

# The Georgist Journal

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## GUEST EDITORIAL - IMMORTALITY OF HENRY GEORGE

In spite of his brimful 58 years, Henry George has been awarded immortality by posterity. His heart was deeply impressed by the desperate needs of humanity. His mind was capable of discovering a cure for the ills of society, tending toward ever increasing poverty. His masterwork, effectively explaining his cure, was Progress and Poverty, brought to light in 1879 after 18 months of travail.

Twenty years later, in the second of two attempts to become Mayor of New York, he collapsed. His death occurred on October 29, 1897, as election day approached. Since then, followers of his philosophy have discussed and worked on its application.

This writer, since her introduction to Georgism many years ago, has heard and participated in numerous discussions on how to implement the philosophy. Should the ideas be followed exactly as idealized - collecting rent on all land in lieu of all taxes? Or shifting real estate taxes from improvements to site values to the greatest extent possible? The atmosphere is ever replete with impatience to see progress.

When one sees a disjointed society everywhere in the world, the sense of urgency is indeed understandable and plausible. No effort to carry the aims to fruition is wasted. The discussions in depth are useful. Disagreement as to method is inevitable. Henry George himself, when faced with the possibility of running for Mayor, had to deliberate and consider contradictory arguments.

A century has passed since Progress and Poverty appeared, without our being satisfied with its impact on society. While we may regret this, we may also rejoice that the existence of this great book continues to exert a profound influence upon society.

As we consider humankind's story, it can be seen that lost civilizations of antiquity and even before recorded history have never been entirely lost. Many of them are vivid today. The story of ancient Troy speaks clearly out of Homer's pages. The art of the Etruscans speaks in beauty. Relics in the earth tell the story of humankind and we can be guided by their lessons. Readers certainly will be able to think of many other examples of immortality - of persons and civilizations.

To be part of an immortality, specifically the immortality of Henry George, confers upon us a privilege. The space of time between the emergence of Progress and Poverty and now is a short period in proportion to eternity. But the message of a "passionate reformer" is an explosion which resounds and does not die. It may be but a whisper among all the blatant sounds, but it endures. Once it appears, it will remain throughout time in one way or another. It is immortal.

- Mary S. Jespersen  
(posthumously)

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