

Address to the
HENRY GEORGE CLUB
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given by
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Many years ago, Mason Gaffney and I were both teaching at North Carolina State College. While there, each of us had occasion to hear the other deliver a prepared talk. Our styles differed. Mason began with a humorous story, while I launched immediately into my presentation. Each of us then thought the other had the better approach.

Now, it has been many years since I have delivered a prepared talk; and, in preparing for this talk I considered how to begin. Should I start with humor? Should I start with a quotation from literature, or the bible, or Henry George? Frank Chodorov once told me he spent a lot of time trying to find the right beginning for each of his essays.

The only humorous story that has come to my mind that would fit the occasion is the story I heard the late Henry L.T. Tideman tell of how he reacted when he was first approached to lead a class in the study of Progress and Poverty. Henry said that after the gentleman had explained about the round table discussion method then being used in New York, and had asked him to lead such a round table discussion here in Chicago, he looked at the man and asked "What? You expect me to stand up in front of my neighbors and say to them 'Look here at what a bright, handsome fellow I am. I'm going to teach you about political economy.'"

I thought of using that story to tell you how it feels to prepare a talk for people whom I have known for a long time.

This year we mark the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of Henry George's Progress and Poverty. Henry George dedicated the work "To those who, seeing the vice and misery that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, feel the possibility of a higher social state and would strive for its attainment."

What is the 'higher social state' envisioned by that young California newspaperman and occasional politician? It is a state that he described as "Association in equality". Think about it. Association in equality-- human beings coming together freely to co-operate in the gathering of food, the making of clothes, the building of houses, to play, to sing, to dance, to court and marry, to beget and rear children, to share joys and sorrows, to worship and pray.

Association in equality. Another expression of the idea of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. The theme that runs through the Law and the Prophets. The law of life repeated and refined by a young rabbi from Galilee in the words "Love your neighbor as yourself."

You were told that the title of my talk is "I Have A Dream." And so by now you must be wondering when I am going to talk about that dream. When I am going to tell you what the dream is.

Yes. I do have a dream. I have a dream that some day we will recognize the fact that we are engaged in a struggle between the forces of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, God and the Devil. I have a dream that some day we will recognize the fact that we are engaged in a struggle between Freedom and Slavery.

My dream does not differ from that of Henry George or of my brother who introduced me to the study of Henry George.

Let me read for you these words from Progress and Poverty:

"...association in equality is the law of progress. Association frees mental power for expenditure in improvement, and equality, or justice, or freedom--for the terms here signify the same thing, the recognition of the moral law--prevents the dissipation of this power in fruitless struggles....Men tend to progress just as they come closer together, and by cooperation with each other increase the mental power that may be devoted to improvement, but just as conflict is provoked, or association develops inequality of condition and power, this tendency to progression is lessened, checked, and finally reversed."

...and finally reversed. Civilization. Western Civilization which has come to us in fits and starts from its beginnings in the fertile crescent and the valley of the Nile--Western Civilization with its spirit nurtured by Jewish theology and Greek philosophy is running pell mell into the quagmire of lost civilizations.

Even as Henry George was writing, he saw the forces of regression and decline. Listen again to the words he wrote: "There is no mistaking it--the very foundations of society are being sapped before our eyes, while we ask, how is it possible that such a civilization as this, with its railroads, and daily newspapers and electric telegraphs, should ever be destroyed? While literature breathes but the belief that we have been, are, and for the future must be, leaving the savage state further and further behind us, there are indications that we are actually turning back toward barbarism."

That was a hundred years ago. And for the next eighteen years, the rest of his life, Henry George worked to spread his ideas. He did not despair, nor should we.

Consider this: Christianity might today be no more than another sect of Judaism had it not been for a young zealot named Paul who preached the message to the gentiles. Consider that it took eighteen hundred years for that message to result in the abolition of slavery.

I do not say it will take another eighteen hundred years to abolish taxes and return to a recognition that land is common property--the common inheritance of all mankind. I believe the time is ripe now for those who understand Henry George to make a concerted effort to propagate his teaching and bring to fruition his ideals.

Among Christians there is a tradition about a second coming of Christ. I am sure that in every age there have been groups who believed that the coming is imminent. Indeed, just a few months ago, I heard that the coming is about to occur. Perhaps. Perhaps. But I don't think it is necessary. Anyway, for myself, if we do need a reincarnation to solve our problems I am willing to settle for a St. Paul.

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