

Georgism Unplugged: the real third way

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THE PROSPERITY PARADOX – THE ECONOMIC WISDOM OF HENRY GEORGE, REDISCOVERED

Foreword & compiled by Dr. Mark Hassed
Chatsworth Village, Aus\$24.00*

THE "THIRD WAY" has been given a bad rap recently. This book shows the true – and really the only – third way; an economic philosophy which harnesses the best of the libertarian and the socialist ideals.

The book is a collection of ten of Henry George's speeches compiled by Hassed, with an excellent preface that encapsulates in about a thousand words exactly how and why we arrived at where we are today and then offering a Georgist solution. I would suggest that the book is worth its cover price for the preface alone. Take this from the preface:

The science of economics today is in a similar situation to that of astronomy five hundred years ago. At that time it was believed that the Earth was a flat, stationary object in the centre of the universe. Because of this paradigm, astronomers were forced to construct elaborate and completely false models of how the universe worked.

It wasn't until the paradigm was challenged by the observations of two great astronomers, Copernicus

(1473-1543) and Galileo (1564-1642), that it was finally abandoned. This change in belief took over a century and such was the strength of the opposition to the change that Galileo was imprisoned, tried before the Inquisition and forced, under threat of torture, to deny his discoveries.

George's ideas may be called a third way. It is a way that doesn't plan for a welfare state – not through lack of compassion, but through lack of need. It is a way that eschews force and regulation in favour of cooperation. It is a way that evens the distribution of wealth, not by taxation and

redistribution of income, but by removal of artificial privilege and the barriers to work. It is a way that liberates rather than shackles the potential in people

The speeches are as clear, down to earth, eloquent and inspiring, as we would expect of Henry George. Speeches however, in their demand for brevity, are a very different creature than that which grows out of the pen. Much as we may lament the fact, many young people find the prose style of Henry George's magnum opus, *Progress and Poverty*, heavy going. I am a fan of the method of argument

employed by George and many of his contemporaries. This method was: to state a proposition; then to exhaustively list all the possible objections to and arguments against the proposition; then to methodically tackle each objection, highlighting its false assumptions and erroneous analyses, then clinically disproving them with the application of the purest logic, thus validating

the original proposition.

But the methodology used in *Progress and Poverty*, for all its symmetry and pure logic, might as well be Greek or Martian for today's young readers. The irony is – and I'm sure I'm not Robinson Crusoe here – that it is precisely the oratorical nature of many of the passages which first drew me to the cause. Henry George was a Martin Luther King when it came to making music out of words.

Hassed was inspired to put this book

together when he discovered these speeches several years ago in a dusty second hand bookshop in Melbourne. This is George-Power – George unplugged. Each of the speeches is the raw essence of *Progress and Poverty*, without the – to some – plodding tone of the proofs and refutations. We get in the book, the purity of the speeches, each one a call to action, demanding justice. He exhorts his audience, with passion, not only to confront the inequities, but shows that a solution is within their grasp. Just imagine you're sitting in the hall, listening to this powerful and inspiring blast from his speech *Scotland and Scotsmen*, delivered on 18th Feb 1884 in the City Hall, Glasgow.

This city ... has been crowded with people driven from Ireland and your Highlands ... When I was over in Ireland two years ago I saw the process. I followed some of those red-coated evicting armies, and saw how, at the behest of men who had never set foot in Ireland, the military forces of the Empire were being used to turn out poor people from the cabins and the land on which their fathers had lived from time immemorial.

That great man ... Michael Davitt, is one of that class. His mother, forced from her home, carried him around begging, rather than go to the almshouse, and coming over here, he had, at an early age, when he ought to have been at play and at school, and not at work, to enter one of your factories, and that empty sleeve on his right side is a memento of that tyranny ... So with ... the people of Scotland. They have been crowded here in the same way ... This is the explanation of the fact that, although during this century ... the productive power of labour has increased so wonderfully, wages have not increased at all save where trades' unions have been formed and have been able to force them up a little ... The Irish have done some kicking against this infernal system, and you men in Scotland have got it yet to do. ... Take no stock of those people who preach moderation. Moderation is not what is needed; it is religious indignation. Grasp your thistle. Take this wild beast by the throat. Proclaim the grand truth that every human being born in Scotland has an inalienable and equal right to the soil of Scotland – a right that no law can do away with; ... You cannot divide land and secure equality ... if the people do their duty, the landlords will be routed – horse, foot, and dragoons.

If we fervently desire progress and an end to poverty; if we want to inspire the next generation of Georgists, with that burning desire; this book would make a very good start.

① Price includes p&p, US\$ 24.00, UK£16.00
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