

THE GOOD SOCIETY!

"... who shall measure the heights to which our civilization may soar? Words fail the thought! It is the Golden Age of which poets have sung...! It is the glorious vision which has always haunted man with gleams of fitful splendor... It is the reign of the Prince of Peace!"



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The Challenge of Henry George

3-615

by Warren Samuels

Two important issues in the study of the ideas of Henry George and their reception by his and later generations have been raised in the investigations of Aaron Fuller, Gene Wunderlich and Terence Dwyer: the legitimacy of George as an economist and the significance of his analysis for economics.

Let me begin with Fuller's correct assessment of some or much of George's writing as **hyperbole**. If we mean by **hyperbole** that an argument is overstated, that excessive claims are made, then surely George's characterization of the moral and social regeneration to be expected from the single tax qualifies:

The sterile waste would clothe itself with verdure, and the barren places where life seemed banned would ere long be dappled with the shade of trees and musical with the song of birds. Talents now hidden, virtues unsuspected, would come forth to make human life richer, fuller, happier, nobler... They need but the opportunity to bring them forth.

Consider the possibilities of a state of society that gave that opportunity to all. Let imagination fill out the picture; its colors grow too bright for words to paint. Consider the moral elevation, the intellectual activity, the social life.

Dr. Warren Samuels is professor of economics at Michigan State University, East Lansing.

But lest we denigrate George unduly, let us consider the hyperbole embedded in conventional practices in economics. First, limiting assumptions are used, and conclusions are drawn and then extended beyond the reach permitted by the assumptions. Second, partial equilibrium solutions are used as proxies for general equilibrium solutions. Third, as with Say's Law and the Coase Theorem, there is casuistic manipulation of assumptions to maintain the ostensible integrity and viability of certain desired conclusions.

George's immodesties are obvious; those found in more orthodox economic analysis are more subtle and recondite, but no less present and significant. Hyperbole lies without deceiving, Macaulay said, but our kind deceives even ourselves.

Why has George's legitimacy as an economist been an issue? He clearly had mastered economics as it stood in the 1870's, that is, principally, classical economics. The original definition of an economist "one who is conversant with, or a student of, economics (the science)" is more inclusive, but the

(cont'd on Page Eleven)

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'The Good Society!' is sent to members of the Alumni Group International – an association of people firmly committed, not only to the constitutional principles of liberty and justice, but to a belief that reasonable solutions may be found for pressing personal and societal problems.

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EDITORIAL

Keith Forrand is a good citizen. He was in a fast food eatery when it was robbed. He gave chase in his car and caught the thief. For his pains, he was shot in the face. He sued Jack-in-the-Box for compensation and was awarded close to \$3 million.

One's sympathies are entirely with Keith, but hardly with either the suit or its conclusion. To hold a business responsible for the off-premises maleficence of a young hood provides further demonstration of the infinite capacity of our legal system to feed lawyers rather than dispense justice.

We now enjoy, if that is the word, one dedicated legal professional for every 410 citizens – up 50% in ten years. And law schools spew an annual 35,000 new mouths greedily to draw sustenance from mountains of work spawned by legislatures

Somehow, these lawyer filled factories produce 150,000 new laws every year, and each one buds a double handful of labyrinthine regulations.

These people have confused justice and law. Good law doesn't produce justice. Good law is the consequence of justice. With justice absent, a monstrous and near hysterical flood of legislation does no more than confirm existing injustice.

Lawyers who would tackle the problem, must first seek a just society. Do they know what it is?

hp

This is a magazine of opinion, comment and debate. The opinions are those of the Editor and contributors. Responsibility for unsigned comment rests with the Editor. Contributions and letters are welcomed. They should connect with the broad subject of political economy, which concerns itself with Man as a person and as a member of society.

By George!

people,

places,

things

Take me, I'm Yours

Paul Bell of Taft, California, tried again to be arrested for failing to file an income tax return. Again, the IRS turned him away with a flea in his ear. This is the eighth year he's demanded arrest and prosecution. Each time he's been told to go away. It's a pretty pass when you can't even get yourself arrested any more.

