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# Henry George and the Poverty of Canadian Progress

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### Résumé de l'article

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**R. COOK**

*Précis*

Après avoir décrit brièvement les principales idées du réformateur Henry George sur les causes de l'accroissement de la pauvreté dans la société industrielle, l'article analyse l'impact de ses idées sur le contexte canadien anglais. Cette influence aurait surtout été marquante à l'intérieur du débat sur les problèmes de la répartition des richesses et aurait joué un rôle déterminant dans le développement de l'Évangélisme social.

*Henry George and the Poverty of  
Canadian Progress*

“The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine; and ye are strangers and sojourners with me.”

Leviticus, xxv, 23

“I was brought up to believe that poverty existed naturally and inevitably in spite of the wonderful developments of the railway and the manufacturing system. George shows that the so-called progress actually causes poverty.”

*The Palladium of Labor*, September 8, 1883

“The fact seems to be that once a man reasons himself into the single tax idea he is irresistibly carried to lengths of which, at the outset, he never dreamed. A very fine perception and powerful grip may save some, but the current of reason floats the ordinary man into the whirlpool of anarchy or, at best, into the less turbulent waters of communism.”

*The Toronto World*, March 24, 1891

THE LAND MONOPOLIST'S SONG

“Lord save the phools an' don't let 'em run out, fur ef it wan't fur them — wise men couldn't get a living” — Josh Billings.

All day my pleasure I pursue,  
Or loll on couch of ease;  
No sort of work have I to do  
Except my whims to please.  
Let others strain and sweat to live,  
I claim by right divine  
That all which art and wealth can give  
Shall be not theirs but mine.

Chorus: For me the farmer ploughs the land,  
The sailor ploughs the sea,  
And all who toil by brain or hand —  
Hurrah! They toil for me.

Why should I work? On every hand  
The fertile soil I own;  
I tax the produce of the land  
Like monarch on his throne.

HENRY GEORGE AND . . .

My claim is first, my hand I lay  
On corn, and wine, and oil,  
The workers all must tribute pay  
To him who owns the soil.

Chorus: For me the farmer ploughs the land, etc.

While labor feeds on scanty fare  
And sink to nameless graves.  
For me are gold and jewels rare  
And garments fine and gay.  
For me choice fruit and costly wine —  
The fruit of others' toil, —  
Good times or bad — come rain or shine,  
Because I own the soil.

Chorus: For me the farmer ploughs the land, etc.

'Tis I who won the richest gains  
Where stately cities rise;  
I profit by the laborer's pain,  
The builder's enterprise.  
There swarms of men in alleys pent,  
I reckon as my slaves;  
They labor hard to pay me rent,  
And sink to nameless graves.

Chorus: For me the farmer ploughs the land, etc.

Hurrah for land monopoly!  
Hurrah for the spoiler's right!  
Hurrah for the unearned increment  
Which grows by day and night!  
Hurrah for the folly of all fools,  
The slaves who crouch and toil,  
Content to be the servile tools  
Of those who own the soil.

Chorus: The bold highwayman robs by land,  
The pirate robs by sea,  
But pirate horde and robber band  
Are paltry thieves to me!

Phillips Thompson  
*GRIP*, XXXI, 763,  
September 29, 1888

On August 4, 1884, the Hamilton Knights of Labor held their annual labour demonstration. It was a gala affair beginning with a colourful and noisy parade of trade unions, bands, athletic teams and even a group of Tuscarora Indians, all led by a Grand Marshal on horseback. Sandwiched between a delegation of

unorganized workers and the True Blues Fife and Drum Band rode a hack bearing the day's leading attraction, the celebrated American social critic, Henry George. It was an occasion that, according to one report, attracted an estimated 10,000 people, and that evening the Crystal Palace bulged with the throngs eager to hear the great man's words.<sup>1</sup>

George's message, warmly received by his Canadian audience, was the same one that he had been preaching on two continents, and with increasing impact, ever since the publication of his book *Progress and Poverty* in 1879. That message, delivered with typical evangelical fervour, was that despite enormous material progress the modern world suffered an increasing burden of poverty and distress. The cause and cure were George's discovery. "All over the world," he declared, "the private ownership of land has been the great cause of serfdom . . . I hold that an equal right to land is an inalienable right that attaches to every human being that comes into the world." How could man's God-given right to the land be restored? By a taxation policy that would give society that unearned increment now pocketed by the landlords. Land values increased as a result of social causes, particularly population pressure, and not from anything a land owner did to the land. Therefore, society, not the landlord, should be the beneficiary of increased land values. True value, George told his readily convinced audience of working people, came from labour, which deserved a full return, not from land ownership, which, through high rents, caused the oppression of the working classes.<sup>2</sup>

