

# *Our Liberal Heritage*

by SELIM N. TIDEMAN

STRANGE may seem the fact that the simple and fundamental philosophy of Henry George should today be less known among our people than it was toward the end of George's lifetime. Any movement is governed not only by the impelling force, but also by the resistance that it meets and the lateral pressures by which it is affected.

I feel this movement was at its height about 1893. I remember the national conference in Chicago that year. I was rather young, but had been taught the basic principles of the single tax. I had just arrived from a foreign country and did not understand the language, but could see the hope and enthusiasm in the assembled delegates. My father, who had been in this country years ahead of me, took me to a meeting in Fullerton Hall, in the Art Institute of Chicago, where the conference was held, and pointed out for me Henry George, Father McGlynn, Tom Johnson and "sockless" Jerry Simpson. There was Louis F. Post, chairman, and John Z. White—both of whom later became my dear friends. All parts of the country were represented in this assembly.

Tom L. Johnson and Jerry Simpson were respectively members of Congress from Ohio and Kansas and stood for free trade. The Wilson tariff bill was then before the House, Johnson, a steel mill owner, wanted steel on the free list. The story of Father McGlynn is too well known for me to repeat.

Back and south of the Art Institute was a section now known as Grant

Park. There 2,000 men slept in the grass each summer night because they had no other place to go. I sometimes accompanied my father as he was going about the machine shops in Chicago's near west side seeking a job, and saw the lineshafts standing still, and hardly a man working. As the depression softened and the weather got cold, I saw a hundred men at the gate of the Deering Harvester plant at 7 o'clock in the morning hoping that some plant foreman might come out and hire one or two of them.

Population and industry were huddled in a tightly circumscribed area, and working people lived in housing which has been materially improved since that time, but is now rated as slum property unfit for habitation.

There was then no difficulty in persuading the average man that there was something wrong in our economy and, if the man had any intellect, to make him see through the land question. The most difficult obstacle was the fact that taxes were low, did not seem oppressive; the working man was nearly always a tenant and knew nothing about them. Hence, a change in taxation did not seem important to him.

However, a few years later we filled an old concert hall to capacity every Friday evening with people who wanted to know about the single tax.

In 1896 came Bryan and "Free Silver" to drag a red herring across the trail of the depression. At the time we looked upon this movement as progress in our direction in spite of the fact that not many of us were

in agreement with it. Even Henry George saw things that way. We made some wayside friends and helped them carry the load, but when the show was over they no longer knew us. The diversion did not pay out. The Socialists became very active and with them we had no common ground. The socialism of that period, which was pure Marxism based on the Communist Manifesto, attracted the disgruntled. It was much easier to understand than our fundamental reform.

The Mark Hanna—McKinley "full dinner pail" did not create much satisfaction among the populace, but then came Teddy Roosevelt bearing down on the "Malefactors of Great Wealth," which drew the attention of many people.

We got tired. People with enough intelligence to understand what we had to offer were the same people who were finding a way to make a comfortable living. Land was made more available by improved transportation, and great advances were evident in the housing field.

Still, there were such sonorous voices in the wilderness as Jim Brown, representing the Manhattan Single Tax Club, a wonderful old fellow;

and Frederick H. Monroe, father of our John Lawrence, who by means of stingy subscriptions intensely solicited, kept John Z. White, and sometimes other able men, on country-wide speaking tours. Louis F. Post's weekly, *The Public*, kept us informed of world progress for nearly 25 years. And there was Reedy's *Mirror* in St. Louis, another important publication. William Marion Reedy lost no opportunity to promote the single tax in his highly cultural periodical.

When the depression of the thirties came, our movement had lost its momentum and had to be started from scratch in competition with the *Great Voice* from the White House. The old liberalism died or was silenced in this country as in Great Britain, and each group of interests turned to the government for the solution of their specific problems at the expense of the whole.

It was at this juncture that the Henry George School of Social Science was instituted. It has been from the start a great liberalizing agency finding its way under modern conditions. It remains a focal point for the survival of true liberalism.

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**THE PHILADELPHIA EXTENSION** of the Henry George School, now "at home" in the Henry George Birthplace at 413 South 10th Street, acknowledges gratefully the following recent acquisitions:

An extensive collection of books on economic subjects from the library of former Pennsylvania Congressman Charles B. Eckert, president of the Henry George Foundation of America.

The complete works of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, Father of the Chinese Republic, presented by Dr. Heng-tse-Tu, director of the Henry George School at Tai Pei, Formosa.

Danish editions of Henry George's works, from the Henry George Forening; also a collection of interesting pamphlets, speeches and newspaper comments of the late Hon. George Fowlds, C.B.E. from New Zealand; also a collection of books from Joseph Moran of Brooklyn, New York.

An original letter from Albert Einstein addressed to Mrs. Rebecca Evans, one of the donors who contributed toward the purchase of the birthplace, together with the translation from German to English which appeared in *Land & Freedom*, the British Henry George publication.