

Purchase of Henry George's Birthplace

PITTSBURGHERS have a particular interest in the news of the purchase by the Henry George Foundation of America of the birthplace of the philosopher and economist in Philadelphia. Not only are the headquarters of the foundation here, but the Pittsburgh graded tax law, a modified form of the Single Tax principle, represents what is described as the most notable approach in this country to the Georgian views of taxation. The ideal of the out-and-out single taxer, of course, is to concentrate all taxation upon land and give the public the benefit of unearned increment, freeing industry of what they call a penalty upon its very enterprise. Formerly land held vacant here was touched lightly by taxation even as it was being greatly enhanced in value by the building around it, the builders being forced to pay chief toll almost as if being fined for adding to the wealth of the community. Now the builders in Pittsburgh are encouraged; improvements are taxed just half the rate levied upon vacant land. Building has increased accordingly. Also no personal property taxes are levied here for city purposes. The sharp turn in this country against giving away public franchises for private enrichment also may be attributed largely to Henry George.

Here is illustrated again how ideas once thought radical and impractical come gradually into general acceptance. While the views of Mr. George may never be applied wholly or by the terms in which he expressed them, there can be no doubt that his book, "Progress and Poverty," was one of the most important productions of the past century from the standpoint of stimulating the study of economics. It put life and heart interest into a topic that generally had been regarded as dull. His work also had a greater effect upon politics of the country than may ever have been realized, renewing the demand for freedom and general opportunity. Mr. George twice made notable canvasses as an independent candidate for the mayoralty of New York. His death came under dramatic circumstances just a few days before the election following his second campaign.

Gratitude for such work in the cause of humanity should be expressed generally in tributes to the memory of Henry George. Accordingly the news of the purchase of his birthplace to be made a shrine of the cause he represented must give wide satisfaction. The Foundation that has made the purchase is entitled to the thanks as well as the congratulations of the public. Such Pittsburgh Single Taxers as George E. Evans, William E. Shoyer, Percy R. Williams, Ralph E. Smith and William N. McNair deserve particular attention in this connection. They have long been working for the cause and with never-flagging zeal.

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A Henry George Shrine To Be In Philadelphia

(From the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger*)

THE chartering in Harrisburg of the Henry George Foundation of America is to be followed by the purchase of the birthplace of George in this city and by an attempt to raise \$1,000,000 for the support of an institute to stimulate interest in the study of political economy and especially the promulgation of the principles of the Georgian school of economics.

The birthplace in this city is to become a permanent memorial and museum. The headquarters of the proposed institute are to be in Pittsburgh. Among the incorporators are Warren Worth Bailey, the erratic editor of *Johnstown*; George E. Evans and Percy R. Williams, of Pittsburgh. They confidently believe that they will have no trouble in raising \$1,000,000 among those who accept the doctrines set down in "Progress and Poverty."

That Henry George's economic theories have survived destructive criticism for forty years may be regarded, according to the point of view, as a compliment to their soundness or as a sad commentary on the ability of men to think on economic problems.

George regarded the Single Tax on land as a cure-all for the inequities of existing taxation systems. As every one was aware of the faults of the existing systems, a certain proportion of the people gladly welcomed the remedy proposed. The faults have not disappeared. The lawmakers are still in the habit of passing tax laws without due thought. For example, Congress during the war planned to make a levy on the profits of the theatres, and it put a tax of 10 per cent on the price of theatre tickets, thinking that each week the managers would compute the amount of their receipts and lay aside 10 per cent to pay the tax. But every one knows that they simply increased the price of admission by 10 per cent and made it clear that that increase was to pay the tax. So the theatre-goers paid the tax and the managers went untaxed. Although the leviers of taxes do not seem to be aware of it, that is what happens with every tax that is levied. It is passed on to the ultimate consumer.

The notion that the big corporations and the rich men can be made to pay a heavy tax and thus relieve the poor man is so widespread that men who ought to know better accept it, and they have been damning Congress for reducing the surtax on large incomes. It need surprise no one if the Democratic platform in 1928 contains a plank denouncing the Republicans for favoring the rich at the expense of the poor.

Now, Henry George's theory was suggested to him by the conditions which prevailed in California. Large tracts of land had been bought at a low price. The owners refused to sell as the population of the State increased. They