

Henry George's Contribution to Socialism in America, 1870-1900

A Senior Honors Project Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of History, University  
Of Hawaii at Manoa

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For Bachelor of History with Honors

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4/15/17

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Peter H. Hoffenberg, Dr. Marcus Daniel, and Dr. Sumner La Croix, for all the help they have given me throughout my work on this thesis. They have been very patient with me. I am very appreciative that they have been willing to take the time out of their schedules to read and critique my work. I would also like to include with the committee members Dr. James Kraft, who was present for my defense and offered his help despite being an unofficial committee member.

A special thanks goes to Dr. Hoffenberg, who has been with me since the beginning of this Honors journey. He helped me choose a topic and has been encouraging me in my writing and focus ever since. His willingness to guide me is worthy of great honors.

## Abstract

The Gilded Age was a period of industrial development in the United States from approximately 1870 to 1900. In many ways, it helped to usher in the modern world. With the large growth in business, there also arose a displacement among workers who were migrating from farms to cities and adapting to new methods of management and business. This dissatisfaction led to the creation of labor unions and the spread of socialism in America. Henry George (1839 to 1897), a political and social leader of this period, was inspired to write his manifesto, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth: The Remedy*, by the social conditions he witnessed. Many socialist thinkers during the Gilded Age and since read George's work and were struck by its socialist leanings. In their writings, most of them conceded that George contributed to bringing socialist ideas to the public with his bestseller. However, some thinkers took issue with his single land tax principle that they judged to be overrated or not radical enough. George has been largely overlooked in the history of the Gilded Age, but during George's life, *Progress and Poverty* reached the minds of reformers, politicians, writers, lecturers, and social leaders.

**Keywords: socialism, anarchism, Progress and Poverty, single land tax**

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In his diary on December 4, 1887, Rutherford B. Hayes, who served as President of the United States from 1877 to 1881, contemplated the evil of his time, the “excessive wealth in the hands of the few meant extreme poverty, ignorance, vice, and wretchedness as the lot of many.”<sup>1</sup> In this entry he mentioned Henry George, a well-known social figure who lived from 1839 to 1897 and author of the 1879 bestseller, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth: The Remedy*. George was inspired to write his most famous work by the same universal problem that Hayes observed of the coexistence of great poverty with great wealth. In his work, George called for a single land tax that would eventually lead to public ownership of land. Hayes wrote,

Henry George is strong where he portrays the rottenness of the present system. We are, to say the least, not yet ready for his remedy. We may reach and remove the difficulty by changes in the laws regulating corporations, descent of property, wills, trusts, taxation, and a host of other important interests, not omitting lands and other property.<sup>2</sup>

With this writing, Hayes joined the pantheon of scholars, reformers, politicians, and writers who were struck by George and *Progress and Poverty*. With the book’s popularity came criticism and praise from many different schools of thought. The period in which George lived and wrote is now referred to as the Gilded Age, roughly from 1870 to 1900. This was a tumultuous time for the United States. The Civil War just ended, railroads were built, national corporations were created, immigration levels rose, and laborers and employers rushed to adapt to new industrialized methods of business. The socialist movement added to the turbulent political and social atmosphere of the Gilded Age. Labor unions and strikes, which appeared

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<sup>1</sup> Rutherford B. Hayes, *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, Nineteenth President of the United States* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1922-1926), 382.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

throughout the country in previously-unseen numbers during this period, sometimes had socialist leanings, which added to the debate surrounding them.

Socialist and anarchist thinkers' writings addressed George and *Progress and Poverty*, like Laurence Gronlund's 1887 pamphlets "Socialism vs. The Single Tax" and "The Insufficiency of George's Theory" and selected issues of Benjamin Tucker's periodical *Liberty*, which was published from 1881 to 1908. Some socialists regarded George as not radical enough and believed his single tax policy would not provide the cure for society as George promised. However, other socialists like Louis Post and George Bernard Shaw praised George. No matter what their personal opinion was on George and the adequacy of his ideas, almost all socialists of the time ceded that George made enormous strides in bringing socialist ideals to the public. George's lasting influence on socialism and the economic and political world in general can be observed at a banquet that took place in 1905 celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Progress and Poverty*. Reformers and writers including William Jennings Bryan, William Lloyd Garrison, Tom Johnson, Albert Shaw, and George Bernard Shaw attended to show their respect to the legacy of George and the impact he had.

Socialists and those opposed to socialism were among the most important groups who debated the legitimacy of George and *Progress and Poverty*. George, who claimed to not be a socialist, pushed the wave of socialist thinking forward with *Progress and Poverty* and his involvement in the economic discussion during his lifetime. Despite the lack of recognition and awareness of the work by the modern public, there was a time when public figures, authors, economists, politicians, activists, scientists, among many others all had an opinion on it. Although he has been overshadowed by more prominent figures over time, his recognition and the debate surrounding *Progress and Poverty* among socialists and other social leaders highlight

his contribution to the rise of socialism in America during the Gilded Age. His work and the conversation surrounding his work revealed the complexities of the socialist movement and the different views held by socialists.

Henry George was one of the many social thinkers of the Gilded Age who believed in and called for change. He was, at different times, an “adventurer, gold prospector, worker, sailor, composer, journalist, government bureaucrat, and lecturer.”<sup>3</sup> George was born in 1839 and raised in a large Christian family in Philadelphia. He stopped going to school at the age of thirteen and began working. He did not attend college. When he was fifteen he went on his first sailing venture. On his way to port he visited New York City for the first time, appearing at first impression to be an exciting and industrious place. When George returned home, he struggled with work and decided to go to California for new opportunities. He switched professions often as a young man and was a self-proclaimed “tramp” for many years. He began writing for newspapers. Living in San Francisco and Sacramento, George and his new wife Annie, and their growing family struggled much financially. Writing for the San Francisco *Times*, *Herald*, and *Chronicle*, George followed and joined in the economic discussion of California.<sup>4</sup> He travelled back and forth between New York and Philadelphia in the 1860s. His visits to New York City after the first time impressed upon him the wealth and the want of cities.

