
Preface

The year 1979 was the centenary year of *Progress and Poverty*, the first and most important work of that unique American analyst and philosopher, Henry George. Accordingly, it is appropriate to consider anew George's particular role in American tax thought. This book reports the papers and summarizes the discussions held at the 1978 Conference of the Committee on Taxation, Resources and Economic Development (TRED). The discussions here included take a careful look at the writings and conceptual positions of Henry George (1839-1897); they explore the usefulness of George's philosophy in dealing with the modern forms of the problems he considered a century ago.

The papers included were prepared by both general philosophical and specialized tax economists, as well as by practicing tax administrators from both Europe and the United States. Although the preparers of papers and their several discussants represent a broad spectrum of tax and economic thought, a general, if tentative, consensus develops. It is that George's land tax possesses significant utility as a source of government revenue, especially for local government. Therefore, wider use of land value as a tax base merits the attention of policy makers.

The United States continues to be a country of great progress with substantial pockets of poverty a century after George wrote of this in *Progress and Poverty*. George advocated wide and substantial use of a tax on land, combined with sharply reduced taxes on earnings and economic endeavor, in order to alleviate poverty and stimulate progress. Yet his followers have enjoyed only modest political, practical, and academic success. Currently spiraling land prices, general inflation, and the shortage of investment produce economic conditions that suggest a reappraisal of tax incentives and disincentives. The analysis of this book and the conference it represents, *Land Value Taxation in Thought and Practice*, will give added insight and confidence to those considering tax system design and the place of land as a tax base in that context. Both the 1978 conference and this book owe much to the stimulus and support of both the members of the Committee on Taxation, Resources and Economic Development and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. As the

late Harold Groves once remarked, Henry George's contribution contains elements of truth that are of enduring importance. It is appropriate to recall this fact a century after the publication of his major work.

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