In his Hamilton speech, as in all of his writings, George spoke at great length about the inequities and miseries of urban-industrial life. His emphasis and the tone of his interpretation is best summed up in a well-known passage from his chief book: ". . . unpleasant as it may be to admit it, it is at last becoming evident that the enormous increase in productive power which has marked the present century and is still going on with accelerating ratio, has no tendency to extirpate poverty or to lighten the burdens of those compelled to toil. It simply widens the gulf between Dives and Lazarus, and makes the struggle for existence more intense. The march of invention has clothed mankind with powers of which a century ago the boldest imagination could not have dreamed. But in factories where labor-saving machinery has reached its most wonderful development, little children are at work; wherever the new forces are anything like fully utilized, large classes are maintained by charity or live on the verge of recourse to it; amid the greatest accumulations of wealth, men die of starvation, and puny infants suckle dry breasts; while everywhere the greed of gain, the worship of wealth, shows the force of the fear of want. The promised land flies before us like the mirage. The fruits of the tree of knowledge turn as we grasp them to apples of Sodom that crumble at the touch."<sup>3</sup>

These were sentiments which touched the hearts of a considerable segment of Canada's working class population because they described the realities of their often miserable lives.<sup>4</sup> But to explain the conditions he described so graphically, George turned from the city to the country, attacked land monopoly

and urged the simple cure-all of the taxation of unearned increment. With land costs lowered by the removal of the speculative element, he believed that more of the people huddled around the dark, satanic mills could take up rural occupations. That, in turn, would reduce the labour pool and force capitalists to pay higher wages. To the Malthusian dilemma he proposed a frontier solution and in a period of transition from pre-industrial to industrial society he was not alone in believing in the need for balance between country and city.<sup>5</sup> As one of George's Canadian friends wrote in 1894: "The disturbance of the natural equilibrium between city and country by the N.P. . . . has been a curse to the workingmen of the cities and towns . . . The sudden rise of large cities benefits no one save the monopolist and exploiter. To the worker it merely means an increase in the number of competitors, higher rents, an increased scale of expenditure and poorer and more squalid surroundings."<sup>6</sup>

George's message was ambiguous and that at least partly explains its popularity. In fact, his ringing denunciations of the emerging industrial order apparently influenced the thinking of many who paid little attention to what later became known as the "single tax" panacea. But even the "single tax", a term which George did not coin and which only came into use in 1887,<sup>7</sup> was far from clear in its meaning. Was it merely a taxation policy, or did it mean land nationalization? As late as 1891 Principal G.M. Grant distinguished between George and one of his disciples in this way: "Mr. George's remedy is land nationalization, and Father Huntington's, the single tax."<sup>8</sup> And George, at least in the early years of his campaign, was apparently willing to take supporters where he found them — single taxers, land nationalizers, Labor Reformers, Christian socialists, Fabians and others. Consequently, the Georgeite movement was composed of a motley crew, attracting both support and criticism from many quarters in Canada, as elsewhere.

George himself was an attractive, if single-minded, reformer. He spoke with fervour, wrote powerful prose and was the master of the arresting example. Certainly he seems to have succeeded in impressing his Hamilton audience in August 1884 and infecting at least some of them with the zeal which he felt for his cause. The editor of the Hamilton *Palladium of Labor*, a Georgeite and a Knight of Labor who may have played a part in getting George to visit Canada in 1884,<sup>10</sup> was carried away on the wings of the American reformer's oratory. "Henceforth and forevermore," he wrote, "the ideas of Land and Labor Reform are one and inseparable. The days of aimless agitation are over. The days of partial and temporary remedies, political quackeries, industrial war, blind and despairing struggles against conditions which must ever co-exist with monopoly are drawing to a close. The watchword from this time out is 'Land for the People'. In that sign we shall conquer. Free land means free men. Land monopoly means industrial slavery."<sup>11</sup>

For a decade, and perhaps longer, Georgeism was as central to the discussion of social questions in Canada as it was in the United States and Great Britain. George's influence on late Victorian radicalism deserves greater emphasis

than it has so far received, partly because Georgeism has too often been made synonymous with "Single Tax".<sup>12</sup> Yet it was his analysis rather than his cure which appears to have impressed many of his readers in Canada as elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> "George had aroused the British social and political conscience during the 1880s as no one else had done," one historian has written, and that is certainly attested to by no less a figure than George Bernard Shaw.<sup>14</sup> A similar assertion about George's importance in Canada is suggested by the extent to which his views were discussed in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>15</sup>