George’s beliefs that shaped the message of *Progress and Poverty* could not have been formed outside of the Gilded Age. During this period, the United States saw rapid industrialization, the creation of big businesses, western expansion, political corruption, and a

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953), 183.

<sup>4</sup> Charles A. Barker’s article “Henry George and the California Background of *Progress and Poverty*” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1945): 97-115, attempts to explain the pivotal land questions of the Gilded Age through George’s work. Barker describes George as a “disremembered” figure in history, who is neither well known nor well forgotten. Barker argues that *Progress and Poverty* was very much a product of its time, and that it could not have been written without George’s experience living in California. George was able to experience the development and the increase in land value in California, an issue that was critical to his analysis of land and the creation of the single land tax policy.

large disparity between wealth and poverty for some groups. The name “Gilded Age” derived from Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner’s 1873 novel, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*. This name promotes the image of the period of hiding corruption and poverty underneath a superficial exterior of great prosperity. Along with the great wealth in the creation of big, national businesses and high levels of immigration came high levels of poverty, two great depressions, inequality, and a limited concentration of wealth.

Historians of the Gilded Age have written its history from various perspectives. Scholars of the earlier twentieth century placed a larger focus on big names and big industries than later historians, who have chosen to focus more on issues concerning labor relations and the inner workings of firms and government. A popular topic for historians has been the robber barons: wealthy men like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and J.P. Morgan who created large businesses and controlled the national industries during this time, such as oil, steel, and railroads. They are also known for having nearly enough political power to hinder the enforcement of anti-trust policies.<sup>5</sup>

In the writing of Gilded Age history, a recent shift has occurred trying to move away from what is already thought about the period.<sup>6</sup> The Gilded Age had corruption and the creation of big business, but its most central characteristic was the social changes and upheaval that occurred in this period between the divisive drama of the Civil War and the revolutionary

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<sup>5</sup> Works on the robber barons include *The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists, 1861-1901* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962) by Matthew Josephson, *Andrew Carnegie* by David Nasaw (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), and *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller* by Ron Chernow (New York: Random House, 1998). The earlier historian Josephson’s characterizations of the robber barons as corrupt businessmen have created stereotypes about them and the Gilded Age. Later historians, like Chernow and Nasaw, present a more complex view on the men who found extreme business success, were philanthropists, and increased tensions between laborers and employers.

<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Calhoun, “From the Editor: Moving Beyond Stereotypes of the Gilded Age,” *OAH Magazine of History* 13, no.4 (1999): 3-4.; Ballard C. Campbell, “Understanding Economic Change in the Gilded Age,” *OAH Magazine of History* 13, no.4 (1999): 16-20. Both of these authors recognize the generalizations made about the period, mentioning historians like Josephson that have contributed to this. They call for creating a more comprehensive view of the period that would move toward other fields besides the robber barons and corruption.



Progressive Era of the twentieth century. The period contained many paradoxes. From an economic standpoint alone, it was a time of great economic growth, great poverty, great industrialization, huge businesses, millions of poor workers, the beginning of American socialism, and the blossoming of American capitalism.<sup>7</sup> Labor strikes and unions formed to counteract the mistreatment of workers in the industrializing business world.

The Gilded Age was a ripe time for socialism to make a grander entrance into the United States. Labor and management changed drastically. Factories and nationwide industries could not be run the same way a small farm could in the past. The new industrialized and mechanized methods of manufacturing required large numbers of workers, interchangeable parts, and a new system of management that would allow the greatest level of production possible, sometimes at the expense of workers' safety and physical and mental health. These changes did not adapt seamlessly into the American workplace. The general sentiment of workers was that they were often treated unfairly and were not paid well for the long hours they worked. Nominally, from 1870 to 1895, urban wages decreased by 10 percent. However, in real terms, urban wages increased by 30 percent over this period, while the consumer price index decreased by 31 percent.<sup>8</sup> The consumer price index and the money supply decreased mostly due to the attempts to move currency back to the gold standard after it had moved away during the Civil War. Prices dropped also thanks to improved methods of agriculture and manufacturing production.

The United States was industrializing, following the trend of Great Britain. This industrialization forced a shift from a rural to an urban economy. Between 1880 and 1910, the

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<sup>7</sup> Later historians like Leon Fink, in his works like *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) and *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), have made strides toward this comprehensive view of the Gilded Age.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Late Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Factor-Price Convergence: Were Heckscher and Ohlin Right?" *The Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 4 (1994): 908.

percent of American citizens living in urban areas increased from 26 to 46 percent.<sup>9</sup> Labor force and employment grew within agriculture and manufacturing sectors because of the improvements in technology. Employment in agriculture grew from 6,790,000 in 1870 to 11,680,000 in 1900, and employment in manufacturing grew from 2,470,000 to 5,895,000.<sup>10</sup> Unemployment rose drastically after the panic of 1893, from 3 percent to 11.7 percent of the civilian work force, but leveled out again by the end of the decade.<sup>11</sup> Gross national product during the Gilded Age increased, in 1958 dollars, from 23.1 billion to 76.9 billion.<sup>12</sup> The United States, despite any falls in wages, was growing dramatically in wealth. Immigrants from around the world flocked to America in the hopes of benefitting from the increasing prosperity.

The nominal decrease in wages, increase in immigration, economic shocks from the panics of 1873 and 1893 and the growing shift from agriculture to manufacturing, and the dissatisfaction that came with these changes were the breeding ground for the organization of labor strikes, unions, and parties. From 1897 to 1900 alone, labor union membership increased by more than 350,000 members.<sup>13</sup> These desires to increase the wealth of the people and allow more freedom in the workplace were influenced by socialist ideas and leaders of the period.

In the 1870s and 1880s, Charles Darwin's ideas were coming to the United States. This movement represented a change in itself, but its acceptance by some groups brought with it a movement toward socialism as well. Those who were inclined toward socialism were also inclined toward the idea of Social Darwinism, which spawned from Darwin's teachings. This evolutionist version of socialism fit better into the American atmosphere compared to the

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Guglielmo and Werner Troesken, "The Gilded Age," in *Government and the American Economy: A New History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 275.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition, Part 1" (Washington, D.C., 1975), 139.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

aggressive German socialism of Karl Marx. Many American socialist thinkers strove toward a utopia, influenced by English philosopher Herbert Spencer's liberal and Social Darwinist ideas, avoiding the violent class conflict of Marxism. Even those who supported Marx tamed their views with the influence of Spencer.<sup>14</sup> A mixture of imported and home-grown ideas about socialism emerged to produce a movement that worked toward change in America's traditionally capitalist society.

