

letter from the editor

There are many facets to the work of Henry George. He explained the laws of economics with a clarity that has never been equalled. Through this he brought to light the fundamental causes of poverty amidst growing wealth. He demonstrated how this could be remedied through replacing all taxes on production with a tax on the rentable value of land.

But George's vision was wider and deeper than this. He was concerned with civilization as a whole and with the kind of life possible for all when poverty is overcome and all people are free to develop to their full potential. He saw with remarkable clarity that a society may flourish only when founded in justice. He saw that economics was ultimately an ethical science, and that a just society is possible only when the majority care for justice above private advantage or gain. The laws of economics may be seen clearly only through the prism of justice, and an intuition of justice is natural to everyone.

If the understanding of the laws of economics is open to all, as part of the natural understanding of society, as George claims, then the modern reduction of economics to mathematical formulae and statistics only serves to obscure the real working of economics from natural reason and observation. As represented in the media by politicians and economic experts one might never guess that it was everyday human life that was being discussed. For many ordinary people economics and politics seems to have nothing to do with them, and this endangers democracy. The modern world is moving towards anonymous bureaucracy, as Hannah Arendt suggests in her book *The Human Condition*. The tendency to reduce economics to

mere mechanism dehumanizes the world and obscures the ethical dimension that is the real ground of economics.

In this edition of Land&Liberty we have tried to widen the scope of articles to embrace aspects of George's thought which have tended to be overlooked in recent decades. Too often his contribution to economics gets restricted to the 'single tax' solution. Since this solution can be grasped only through understanding the laws of economics, and the meaning of the basic terms of land, labour and capital, for most people talk of the 'single tax' or 'LVT' is largely meaningless and serves only to obscure the real contribution of George to political economy.

So in this issue we have brought aspects of George's thought into debate with articles on Thomas Paine, Darwin and Piketty. George himself challenged some of the most influential people of his time, most notably the eminent social philosopher Herbert Spencer, showing how the prevailing scientific and social ideas of his age were false and harmful. It is part of our task, following on from George, to challenge some of the false scientific and social ideas of our own times, which prevent the abolition of poverty.



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