

About Henry George

Henry George was born in Philadelphia in 1839, the second of ten children. His father was a clerk at the Philadelphia Customs House, and the family lived modestly.

George attended school until the age of thirteen, when he told his father that he desired "to go out into the world" to work and help support the family. He worked odd jobs and learned to set type. At sixteen, he sailed to Australia and India as a ship hand, eventually returning to the U.S. At age eighteen, he headed west in search of gold.

George spent 1858 in West Coast mining camps and settled in San Francisco in 1859. He found employment as a compositor. He met and married Annie Corsina Fox in 1861. George struggled to find employment and pursued a career in journalism. George published his first book, *Our Land and Land Policy: National and State*, in 1871.

In his landmark book *Progress and Poverty* (1879), George proposed a deceptively simple solution to the problems of economic inequality and industrial depression. He called for the replacement of all federal, state, and local taxes with one tax on land. His proposal became known as the "single tax." Taxing only land values, George believed, would generate all the revenue needed to operate government and produce ever greater levels of opportunity.

In the winter of 1881-1882, George embarked on the first of several tours of the British Isles. He influenced English politics,

helping spur not only a popular land reform movement but also modern British socialism and Irish nationalism.

Back in the US, George was invited to testify before the Senate Committee on the Relations between Labor and Capital in 1883. He published *Social Problems*, a compilation of his editorials. The United Labor Party nominated him to represent the interests of more than 150,000 working men and women in the New York City mayoral race of 1886. Although he lost the election, his campaign attracted national attention as the culmination of what some commentators called "the year of labor."

The campaign also ignited religious controversy. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII placed *Progress and Poverty* on the Vatican's *List of Forbidden Books*.

George edited a weekly newspaper and authored three books: *The Condition of Labor* (1891); *The Perplexed Philosopher* (1892); and *The Science of Political Economy* (1898).

He was nominated again for mayor of New York in 1897. Three days before the election, on October 29, 1897, he suffered a stroke and died. His funeral two days later was likened in size to that held for General Grant. The *New York Times* reported: "No demonstration of popular feeling on the death of a public man since Lincoln's body lay in the City Hall has been so imposing in extent and character as that of yesterday. Call it, if you will, hero worship; but its object was really a hero."