Some of the most well-known and influential socialist thinkers of the time were John Bates Clark and Richard Ely. They were economists with a Republican and evangelical background who were pushed toward socialism by the injustice and poverty they witnessed in American and Europe. Laurence Gronlund was a more extreme thinker with Marxist tendencies. Gronlund was "the first among the English-speaking Gilded Age socialists to propose a Marxist solution to America's social problems."<sup>15</sup> Daniel De Leon, a Marxist and Spencerian socialist, became the leader of the Socialist Labor Party in 1890. The party was the period's longest-lived socialist organization. De Leon took a more revolutionary stance and scoffed at reformers and intellectuals who called for a cooperative social order.<sup>16</sup>

Although socialist ideologies influenced many movements in the Gilded Age, socialism was not widely accepted by the American public and faced much opposition, just as it does today. The Haymarket riot in Chicago in 1886 created fear and resentment against socialism and anarchism. During the riot, a bomb set off during a labor strike and the ensuing police gunfire injured sixty-seven policemen, eight of whom died, and several civilians.<sup>17</sup> Even Clark, who was considered a mild socialist, faced backlash after this event and withdrew from his socialist ideas

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<sup>14</sup> Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870-1920* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

during the reaction to the Haymarket riot.<sup>18</sup> Other strikes, like the 1894 Pullman Strike and 1892 Homestead Strike, brought the dissatisfaction of the labor force even more into the public conscious.

George saw in the Gilded Age the same great economic disparity that caused labor unions to form and strikes to break out. He used this setting to write his book about great poverty always accompanying great wealth. George contested that the public policies designed to prevent this division were unsatisfactory and were the cause of all poverty and inequality. His analysis and suggestions of new policies had a wide influence on socialist and classic liberalist policies in the new century and helped to spark the Progressive Era.

*Progress and Poverty* begins with the assumed truth that great poverty always accompanies great wealth, which in George's eyes, was indisputable during the Gilded Age. This is the problem to which George presents his solution of a single land tax. George affirms in his introduction, "Where the conditions to which material progress everywhere tends are most fully realized...we find the deepest poverty, the sharpest struggle for existence, and the most enforced idleness."<sup>19</sup> The stated purpose of his influential work is to find the reasons behind this phenomenon and the solution to this problem.

Henry George found many issues with the contemporary political economy of his time. Throughout the course of the work he critiques the works and ideas of influential economic thinkers. Because the current thinking, according to him, is all wrong in citing that wages are drawn from capital, George takes the time to debunk common thought altogether and economic thought, even from the most basic definitions of capital, labor, and land. He devotes a whole chapter of the book to disproving the widely popular Malthusian theory, which states that

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<sup>18</sup> Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Henry George, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth: The Remedy* (New York: H. George & Co., 1960), p. 6.

“population, tending to increase, must, when unrestrained, ultimately press against the limits of subsistence...which makes the procurement of subsistence progressively more and more difficult.”<sup>20</sup> This theory is counterintuitive because in the real world more men can produce more food, verifying the very opposite of Malthus’ doctrine. The trouble with this theory is that it places the blame of poverty on naturally occurring circumstances and off of political policies and “the greed of the rich and the selfishness of the powerful.”<sup>21</sup> This is especially relevant for George because his argument for the remedy to society’s disparities of wealth is a change in political and economic policies.

George goes on to explain the nature of the distribution of wealth and returns to three factors of production: land, labor, and capital. The returns to land are expressed in rent; the returns to labor are expressed in wages; and the returns to capital are expressed in interest. Because “capital is a result of labor”<sup>22</sup> and “labor can be exerted only upon land,”<sup>23</sup> land is the starting point for production. This idea is true in an agriculturally-based economy, but was becoming less valid during the industrialization in the Gilded Age and the transition from a rural to urban society. George explains rent and the law of rent, coming to the conclusion that “no matter what be the increase in productive power, if the increase in rent keeps pace with it, neither wages nor interest can increase.”<sup>24</sup> Rent is what holds back the increase in wealth for laborers and producers, as the returns for their labor and capital are dependent on what is taken first for the return to land. Wages are but the product of one’s labor. Capital can only be created through labor and thus, interest and wages rise and fall together.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.163.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

Wages and interest depend on the value of rent of land. This dependence is what creates poverty. George asserts, “We have now seen that while advancing population tends to advance rent, so all the causes that in a progressive state of society operate to increase the productive power of labor tend, also, to advance rent, and not to advance wages or interest. The increased production of wealth goes ultimately to the owners of land in increased rent.”<sup>25</sup> George firmly states that land speculation “is the true cause of industrial depression.”<sup>26</sup> It is typical that when production increases, rent also rises, causing wages to fall. From 1870 to 1895, real land rent increased by 74 percent. The nominal wage-rental ratio dropped by more than 25 percent.<sup>27</sup> These statistics illustrate that George’s problem with land rent had relevance during his lifetime. Although wages were increasing, rent was also increasing at a larger rate. George wrote that land is necessary to production; it is necessary to labor. No wealth can be produced when labor is cut off from the natural resources of land. It is clear then, for George, that “when labor cannot satisfy its wants...it can be from no other causes than that labor is denied access to land”<sup>28</sup> because of rent prices.

The culmination of this argument of the power of rent to influence wages and interest is George’s statement, “The great cause of inequality in the distribution of wealth is inequality in the ownership of land.”<sup>29</sup> George believes that private ownership of land and the monopolization of land cause poverty because they hinder labor’s production, preventing increase of wealth and wages. He calls for making land common property. George then defends this position by declaring that the current system is unnatural in denying labor its own produce. Many who own land produce nothing on their own, and yet receive much of the profits. He compares private

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>27</sup> O’Rourke and Williamson, “Late Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Factor-Price Convergence,” 908.

