# FOREWORD

IN 1879 WAS published a book, which furnishes a text for the pages herein to follow. In *Progress and Poverty* Henry George demonstrated beyond peradventure the foundation truth that all men are entitled to equality in the resources of Nature and that the result of a denial of this equality is the great cause of the social distresses which afflict mankind. He laid down the basic principles upon which all government must rest if the progress of mankind is to be furthered. The present book will have little meaning to one who regards existing landed institutions as immutable and who is unwilling to consider changes tending to create and maintain equality in right among men.

*Progress and Poverty* may be viewed from two aspects. The first relates to the rights of all mankind. In all the years which have elapsed since its publication nothing has added to the force of its arguments on this point and nothing I believe could detract from them. The other regards the immediately practical side—our ability to put into play the principles laid down by Henry George. To this it must be confessed he gave minor consideration. His conclusion was in substance the same as had been insisted upon by Patrick Dove in his *Theory of Human Progression* published a number of years previously. In brief it called for the levying of all taxation upon land values, freeing improvements and personal property from taxes. Both writers believed this would restore equality in human opportunities lost by the private ownership of land. While Dove was willing to stop at this point, George recognized a right in "running water." Neither discussed the questions whether taxation was the answer to the ownership of subsoil wealth,

control of tracts devoted to such specialized undertakings as railroads, etc., dams for the generation of electric power or the management of forests, although George did in his *Social Problems* recognize the advantage to come to the community through the ownership of certain most important undertakings which might better be conducted by the State. Absence of such discussion in his main work has in many instances led to confusion in the minds of some of George's followers.

This writer believes that it is equally as important to know how to apply principles in which one believes as to accept the principles themselves. In this special connection we may ask ourselves: Granting that a large part of the application of the fundamentals of *Progress and Poverty* may be met by taxation of land values (or after assumption of land ownership by the State by rental to individuals), how is this part of the ultimate end to be gained? Can taxation be the answer to forest cultivation or the administration of subsoil wealth or the handling of railroads or the manufacture and distribution of electric power created by publicly or privately owned dams? Further, may we not to advantage review the matter of possible compensation to private owners and, regarding it as not an essential part of George's foundation ideas, consider whether any should be paid and if so how much?

In large measure George did not solve or undertake to solve the questions to which reference has just been made. This is understandable when we reflect that since his writings many of these matters have assumed an importance they did not possess when *Progress and Poverty* was written. The matter of the forests was not so exigent, for a much larger part of this country was yet a "forest primeval." While the existence of subsoil wealth was well known, yet since his time petroleum and gas have offered new and gigantic problems. Questions of transportation were by no

means unknown, yet, since, their growth has been tremendous. Production of electricity, of little importance in his time, is now most important. It is therefore not strange that George spent so little time over these matters, scarcely recognizing them as a part of the practical side of what may well be regarded as his problem.

We are told frankly that after its termination our present system of so-called "American free enterprise" must be maintained, in fact if not in express words that at all hazards the existing social structure must be continued with no change. This position ignores the fact that today there exists nothing approaching freedom in our undertakings. For the purposes of this little book we must ignore what so many regard as the faults of our patent system and the shortcomings of private control over money, the lifeblood of all commerce and the other social and political errors of which we have a right to complain. We must pass by the evils inseparable from control of so much of our industry through gigantic combinations arising from many causes. Our gaze must be centered upon the greatest though not the sole cause of inequalities among men—pointed out as such very vividly by Rousseau two centuries ago and brilliantly illustrated by Henry George.

How can there be any "free enterprise" when no one can drive a nail or plow a furrow for himself unless he first buy permission from another man to occupy or use the earth upon which he works? When did we ever enjoy "free enterprise" in this land we fondly call ours? Certainly this has not been the case since early in the history of this country when the first white settlers appeared upon our shores. Why should those who profess a desire for freedom overlook the prime necessity of mankind—land upon which to work—asking that the ancient wrongs be perpetuated without alteration, and why should they do this in the name of

that freedom to which we all profess adherence? We must fight to be free of taxation upon all commerce, upon every restriction upon the laudable efforts of man to earn his bread, build his home and furnish it, perform all needful industrious acts without license, and without tribute in any shape to his fellows.

The general purpose of this book is not so much to answer definitely and at once all the various problems just spoken of as to raise them for discussion with relation to the general thesis of *Progress and Poverty*. In this we may not be too dogmatic, and this for several reasons. We are living in a changing world. The conditions to which we address ourselves are not those of one hundred years ago or even sixty-five years past. Progress of civilization offers new facets to reflect the light to advancing day. No standard of action remains fixed.

For another reason our work must be temporary. We will all agree that justice should prevail, and equality of opportunity among men. But what is justice? How can we know absolutely when we are just or even protecting human rights? I am impressed by the fact that in England a hundred-and-fifty years ago two hundred crimes were punishable by death. Today the supreme penalty is inflicted for only a few crimes. The judge of old who directed the hanging of a man for stealing fifty dollars thought he was displaying justice. Today we do not think so, and we are slowly concluding that we know little of real justice. So it may well be as to the means of attaining equality. Will certain means absolutely bring about the ends aimed at? Are they the best attainable? We know that in all scientific matters we ask these questions and as to them we are always striving for perfection. Why may this not be the case in the elusive science we are studying? We may recall the words of Lowell:

"New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth."

We need not let these words discourage or unnerve us for

"They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of truth."

If this book has the slightest influence in leading the followers of Henry George—and the infinitely greater number who should in the interest of their own well-being be numbered among them—to consider and examine how they may guide the bark of State into the channels of safety through increasing attention to the welfare of the common man, of whom so much is said and for whom so little is done, it will serve its purpose.

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