Wall Street Blues

The lady was billed as a consulting economist to both houses of Congress as well as to various 'foreign governments'. Now, she was worried because several American banks had become entangled in some rickety foreign economies (she was unclear as to whether these were numbered among those she had advised).

We are owed billions of dollars by these countries, she said, and they are likely to default and we'll lose the lot. I reminded her that I stood to lose nothing, for I hadn't lent them a sou. She smiled sweetly and pointed out that I would be affected, for to recoup their losses, the banks would raise the prime rate to positively unheard of amounts and I would be paying through the teeth. I didn't pursue this fantasy, but it definitely confirmed her connection with congressional economic policy.

I also choked an impulse to ask whether she was connected to these foreign welshers. Instead, I pondered the scenario in which a bank's personal and private profit from a loan suddenly, when the transaction turns sour, segues into a social embarrassment for us all.

It seems that these banking tycoons had not been seeking their own personal and private aggrandizement. Rather, had they been working on my behalf. They just hadn't bothered to let me know how

The Good Society

much I was making on those multibillion deals with Poland, Mexico and the like. Unfortunately, just before they arrived at an actual distribution of cash, they suddenly found they didn't have any.

Once this is understood, we can forgive their incompetence. Might even find a few small coins if a collection is called. It's just that that they forgot to tell us how well we were doing —until we weren't. It's an error that anybody could make.

Oil in the Family

The U.S. Government doesn't make mistakes like this. This is because they are patriotic. They keep their debts at home where they belong. Then, we can pay them before they get too immense. If you suggest they get too immense anyway, it's just your badmouthing. It's not an easy task to keep the rate of spending ahead of income.

Anyway, our elected officials have other things to worry about, such as the recent drop in oil prices. One of the hired hands working for what, in jest, is called 'The Administration', showing his vocation was more than a just a job, told us he was 'worried sick' that oil prices would fall through the floor. Unbridled price cutting is pretty hard to take just when you've got prices nicely stabilized. He hoped that barrel prices would sink no more than \$2 or so.

In a heartwarming expression of solidarity between church and state, Standard Oil of California, through its chairman, also viewed with horror the prospect of a lower oil price.

Not that we should expect anything less from such economic experts. After all these are the people who gave us stabilized orange prices, stabilized tobacco prices, even stabilized milk prices. It's a tough job, but someone has to do it.

However, the drop in prices does allow one positive consequence. Our strategic reserve, or official oil pit, will now cost a little less to build. In fact, instead of pumping low-priced oil from our own wells for use, even as we import high priced OPEC oil to fill the hole, perhaps we have a way **really** to shaft those Arabs.

Of course, Congress will never get such an idea past a 'cut taxes' President, but first, to deter consumption, we put a 5¢ per gallon tax on home grown

oil. Once we're awash in oil, we fill our reserve from our domestic oil supply! In fact, we might well be able to keep the strategic hole topped up with our own oil until OPEC caves in, cries 'Uncle Sam' and stabilizes its prices at the correct market level.

Seeing the Sites

When Homer Hoyt, in his "Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago", asserted that the actual ground space occupied by buildings in Cook County was 3% of the total area, we were inclined to feel that he was pushing it a little. When he followed this statement with the contention that the entire population of the U.S. could be housed within Chicago, if it were built to the limit allowed by zoning law, we sophisticates tittered behind our hands.

STOP PRESS!

We have just received the costs of the Annual Conference in Goleta (just 12 miles north of Santa Barbara). Other details are published on Page Eleven of this issue of TGS.

Prices below include full board, the \$25 Registration Fee, and the Saturday Banquet, which will be a thoroughly Hawaiian Luau (\$17.50 separately) at which everyone will get a free lei. I think that's the way Clancy spells it. These are inclusive package prices (except for \$5 refundable key deposit) and are obviously a bargain, so no improvisations are possible.

Accommodation is good as is the food. Rooms are in pairs, sharing a bathroom. The following are per person rates for a room with 'Double Occupancy' and 'Single Occupancy'. Third column is for each child 6 - 12 years old. They cover Dinner when you arrive through to Sunday lunch. Should you arrive on:

	<u>Double</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Child</u>
Thursday (3 nights)	\$120	\$145	\$55
Friday (2 nights)	\$ 90	\$125	\$40
Saturday (1 night)	\$ 60	\$ 75	\$25

Guarantee reservation with a \$25 deposit. Help us by paying in full by a June 6th postmark and you'll earn a WHOPPING 10% discount.