<sup>28</sup> George, *Progress and Poverty*, 272.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 295.

ownership of land to slavery. Despite the acceptance of private land ownership as a staple of civilized society, George concludes that it is not necessary to induce labor to work it. He writes, “Were land treated as public property it would be used and improved as soon as there was need for its use and improvement.”<sup>30</sup>

George’s plan to implement the public ownership of land is “to abolish all taxation save that upon land values.”<sup>31</sup> This will discourage private ownership, stop land speculation, and increase production. This tax would be cheaply collected since the government would no longer have to worry about all other taxes. Labor and capital would be free to collect the complete profit of their product, inducing laborers to work more and wages to rise. No one will lose because the land will be unchanged. It will only then be free to reach its full productive power, unhindered by rent, land speculation, and private ownership.

George has enormous faith in this policy he sets forth. He believes it can simplify the role of government, which would no longer need occupy its time collecting different taxes and settling disputes of land ownership, thereby allowing public officers to turn their attention to more pressing problems. Since this policy would eliminate poverty, all issues associated with poverty, like greed and lust for riches, would also be eliminated.

George spends the majority of his work discussing basic economic principles. For the era in which he was writing, his ideas are straightforward and evocative of a more progressive time. He discourages the views of past economic thinkers despite their popularity. In the end, George’s main purpose in writing *Progress and Poverty* was to call for change. He needed to explain his thinking from basic principles up in order for the audience to know that he understood about which he was writing and in order for them to be even partially open to accepting his radical

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 401.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 406.

proposal of a single land tax. Private property has always been a strong component in American ideology. George was radical to suggest that land should be publicly owned and that those who own land should suffer under a land tax. In the midst of the injustice and inequality that George saw in his time, he provided a clear solution to these problems. The simplicity of his solution and the clarity of his writing throughout his work attracted many members of the public and the intellectual sphere because it was easy to understand. It represented a hope for a flourishing future.<sup>32</sup>

The book was a best seller, and George soon became an international figure. Richard L. Andelson's collection, *Critics of Henry George: A Centenary Appraisal of Their Strictures on Progress and Poverty*, acknowledges, "Within less than two years of its publication by a commercial press, *Progress and Poverty* was a runaway best-seller, and its author's name, an international household word."<sup>33</sup> Immediately after publishing his work, recognition came slowly. He eventually began speaking in Europe and upon returning home, was received with great honors. His work became hotly discussed and critiqued, but it also found its devotees.

During his lifetime, George dealt with criticisms from both socialists and anti-socialists. But overall, nearly all scholars, thinkers, economists, reformers, political leaders, and everyday people knew *Progress and Poverty*. George went all around the country and Europe lecturing on the ideas in his work. He was well-known in the political and economic spheres of America.<sup>34</sup> He continued writing throughout his life, producing other books like *Social Problems* and *Protection*

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<sup>32</sup> George's life and works have been a way for historians to study the Gilded Age. Edward T. O'Donnell, who published *Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality: Progress and Poverty in the Gilded Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) asks why George was so popular and influential. He connects the rise of his popularity with the rise of labor movements in the United States. Most importantly, he analyzes George's life in the context of the Gilded Age and his critique of the free-market system. The Gilded Age, according to O'Donnell, was the perfect breeding ground for an evaluation like George's.

<sup>33</sup> Robert V. Andelson, *Henry George: A Centenary Appraisal of Their Strictures on Progress and Poverty* (London: Associated University Press, 1979), 389.

<sup>34</sup> Charles A. Barker, *Henry George* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).



or *Free Trade*. For the rest of his life George never wavered from his strong beliefs set forth in *Progress and Poverty*.

Whether or not George was a socialist, socialist thinkers during his lifetime were interested in George's works. The discussion around him even reached the ears of Karl Marx. In a 1881 letter to Friedrich Adolph Sorge, the German communist who was involved in German and American labor movements, Marx called George "utterly backward" for believing that a land tax would solve all of society's problems and for not understanding the basic principles behind value, profit, rent, and interest. He gave George some credit, writing that his book was "a first, if unsuccessful, attempt at emancipation from the orthodox political economy."<sup>35</sup> Marx's opinion on *Progress and Poverty* mirrored many of the reactions that socialist leaders in the United States had.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1880s the Central Labor Union approached George with interest in having him run for mayor of New York City for labor in 1886. Although hesitant at first and wary of the temptations and perils of politics, George accepted the nomination with the hopes that he would not waver from his ideals and make them into real policies. He lost to the Democrats, but received nearly seventy thousand votes, an unprecedented amount for a labor party and within just ten or twenty thousand votes short of winning. The winner, Abram S. Hewitt, received about

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<sup>35</sup> "Marx to Friedrich Adolph Sorge in Hoboken; June 20, 1881," *Marx Engels Internet Archive*, accessed March 20, 2017. [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/letters/81\\_06\\_20.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/letters/81_06_20.htm).

<sup>36</sup> George's influence on socialism has been focused more in Britain than in America. The historian Peter d'A Jones has produced several works on George and British socialism. In works like "Henry George and British Labor Politics," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 46, no. 2 (1987): 245-56 and "Henry George and British Socialism," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 47, no. 4 (1988): 473-91, George's influence on the Fabians is emphasized. The Fabian Society was a socialist group in Britain in the late 1800s that endeavored to institute socialist principles using existing institutions. This society represented a milder form of socialism that had no need of total and possibly violent social upheaval. The Fabians incorporated George's teachings with their own. It is still debated whether George was a socialist or not, and if so, to what extent. During his life, some accused him of being socialist or communist. George's inclusion in collections like Helen Alfred's *Toward a Socialist America: A Symposium of Essays by Fifteen Contemporary American Socialists* illustrates the open opinion one can have about his socialist tendencies, or lack thereof. Alfred undeniably believes that George was a socialist, but his status as a socialist was debated by his contemporaries and himself.

ninety thousand votes. He and many others believed that he was unfairly defeated and that illegal voting fraud had prevented him from winning. Despite his loss, he was able to receive almost ten thousand more votes than political newcomer Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>37</sup> After accepting defeat he continued going around the country speaking.

