

# Polemics Relentlessly Reduced

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I HAVE read and re-read the chapters of *Progress and Poverty* with sincere appreciation and a sense of enlightenment. In the beginning, I must confess, I was a trifle perturbed by what appeared to be a rather repetitious and verbose writing style, but as I progressed in the study and acquired a better understanding of Mr. George's reasoning, I found that none of my adverse literary criticism remained, and I was delightfully fascinated by his mastery of words.

The whole theory was new to me and many important points were brought to my attention in the course. The first came in Chapter II, when it became obvious that I must discard my former applications of such terms as wealth, capital, profits, production, etc. — and think of them only in the economic sense. It wasn't exactly easy to conceive that wealth could not be measured in acres of land or money in the bank.

The next real jolt came when I was forced to pry myself loose from the common assumption that wages are drawn from capital. Somewhat later, I was delighted by the uprooting of the over-population myth.

But my first realization of the great importance of Mr. George's thinking came, not as a bombshell, but slowly and laboriously as, little by little, I recognized the justice of his principles of land ownership.

To one who had occasionally speculated in land, and who saw nothing wrong in harvesting a substantial gain for what he considered shrewd foresight, this truth was unsettling. But, as the sound reasoning of Mr. George relentlessly reduced my polemics to mere gibberish, I did accept it unqualifiedly and wholeheartedly.

Here was the answer to a situation that has puzzled humanity since the first chronicler took up his stylus to record human events. Here was the answer to a phenomenon that has forever plagued civilization — enormous wealth side by side with abject poverty in a land of plenty.

But perhaps even more startling was the simplicity of the remedial procedure proposed by Henry George — the single tax. So clearly would its application be no great hardship to anyone — that it is difficult to understand why acceptance has been overlooked so long.

"Coordination in housing and community development programs is lacking in one critical area, notably the myriad methods of taxing real property. The state and local governments have failed to make maximum use of the enormous potential inherent in the property tax for either the prevention or the cure of poor housing and other blight conditions. In fact since the tax is based on the value of the land and improvements, those who permit their property to deteriorate, reducing area property values, are rewarded

with lower property taxes. Landlords who enhance the value of their property have their assessments raised.

"We do not undertake to suggest what would be a proper method for a state or local community to tax the property of its citizens. We do recommend, however, that a model, uniform property tax code be drafted, which would encourage, rather than discourage, the best economic uses of land."

— From a U. S. Congressional Joint Economic Committee Report, March 2, 1964