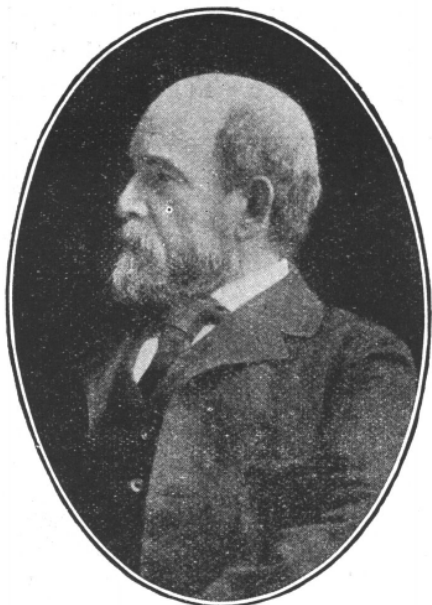


## THE LAW OF HUMAN PROGRESS

By Henry George



Mind is the instrument by which man advances, and by which each advance is secured and made the vantage ground for new advances. Though he may not by taking thought add a cubit to his stature, man may by taking thought extend his knowledge of the universe and his power over it, in what, so far as we can see, is an infinite degree. The narrow span of human life allows the individual to go but a short distance, but though each generation may do but little, yet generations succeeding to the gain of their predecessors, may gradually elevate the status of mankind, as coral polyps, building one generation upon the work of the other, gradually elevate themselves from the bottom of the sea.

Mental power is, therefore, the motor of progress, and men tend to advance in proportion to the mental power expended in progression—the mental power which is devoted to the extension of knowledge, the improvement of methods, and the betterment of social conditions.

Now mental power is a fixed quantity—that is to say, there is a limit to the work a man can do with his mind, as there is to the work he can do with his body; therefore, the mental power which can be devoted to progress is only what is left after what is required for non-progressive purposes.

These non-progressive purposes in which mental power is consumed may be classified as maintenance and conflict. By maintenance I mean, not only the support of existence, but the keeping up of the social condition and the holding of advances already gained. By conflict I mean not merely warfare and preparation for warfare, but all expenditure of mental power in seeking the gratification of desire at the expense of others, and in resistance to such aggression.

To compare society to a boat. Her progress through the water will not depend upon the exertion of her crew, but upon the exertion devoted to propelling her. This will be lessened by any expenditure of force required for bailing, or any expenditure of force in fighting among themselves, or in pulling in different directions.

Now, as in a separated state the whole powers of man are required to maintain existence, and mental power is only set free for higher uses by the association of men

in communities, which permits the division of labour and all the economies which come with the co-operation of increased numbers, association is the first essential of progress. Improvement becomes possible as men come together in peaceful association, and the wider and closer the association, the greater the possibilities of improvement. And as the wasteful expenditure of mental power in conflict becomes greater or less as the moral law which accords to each an equality of rights is ignored or is recognized, equality (or justice) is the second essential of progress.

Thus association in equality is the Law of Progress. Association frees mental power for expenditure in improvement, and equality (or justice, or freedom—for the terms here signify the same thing, the recognition of the moral law) prevents the dissipation of this power in fruitless struggles.

Here is the Law of Progress, which will explain all diversities, all advances, all halts, and retrogressions. Men tend to progress just as they come closer together, and by co-operation with each other increase the mental power that may be devoted to improvement, but just as conflict is provoked, or association develops inequality of condition and power, this tendency to progression is lessened, checked, and finally reversed.

Given the same innate capacity and it is evident that social development will go on faster or slower, will stop or turn back, according to the resistance it meets. In a general way these obstacles to improvement may, in relation to the society itself, be classed as external and internal—the first operating with greater force in the earlier stages of civilization, the latter becoming more important in the later stages. . . .

The mental power, which is the motor of social progress, is set free by association, which is (what, perhaps it may be more properly called) an integration. Society in this process becomes more complex; its individuals more dependent upon each other. Occupations and functions are specialized. Instead of wandering, population becomes fixed. Instead of each man attempting to supply all of his wants, the various trades and industries are separated—one man acquires skill in one thing and another in another thing. So, too, of knowledge, the body of which constantly tends to become vaster than one man can grasp, and is separated into different parts, which different individuals acquire and pursue.

Now, this process of integration, of the specialization of functions and powers, as it goes on in society, is by virtue of what is probably one of the deepest laws of human nature, accompanied by a constant liability to inequality. I do not mean that inequality is the necessary result of social growth, but that it is the constant tendency of social growth if unaccompanied by changes in social adjustments which in the new conditions that growth produces will secure equality. I mean, so to speak, that the garment of laws, customs, and political institutions, which each society weaves for itself, is constantly tending to become too tight as the society develops. I mean, so to speak, that man, as he advances, threads a labyrinth, in which, if he keeps straight ahead, he will infallibly lose his way, and through which reason and justice can alone keep him continuously in an ascending path. . . .

For while the integration which accompanies growth tends in itself to set free mental power to work improvement, there is, both with increase of numbers and with increase in complexity of the social organization, a counter-tendency set up to the production of a state of inequality, which wastes mental power, and as it increases, brings improvement to a halt. . . .