The United Labor Party, officially formed under the candidacy of George and in connection to the Central Labor Union, fell apart and merged with the Democratic Party in 1888. After its defeats, it deteriorated from internal conflicts, particularly with the Socialist Labor Party. In August 1887, the ULP ruled that the SLP would no longer be allowed to maintain their party within the ULP because of the increasing tensions from different ideas on the abolition of land and capital. The SLP was essentially expelled from the ULP.<sup>38</sup>

An article titled “Socialists to the Front” in the New York *Sun* on June 24, 1887, reported that the SLP did not wish to split with the ULP, but instead perfect it to align with socialist thinking.<sup>39</sup> Laurence Gronlund, a prominent figure within the SLP, reportedly said that the socialists favor George’s nationalization of land, but wish to “go further and demand the nationalization of capital also, and the abolition of all monopoly.” He mentioned that he would be releasing “The Insufficiency of Henry George’s Theory,” which would “set out the aims of the Socialists as differing from...those of Mr. George and the present United Labor Party.” Gronlund criticized the Communists, with whom he admitted the socialists were often associated. In socialism, Gronlund affirmed, “every man gets all he earns and owns all he gets.” In communism, those who do not work get as much as those who do. This ideal of socialism, as

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<sup>37</sup> Barker, *Henry George*, 478.

<sup>38</sup> Barker, *Henry George*, 496.

<sup>39</sup> “Socialists to the Front: Eager to Convert the Rest of the United Labor Party,” *The Sun* (New York, NY), June 24, 1887.

set out by Gronlund, seems to align with George's own proposal for an ideal society, but Gronlund insisted that George's remedy alone could not produce this effect.

The same article includes an interview with George, who denied being a politician or having any control over the ULP's actions in relation to the SLP. George acknowledged also that his and the socialists' goal was the same in the "improvement of the social conditions of mankind," and said, "Personally, I do not propose to enter into any controversy with the German socialists ... [who] are an earnest, honest set of thinkers." George asserted that he saw no point in quarreling with those who "are progressing in the same direction as I am." The crucial difference that George pointed out between socialists and himself was the role of the individual and the role of the state. He surmised that in socialism the individual existed for the state, but in his principles, the state existed for the individual.

The SLP held more extreme views than the ULP that was centered on George and his theories. They were unhappy with the ULP's lack of acceptance of their views, but they were also unhappy with their expulsion, which they blamed partly on George. An article in the *New York Times* on August 11, 1887 described Socialists as "Still Attacking Henry George."<sup>40</sup> The article stated, "The Socialists do not intend to desist from their attacks on Henry George, whom they evidently regard as one of the principal causes of their expulsion from the United Labor Party." The newspaper expressed the sentiment from the capitalistic press, stating that they "almost without exception argues that if the United Labor Party tries to throw the Socialists overboard because they preach Communistic principles it must, if it wants to be consistent, also throw overboard Henry George, because his theory is also Communistic." This article not only conveys that generally George was known for having Communistic theories, but also that the SLP thought of him as a traitor to their cause.

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<sup>40</sup> "Still Attacking Henry George," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), August 11, 1887.

Laurence Gronlund took issue with George's theories and his involvement in the ULP. He lived from 1846 to 1899. The Danish-born American Marxist quit practicing law and became a socialist writer and speaker. Friedrich Engels reportedly approved of Gronlund, but many other American socialists, like Richard Ely, did not. His work, *The Cooperative Commonwealth* (1884), was the first significant American popularization of Marxism. He was a proponent of German socialism, which some Americans, even American socialists, denounced for its proposed violent class conflict that enact change.<sup>41</sup> Gronlund's three major contributions to American socialism were "first, a theoretical adaptation of German socialism to the American milieu; second, a substantial influence on Edward Bellamy; and third, an effective criticism of the theories of Henry George."<sup>42</sup>

In 1886, Gronlund joined the SLP and published two pamphlets attacking the policies set forth by George. In 1888 he became a member of the SLP executive committee. One of these pamphlets was entitled "Insufficiency of Henry George's Theory,"<sup>43</sup> published in July 1887. This pamphlet was issued during the separation of the SLP and the ULP. Gronlund explained that he is not trying to threaten George personally, but instead was trying to further disunite the philosophies of the SLP and the ULP. The ULP, according to Gronlund, was placing far too much emphasis on George's single tax and not stressing the importance of the need to overhaul the corrupt economic system in place. In order to persuade others from falling into the Henry George trap, Gronlund needed to explain the shortcomings in his theories.

In the introduction of this work, Gronlund asserted,

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<sup>41</sup> Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870-1920* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> P.E. Maher, "Laurence Gronlund: Contributions to American Socialism," *The Western Political Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1962): 618.

<sup>43</sup> Laurence Gronlund, "The Insufficiency of Henry George's Theory" (New York: New York Labor News Company, 1887).

Not only do we highly esteem the noble qualities of [George's] head and heart; not only do we warmly recognize the great services he has rendered to the cause of reform, as well by his splendid refutation of the hateful Malthusian doctrine, as by his fusion of so many progressive elements into a political party; but, more particularly, we consider Henry George the forerunner of Socialism in these United States, and the entering wedge for our ideas into American minds.<sup>44</sup>

Gronlund did not undervalue the importance of George and his contributions to the socialist cause. His main critique of George was that too much emphasis was placed on his land theory. Gronlund lamented the United Labor Party's focus on the land theory and George's remedy and ignorance of the evils of capitalism.

This pamphlet expounded on the deficiency of the single tax, which Gronlund accuses of being far from a "universal panacea" and "altogether too narrow and one-sided," "impracticable and inadequate."<sup>45</sup> He believed that *Progress and Poverty's* argument and description of the problem was too well laid out to fit George's remedy. Even in George's explanation of basic economic principles, like interest, Gronlund found issue. He wrote, "The conclusion, that only landholders benefit from our material progress, he is thus brought to by the most astonishing piece of self-deception."<sup>46</sup> He accused George of ignoring important economic variables in order to make his own theories seem more favorable and indisputable. He called the distinction George made between land and capital "absolutely baseless"<sup>47</sup> because most land has improvements imposed on it or inherent advantages, and these improvements are not able to fit into the category of land.