## I

Many Canadians were acquainted with George's ideas and his campaigns well before he visited Hamilton in the late summer of 1884. He had held moderately successful meetings in Toronto and Montreal, where he concentrated on the Irish Land question, in 1881,<sup>16</sup> and his British campaign had been fairly fully chronicled in the Canadian press. But the Hamilton visit, which followed on the heels of another well-publicized British tour, made him the centre of a good deal of Canadian attention. In the next decade he was the subject of newspaper editorials, speeches, and articles in secular and religious periodicals. His ideas played a major role in at least two novels, and it was his philosophy that informed the drawing, writing and speaking of J.W. Bengough, one of the country's most brilliant caricaturists. At least one candidate ran for parliament on a Georgeite platform — though Mayor Edward Eustace, who described himself as a Georgeite and a socialist, managed to garner only twenty-seven votes against his rather more notorious opponent, Sir John A. Macdonald in the 1891 election.<sup>17</sup> Almost every respectable intellectual felt called upon to state his position on *Progress and Poverty* and even young Mackenzie King was tempted by the Georgeite heresy, though his caution, as usual, overcame his enthusiasm. Having heard David Mills lecture on George, King wrote: "Though I would not like to declare myself in favour of single tax I would like to see more clearly how it would benefit the classes it is intended to, viz. the poor and the labouring classes."<sup>18</sup> George was certainly widely discussed and one prominent writer on social and political questions, Morley Wickett, believed that the growing interest among Canadians in political economy could be attributed both to the condition of the Canadian economy and "in certain quarters to the writings of Marx, Henry George and also Edward Bellamy."<sup>19</sup>

Not surprisingly, Goldwin Smith and W.D. LeSueur, two Canadian intellectuals who always kept a close eye on international controversies, were among the earliest to respond to George's ideas. Smith's reaction, which came in a July 1880 review of *Progress and Poverty* was predictably negative. In Smith's judgment, George was inaccurate about the increase in poverty, wrong about the causes of the limited economic distress that did exist, and positively immoral in urging what amounted to the confiscation of private property without compensation.<sup>20</sup> In a widely circulated polemic entitled *False Hopes*, Smith lumped George in with socialists, Greenbackers, labour unionists and other trouble makers and grumbled angrily "that such views can be propounded anywhere but

in a robber's den or a lunatic asylum, still more, that they can find respectful hearers, is proof that the economical world is in a state of curious perturbation."<sup>21</sup> Smith retained those views about George and other "prophets of unrest" until the day he died,<sup>22</sup> for he never gave up his firm conviction that the laws of economics, sanctioned by divine imprimatur, should not be criticized or tampered with by agitators and cranks. Man's lot was hard, but improving slowly, though perfection was hardly to be anticipated. "Injustice is human," he insisted, "and where inequality is the fiat not of own, but of a power above man, it is idle, for any practical purpose to assail it as an injustice."<sup>23</sup>

Smith's view of man and his world contrasted starkly with those of Henry George. *Progress and Poverty* excluded optimism about man, locating problems in the social order rather than in human nature. George believed in moral progress which would ultimately result in equality and justice.<sup>24</sup> In his Hamilton speech he struck out at the gloomy *Bystander* and the crowd cheered. "Men of a certain type seem to think as if slavery were the natural lot of man — they wish to console us with the idea that, though things are not today what they should be, yet the masses should be contented when they look at their forefathers. This is all humbug. The natural state of man is that of freedom."<sup>25</sup> There was no real meeting ground between George and Smith, though their difference was fundamental to an understanding of late nineteenth century social thought.

