

# A Word With You

THERE are a lot of unspoken premises in Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* and his other works. What he does not say is just as important as what he says.

George simply undertook "an inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions and of increase of want with increase of wealth" with a view to finding the remedy, and he proceeded straight from problem to conclusion.

He brought to this task, or developed along the way, a whole network of suppositions about human nature, the social order, and even the universe—matters which have absorbed philosophers for millenia.

One very great assumption was that the human mind *can* fathom the answers to such problems as George set about examining—and that man *can* do something about them. How many world philosophies and religions have reached the opposite conclusion!

George also assumed that, to get the right reforms into operation and to attain the ideal society, it was not necessary to "change human nature," as some contend, but that it was only necessary for people, as they are, to understand the right things to do.

The acceptance of people as they are is a quite remarkable characteristic of George's, and an exquisitely rare quality in a reformer. George intuitively understood the secret springs of

human nature, and thus could not easily be knocked from his position. His was no sentimental idealization of man, which turns to disillusion at the first un-ideal symptom. Nor was it that vitriolic bitterness that has contaminated so many observers of the social scene. It was instead a realistic view of man, with a trust in his great potentialities. George was capable of sorrow and anger, but he never turned his back on man because of the sordidness he found.

And George does not waste his or the reader's time with futile maps of the ideal society—with all individuals and groups in their proper niches—and the economic machine tuned up and oiled and planned to work just so. *He really does trust freedom* to do a better job than anyone can plan.

George has been criticized for thinking that the only important things are land and land rent, because they are the only things involved in his proposal for government action. Of course he knew the importance of all the many occupations and objects of wealth that go to make up economic society! He simply realized that the way of freedom is the best plan for them.

All these are "between the lines" in George's works. And these things that he does *not* say constitute a great contribution!

—Robert Clancy

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The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N.Y., supports the following principle:

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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