On the practicality of George's remedy, Gronlund criticized George's lack of a budget and doubted the sufficiency of his land tax to be able to create the kind of cooperative and government-funded society for which George hoped. He called this remedy "a leap into the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

dark.”<sup>48</sup> Most importantly, Gronlund did not have confidence that George’s remedy would bring about the increase in quality of life for the wage earner that was at the heart of George’s purpose in writing *Progress and Poverty*. Gronlund affirmed,

Now it is clear as sunlight, that immunity from taxation would benefit the capitalist classes solely; it will not diminish the items profit and interest. It cannot possibly increase wages, for free land will not enable the workers to create with their bare hands raw materials and other means of labor, but it may actually bring wages down to the increased cheapness of living that might follow.<sup>49</sup>

Gronlund agreed that land nationalization was necessary, but he denounced greatly that the confiscation of rent could be used as a means to that end. He supported the United Labor Party’s proposals to make public the control of telegraphs and railroads, but accused George of insisting that these types of controls would suppress individual liberty and personal property. Gronlund saw this nationalization as a step toward liberty, freeing the individual of dependence on other individuals. George concluded that no person owed the produce of his labor to any other person, but Gronlund claimed the interdependence as the design that would allow society to prosper.

Gronlund’s other pamphlet, also issued in 1887, was titled “Socialism vs. Tax Reform: An Answer to Henry George.”<sup>50</sup> It included George’s writings on socialism reported in the *Standard* in 1887. George admitted in the newspaper on July 30, “I myself am classed as a socialist by those who denounce socialism, while those who profess themselves socialists declare me not to be one. I neither claim nor repudiate the name.”<sup>51</sup> He criticized the socialist principles supported by Laurence Gronlund and H.M. Hyndman, who was a German socialist in England, decrying their class of socialism as “a high-purposed but incoherent mixture of truth and

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Laurence Gronlund, “Socialism vs. Tax Reform: An Answer to Henry George” (New York: New York Labor News Company, 1887).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

fallacy.”<sup>52</sup> He regarded their principle weakness as confusing and failing to make a clear distinction between what he believed to be the primary factor of production, land, and the other factors, labor and capital. Despite what Gronlund would accuse him of, George declared, “The great thing which we should aim to secure is freedom (precisely) – that full freedom of each which is bounded by the equal freedom of others.”<sup>53</sup>

George called for, despite their differences, the cooperation of the different schools of thought in obtaining the “high and noble” aspirations of socialism that work toward “the abolition of poverty.”<sup>54</sup> In the August 6<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Standard* George predicted that the exploitation of the ULP by the socialists would push the ULP to define their position separate from the socialists at the Syracuse convention on August 17. He affirmed, “There are a large number of us who are not socialists...and if the socialists of the German school, who have hitherto acted with the United Labor Party, propose to use the socialistic organization as a party within a party, and making up in discipline what they lack in numbers, to insist upon any indorsement [*sic*], expressed or implied, of their peculiar theories as a condition of continuing to act with the party, then the quicker the two bodies will separate, each to go its own way, the better it will be.”<sup>55</sup>

George defined socialism as “making the State the sole landholder as well as the sole landowner, the sole capitalist, the sole employer and the sole director of production and exchange.”<sup>56</sup> He found issue with socialist definitions of labor and capital, just as Gronlund found issue with his. Where George believed the primary reason to be private land ownership and rent, he accused the socialists of blaming the poverty and inequality of riches on the wage

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

system and free competition. He declared the “utter impracticability and essential childishness” of the cure the socialists would propose of handing all capital to the state.<sup>57</sup>

Although both socialists and single taxers called for the nationalization of land, George condemned the “violent and radical change as would be involved in the formal resumption of land by society at large, and the letting of it out to individuals,” which was championed by socialists.<sup>58</sup> He did not back down from his belief that free public use of land would cure all of society’s ills. He accused the socialists of wanting to stay in the ULP so that it could steer the course of the party for its own purposes. “For my own part I have always refrained from accentuating any differences with socialists until forced to, regarding then as workers in the great cause of the emancipation of labor who, however superficial their views, illogical their theories or impracticable their plans, aimed at noble ends, and had laid hold of, even if the exaggerated, an important truth.”<sup>59</sup>

Gronlund’s reply to George in “Socialism vs. Tax Reform” began with the accusation that George always had avoided entering into a discussion with socialists about his beliefs. Gronlund stated plainly against George, “We [socialists] contended that your teachings that private property in land is the cause of our social evils and that the abolition of land ownership would remedy them are false. It was your plain duty to refute us...but you turned a deaf ear to us.”<sup>60</sup> He denied that the socialists had plans to exploit the ULP, recalling that socialists formed the party along with other labor organizations without George. If any person was steering the party to his advantage, according to Gronlund, it was George, whose single tax principles had

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.15.



been adopted by the ULP after his popularity helped to bring in the seventy thousand votes in the race for mayor.

Gronlund came to the conclusion from George's writings that he did not understand the nature of socialism. It seemed ridiculous that George would belittle the movement with words like "superficial" and "childish" when "great numbers of the educated classes in Great Britain are at this day embracing [socialism] after in many cases having been led to study it by George's own books."<sup>61</sup> Gronlund attacked George's land-based policies, which, as time has shown, Gronlund believed had no base in the industrializing world. For socialists, labor produces wealth, not land.

Gronlund denied that socialists and George could work together because even from basic principles, the two groups did not align. They have worked together and agreed that private property must be abolished, but they could go no further together if George wanted to stop at that. Gronlund moreover stated, "George, [in not acting toward the abolition of the wage system], opposes himself to the efforts and aspirations of the working-classes everywhere."<sup>62</sup> The individualism that George believed would never allow socialism to flourish in America Gronlund wrote was more a characteristic of a past time, not the American people.

Gronlund stated that if the ULP were to be a land party, the socialists would "leave it here and now."<sup>63</sup> Despite their harsh words against each other, the socialists were unhappy when forced to leave the ULP. From George and Gronlund's writings, it is clear that they would have preferred to work together, if possible. Imperatively, however, George was not a socialist and the socialists were not georgists. Their inherent differences and varying degrees of radicalism led them to split from the ULP and turn down their own path.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.17-18.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.35.