But the great cause of inequality is in the natural monopoly which is given by the possession of land.

The first perceptions of men seem always to be that land is common property; but the rude devices by which this is at first recognized—such as annual partitions or cultivation in common—are only consistent with a low stage of development. The idea of property, which naturally arises with reference to things of human production, is easily transferred to land, and an institution which when population is sparse merely secures to the improver and user the due reward of his labour, finally, as population becomes dense and rent arises, operates to strip the producer of his wages. Not merely this, but the appropriation of rent for public purposes, which is the only way in which, with anything like a high development, land can be readily retained as common property, becomes, when political and religious power passes into the hands of a class, the ownership of the land by that class, and the rest of the community become merely tenants. And wars and conquests, which tend to the concentration of political power and to the institution of slavery, naturally result, where social growth has given land a value, in the appropriation of the soil. A dominant class, who concentrate power in their hands, will likewise soon concentrate ownership of the land. To them will fall large partitions of conquered land, which the former inhabitants will till as tenants or serfs, and the public domain, or common lands, which in the natural course of social growth are left for awhile in every country (and in which state the primitive system of village culture leaves pasture and woodland) are readily acquired, as we see by modern instances. And inequality once established, the ownership of land tends to concentrate as development goes on.

The Law of Human Progress, what is it but the moral law? Just as social adjustments promote justice, just as they acknowledge the equality of right between man and man, just as they ensure to each the perfect liberty which is bounded only by the equal liberty of every other, must civilization advance. Just as they fail in this, must advancing civilization come to a halt and recede.—PROGRESS AND POVERTY, *Book X., Chap. III.*

### THE LAND SONG

(Air: "Marching Through Georgia")

Sound a blast for Freedom, boys, and send it far and wide!  
March along to victory, for God is on our side!  
While the voice of Nature thunders o'er the rising tide—  
"God made the Land for the People!"

*Chorus*

The Land! The Land! 'Twas God who gave the Land!  
The Land! The Land! The ground on which we stand!  
Why should we be beggars, with the Ballot in our hand!  
"God gave the Land to the People!"

Hark! the shout is swelling from the East and from  
the West;

Why should we beg work and let the Landlords take  
the best? [rest:

Make them pay their taxes for the land—we'll risk the  
The Land was meant for the People!

*Chorus*

The banner has been raised on high, to face the battle  
din!

The Army now is marching on the struggle to begin:  
We'll never cease our efforts till the victory we win,  
And the Land is free for the People!

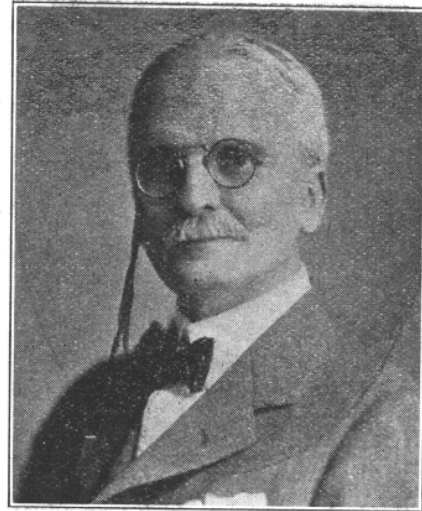
*Chorus*

Clear the way for Liberty! The Land must all be free!  
Britons will not falter in the fight, though stern it be,  
Till the flag we love so well shall wave from sea to sea.  
O'er the land that's free for the People!

*Chorus*

### HON. CHARLES O'CONNOR HENNESSY

President of the Third International Conference to Promote the Taxation of Land Values and Free Trade, Copenhagen



Charles O'Connor Hennessy, formerly a senator of the State of New Jersey, is widely known in the United States as a writer and speaker upon co-operative banking as exemplified through the savings and home-building societies of the country, commonly known as building and loan associations. There are now more than 12,000 of these organizations in the United States and they are assuming great social and economic significance in the financial structure of the country, as may be inferred from the fact that membership of these peoples' savings banks now approximates ten million persons, and their combined resources exceed five billion (five thousand million) dollars, practically all of which is invested in mortgages upon small dwelling houses owned by the members of these societies. Mr. Hennessy has been honoured with the presidency of the national organization of these associations, and is now President of the Franklin Society for Home-Building and Savings of New York City, which was organized by the newspaper workers of the city thirty-eight years ago, and has grown under his leadership to be one of the largest institutions of its class in the United States. He is also Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Land Bank of the State of New York, a semi-public co-operative institution, which acts as the central credit organization of savings and loan associations of the State of New York.

For many years, Mr. Hennessy resided in a New Jersey suburb of the metropolis and took an active part in all public affairs. Being a Democrat in politics, he was closely associated with the administration of Woodrow Wilson as Governor of New Jersey, and was elected twice to the Lower House of the legislature and then served for three years in the State-Senate. During this period (1911-1917) his name was associated with many measures of progressive legislation, including bills for the reform of the State's financial system; for municipal home rule in taxation; for the revision of the State constitution; for reforms and economies in the construction of State highways; for greater freedom of public discussion through the use of public schools; for the abolition of capital punishment; against sectarian