

HENRY GEORGE'S FIRST MAYORALTY CAMPAIGN

Henry George died on October 29, 1897, the day before election day when he was standing, for the second time, as candidate for the mayoralty of New York. The previous occasion was in 1886. In that first campaign, far more so than in the second, Henry George was attacked by the privileged interests with a malevolence that knew no bounds. In their fear and alarm that he might triumph, they reached the lowest depths of misrepresentation and abuse. He had already made several speaking tours in Great Britain and Ireland, acclaimed everywhere with popular fervour; he had become known all over the world as the champion of the rights and liberties of the common people. How the forces of monopoly reacted is shown by the leading article in the *Yorkshire Post* of November 5, 1886, for the preservation of which we are indebted to our correspondent, Mr. Coulton, in Bradford. The election had taken place. George's opponents were the Tammany candidate Abram S. Hewitt and the Republican Theodore Roosevelt, later President of the U.S.A. The result as officially reported was Hewitt 90,112; George 68,110; Roosevelt 60,411. The *Yorkshire Post's* passionate lampoon was in the strict tradition of the scribes who all down the ages have borne false witness.

(From the *Yorkshire Post*, November 5, 1886.)

The defeat of Mr. Henry George in his candidature for the mayoralty of New York is a matter on which New York and America itself should be congratulated; but it is none the less significant that he should have received no less than 67,699 votes from citizens of New York who were willing that he should be their chief magistrate.

The combination of interests which Mr. Henry George represented in his candidature is worth considering. When he was in this country he contented himself with preaching a doctrine relating to property in land about

which the worst that could be said was that it was insane in theory and impossible in practice. He did not, so far as we remember, counsel the people to seize the land and bury the landowners in it, or put forth other violent schemes of that kind. But in America he has been the avowed champion of the Anarchists, the defender of the men who are now sentenced to death for murder, constructive and actual. And, in addition to this, the greatest support he has received in his New York candidature has been from Mr. Patrick Ford, of the *Irish World*, and the Irish dynamite and assassination party. Mr. Ford is a valued ally of Mr. Parnell, and thus we have Mr. Henry George as the point of contact or connecting link between the English Socialists, the Irish Parnellites and their English friends, the Irish-American assassins, and the idle, cowardly, and filthy beasts who are called Anarchists.

That such a man should have received nearly 68,000 votes from citizens, some of whom presumably own property and attach some value to the preservation of order and the protection of human life, is surprising and ought to teach the Americans a lesson.

If it had not been for the devotion to public duty shown by Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Roosevelt, the Democratic and Republican candidates respectively, the Empire City would now be governed municipally—and that means much more in the United States than in this country—by the representative of the party of every kind of corruption, disorder and crime. The public offices of the city would have been filled by the nominees of Mr. Ford—the very dregs of even American politics. But Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Roosevelt, both of whom belong to public life in a sphere above mayoralties, yielded to the pressure which was put upon them and the danger they saw to be threatening, and came forward, each to try to defeat Mr. George. Thanks to their public spirit, he is defeated, but his support was much too great to be pleasant.

Although English municipalities are not immediately threatened with the domination of such men as Mr. George, it frequently happens that they are left in the hands of extravagant, incompetent, or unscrupulous men, because the best men will not sacrifice their inclinations and their comfort by entering the public service. The example of these two gentlemen in New York, and of Mr. Hewitt, who is in ill-health, in particular, should act as a stimulus to good citizens everywhere.

The "close shave" which New York has just experienced should awaken the people, and the people of the United States generally, to the danger which is to be apprehended from the detestable gang which, whether called Socialist, Parnellites, or Anarchists, is seeking to undermine and overthrow all prosperity, all security, and all individual and public peace and safety.

Quite a historic outburst. Yet it can be allowed to escape from reproof into the amusement with which it is read to-day.