George admitted that he would choose anarchism over socialism, for socialism would restrict the rights of the individual by placing too much control and power in the hands of government. The large role of government in the socialist philosophy was the main criticism George brought up. Anarchism, on the other hand, would facilitate freedom and less governmental control, despite the problems a lack of government would cause. He asserted that anarchism and socialism were not the same or similar, “as so many who know nothing of either seem to suppose.”<sup>64</sup> This facet of individualism, inherent to anarchism and American ideology, according to George, was precisely why German socialism could only be exceptionally successful in Europe. Those in Europe “have become largely used to governmental supervision and direction, and are accustomed to look to government as a sort of special providence.”<sup>65</sup>

Benjamin Tucker was an anarchist who lived from 1854 to 1939. Tucker was influenced by American anarchist and individualist thinkers, such as Josiah Warren and Colonel William B. Green, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the French anarchist and politician. Tucker was a journalist and writer throughout his life. From 1881 to 1908 he published an anarchist journal called *Liberty*. As a proponent of anarchism and socialism he wrote and published others’ works that promoted those ideals. In his work he criticized George many times.<sup>66</sup>

Although George admitted his preference for anarchism over socialism, Tucker and George disagreed on many ideas. Without even bringing the Single Tax Policy into the debate, Tucker found issue with George’s ideas on interest. Tucker was prominently anti-monopoly, and George had attempted to separate interest from the money monopoly issue. They disagreed also on the land question. In his writing, Tucker said of George’s land policies, “According to

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Charles A. Madison, "Benjamin R. Tucker: Individualist and Anarchist." *The New England Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1943): 444-67.

George...the State is to acquire the land by confiscation instead of by purchase.”<sup>67</sup> Tucker calls George’s land nationalization “nothing more than a diminution of the landlord class and a concentration and hundred-fold multiplication of the landlord’s power.”<sup>68</sup> He wrote, “*Liberty* has never stood with those who profess to show on strictly economic grounds that economic rent *must* disappear or even decrease as a result of the application of the Anarchistic principle,” namely Henry George.<sup>69</sup> He accused Henry George and the Single Tax philosophy of robbing landowners of their rights to do what they wish with their land. He called it “tyrannical” for the State to forcibly take away land, which is what “makes the Single-Tax a State Socialistic measure.”<sup>70</sup>

Tucker attacked the logistics of George’s Single Tax policy, questioning the ability of government to procure and redistribute the land evenly and believing that this policy would eventually lead to the same inequality that it tried to destroy. He wrote, “Even if a part of the economic rent is rightly mine, I prefer to leave it in the pocket of the landowner, since it is bound to ultimately get back there.”<sup>71</sup> Being an anarchist, Tucker was against the use of government policies to improve social conditions. He stated, “The Socialists and Single-Taxers will have attained their paradise when they are robbed by officials instead of by landlords and capitalists.”<sup>72</sup> Tucker believed that anarchism was the only way to affect the distribution of wealth. To him, anarchism was “to let [wealth] distribute itself in a free market in accordance with statute law.”<sup>73</sup> He believed that socialism meant to rob people of their liberty in pursuit of equality, but anarchism would give people to be free and wealthy, but not necessarily equally as

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<sup>67</sup> Benjamin Tucker, *Individual Liberty: Selections from the Writings of Benjamin R. Tucker* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1973), 182.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

rich. Socialism would deprive everyone of their advantages to produce and progress, but “liberty will abolish interest; it will abolish profit; it will abolish monopolistic rent; it will abolish taxation; it will abolish the exploitation of labor; it will abolish all means whereby any laborer can be deprived of any of his product.”<sup>74</sup> He believed, like Laurence Gronlund, that a simple single tax policy would not provide the solution to all ills of society.

Tucker belittled George for pretending to be a “champion of liberty.”<sup>75</sup> He blatantly expressed, “Henry George and his co-workers are of that class that ‘speak in the name of liberty, but do not know the meaning of the word’.”<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, he believed that a land tax was a form of robbery and fundamentally disagreed with George because, as an anarchist, he could not advocate any policy that would give more power to the state. Tucker instead argued for the “abolition of the money monopoly and the refusal of protection to all land titles except those of occupiers.”<sup>77</sup>

When Louis Post, a strong advocate of Henry George and the Single Tax, spoke that occupancy and use are the only rights to land, Tucker jumped at the chance to break down the argument of one of George’s most loyal followers. Tucker took Post’s statement as a step away from the Single Tax philosophy, which supported the possession of land equally by all, toward more of his idea on land, that it should belong to people on the basis of use and occupancy. After Post corrected himself and reinforced his support of the Single Tax, Tucker criticized him of flip-flopping. He sarcastically stated that he preferred Single Taxers who stuck entirely to their opposition of the use and occupancy angle and begged, “Relieve me, pray, of opponents like Mr.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

post, who, using my own phraseology in a distorted sense, strive to make it appear to the people that their ideas are mine.”<sup>78</sup>

Progressive social reform was growing during the Gilded Age. John Dewey was an educational reformer who lived from 1859 to 1952.<sup>79</sup> He pushed throughout his life for his theory of learning-by-doing, helping to create a more practical and less teacher-centered curriculum for some schools. John Dewey was a fervent supporter of Henry George’s policies in *Progress and Poverty*. He contributed an introduction to *Significant Paragraphs from Progress and Poverty by Henry George* in 1928.<sup>80</sup> He boldly stated,

It would require less than the fingers of the two hands to enumerate those who from Plato down rank with him. Were he a native of some European country, it is safe to assert that he would long ago have taken the place upon the roll of the world’s thinkers which belongs to him, irrespective, moreover, of adherence to his practical plan.<sup>81</sup>

Dewey assigns George’s separation from academic circles as the reason for his deficiency of recognition. Dewey supported and championed the “practical merits of his plan of reform of taxation,” which had wrought bitter disposition and confused George’s status as a philosopher and thinker.<sup>82</sup> For Dewey, George’s “clear intellectual insight into social conditions, his passionate feeling for the remediable ills from which humanity suffers, find their logical conclusion in his plan for liberating labor and capital from the shackles which now bind them.”<sup>83</sup>

Dewey considered George “one of the world’s great social philosophers,” and the social awareness and activism that he found in George’s work carried over to his own work as a social activist during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era of the United States.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>79</sup> *A Dictionary of 20<sup>th</sup> Century World Biography*, ed. Asa Briggs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.)