Then Harland Bartholemew pointed out that in his survey of 53 downtowns, no less than 29% of the space was undeveloped (another 28% was used for streets and alleys). And Mason Gaffney told us that 84% of metropolitan New York City (79% of the usable area) was undeveloped for urban use.

Now the House Subcommittee on the City has jumped in. Their report declares that even as real estate developers are cutting swaths across the family farms, much of the country's urban land lies unused. Says the report "In the nation's largest central cities, the amount of vacant land is more than twice as extensive as the land occupied by all their commercial and industrial activities combined".

Not just the largest. The vacant, but developable, land of Columbia, MO is 47% of its total area.

Go to Your Deli Case

Meantime, if you can't get some of the fresh stuff, get it in a can. You can buy 8 ounces of Kand Land for a cheap \$3.50 and tell everyone you have a piece of land going for a cool 2 million bucks an acre. It's guaranteed earthquake proof, has no dormant volcanoes, and may be moved quickly in the event of flood.

You can also place it under your seat on your next flight and feel you're keeping your feet on the ground.

As far as we know, outside of Alaska, you still can't get it quick frozen.

Now, Let's Be Practical

"If power is for sale, sell your mother to buy it. You can always buy her back again."
(19th Century Ashanti Proverb)

There's Always a Silver Lining

Stalin said 'when we come to hang the Capitalists, they will sell us the rope'. Maybe, he was right. This from a recent investment promotion:

COMMUNISTS THREATEN EMBARGOES OF CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES

Coming shortages more crippling
than the Arab oil crisis

— but shrewd investors can profit

I guess we sell either Mom, or the rope. *TGS*
The Good Society

OUR NATURAL RIGHTS

by Harry Pollard

Let's assume that we are the island castaways. We have recognized the fact of our unique individuality and we appreciate our similarities. Urged by the profitability of cooperation, we are obliged to search out the extent and limits of our individual rights. The **implicit contracts**, or negative understandings, such as 'we won't kill, maim, or otherwise injure each other' have already been accepted, or our conference would be stillborn.

It is likely that our first concern will be to make the implicit contracts into **explicit** contracts. These are protective agreements and include the idea of enforcement via penalty. If such protective contracts sound like laws, they should. Though contracts are individually agreed, people can easily contract in concert for their mutual protection.

Once we feel safe, we can look to the more positive advantages of cooperation. As we make our claims, it becomes apparent that every right we claim is actually an assertion of ownership, 'what is mine and what is thine'. We are trying to establish what belongs to whom.

However, we need not study every instance of property right. Instead, we may use the conclusions of the classical political economists. They separated everything in their universe into three classes —

*'Political Economy' is a social science. Indeed, 'political' refers to gatherings of people, and 'economy' is a word for organization, or system. Interaction between people means exchange and the marketplace. Also, because exchanging requires time, it implies production that is not immediately consumed. Those products still involved in the process

The Good Society

PART II OF THE ARGUMENT THAT THERE ARE NO
'NATURAL RIGHTS', THAT RIGHTS ARE PURELY
CONTRACTUAL — AND DETERMINE OWNERSHIP

people, natural resources, and their products.* We may conveniently examine each in turn.

The aspect of people that is our specific concern is exertion. Exertion is the external manifestation of humanity. How you act and what you do is a resultant of all that goes to make you a person.

Meaningful Exertion

Yet, exertion is not always the same. Some is more significant. We may discard the less important by giving our attention only to exertion whose result is measurable in the market place. (Sand castles and mud pies may be artistic, clever and even socially redeeming, but they are likely also to be both ephemeral and unmarketable.)

So, the essential characteristic of this concept named '**Labor**' is **meaningful exertion** and this will become the first focal point of our quest for 'rights', or 'warranted claims'.

Exertion connects each person to the outside world. A favorite, though rather weak, assertion of libertarians is "I own myself". It would seem that 'I' is 'myself'. If 'myself' means me in the corporeal sense, it seems unfair to point out that 'myself' is a nuisance that no-one would volunteer to own. 'Myself' (the body) requires attention or it dies. It needs sustenance, care and a place to sleep, or it may fall prey to ills, ages and injury. At times, 'myself' seems to cost rather more than it is worth.

