Pole under the ice-cap, one out of every seven persons in the U.S. receives a check from the government without which he could not live.

The problem is still—progress *and* poverty.

—Robert Clancy

Vol. 21, No. 10

September, 1958

The Henry George News is published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N. Y. Publication Committee: Lancaster M. Greene, Chairman; Otto K. Dorn, William S. O'Connor; Alice Elizabeth Davis, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, November 15, 1943; at the post office of New York, N. Y. under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions, \$2 a year; single copies, 20c.

HENRY GEORGE NEWS