<sup>80</sup> John Dewey, introduction to *Significant Paragraphs from Progress and Poverty by Henry George* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1928).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

Daniel De Leon was the editor of the SLP's newspaper *The People*. After the death of Henry George on October 29, 1897, De Leon wrote an editorial in the pages of *The People* analyzing his life.<sup>85</sup> De Leon wrote, "Henry George was in no wise [*sic*] a representative of the working class – class-conscious or otherwise – much less a forerunner of the Social Revolution." George was running for Secretary of State of New York. The election was only days away when he passed away. De Leon affirmed,

A benign Providence removed him before election day, the day, when, had he lived until then, he would have suffered the crowning mortification of his life – the sight of the evidence that his inane Single Tax theory had dwindled to nothingness, and that even with the most absurd, loud and huckstering system of booming, given him by the capitalist conspirators, and accepted by him, his name had ceased to be one to conjure by, and that his struggles to stem the tide of Socialism were misspent.

Henry George had many "isms" attached to his name during and after his lifetime. To capitalists, he was a socialist or a communist who worked against the individual rights of the people. To socialists, he was strictly a georgist who did not fully support their plans to create a more equal society. To anarchists, he was a socialist who turned a blind eye to the importance of liberty. To the world of intellectuals and reformers, he was simply a writer whose broad ideals ushered in a new wave of changes.

Those intellectuals gathered at a banquet celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Progress and Poverty* in 1905. The *New York Times* published on January 5, 1905 an article entitled "Henry George's Praise Sounded by Bryan," describing this event.<sup>86</sup> Two hundred fifty people attended and many letters from those who could not attend were sent in. The speakers and contributors included Henry George, Jr., William Jennings Bryan, Richard Burton, Louis F. Post,

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<sup>85</sup> Daniel De Leon, "Henry George; November 7, 1897," *Daniel De Leon Internet Archive*, accessed April 6, 2017. [https://www.marxists.org/archive/deleon/pdf/1897/1897\\_nov07b.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/deleon/pdf/1897/1897_nov07b.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> "Henry George's Praise Sounded by Bryan: Twenty-fifth Birthday of 'Progress and Poverty' Celebrated," *The New York Times* (New York: New York), January 5, 1905.

William Lloyd Garrison, Tom L. Johnson, George Bernard Shaw and Albert Shaw, all men of cultural, political, and social prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At this event William Jennings Bryan gave a speech. He began with describing an encounter he had with Leo Tolstoy. “[Tolstoy] spoke in highest terms of Henry George and indorsed his economic theories,” he started. He went on to say,

We celebrate to-day the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Henry George’s book, and only four years before that Tolstoy turned from a life of society and ambition to devote himself to the public weal....Love is his inspiration, and it was love that made Henry George what he became. He has touched the conscience of the world, the world will admit, and that he touched it because he loved it the world will not deny.

A letter was read from George Bernard Shaw, “the dramatist and author of a number of Socialist books.” The letter stated, “When I was thus swept into the great Socialist revival of 1883 I found that five-sixths of those who were swept in with me had been converted by Henry George.” Foreign letters included those from Wilhelm von Polenz, a German writer; Svend Hogsbro, a Danish member of Parliament; Sophus Berthelsen, President of the Danish Henry George League; and Johan Hanses, the leader of a Swedish land reform movement.

Henry George, Jr. spoke to great applause of the story of his father. He started, “Out of the open West came a young man of less than thirty to this great City of New York.... His Alma Mater had been the forecastle and the printing office. He was poor, unheralded, unknown.” According to his son, George saw, in San Francisco and across the country, the monopolization of land and the increasing struggle, including his own, of those who would have to work under those who owned land by chance. George wrote “Our Land and Land Policy,” the precursor to *Progress and Poverty*, and its popularity led him to devote more than a year to the thorough study that allowed that memorial banquet to happen.

William Lloyd Garrison testified that the “paramount, overshadowing issue underlying the teachings of ‘Progress and Poverty’ is the clear principle of human justice.” He asserted that George’s legacy was created thanks to his cry for equality, a crusade for which most can fight. He described, “Never more alive than to-day, it is as fresh in spirit and matter as at the hour of its birth. Criticism has not withered nor censure staled its regenerating truth...Its prophecy of a progressive decivilization while land monopoly holds sway has been fulfilled to the letter.”

A letter from Louis F. Post, one of the most fervent supporters of George and his single tax policy, was read. His letter illustrated the influence of the single land tax in different parts of the world. He wrote, “This kind of progress may be found also in England, where the general tendency has gone further than here, and in Australia, where the principle is coming to actual use.” This article in the *New York Times*, published after Henry George’s death, demonstrates the relevance and the impact of *Progress and Poverty*. Influential public figures, some of them arguably more renown than George, all gathered together to celebrate his life and his most famous work and the influence that he had on them.

George uncovered many truths in his writings. The Gilded Age was a time of great progress and of great poverty. A land tax, though impractical today, may well have settled some of society’s inequality in the agriculturally-based economy of the nineteenth-century United States. Some called him a genius; others called him a child. His name has not been judged influential enough to be included in many histories of America. None of his contemporaries, despite their personal opinions on the validity of his work, would dare to deny the ubiquity of his name, especially among progressive and intellectual circles. The same reformers and philosophers who transformed the U.S. into a modern economy with modern regulations and reforms that improved Americans’ lives read George. They knew him, and they honored him.



George's lack of recognition in more recent times fails also causes a lack of acknowledgement of the complexities of his teachings, especially among those for and against socialism. If one so desires, one could place George into the category of socialist, with his proposal of a single land tax and his scorning of private land ownership. Similarly, if one so desires, one could place George as vehemently anti-socialist, with his criticism on the pro-government and anti-individual teachings of socialist leaders. He did not consider himself to be a socialist. He stuck with his beliefs to the end of his life, never wavering from his cause of eliminating poverty.

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