A slaveowner cares little about the slaves he 'owns'. After all, what could be more ridiculous than

of production and exchange are called Capital, while those in the hands of the final consumer are called Wealth. In the view of classical political economy, all things fall into one or the other of four mutually exclusive classifications, People (**Labor**), Natural Resources (**Land**), and their products (**Capital** and **Wealth**).

CHILDREN

CONCEPTION, CONTRACEPTION, ABORTION

..... AND THE WHOLE DARN THING

We contended (TGS - Spring '83) that there were no 'natural rights' that 'come with the body'. That rights were a societal invention and were contractual in nature. When people, to gain the benefits of cooperation, associated peacefully, it made sense to confirm conditions of their interaction, to determine their 'rights'.

A pre-requisite to negotiation is recognition by all parties that the others have authority to negotiate for themselves.

Which leads us into the thoroughly rhetorical query, 'How may an infant contract its conditions?'. Of course, he cannot. A neonate is not accepted as an authority for anything. One doesn't discuss 'rights' with someone who cannot produce, whose exertion realizes nothing of market value and who, without external attention, will quickly die.

It is clear that we must put aside eristic support for the 'rights' of children. Rather, should we focus on the factor that demands serious address - the relationship of parent and child.

This major concern, the custody of a vulnerable creature, is often overwhelmed by the torrential flood of chatter about conception, contraception and abortion. The interminable debate distracts us from the aspect of a child's existence most influential to its development - parenting.

The newborn child is a symbiont. It cannot live without the parents, who receive in return perhaps less vital, but equally important contributions from the child.

These will differ from family to family. But both parents are likely

to enjoy not only direct intellectual, emotional and spiritual returns, but a synergistic reinforcement by the 'family effect' - the simple pleasure of having a baby about the house.

Not so rewarding is the voracious appetite of the baby for immediate personal attention to every kind of physical and mental discomfort - real or contrived. A baby in full throat in the small hours, oblivious to time, the neighbors, the agonizing of hapless parents - indeed to the entire majesty of civilization, is an experience whose wretchedness cannot adequately be described to the non-parent.

But, just as difficult to communicate is the delight in a playful baby, or the frontiers of beginning steps, first words. The satisfaction that attends the shepherding to maturity of a brand new person.

Often told and better recorded are the tales of sights that must be lowered in response to family needs, the careers postponed or sacrificed, the standards of living that may fall as a consequence of demand without supply.

The child's future in the family will depend on parental reaction to the good and bad news. Yet, the child is not party to any decision. It is the parents alone who choose. Should they feel the infant lays too heavy a burden, they may abandon it. If they do, the child has no effectively enforceable 'rights', not even the 'right to live'. Our condemnation of such desertion springs less from the abrogated rights of the child, than from our own affronted morality. Under-

standably, we want the parents to behave as we would.

We are a species which must care for its infants, or it won't survive. Human beings can reason and have chosen the advantages of cooperation. We, who have survived to our umpteenth generation, are likely to be naturally cooperative. The need of our young for protection is probably chiselled deep in our unconscious to become part of our 'understandings'. We are predisposed to care for children, **any children.**

But, we must guard against a belief that this legacy of care is some kind of societal imperative. Society doesn't care - only individuals will love and cherish. Concern for the young is an obvious manifestation of individual attitude. A child abandoned in a civilized community is gathered in by other adults. Not because the child has 'rights', but because adults choose to act in this fashion.

It may be a response to philosophical or religious pressures, or a simple reaction to helplessness. In any event, their decision may involve them in parenting to maturity.

And what is maturity? Certainly, age has little to do with becoming an adult. Perhaps, it's when the child accepts responsibility for himself and his actions. When he is recognizably an individual ready to contract his rights, the boy has become a man, the girl has become a woman.

And, at this time, they are ready to assert their warranted claims and receive their contractual rights.

to own people. Bodies come with needs and requirements – and occasionally with dangerous inclinations. Bodies must be confined, perhaps manacled, certainly guarded, probably punished, sometimes chased. Ownership of bodies is a headache to be avoided. Although leg-irons may ensure a reluctant cooperation, they weigh as heavy on production as on the captive.

