

the Henry George News

PUBLISHED BY HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE • OCTOBER 1966

Fourscore and Seven

ON November 19, 1863, at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, a tall, gaunt man with a sad face delivered a short speech to dedicate a National Soldiers' Cemetery at that battleground. His name was Abraham Lincoln. His words were few, but their simple magnificence was such that they remain a lasting American heritage and a unique masterpiece of English rhetoric. Especially remembered is Mr. Lincoln's opening passage: "Fourscore and seven years ago . . ."

Adherents of Henry George, whose 127th birthday was celebrated on September 2nd, will find this phrase intriguingly significant this year. A bit of arithmetical computation will disclose the reason. *Progress and Poverty* was published in 1879, so 1966 marks its eighty-seventh anniversary. Thus Henry George gave his great work to the world "fourscore and seven years ago." The coincidence is worth observing because once again in history a time has come for dedication to a worthwhile cause.

It would be far-fetched to equate their respective philosophies, yet there is a comparison to be made. Lincoln strove to establish freedom from chattel bondage; George sought to release men from economic servitude. In a sense Lincoln *did* succeed (albeit by means of a devastating internecine war), whereas George's goal is yet to be attained.

"Fourscore and seven years ago," Henry George brought forth upon this continent a lucent remedy for poverty, the problem which has beset mankind since time immemorial. Unhappily his noble concept is still only a seed, which here and there burgeons, but has yet to blossom and flower, as one day it must. Until that day, those who recognize the validity and the value of George's wisdom can but protect and nurture this seed, in the fervent hope that it will take root and thrive for the betterment of all.

Fourscore and seven years after the publication of the Declaration of (political) Independence, Abraham Lincoln urged his countrymen to dedicate themselves to a new birth of freedom. Now fourscore and seven years after the publication of *Progress and Poverty*—a declaration of economic independence—it is incumbent on the followers of the philosophy of freedom to rededicate themselves to its widest possible dissemination, and to its ultimate adoption.

—Sydney Mayers