Less predictable than Goldwin Smith was W.D. LeSueur's response to *Progress and Poverty*, a copy of which George had presented to the Canadian positivist. LeSueur was a follower of Comte and his writings on literature, science, religion, philosophy and history expressed a theoretical radicalism that was rarely applied to social questions.<sup>26</sup> His defence of *Progress and Poverty*, in 1881, was designed not so much to uphold George's reformist ideas as it was to assert that the American's thinking fitted into evolutionist conceptions.<sup>27</sup> It was George's general philosophy and method rather than his specific proposals that LeSueur approved and that because he perceived correctly that George questioned dogmatic religious and ethical teachings as much as he did himself.<sup>28</sup> For this reason LeSueur was much closer to Henry George than Goldwin Smith and the American was quick to proclaim his Canadian disciple "worth half the college professors in the United States."<sup>29</sup>

George's most enthusiastic Canadian supporters were found, naturally, in the columns of the little radical weeklies that sprang up in the last decades of the century. These papers — *The Labor Union*, *The Palladium of Labor*, *The Labor Advocate*, *The Canada Farmers Sun*, *The Social Reformer*, *Grip* and *Citizen and Country* — were all, in some measure, associated with the Knights of Labor, the Patrons of Industry, The Anti-Poverty Society, The Toronto Conference on Social Problems, the Toronto Trades and Labor Council, Nationalist and Single Tax Clubs, and Suffragist groups which harboured whatever radical and quasi-radical ideas existed in late nineteenth century English Canada. Only *The Palladium of Labor*, which claimed the title of George's first Canadian exponent, *Grip*, *The Social Reformer*, The Anti-Poverty Society, and the Single



Tax Clubs fully espoused Georgeite doctrine. The others provided only partial support or at least platforms for single tax advocates. J.W. Bengough, William Douglas, J.L. Dawkins and Samuel T. Wood (known to his friends as “Single Tax” Wood), were thorough-going Georgeites. But they could almost always count on support from a broader group of social reformers and religious dissenters, people like W.H. Rowe, A.W. Wright, Phillips Thompson, George Wrigley and even suffragists like Dr. Emily Stowe, Dr. Margaret Gordon and others.

This group, and their followers, were united by at least two convictions which provided a link with Henry George. All of them believed that the emerging industrial order in which they lived contained growing injustices that were unacceptable: monopoly and tramps, poverty in the midst of plenty, child labour, slum housing, low farm produce prices, discrimination against women. They were equally convinced that the economic laws proclaimed in orthodox circles were not laws at all, but rationalizations. And finally, all were somewhat unorthodox in religious belief — either critics within Protestantism like Bengough and Wrigley, or seekers who had moved out of the orthodox Churches to Theosophy or Unitarianism, like Thompson and Stowe. They would probably all have agreed that “the son of the Carpenter was the greatest social reformer that ever lived” and “that if Christ were to come to earth today and speak against usurers, land grabbers, monopolists and tyrannical employers, as he did against the Scribes and the Pharisees, they would lock him up as a criminal or a lunatic.”<sup>30</sup> In that, at least, they agreed with Goldwin Smith. Their creed was well summed up in W.H. Rowe’s *Labor Union*, a Knights of Labor paper, which criticized defenders of the *status quo* saying: “They quote scripture to prove that Almighty Wisdom intended from the outset that man should prey upon his fellow; or, if they belong to the modern materialistic school, they quote science to show that it is in accordance with natural law that the stronger should prey upon the weak. It may be that an effectual scheme for the mitigation of poverty and the prevention of that flagrant injustice by which one soulless avaricious man can possess himself of a superfluity through the labor of others, has not yet been devised. It is difficult to tell them until the attempt has been made but there is every reason to believe that a good deal at any rate could be accomplished by the nationalization of land according to the scheme of Henry George. Be that as it may what we wish to point out is that the obstructives who do nothing but pooh-pooh any proposition for ameliorating social conditions virtually endorse the libel on Divine wisdom that these evils are either natural or necessary.”<sup>31</sup> Their goal, almost always expressed in religious metaphors, was to build a society where the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount could be practised.<sup>32</sup>

What is important to emphasize is that among Canadians influenced by the writings of Henry George only a few accepted what J.W. Bengough labelled “the whole hog” solution of single tax and free trade.<sup>33</sup> But many others accepted all or part of his analysis, and particularly his insistence that while the rich grew richer in industrial society, poverty was also on the increase. As *The Labor Advocate*, whose editor Phillips Thompson had moved on from the Georgeite

analysis to a Bellamyite socialist solution, put it in 1891: "We have made great progress of late years — great strides in the direction of material development and national prosperity. And as a natural, inevitable consequence under the system of monopoly of land and capital and competition among workers, we have chronic pauperism, soup kitchens and the bitter cry of the unemployed and disinherited who, though they may not know it, are poor because they have been robbed."<sup>34</sup>

It was exactly those sentiments which were expressed in a memorial presented by a Joint Committee of the Knights of Labor, the Single Tax Association, the Trades and Labor Council, the Women's Enfranchisement Association, the Eight Hours League and the Nationalist Association to the Annual meetings of the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in 1891. The memorial called upon the leaders of these churches to raise their voices against the oppression of the poor by the rich. The Anglicans and Methodists rejected the petition, while the Congregationalists and especially the Presbyterians, expressed a willingness to take the matter under study. This response was not entirely surprising, given the known attitudes of leading Churchmen to the doctrines of Henry George.

