

# Single-Tax Doctrine Of Henry George Still Supported, Recent Parley Proves

## Originator's Rank As Thinker Has Risen With Years

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TO MANY PEOPLE, the most surprising thing about the single-tax conference at Lakeside a week ago is the fact that it was held. Most of those who have any knowledge of the single tax appear to associate it with the gaslight era, and therefore they find it odd that the famous old panacea should still command attention today.

The Lakeside conference demonstrated beyond question that the single tax is still alive, but it also made it plain that the modern Georgists have a long way to go before they regain the position their predecessors held in the last century.

Few any longer deny that Henry George was one of the outstanding original thinkers produced in this country. The late John Dewey wrote of George that "it would require less than the fingers of the two hands to enumerate those who from Plato down rank with him."

There was much more to George's philosophy than the single tax—for instance, he was one of the great apostles of free trade—but his solution to the land problem was always the key to his system of social reform.

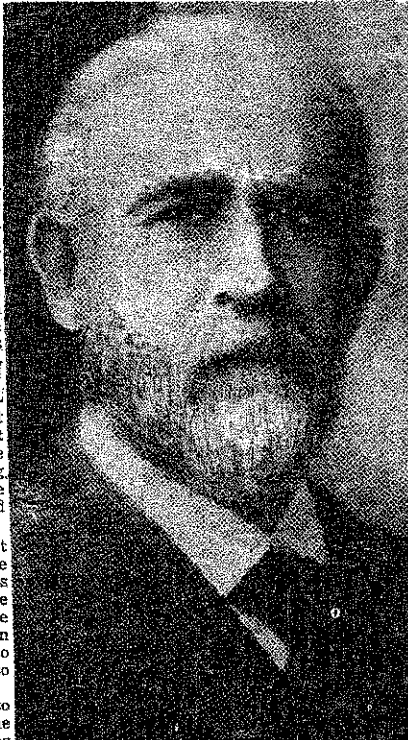
**GEORGE WAS BORN** in Philadelphia in 1839 and became a printer. He joined the throng of immigrants to the West in the 1850s and observed the effects of land speculation in the boom towns of California. George was bitterly poor during most of the time he lived in the West, and he became convinced that land monopoly was the cause of poverty.

George argued that, unlike other items of trade and exchange, land was the "gift of nature" and not the result of human endeavor. Therefore he contended that land should be at the free disposal of anyone who would put it to productive use.

In 1879 George published "Progress and Poverty," his greatest work, in which he advanced the idea that the state should confiscate rent—the single tax—as a means of forcing those who extracted an "unearned" profit from land to disgorge their holdings.

"**PROGRESS AND POVERTY**" made George famous both in the United States and Europe. In 1881 he went to Ireland to take part in the battle against the English landlords. He then settled in New York, and in 1886 became an independent candidate for mayor with the backing of 165 labor organizations in the city. George ran second to the Democratic candidate but well ahead of Theodore Roosevelt, who was the Republican nominee.

Dr. Edward McGlynn, a Catholic priest who had supported George, was excommunicated in the aftermath of the campaign. It was widely believed that pressure from Tammany Hall was responsible for Father McGlynn's excommunication, and in 1892 he was reinstated in the priesthood, after it had been demonstrated that the single tax



THE LATE HENRY GEORGE AND SCHOOL THAT BEARS HIS NAME  
Advocate of single tax died in 1897; institution with headquarters in New York helps keep his theories before public

did not conflict with Catholic doctrine.

For the rest of his life George lectured and preached the single tax. Perhaps his most famous convert was Tom L. Johnson, the millionaire reformer who four times was elected mayor of Cleveland. In 1897 George was again a candidate for mayor of New York, but he died on Oct. 29, four days before the election.

IN THE YEARS immediately following the death of Henry George things looked encouraging for the single tax. In England, Georgists were very helpful in obtaining acceptance for the celebrated Lloyd George budget of 1909, with its heavy emphasis on land taxation.

In the United States, Woodrow Wilson, an admirer if not admittedly a disciple of Henry George, was elected president, and his cabinet contained several associates of the single-taxer.

Among the major figures were Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, whom George had supported for president in 1896, and Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, who had been Johnson's aid and successor in Cleveland. Among the minor figures in the Wilson cabinet was Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post, who had battled for the single tax at George's side for many years.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR put an end to whatever hopes the Georgists may have had, for the single tax, like other reform measures, suffered serious loss of support during the prosperous 1920's. In the elections of 1920 and 1924 the single-taxers entered presidential tickets, but the vote they received was insignificant. By the end of the decade it is fair to say that the

single tax was a dead and forgotten issue.

With the coming of the depression interest in reform revived, and the single tax was not neglected. In 1932 the Henry George School of Social Science was founded in New York by Oscar H. Geiger, a fur dealer who, as a young man, had learned the lesson of the single tax from its originator. Today the Henry George School, with its correspondence courses and extension branches in cities across the country, is the chief instrument for the dissemination of single-tax.

SINCE THE DAYS of Tom Johnson, Ohio has been a favorite state in the eyes of the Georgists. At present, when the single tax finds most of its adherents in large metropolitan centers, Ohio, alone has a statewide organization and a state director.

The expenses of the Henry George School, which offers its courses free of charge, are met by voluntary contributions and by funds drawn from a foundation established by John C. Lincoln, chairman of the board of the Lincoln Electric Co. of Cleveland. Mr. Lincoln was the single-tax candidate for vice president in 1924, and is now the president of the Henry George School.

DURING HENRY GEORGE'S lifetime his followers might have been classified roughly in three groups: a handful of men of means, who helped to finance the crusade; a substantial number of what are sometimes called middle-class liberals, who provided the leadership for the movement; and a large representation from organized labor, who provided the votes.

A check at the Lakeside conference revealed that, among others, there were present a college student, some housewives, a real estate dealer, an insurance-company executive, a salesman, the president of a woman's club, a newspaperman, an attorney, a nurse, a cost estimator, and the superintendent of a home for the blind.

ANOTHER DIFFERENCE between the single-tax movements of the 19th and 20th centuries is the absence among modern Georgists of the fiery leadership which made the campaigns of the past such memorable affairs. Great fighters like Tom Johnson, Father McGlynn and Henry George himself, were able to keep the faith alive and flourishing despite repeated defeats at the polls.

A partial check of those in the Toledo area who had enrolled in the Henry George School courses four years ago revealed that many of them had subsequently lost interest in the movement.

From the ideological standpoint there seems to be no reason why the single tax should not be popular today. Aside from their unorthodox views on land taxation, single-taxers are as enthusiastic for free enterprise as any industrialist, and they also advocate greatly increased rewards to labor. Yet modern Georgists would be the first to admit that their movement is not as strong today as it was 50 years ago.

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HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

National Headquarters