At the slave auction, the slave-owner does not buy a body. Rather does he try to acquire the capacity of a mind and body **meaningfully to exert**. A slave's attraction rests not in what he is, but in what he can do. Profit builds not with the body count, but with effective expropriation of the body's effort.

When the 'meaningful exertion' of a slave can be appropriated without need to secure, protect and discipline him, slavery becomes markedly more attractive. That is why it is so prevalent in the modern world.*

Who Claims Exertion?

Exertion is the external manifestation of each person. So, in our free community, to whom does it belong? Who may assert a right, a 'warranted claim' to it? It probably requires a less than profound philosophical insight to award ownership of exertion to the one who exerts.

But, philosophy is buttressed by an intrusive pragmatism. Exertion is a drag. The mind grows weary and the muscles suffer only so many contractions before they ache. The one who exerts is also the one who tires, who drops from fatigue, who requires rest to repair and renew. It is not without reason that 'we seek to satisfy our desires with the least exertion'.

We are also pressed by 'unlimited desires', but we find their satisfaction is married to exertion. Although exertion is not enthusiastically sought

*A convenient measure of your 'enslavement' is the percentage of your exertion which is taken without compensation. However, slavery is not determined by the amount of expropriation, but by its fact. If 1% of a person's exertion is taken non-contractually, he is enslaved. The house-slave enjoying a cot inside the mansion was not less a chattel than the field slave sleeping on an earthen floor.

The Good Society

after, we must play out the scene. But, we act only as a means to receive. A successful alien claim to our exertion will promptly end the effort. In our free community, exertion will occur only when Labor's claim to it is clearly accepted.

However, libertarians unhappy with the self-ownership argument should note the Von Mises assertion, "Ownership means full control of the services that can be derived from a good". Perhaps it could be said that when you own your exertion (service) – that establishes your ownership of you.*

Political economy is a social science. Scratching my back is not within its province. But, if I scratch your back, the action has become 'social'. It is properly part of the study. Yet, the service would remain unperformed if you failed to agree that the exertion is mine. Should you not concede that the scratching (exertion) is mine, your back will be left to itch. Indeed, if you do not contractually accept my complete 'right' to the exertion, it will not enter the market.**

The performance of a service provides transitory satisfaction. Your itch has been treated. You are the direct beneficiary of the exertion. However, you may also enjoy my exertion at secondhand?

For example, my exertion may be used, not to provide you with an immediate service, but to bake for you a cake. When you buy the cake from me, you are receiving (in a sense) my congealed exertion, given substance by this material product. The question again arises. How may we establish the **right** to trade the cake?

The argument for the right to one's exertion applies also to the right to the products of exertion.

*Economic classicists including both Adam Smith and Henry George have suggested that exchange is really the trading of exertions. George further pointed out (SPE p. 497) that the value of one's exertion is subjective and therefore difficult to use as a common measure. Hence, in the marketplace, it is usual to compare products – the results of exertion.

**Time is also a factor. One exerts only because desires are expected to be satisfied. If this reward is delayed, Labor demands compensation. Thus is born 'Interest' – the reward for 'delay of satisfaction'.

Just as exertion would not exist without a person, so also would not the product. The exertion is traded for the product. Labor may satisfy another's desire directly with service, or indirectly with a material construct. The grounds for yielding ownership of exertion to the exorter also support ownership of the product by he whose exertion creates it.

Exertion will not be applied if ownership of its results is denied. This is the problem faced by a voluntary socialist collective. As Man 'seeks to satisfy his desires with the least exertion' any member of the collective who receives more exertion than he gives will enthusiastically commend the arrangement. But better producers, who lose exertion to 'equal shares' will tend to withdraw. As average production falls with the loss of the more productive, the collective will usually fail - unless coercive restraints are introduced.

A voluntary collective can prosper and remain free when its members are indifferent to material

returns. Psychological rewards may take their place, such as a the warm sense of belonging to a collective family or satisfaction from an active commitment to a religious or philosophical belief or even, perhaps, the exciting attention of a charismatic leader.