The methodist *Christian Guardian*, edited by the Rev. Dr. E.H. Dewart, had proclaimed George's doctrines misleading and dangerous. Repeatedly these "communistic theories"<sup>35</sup> were condemned, for the *Guardian's* editor viewed society in a manner much closer to Goldwin Smith than to Henry George. Commenting on the Toronto Anti-Poverty Society, which sponsored a visit by George to Toronto in 1889,<sup>36</sup> the *Guardian* remarked sourly that "The best anti-poverty society is an association of men who would adopt as their governing principles in life, industry, sobriety, economy and intelligence. Any theory that promises wealth without regard to character is a snare and a delusion. The lazy and shiftless cannot become wealthy in an honest way."<sup>37</sup>

The main Presbyterian response was a few degrees more positive and a good deal more thoughtful. That church's most eminent spokesman on social and political questions was Principal G.M. Grant. Like many other Canadians in the 1880s he had some thoughts on *Progress and Poverty*. Perhaps more perceptively than any other observer he detected the religious character of George's writings and the attitude of his followers. "Nothing short of remarkable qualities in a book could give rise to such bibliolatry," he wrote. Yet most of the qualities were remarkable only for their falseness, Grant believed. He disagreed with George's contention that most men's living standard was worsening, rejected the labour theory of value, and denied that land monopoly was the central evil. Yet he was satisfied that George had identified a real problem, one that orthodox political economists like Goldwin Smith had failed to answer. "For convince the masses that the doctrines of the orthodox political economist are the whole truth, and Karl Marx's conclusions will be accepted by them," Grant observed shrewdly. The old political economy of individualism was outdated

and Henry George, for all his failings and oversimplifications, at least realized that.<sup>38</sup>

Grant returned to the fray on other occasions, admitting that a tax on land speculation would be a good measure, but growing increasingly emphatic in his rejection of George and his Canadian disciples. A speech which the Presbyterian divine gave at Trinity College early in 1891 brought an immediate counterattack from Reformers who usually viewed Grant as something of a friend. J. W. Bengough, who was certainly an admirer of Grant, believed that the Queen's Principal had so distorted George's position that only a sarcastic parody could serve as an adequate response. "We understand that Mr. Henry George intends delivering a lecture at Queen's College, Kingston, in which he will completely refute and demolish Newton's theory of gravitation. He has given long and earnest study to the subject and feels confident that he will be able to prove the fallacy of Newton's idea that the earth is kept in orbit by the periodical falling of green apples. Principal Grant has secured a reserved seat for the occasion."<sup>39</sup> S. T. Wood and the Single Tax association took a more serious line, one that they thought should be especially telling. "Has your address added to the respect for Christianity," they asked, "or has it aided to intensify the feeling of hostility and contempt with which, unfortunately, so many of the toiling masses regard the Christian ministry?"<sup>40</sup> Grant delivered his reply in a lecture at the Kingston city hall, once again rejecting George's theories, and dismissing his critics as men with "a comical conception of Christianity".<sup>41</sup>

Yet George's influence on Canadian Protestantism appeared to be growing by the 1890s. One piece of evidence was the warm reception accorded to Father J. O. S. Huntington, a radical New York Episcopalian, Knight of Labor and Georgeite,<sup>2</sup> who visited several Canadian cities, including Toronto and Kingston, in January 1891. (His visit may, in fact, have been the cause of Principal Grant's renewed denunciations of George.) He delivered several speeches and sermons in Toronto including one entitled "Religion and the Single Tax", in which he had a few uncharitable words for the Principal of Queen's. But what was just as interesting as his speech was the composition of the platform party. The usual single taxers and representatives of the Trades and Labor Council were there, but they were far outnumbered by a large group of Reverends, Rural Deans, and Doctors of Divinity. Perhaps not all of these men of the cloth found themselves in full agreement with their ecclesiastical Georgeite visitor, but their very prominent presence gave the ideas a new respectability.