Purpose and Echoes of the Campaign

At the 1886 mayoral election Henry George's candidature was urged and sponsored by the Labour and Trade Union organisations. Accepting the nomination he made it clear it was not office he was after; he wanted to plant the seed; through such a campaign he would be able to bring the land question into practical politics and do more to popularise its discussion than years of writing

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would do. The declaration of principles upheld in the campaign and endorsed by the Labour convocation had as its aim the abolition of the system which compels men to pay their fellow creatures for the use of God's gift to all, and permits monopolisers to deprive labour of actual opportunities for employment. It recognised that the advantages arising from social growth and improvement belong to society at large. The true purpose of government was the maintenance of that sacred right of property which gives to everyone opportunity to employ his labour, and security that he shall enjoy its fruits. It proposed the abolition of all laws which give to any class of citizens advantages that are not equally shared by all others. The crowding of many people into narrow tenements at enormous rents while half the area of the city was yet unbuilt upon was denounced as a scandalous evil. To remedy that, "all taxes on buildings and improvements should be abolished so that no fine shall be put upon the employment of labour in increasing living accommodations and taxes should be levied on [the value of] land irrespective of improvements so that those who are now holding land vacant shall be compelled to build on it themselves or give up the land to those who will." The declaration further asserted that "the enormous value which the presence of a million and a half of people [that was 1886] gives to the land of this city belongs properly to the whole community; it should not go to the enrichment of individuals and corporations but should be taken in taxation and applied to the improvement and beautifying of the city, to the promotion of the health, comfort, education and recreation of its people, and to the providing of means of transit commensurate with the needs of a great metropolis."

It was a dramatic campaign. Lengthy descriptions of it are given in Louis F. Post's *The Prophet of San Francisco*, in the *Life* by Henry George, jnr., in *Henry George, Citizen of the World* by Anna George de Mille and in the Post-Leubuscher report *The George-Hewitt Campaign* which was published by the Lowell Co., of New York. The working men were without political machinery. The election laws at the time made party machinery greatly advantageous; they were such as to make bribery, intimidation and miscounting a common practice. Moreover, under the election law the party had to print its own ballots and distribute them to voters and some of the districts were actually without distributors and ballots. The counting was at the mercy of officers named by the local bosses of the Republican Party, the County Democracy and Tammany Hall. Many stories of fraudulent counting were reported by "George watchers" who were grudgingly allowed to observe the count, for the law required it, but who were not allowed to interfere or enter a formal protest. Mr. George believed at the time, and many circumstances afterwards confirmed his belief, that he had really been elected but had been "counted out."

An incidental outcome of the campaign was the radical reform of those voting laws which enabled the unscrupulous to manipulate elections. Henry George had long demanded the Australian ballot system. He headed the agitation by which in 1886 the idea first seriously entered American politics. It was taken up by the trade unions and Labour movements in various parts of the country and acquiring support from other sources was, in one form or another, within a few years adopted by most of the States in the Union and ultimately by all.

A.W.M.

AUSTRALIA

We have received from *The Henry George Justice Party* (which put up candidates in the recent elections for the Australian Senate) its Manifesto with "Declaration of Principles," "Platform and Policy," and "Organisation." The "Declaration of Principles" is, with full statement, the same as that of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. There will be attached to the Manifesto the familiar badge (of the United Committee and of the International Union) with the wording "True Liberty means Equal Liberty—Free Land, Free Trade, Free Men—Tax Land Values." As for the "Platform" it declares first for "Basic Policy," secondly for "Taxation—Initial Policy," followed by paragraphs relating to Valuation; Trade and Abolition of Exchange Controls; Monopolies; International Relations; Decentralizing of Legislature, etc. "Basic Policy" includes: public revenue to be raised by collection of the peoples ground rent; abolition of taxation on labour and all things produced by labour; complete freedom of trade both internal and external; proportional representation for all elections, federal, state and municipal. "Taxation—Initial Policy" includes: complete abolition of the sales tax and pay-roll tax; all-round reduction in tariffs with abolition of tariff taxes on housing materials and those goods that are in short supply; substantial reduction in the level of government spending; a development fund raised by a rate on land values to meet the cost of such public works as roads, railways and irrigation, the rate to be uniform on all land values without graduation or exemption replacing and superseding the existing State Land Taxes; all municipal water and sewerage to be levied on site values.

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