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Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Apr., 1979, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Apr., 1979), pp. 113-127

Published by: American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3486892>

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The AMERICAN JOURNAL of ECONOMICS and SOCIOLOGY

Published QUARTERLY in the interest of constructive
synthesis in the social sciences, under grants from the Francis
Neilson Fund and the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation

VOLUME 38

APRIL, 1979

NUMBER 2

The Single Tax Movement and Progressivism, 1880–1920*

By DOMINIC CANDELORO

ABSTRACT. *Henry George's Single Tax movement* and the *Progressive movement* in the United States were inter-related. After the publication of *Progress and Poverty* a political movement developed around George. It failed, partly because George was a poor politician although he had proved a master-publicist, partly because he aroused a formidable opposition. Nevertheless the single taxers did contribute to progressive *reform* a specific plan for manipulating the environment in a Social Darwinistic way. *George's philosophy* also rejected *socialism* in favor of a *reformed* and purified *capitalism*—perhaps the most important theme in 20th century reform thought in America. Moreover, the Single Tax movement contributed to the *democratic reform* movement such leaders as *Tom L. Johnson, Brand Whitlock, Louis F. Post, Fred-eric C. Howe, George L. Record, Newton D. Baker* and *Franklin K. Lane*.

THE NATURE OF PROGRESSIVISM in America continues to be a subject of debate among historians. Were the Progressives basically middle class, upper class, working class (1) successful, unsuccessful, altruistic, selfish, or a combination of all of the above? (2) In this paper I propose to recount briefly the history of what was formerly considered to be a prominent aspect of Progressivism, the Single Tax Movement. I shall analyze the single tax phenomenon in the light of recent scholarship with the hope of shedding yet another ray of light on the perennial questions concerning the nature of Progressivism.

*Presented in commemoration of the centenary of the publication of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, this paper is based on a paper presented at the Great Lakes History Conference, April 29, 1977.

American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 38, No. 2 (April, 1979).
0002-9246/79/020113-15\$00.75/0

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I

THE SINGLE TAX movement began with Henry George. George was a San Francisco newspaperman in the 1870s who became disturbed by the emergence of poverty in California just at the time when industrial advancement should have produced uninterrupted prosperity. In *Progress and Poverty* (1879), his exceedingly popular treatise on political economy, George declared that the basic cause of poverty was land monopoly. The land and natural resources of the nation belonged to the people. Land values were socially created by general economic development and population increase. Those who held land in the expectation that it would increase in value were the beneficiaries of an unearned increment. If this wealth could be distributed to the people as a whole and not monopolized by the privileged few, poverty could be wiped out. Instead of confiscating all land, George proposed a stiff tax on the value of land exclusive of any improvements or buildings on the land, a tax nearly equal to its annual economic rent. According to George, this would discourage land speculation, decrease the price of land, and provide enough revenue for the state so that all other forms of taxation could be eliminated. Thus the term "single tax." This solution, along with fully competitive markets and free trade, would bring permanent prosperity and restore competition in a system of unperverted capitalism. Wages would rise, for workers would have the option of returning to cheap land if they felt exploited. Without tariff and patent protection, monopolies would be destroyed. Moreover, revenues from the proposed tax would be so great that the State could provide a myriad of public services and certain social and cultural programs (3).

Henry George was definitely not a socialist. He did not preach government ownership of the principal means of production; he advocated heavy taxation of the most important and non-reproducible factor in production—land and natural resources. A Jeffersonian by temperament, George was repulsed by the penchant of socialists for regimentation (4). This was George's chief objection to the utopia presented by Edward Bellamy in *Looking Backward*. The single tax was the one reform that would free capitalism to reach its high potential.

After the publication of *Progress and Poverty* George travelled about the country and the world promoting the book and his philosophy. The book eventually sold some two million copies. Scattered organizations devoted to George's philosophy appeared in major cities including New York. In 1886 the Central Labor Union of New York

City became determined to avenge in the political arena recent setbacks in its struggle against management. Its leadership, which included several who were already disciples of George, convinced Henry George to be their candidate for mayor. Georgists, socialists, Father Edward McGlynn's Anti-Poverty Society, and labor leaders including both Terence Powderly of the Knights of Labor and Samuel Gompers of the newly-formed American Federation of Labor worked hard for George's election in a colorful and exciting campaign. However, the Tammany Democratic candidate, Abram S. Hewitt (something of a reformer himself) won approximately 90,000 votes to defeat George with 68,000 and the young Theodore Roosevelt with only 60,000 votes (5).