Another concrete sign of the compatibility of Georgeism and Protestantism soon appeared in the *Canadian Methodist Quarterly*. The July issue of that periodical, more liberal but much less widely circulated than the *Guardian*, carried a long article by one of Methodism's most powerful leaders. The Rev. Albert Carman entitled his piece, which had probably begun life as a sermon, "The Gospel of Justice". In it he made no bones about his belief that the church too often allied itself to the rich and attempted to anaesthetize the poor. "Should the suddenly rich, the monopolists, those who have filched the savings of the

people, all who live by the labor of others, meet in secret council to frame a religion under which they would like the world to live, what better could they enact than that the oppressed would bear with Christian humility their oppression, and the wronged would live on with silent lips, looking for right only beyond the grave? And yet that is in practical effect the Gospel heard today in many an upholstered pew . . ." As Carman rolled on in the sepulchral tones of an Old Testament prophet, he paid his respects to Henry George for his "tremendous persistence in drawing to the world's attention the evils of land monopoly." Like many a Single Taxer before him Carman reminded his readers of the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus: "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." "If that chapter is not inspired," declared this traditionalist in Biblical interpretation, "the Old Testament must be thrown away."<sup>44</sup> George could not have received a more forceful endorsement.

The role of Henry George's ideas in the development of the social gospel in Canada is very clearly revealed in two novels of the 1890s. One, entitled *Roland Graeme: Knight* was written by a woman who often worked in collaboration with Principal G.M. Grant. Her name was Agnes Maule Machar. The second came from the imagination of Albert R. Carman, son of the General Superintendent of the Methodist Church in Canada. It was entitled *The Preparation of Ryerson Embury*.<sup>45</sup> In each of these novels a young Christian, whose faith is troubled or undermined by scientific rationalism and unanswered social questions, finds his way back to the faith through the influence of Henry George. Indeed each book contains a fictional character who might have been modelled on Henry George, and Miss Machar quoted directly from George's works.<sup>46</sup> A character in *Ryerson Embury* remarking on the similarity between George's teachings and Christian ethics, continues with a summary of the new Gospel: "The fact of the matter is that we, who discarded religion because we found it made a stalking horse of the plunderers of the poor, have simply given up a weapon that is properly ours. Every great religious leader has had but the one purpose of rescuing the suffering section of humanity . . . And what interpretation of the Kingdom of God will fit except 'a right social order' . . . in which . . . every man should be able to feed and clothe himself by simply doing the thing he would choose to do."<sup>47</sup> Henry George had become the architect of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

## II

In Canada, as in the United States, Henry George was a very significant figure in the development of the social gospel. Where Goldwin Smith, *The Christian Guardian*, and other conservative Protestants had rejected George as a threat to both society and religion, liberal Protestants perceived that his views were entirely compatible with their desire for modest reforms. To Protestants whose theology was under attack from historical criticism and science, on the one hand, and who were frequently criticized for failing to be relevant to the social needs of the times, on the other, George provided an answer. That answer was a moralistic rhetoric combined with a reform proposal that promised a

maximum of utopia with a minimum of change. Social salvation through works, seemed easier than individual salvation by faith to Ryerson Embury and a growing number of Protestants would eventually follow in his steps.<sup>49</sup>

But Henry George had an even wider influence. As Ryerson Embury put it: "*Progress and Poverty* — lays out the orthodox ideas on political economy with a flail."<sup>50</sup> Just as George challenged traditional Protestants to face up to the demands of social suffering, so he forced others to question the dogmas or orthodox political economy. "Political Economy has been called the dismal science," he wrote, "and as currently taught, is hopeless and despairing. But this, as we have seen, is solely because she has been degraded and shackled; her truths dislocated; her harmonies ignored; the word she would utter gagged in her mouth and her protest against wrong turned into an endorsement of injustice. Freed — as I have tried to free her in her own proper symmetry, Political Economy is radiant with hope.

"For, properly understood, the laws which govern the production and distribution of wealth show that the want and injustice of the present social state are not necessary; but that, on the contrary, a social state is possible in which poverty would be unknown, and all the better qualities and higher powers of human nature would have opportunity for full development."<sup>51</sup>

As Goldwin Smith and others recognized, once established ideas about the economic order were questioned, especially those concerning property, a large hole was opened in the established order. There was no reason to believe that the "Single Tax" would be the stopping place. Phillips Thompson, who had thought his way out of Christianity, realized that he could go beyond George, too. "The Single Tax movement is doing excellent work in breaking ground for Socialism by causing people to think of the evils begotten by land monopoly and the way to remedy them," he wrote. "There is no tariff on ideas, nor any conceivable method by which those who have cut loose from conventional opinions so far as to realize that the landlord instead of being a social benefactor is a spoliator and a parasite, can be prevented from carrying the principle to its logical conclusion and condemning all forms of unearned increment."<sup>52</sup>