However, on the island our association rests on personal contract, so our first imperative was to determine warranted claims. We should feel rather content with the results of our heavy session, for we seem clearly to have confirmed a person's right to his exertion (Labor) and to the products of his exertion (Capital and Wealth). In each case, the creation belongs to the creator. Which leaves to be settled only the right to natural resources - the ownership of the island.

And there's the rub, for we are about to run headlong into the arms of another Creator! Tomorrow's parley is likely to take us on another long day's journey into 'right'! (to be continued)

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Jackie Sherman PhD California

The Spring 1983 issue of **The Good Society** explains very clearly why your "unselfish crusade to help almost everyone else enjoy a better way of life" (from the article by Perry Prentice) strikes many public-school teachers as a very selfish crusade by middle-class people to avoid paying the taxes which provide what we in our country have come over our 332-year history of public education to

consider as essential services to our less fortunate.

Dr. Milton Friedman, a highly conservative economist from the Chicago School of Economics which provided us with the highly laughable concept of 'supply-side' economics, which has failed to work, has long favored the voucher plan for public education for the same reasons that I and most other teachers oppose it. It would provide less tax support for the public schools by siphoning off tax money to parents who want an education for their children other than what is provided in the public schools.

That is not necessarily or even probably a "better" education. Public schools teach every child who comes to them, including the emotionally disturbed and those with learning disabilities; and public schools provide a variety

of enrichments which private schools, except for a very few of the fabulously expensive, can never hope to offer.

Parents who prefer what is called 'basic' education for their children have always had the right to send their children to accredited private schools which provide such training, chiefly in the basic academic rote skills of reading and computation.

A nationwide siphoning off of such tax money as now supports the public schools to parents who prefer to send their children to private schools, most of which in country are affiliated with religious groups, would effectively destroy the tax base for public education.

When the voucher system was proposed in this state, teachers

The Good Society

fought it. Public education has been considered so important to us that it the first charge upon public funds — as set forth in our state constitution.

I have had for 12 years the experience of accepting students who transferred from the most prestigious private schools in the San Fernando Valley to the public high school where I taught. Both I, and other teachers of accelerated classes, were puzzled as to why the academic background of these students was so poor. They had apparently transferred to a public high school because of financial pressures to meet school fees, or because their parents were concerned that their private schools were not fully accredited to prepare students for the better colleges and universities.

Although, their entry grades were good to excellent, most made very average or below-average grades in the public schools; their grades had been artificially inflated in the private schools, I suppose to keep the parents happy. Private schools are not a panacea. A strong and healthy system of public education has always been a recognized alternative even for wealthy parents.

Henry George was one of many democratic (small 'd') reformers who opposed the raw exploitation of our human and natural resources during our Gilded Age. His career in Oakland, San Francisco, and New York was premised on his demand for equality of opportunity — that is, to allow the underprivileged, in his day about 80% of our population and now about 50%, a chance for a better life. He pro-

The Good Society

posed that his "single tax" provide vast public works, including a free state university system crowning a free excellent public school system. Knowing his reputation, teachers' groups were interested in your message.

But the Henry George movement has left Henry George behind. I have never attended a local meeting which addressed itself to the harsh inequality suffered by Henry George's initial constituency, the poor and the workers and poor farmers. Instead it proposes to middle-class and upper-class taxpayers various and sundry methods of avoiding their obligations to their less fortunate fellow-citizens.

Henry George fully recognized that there is no free lunch, that public education is paid for by public taxes, and that public education provides the chief route of upward mobility for the poor. Speakers and audiences at local Henry George meetings recognize, naturally enough, that the taxes they pay are not entirely or even mostly spent on direct benefits to them: but what I find abhorrent is that they do not recognize that they have a social responsibility, that they are part of a public community, that they owe something to the society which has rewarded them with incomes and perquisites above the common run.

We are, as contemporary historians are fond of reminding us, in a second Gilded Age comparable in greed and insensitivity to our first, which brought forth Henry George. I am hopeful that the voices of the do-gooders and reformers, of whom I in my small

way am proud to be one, will ultimately propel this country into a new wave of reform.

