

This edition of Land&Liberty marks the beginning of an effort to meet a need that is long overdue - to help young people participate constructively in social and economic reform. We take our lead from Henry George who said: 'Social reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting; by complaints and denunciation; by the formation of parties, or the making of revolutions; but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas. Until there be correct thought, there cannot be right action; and when there is correct thought, right action will follow. Power is always in the hands of the masses of men. What oppresses the masses is their own ignorance, their own short-sighted selfishness.'

The 'correct thought leading to right action' that George refers to is not to be confused with any subjective political correctness that may be fashionable for a time. He is referring to thinking that reflects accurate observation and impartial evaluation that makes it possible to apprehend the truth of the matter. The 'ignorance' and 'short sighted selfishness' refers to a failure to acknowledge the true nature of human society, man, and the importance of economic justice in securing everybody's true happiness.

People learn from direct observation and experience of the world about them and from what others say, write, do and produce. What they learn affects how they think and crystallises in a body of ideas, theories, opinions and beliefs that they adopt and, in turn, manifests in what they say, write, do and produce – and how they subsequently observe and think! Most importantly people learn and think about themselves; and the ideas that people hold about 'me' and 'mine' rule their lives, and limit what they may then learn.

Henry George sought to protect his own thinking from error by constant reference to observable phenomenon and in the order, regularity and patterns he observed in the world and in people's behaviour he saw evidence of natural law. This became his test for the truth in any statement – is it consistent with the law? George recognised that man, society, the earth, work and the man made world are natural phenomena each conforming to the laws of their own nature. He then came to see how there was a way to distribute the man made world (wealth) throughout society that reflected the nature of its production. He noticed also how social and economic problems arose where this natural distribution was ignored.

Today everybody is subjected to an astounding and confusing range of economic ideas, theories, opinions and beliefs from every direction. Most are subjective and coloured by the interests of the advocates. This is tragic given that the future of mankind and the planet are at stake. There are signs that an increasing number of young people are now eager to better understand social, economic and environmental affairs and we are sure they could do no better than to explore with us what Henry George had to say on the subject.

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