A Phillips Thompson in Toronto, a Henry Harvey Stuart in Fredericton, a Salem Bland in Winnipeg began with Henry George and then moved on to a more thorough-going radicalism. There were others who did not: J.W. Bengough, F.J. Dixon, Nellie McClung and T.A. Crerar. But George's writing opened the eyes of many Canadians to the idea that social and economic arrangements were not forever sanctioned by divine or scientific laws beyond the powers of man to change. "The old days of slavish acquiescence to whatever is uttered with an air of authority and fortified with a scripture text or a passage from Adam Smith have gone by forever," one Canadian social critic wrote. "The monopolists and their advocates have been compelled to make the attempt to meet the arguments of George and other noble minded Labor Reformers."<sup>54</sup>

That, in a nutshell, was Henry George's contribution to the discussion of the progress of poverty in late Victorian Canada.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Palladium of Labor*, August 9, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York, 1938), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Greg Kealey, *Working Class Toronto at the Turn of the Century* (Toronto, 1973); and Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty* (Toronto, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> John L. Thomas, "Utopia for an Urban Age: Henry George, Henry Demarest Lloyd and Edward Bellamy," *Perspectives in American History*, VI, 1972, pp. 135-66; and Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision. Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America*, (Greenville, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> Phillips Thompson, "Country and City Toilers," *Canada Farmers Sun*, August 29, 1894; Ramsay Cook, "Tillers and Toilers: Populism in the Canada Farmers' Sun, 1892-96", (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> Charles A. Barker, *Henry George* (New York, 1955), p. 518.

<sup>8</sup> *The Kingston British Whig*, February 13, 1891.

<sup>9</sup> Elwood P. Lawrence, *Henry George in the British Isles* (Ann Arbor, 1957), pp. 54-7.

<sup>10</sup> Public Archives of Canada (P.A.C.), Phillips Thompson Papers, Henry George to Thompson, May 7, 1884.

<sup>11</sup> *Palladium of Labor*, August 9, 1884.

<sup>12</sup> See Craufurd Goodwin, *Canadian Economic Thought* (Durham, 1961), pp. 32-38; and F.W. Watt, "The National Policy, the Workingman, and Proletarian Ideas in Victorian Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, XL, 1, March 1959, pp. 1-26.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, *The Fabians* (New York, 1977), p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> The discussion of George, and especially of the single tax, continued in Canada long after the 1890s as even a cursory reading of *The Grain Growers Guide* will indicate. Moreover, taxation policies which bore at least some similarity to George's proposal were enacted in various parts of the country. See, for example, Archibald Stalker, "Taxation of Land Values in Western Canada," unpublished M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1913; and F.C. Wade, "Experiments with the Single Tax in Western Canada", Paper read before the Eighth Annual Conference on Taxation under the Auspices of the National Tax Association, Denver, Colorado, September 11, 1914. W.C. Good's *Production and Taxation* (Toronto, 1919) also owed a great deal to George. But by the twentieth century George's general analysis of capitalism was rarely discussed, having been either accepted, rejected or superseded. People like D.W. Buchanan and F.C. Dixon, in Winnipeg, tried to keep the faith but even they rarely seem to have appealed to George's general analysis.

<sup>16</sup> Henry George, Jr., *The Life of Henry George*, (New York, 1900), pp. 351-2.

<sup>17</sup> *Kingston British Whig*, March 6, 1891.

<sup>18</sup> P.A.C., W.L.M. King Papers, Diary, December 12, 1895.

<sup>19</sup> Morley Wickett, "The Study of Political Economy at Canadian Universities," *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industries for the Province of Ontario, 1897* (Toronto, 1899), p. 106.

<sup>20</sup> *The Bystander*, July 1880, pp. 384-87.

<sup>21</sup> Goldwin Smith, *False Hopes, or Fallacies Socialistic and Semi-Socialistic, Briefly Answered* (New York, 1883), p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> *The Week*, January 31, 1884; *The Bystander*, December 1889, pp. 97-99; Arnold Haultain, *Goldwin Smith: His Life and Opinions*, (Toronto, n.d.), pp. 183-84.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *False Hopes*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> George, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 506-526.

<sup>25</sup> *Palladium of Labor*, August 9, 1884.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Brian McKillop, "A Disciplined Intelligence, Intellectual Enquiry and the Moral Imperative in Anglo-Canadian Thought, 1850-90", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Queen's University, 1976, Ch. V.