For years I hoped that the Henry Georgists would be in the van of such a movement. But I have never heard a liberal speaker or proposal at one of your meetings. I have never read a liberal or compassionate article in your publications. Henry George's mantle is used now by the very elements of society which he so mistrusted, the greedy and acquisitive who exploit their fellows.

I remind you I took my first degree in economics from UCLA, so that I am on at least a speaking acquaintance with economic concepts. I think the Henry Georgists would benefit also from a few sociological concepts.

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Sorry Jackie, but justice must take precedence over charity. The Lady-of-the-Manor, who provided goodies for her underprivileged, rack-rented, peasants of yesteryear, is not unlike the modern State which gives food-stamps to its underprivileged. We can tax (or persuade) the privileged to divvy up some loot, or we can strike at the roots of their privilege.

I fear that 'liberal democrats' advocate charity mainly to massage their 'psyches'. Georgists prefer to tackle the heaping mountain of privilege that makes the charity needful. The Georgist task is just a smidgin more difficult.

Fred Foldvary

California

Regarding 'Our Natural Rights' and the alleged lack thereof, the 'proof' given was that on an island

Page Nine

by himself, a person has no 'rights'. This was set forth as 'fairly obvious' yet it is by no means obvious to me. Just because a person does not 'need' any rights does not by itself prove that none exist. Just because one's life is then a matter of fact does not mean there is no right. A libertarian castaway would not necessarily shrug off the notion that he owns himself. 'Of course I own myself!' he could say.

'Natural rights' is simply a different way of saying 'natural morality'. In my book **The Soul of Liberty** I have presented a derivation of natural moral law, by which acts that you do to your own self are morally neutral, but acts that affect others can be classified, sometimes, as good or evil.

There are many moral codes that would prescribe acts that you do to yourself alone as good or evil, thus they would not even grant you full rights to self ownership. Perhaps God owns you and has given rules to follow.

So morality in general does prescribe, in one way or another, moral significance (even if neutral) to acts you commit by yourself. And the fact that good or evil do not come into play until another being is encountered does not deny the existence of natural morality as something inherent in humans.

Furthermore, why should equality be a 'sensible conclusion' to negotiation between two persons on the island? Why would not the stronger party decide it is to his advantage to enslave the weaker one? History has shown that social inequality is just as common, if not more so, than any recognition of
Page Ten

equal individuality. If there is no natural morality then slavery is no more unnatural or irrational or wrong than social equality.

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Alone on the island, you may declare what you wish. It means nothing. A right is a warranted claim, a claim you can support with evidence and reason. Alone, to whom do you make your plea?

'Good' and 'evil' are expressions of value. Your expressions of value, relating to your personal well-being. You need no reference to other 'moral codes' for your decisions. You will simply choose advantage over disadvantage.

And, Fred, slavery is hardly negotiable. Contracts are freely made. Sensible people determining rules for themselves are likely to opt for equal treatment. Under attack, one may agree to anything, but this isn't a negotiated settlement of the terms of cooperation.

Doris Gordon

Maryland

Thanks for the copy of your Spring edition. I found Harry Pollard's article, 'Our Natural Rights (There ain't no such thing as)', interesting. The question of the existence of natural rights seems to be an unsettled question among some libertarians.

He uses the term 'right to life'. We have been saying, instead, 'right not to be killed'. Suppose one individual has no desire to 'contractually cooperate with another but instead prefers to kill him or her? Should my desire not to be killed have to be negotiated with anyone?

Or, should someone's inability to negotiate a contract with another such as the preborn child with the mother, mean that the one with the power is free to kill?

Perhaps such questions as these will be answered in the next issue.

Does Mr. Pollard make the distinction between having inalienable rights and, on the other hand, having the ability to exercise those rights and having others respect one's rights? It seems that he may only be talking about ability and respect, not the concept of having inalienable rights.

(National Coordinator
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Doris, your 'right not to be killed' doesn't exist, except as a contractual decision. If someone is a 'rogue' and wants to kill, you're out of luck. However, understandings not to harm each other are likely to become explicit contracts (see Part II - Page 5). Furthermore, free people do not lack common sense. They are likely informally to act in concert against a threat - and also to do so by contract.

