

In the April GEORGIST JOURNAL Basil Butterworth writes on George and Malthus and justifies Malthus in this way: "Malthus did at least try, with the limited statistical information available, to calculate, etc."

For Henry George the statistical game was meaningless. Having first satisfied himself that density of population in itself was not the cause of poverty and hunger (for instance finding much more density in parts of Europe than in India), overpopulation was for him simply "prevented by the physical fact that no more people can exist than can find subsistence."

Malthus only happened to be one of the obstacles Henry George had to tackle before being able to prove his true laws of rent and wages, and point to flaws in the distribution of wealth which were the immediate cause of hunger and poverty. As he expressed it, "The current theory of wages has never been put fairly upon its trial because, backed by the Malthusian theory, it has seemed in the minds of political economists a self-evident truth." And, "The Malthusian doctrine parries the demand for reform, and shelters selfishness from question and from conscience by the interposition of an inevitable necessity. A philosophy by which wealth may complacently button up its pocket when poverty asks an alms, and the rich Christian implore the good gifts of the All Father without any feeling of responsibility for the squalid misery that is festering but a square away."

Whatever concessions Malthus may have made here and there, such were the consequences of his teaching; and today one consequence is to attempt the sterilization of poor people. Thus Henry George found it necessary to treat this theory with all his thoroughness.