

painted a panoramic scene of society which contained the best elements of a socialistic world. His novel *Looking Backward* is the story of Julian West who awakes in the year 2000 to a world where man has conquered the evils of poverty, war, crime and depravation. Industry is nationalized and no one wants for anything because wealth is distributed equally. With no private property, there is equal public access to culture.

Illustrating the follies of individualism and the necessities for group action, Bellamy says: "The difference between the age of individualism and that of concert is characterized by the fact that, in the 19th century, when it rained, the people of Boston put up 300,000 umbrellas over as many heads, and in the 20th century they put up one umbrella over the heads."

"One umbrella" refers to government efforts to improve sidewalk coverings. Individualism, with all its evils, had given way to governmental control in Bellamy's world—a world that had captured the imagination of thousands. Bellamy's National Clubs took root around the country.

Muck-raking, a type of mud-slinging journalism which still flourishes today, was begun by Henry Demarest Lloyd, a journalist who had shunned the desire for wealth. Lloyd saw first-hand the labor strife in the 1880s and the strangle hold that owners of capital had on the lives of workers.

He became a leading spokesman against trusts, monopolies and all forms of large consolidation. A critic of capitalism, he wrote articles against its abuses, maintaining that some types of control were needed in order to curb the disdainful appetites of capitalism.

Lloyd's most important and successful book, *Wealth Against Commonwealth*, was a vitriolic attack on John D. Rockefeller, then America's most successful business magnate. Lloyd says, "The Standard Oil has done everything with the Pennsylvania

An American

By
Michael
Gavaghan



• Henry George painted by George DeForest Brush

HENRY GEORGE wrote a book that is still, more than 100 years later, the best-selling economics book in world history. In between he sailed around the world as a 16-year-old cabin boy, panned for gold during the rush of the mid-1800s, and somehow combined these robust pursuits with an intense self-disciplined study of the world's great thinkers.

Does that sound incongruous? There's more. Though famous on three continents by the end of his life, George failed in his most vigorous effort to hold elected office at home.

In that contest, an 1886 race for mayor of New York City, he soundly defeated a Republican candidate by the name of Teddy Roosevelt, who was to become one of our more popular presidents, only to lose to an historical nonentity named Abrams Hewitt.

Enough contrasts? Hold on. Though a deeply religious Protestant, George became embroiled in an excommunication controversy that was to resound through the Catholic Church for generations. His admirers included Leo Tolstoy, George Bernard Shaw and Mark Twain, though the press of his day often portrayed him as a starry-eyed radical.

Henry George was born in Philadelphia in 1839. By most accounts he was intelligent, restless, religious and rebellious. He was never one for formal

legislature except to refine it . . . America has the proud satisfaction of having furnished the world with the greatest, wisest and nearest monopoly known to history."

Through his articles and best-selling book, Lloyd was instrumental in arousing the public conscience concerning big business. His style and the emotional tone of his writing had its impact, not only on the public, but on legislators. His solution for a new order contained the idea that there "must be no private use of public power or public property. These are created by the common sacrifices of all, and can rightfully be used only for the common good of all — from all, by all, for all."

Rounding out the triumverate of reformers was Henry George. He was not a supporter of socialism but a critic of capital concentration and poverty. At the heart of poverty, with all its concomitant evils, he felt, was the institution of land ownership. Al-

though George recognized poverty, the maldistribution of wealth, the plight of workers and the strangling effect that captains of industry had upon the economy, he felt that the solution lay not in the nationalization of industry, but rather in the treatment of mother earth.

Land, which includes natural resources, was considered the warehouse of all potential wealth. No wealth can be produced unless there is access to land. But, George claimed, land began to be monopolized by the few, while the majority were compelled to pay for the use of that land. Land owners bring more land into use when it is profitable to do so. Otherwise they allow the land to remain vacant, waiting for its value to rise.

This speculation, in his view, was the culprit and land monopoly was the mother of most other monopolies. George's remedy was therefore to abolish land monopoly.

Unlike the socialist, George felt

original!

education, and set sail on a steamship called the Hindoo shortly after quitting school.

This 14-month journey took him to Africa, Australia and India, among other places, and his personal log shows the makings of the passionate and perceptive writer he was to become decades later.

