

Henry George, Anti-Socialist

Those many citizens who are concerned over the modern drift toward socialism, why have they given so little attention to Henry George, America's outstanding, irreconcilable enemy of socialism?

There are still followers of Henry George. These are putting on special celebrations this month of the author, 80 years ago, of *Progress and Poverty*. Their voice is but a sparrow's whisper, so small it has become. Why are the dreaders of socialism so neglectful of Henry George?

Progress and Poverty presented an idea which, up to 40 or 50 years ago, had an important following. Cleveland's Tom Johnson, mayor and congressman, was a powerful follower, 40 years ago, of the Henry George philosophy. The "single tax" idea was making headway. Now it has largely dropped from sight, and just when the "socialism" which it opposed is more an issue than before.

The value of land, Henry George taught, is produced, not by the labor of any man, but by the labor of everyone. The high cost of the corner lot in the city is the product of the labor and enterprise of the whole city. The value of the lot, the land, is the measure of the value of the society surrounding it. Take that value for public use, and the public will only be getting back what it gave.

Getting back what thus it gave, the community will have all the money it needs to serve its interests. There would need be no other tax. Houses, factories, incomes would not need be taxed, but only the land beneath and behind them. Once the land, including the city lots and mines, was taxed by the community to get back the value the community gave it, there would be no monopoly, but only free enterprise. Socialism could no more thrive and survive under those conditions than a snowball under a July sun.

So goes the argument.

The name of Henry George, who died more than 50 years ago, is still remembered and by some revered. The prescription which he wrote, his guarantee against the collectivism which most of us abhor, lies mostly forgotten, all un-filled. Are we as dead set against socialism as we think we are? Why, then, the averted eyes, the blank, unknowing look, at mention of Henry George the anti-socialist?

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