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Whether they belong to any organization or not, there are to-day, as everyone acquainted with the labor movement knows, a considerable number of men who have come to believe that the readiest, if not the only, means by which existing unjust social conditions can be changed for the better, is through violence of some sort. Few of these men are avowed anarchists; most of them have more definite idea than that there is some deep wrong in the constitution of society which can never get redress until the propertied classes find their own comfort and safety imperiled.

This is a dangerous element, but it is only the correlative of a still more dangerous element, that influential class, controlling most of the organs of public opinion and education, who exert all their power to suppress any honest inquiry into the causes of the injustice which the masses so bitterly feel. Violence is the method of ignorance and despair. Men who see the possibility of a peaceful remedy for their wrongs do not turn to it.

The real conservatives of to-day are those who, having traced social injustice to its real root, the fundamental wrong which disinherits the masses and causes material progress itself to make harder the lot of the mere laborer, are endeavoring to popularize the simple yet efficient remedy involved in freeing production from the taxes now levied upon it, and taking for social use the values created by social growth and improvement.

"This thing is absolutely certain: Private property in land blocks the way of advancing civilization. The two cannot long coexist. Either private property in land must be abolished, or, as has happened again and again in the history of mankind, civilization must again turn

back in anarchy and bloodshed. Let the remaining years of the nineteenth century bear me witness. Even now, I believe, the inevitable struggle has begun. It is not conservatism which would ignore such a tremendous fact. It is the blindness that invites destruction. He that is truly conservative let him look the facts in the face; let him speak frankly and dispassionately. This is the duty of the hour. For, when a great social question presses for settlement, it is only for a little while that the voice of Reason can be heard. The masses of men hardly think at any time. It is difficult even in sober moments to get them to calmly reason. But when passion is roused, then they are like a herd of stampeded bulls. I do not fear that present social adjustments can continue. That is impossible. What I fear is that the dams may hold till the flood rises to fury. What I fear is that dogged resistance on the one side may kindle a passionate sense of wrong on the other. What I fear are the demagogues and the accidents.

"The present condition of all civilized countries is that of increasing unstable equilibrium. In steam and electricity, and all the countless inventions which they typify, mighty forces have entered the world. If rightly used, they are our servants, more potent to do our bidding than the genii of Arabian story. If wrongly used, they, too, must turn to monsters of destruction. They require and will compel great social changes. That we may already see. Operating under social institutions which are based on natural justice, which acknowledge the equal rights of all ^{to} the material and opportunities of nature, their elevating power will be equally exerted, and industrial organization will pass naturally into that of a vast co-operative society. Operating under social institutions which deny natural justice

by treating land as private property, their power is unequally exerted, and tends, by producing inequality, to engender forces that will tear and rend and shatter. The old bottles cannot hold the new wine. This is the ferment which throughout the civilized world is everywhere beginning."

It is now five years since I wrote these words. What has happened since, and is now happening, has all the more convinced me of their truth.

Signed: Henry George.
April 30, 1887