George returned to Philadelphia, became a printer's apprentice, and tried to ignore his acute wanderlust. He failed. A friend's letter from the West Coast told of high wages for printers, and George set sail for California, which was to be his home for the next 20 years.

California was boom country then. The Gold Rush attracted thousands of fortune-seekers, the land was fertile and seemingly boundless, and businessmen paid top dollars to lure workers away from farming. And while those attractive salaries were what brought Henry George west, he could not resist several mining ventures of his own, each of which failed.

During his California years George married Annie Fox and began raising a family. He also was forced to endure a relentless cycle of boom-and-bust that seemed to afflict all working people. The Georges knew poverty intimately and Henry once wrote that if he had not received money from a well-dressed stranger, "I think I was desperate enough to have killed him."

that there were two factors responsible for producing wealth - labor and capital. Neither should be restrained in its power to produce wealth since each needs the other, prospering and suffering together.

The landowner benefits most from the prosperity that has been created by the worker and his tools, and is the inactive party in the wealth-producing system. By collecting the full rent from the land, he no longer makes a profit by owning that land.

Reformers of the 1800s - the Bellamys, Lloyds and the Georges - rose up during a time of increasing industrialization, poverty and corporate abuse. The individual had begun to be lost to the powerful "whole" of society. These reformers spoke up to make people notice the problem, become concerned and cause change. This spirit of reform has become an American institution, one which continues to help insure the rights of the individual, and of the less powerful.

What had driven this peaceful, honest man to such an extreme? Why were there suddenly so many able-bodied and ambitious workers unable to find work? What had happened to the great wealth-producing juggernaut called the industrial revolution?

The investigation of these questions and a proposed "remedy" formed the basis of George's first and greatest book, *Progress and Poverty*. He worked for two years on the manuscript. It was rejected by several New York publishers, so Henry George, former printer's apprentice, set the type for his masterpiece himself. With the generous help of a San Francisco printer he published a small author's edition in 1879. He was 40 years old.

Within two years George was famous. *Progress and Poverty* was translated into 15 languages. He travelled the globe, lecturing on political economy and the land question. His other books were *Protection or Free Trade?*, *Social Problems* and *The Science of Political Economy*.

In 1886, several prominent New York City labor leaders asked George to run for mayor. Organized labor was not especially fond of him (Samuel Gompers was an exception), nor was George a strong union man. But the laborites saw in George a candidate capable of upsetting the unacceptable nominees of the major parties.

George saw a chance to further publicize his theories. He accepted with a condition: 30,000 petition signatories would have to be collected in his support before he began the race, an extraordinary figure for that time. The union activists collected 34,000, and Henry George became a politician.

He took to the stump as to the manner born and played to wildly enthusiastic street crowds. He also engaged his leading challenger, Democrat Abram S. Hewitt, in a war of words in the pages of New York's daily newspapers. In an extraordinary series of open letters to each other, George and Hewitt practised an elegant and elevated mud-slinging not since seen.

George lost the election, outpolling Republic Theodore Roosevelt but falling 22,000 votes behind Hewitt. What was especially odd (and, many believed, suspicious) was that George tallied only twice as many votes as he had collected signatures on his nominating petitions.

In the days which became the gestation period of the notoriously corrupt Tammany Hall, it was deemed impossible to win without election inspectors. As these individuals were appointed only by the two major parties, George's defeat was probably inevitable.

Among his most ardent supporters during that campaign was a Catholic priest, Father Edward McGlynn of St. Stephen's parish and the founder of the Anti-Poverty League. McGlynn was warned repeatedly by his superiors not to participate in Henry George's activities, and he repeatedly replied that nothing George advocated was in conflict with Church doctrine. McGlynn paid for his support with excommunication.

George's later years consisted of international lecture tours and prolific writing. He was persuaded to take one more shot at the mayor's office in 1897. He died of a stroke during the campaign.

His funeral was massive and compelled even long-standing political opponents to sing his praises. As author David Hapgood recently noted: "As with most radicals, Henry George became praiseworthy once he was safely buried."



● David Ricardo (1772-1823): the English economist developed the theory of rent, best summarised in his aphorism "corn is not high [in price] because a rent is paid, but a rent is paid because corn is high". Henry George elaborated the theory into a coherent social and economic philosophy.