A contractual right cannot be inalienable. A contract is made and fulfilled by the individual who made it. There is no way you can make me keep a contract, should I choose to renege. Agreements are made and kept in the minds of the parties who make them. It may be useful to record them, but the record isn't the contract.

'Preborn' children cannot contract, so they have no rights. But, the mother will presumably have her own contracted rights. *TGS*

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(cont'd from front page)

more recent use of the term "one versed in the science of economics" includes George, even if it should, regrettably, exclude one or two of his critics. George actually was quite conservative; he largely accepted classical economics, and his theory of economic policy gave effect to the values of an

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As yet, none of these subjects have been accepted for the Annual Conference of the Council of Georgist Organizations, yet the Program will still be fun and informative.

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industrial capitalist system.

But in our time there is another sense in which the term 'economist' is used: to designate the members of a profession which, by its research, adds to the body of economic science; or, by applying the science, develops advice for decision-making on economic problems for government and business executives and legislators as well as private individuals; or, by teaching in academic settings, trains the next generation of men and women to qualify for the designation under one or another of its rubrics. The question of George's qualification for the designation arises because he ran up against the arrogance, hubris, and entry barriers of a newly professionalizing discipline.

But it is not only professional snobbishness that must be called to account. George also was perceived as unsafe. Although he believed that his policies would extend and strengthen individualism and the system of nonlanded property, others, sensitive to any challenge to established property rights and to policies seemingly socialistic (George thought his policies would prevent socialism), considered his proposals anathema. Many believed he opened the door to even worse change, although the threat to landed fortunes was serious enough in some eyes. George, accordingly, was and has been suspect as an economist because he was a professional outsider (as the profession came to define itself) and because he raised issues which many believed it dangerous to associate with economics.

Even so heterodox an economist as Simon Nelson Patten would restructure economic theory to render it immune from dangerous conclusions such as those offered by George:

.... economic doctrine must be recast so that it would rest wholly on present data. It will not accept socialism; and to free itself from the snares into which it has fallen through the careless statements of its creators, it must isolate itself more fully from history, sociology and other disciplines that give undue weight to past experience.

The central theme of Georgian positive economics is clear and significant: the structure of individual opportunity sets has been formed, to an im-

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portant degree, through the evolution of landed property as an institution, and the distributions of income and wealth (as well as other facets of economic performance) reflect, in part, the identification and assignment of real property rights.

George raised two fundamental policy issues: 1) he questioned the terms of access to and use of land as channeled by real property and other rights, and 2) he asked whether the institution of landed property then extant was anachronistically suited to the enjoyment and wealth of some as contrasted with all individuals.

Whatever one's normative views on these matters, the positive analysis and the policy questions are fundamental. Both were anathema to an establishmentarian perspective once any actual or potential conflict between landed and nonlanded interests had been resolved.

The famous controversy between George and Francis A. Walker over the interpretation of data from the census of 1890, recalled by Wunderlich, is significant in precisely this regard. Data on landholding and their interpretation were important to both the analysis and the critical question of policy, for the data would help define reality and influence the probative value of alternative policy premises. The distribution of land ownership and the trends therein are important and certainly were deemed so by most parties to the controversy.

Page Twelve

Wunderlich, therefore, is absolutely correct in identifying the importance for policy analysis of 1) specifications of universe and of unit of observation and 2) data construction per se with regard to all "facts" pertaining to land. Manipulation of such "technical" matters could and did influence people's definition of reality.

George challenged the value system associated with landed property as it then existed as a pre-eminent institution in American society. In doing so, he also challenged both the theory and data construction upon which important areas of economic analysis rested. To a very large extent, the discipline of economics has sidestepped George's questions.

It is ironical to note, as Dwyer does, that in pressing these challenges George anticipated some of the developments of modern economics. We honor some of his contemporaries with the mantle of the profession for less. Perhaps it is fitting, now that a century has passed, that we answer George's questions in our fashion.

TGS

References

Aaron B. Fuller: Managing senior associate - consulting firm, Booz, Allen and Hamilton.

Terence M. Dwyer: Senior economist, Commonwealth Treasury, Australia.

Gene Wunderlich: senior economist, Economic Research Service, Dept. of Agriculture.

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