<sup>27</sup> W.D. LeSueur, "Progress and Poverty and the Doctrine of Evolution," *Canadian Monthly and National Review*, May 1881, pp. 287-96.

<sup>28</sup> W.D. LeSueur, "The Future of Morality," *Canadian Monthly and National Review*, January 1880, pp. 81-93.

<sup>29</sup> George, *The Life of Henry George*, pp. 340-41.

<sup>30</sup> *Palladium of Labor*, October 27, 1883.

<sup>31</sup> The Labor Union, February 17, 1883.

<sup>32</sup> *The Social Reformer*, 1, 1, November 1889.

<sup>33</sup> Ramsay Cook, "The Ragged Reformer: J.W. Bengough, The Caricaturist as Social Critic," (forthcoming); Stanley Paul Kutcher, *John Wilson Bengough: Artist of Righteousness*, unpublished M.A. thesis, McMaster University, 1975.

<sup>34</sup> *Labor Advocate*, January, 1891. For Thompson's general view see his *The Politics of Labor*, (2nd ed., Toronto, 1975); John David Bell, *The Social and Political Thought of the Labor Advocate*, unpublished M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1975; Ramsay Cook, "The Political Economist and the Prophet of Unrest," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 4th Series, Vol. XIII, 1975, pp. 228-250.

<sup>35</sup> *Christian Guardian*, February 13, 1884, February 13, 1889.

<sup>36</sup> *Grip*, November 16, 1889.

<sup>37</sup> *The Christian Guardian*, January 29, 1889.

<sup>38</sup> George Monro Grant, "Progress and Poverty," *The Presbyterian Review*, IX, 34, April 1888, pp. 185, 198. For an account of Grant's social ideas see Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 183-86.

<sup>39</sup> *Grip*, February 7, 1891

<sup>40</sup> S.T. Wood and J.L. Dawkins to Principal G.M. Grant, 2 February, 1891, *The Labor Advocate*, February 20, 1891.

<sup>41</sup> *The Kingston British Whig*, February 13, 1891.

<sup>42</sup> Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York, 1967), pp. 239-41.

<sup>43</sup> *The Labor Advocate*, January 23, 1891.

<sup>44</sup> Albert R. Carman, "The Gospel of Justice," *The Canadian Methodist Quarterly*, July 1891, pp. 287, 300.

<sup>45</sup> Agnes Maule Machar, *Roland Graeme: Knight* (Toronto, 1892); Albert R. Carman, *The Preparation of Ryerson Embury* (Toronto, 1900). See Mary Vipond, "Blessed are the Peacemakers: The Labour Question in Canadian Social Gospel Fiction, *The Journal of Canadian Studies*, X, 3, August 1975, pp. 32-44, for a fuller discussion of these novels and a somewhat different emphasis.

<sup>46</sup> Machar, *Roland Graeme*, p. 184.

<sup>47</sup> Carman, *Ryerson Embury*, p. 229. See also Machar, *Roland Graeme*, p. 279.

<sup>48</sup> Fred Nickleson, "Henry George: Social Gospeller," *The American Quarterly*, XXII, 1970, pp. 649-664.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Allen, *The Social Passion* (Toronto, 1971) examines this phenomenon in detail.

<sup>50</sup> Carman, *Ryerson Embury*, p. 153.

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<sup>51</sup> George, *Progress and Poverty* pp. 559-60. George Bernard Shaw virtually plagiarized this passage, putting it into more succinct prose, for the closing sentence of his contribution to *Fabian Essays*. He wrote: "It is economic science — once the Dismal, now the Hopeful — that we are indebted for the discovery that though the evil is enormously worse than we knew, yet it is not eternal — not even very long lived, if only we bestir ourselves to make an end of it." George Bernard Shaw, editor, *The Fabian Essays* (1889), (London, 1950), p. 27.

<sup>52</sup> *The Labour Advocate*, March 17, 1891.

<sup>53</sup> James K. Chapman, "Henry Harvey Stuart (1873-1952): New Brunswick Reformer," *Acadiensis*, v.2, Spring 1976, pp. 79-104, Long after he became a socialist Stuart remained a staunch advocate of the Single Tax. See H.H. Stuart, "Municipal Taxation," *The Canadian Municipal Journal*, VII, December 1911, pp. 477-79.

<sup>54</sup> *The Palladium of Labor*, June 14, 1884.