Henry George's backers complained of being counted out, but looked forward to electoral victory in the near future. It was not to be. In the following year George ran for New York Secretary of State but was not supported by the socialists (whom he had forced out of leadership positions in his United Labor Party). His cause was also abandoned by some labor groups who had been alienated by George's stand in favor of the death penalty for the anarchists convicted in the Haymarket Riot. In good conscience and possibly in an attempt to appear less radical to the electorate, George agreed with the Illinois Supreme Court that the Haymarket Rioters were guilty of conspiracy and that the death sentence was warranted; however, George recommended clemency for the accused (6). The Single Tax Prophet made such a dismal showing in 1887 that he resolved henceforth to avoid electoral politics.

Despite defeats, Henry George's foray into New York politics in the 1880s brought some benefits to the emerging Single Tax movement. *The Leader*, originally begun as a campaign paper, and *The Standard*, a permanent newspaper, had been established as the official organs for expressing the opinions of the movement. The latter had a respectable circulation of 40,000 in New York between 1887 and 1892. In addition, George's political activities had drawn a number of key people to George's side such as Tom L. Johnson, the Cleveland millionaire, Louis Post, a journalist, William T. Croasdale, editor of *The Standard*, and Father McGlynn.

The bitter experience of defeat in 1887 led George and his followers to avoid independent party politics in the 1888 presidential campaign. The George group decided to throw its wholehearted support to Grover Cleveland because of the preference the incumbent president had re-

cently shown for lower tariffs. Since the single taxers were almost as insistent in their support of free trade as they were of land value taxation, George's friends willingly mounted a propaganda campaign in New York City on behalf of Cleveland and free trade. Cleveland was defeated in the electoral college although he won the popular vote. Thus any hopes that the George group might have had for a political reward for their support was dashed.

II

BETWEEN 1886 AND 1890 the movement also suffered some internal schisms. Father McGlynn, with his emphasis on the Irish land question, evangelism, and his opposition to free trade, split with the George group in 1888. The socialists had also departed, as had the labor unions. Another group, led by Thomas G. Shearman, saw the single tax mainly as a fiscal measure to be applied in a limited manner without reference to the other aspects of George's philosophy. When they formed the New York Tax Reform Association, they too drifted away from the hard core of the Henry George movement in the late 1880s.

In an effort to bounce back, the mainline Georgists sought to spread the movement nation-wide. They first organized the Manhattan Single Tax Club in 1889 which in turned called the first National Single Tax Conference the following year.

Croasdale, editor of *The Standard*, organized the meeting which was held at the Cooper Union September 1-3, 1890. From more than 100 local single tax organizations around the country came about 300 representatives from 27 different states. The conference established the National Single Tax League and endorsed a platform written by Henry George which called for a tax on land values, an end to all other taxes (especially the tariff), and the limited government ownership of utilities and railroads (7). The meeting also served as a means by which the members from different sections of the country first got to know each other. Louis Post's description of the meeting written in 1911 is filled with references to individuals who subsequently became influential both within and outside of the Single Tax movement. These included Hamlin Garland, Warren Worth Bailey, Tom Johnson, Edward Osgood Brown, in addition to a number of state senators, local judges, journalists, lecturers, and a group calling itself the Singletax Brotherhood of Religious Teachers (8).

A second national conference under the same leadership was held at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 but attracted fewer par-

ticipants. Since these two National Single Tax Conferences did not produce the upsurge in organizational support either financially or morally which George had anticipated, no more national conferences were held until 1907 when another unsuccessful meeting took place in New York. A few years after that the Fels Fund began to sponsor annual meetings between 1909 and 1916.

As a separate entity the Single Tax Movement saw a good deal of failure in the 1890s. *The Standard* folded in 1892 after Croasdale died. Cleveland was victorious in 1892 but George's support for him did not result in any political preferment for single taxers. In 1895 and 1896 single taxers descended upon the state of Delaware in an all out propaganda effort to make it the first single tax state. The effort netted a disappointing 3 percent of the vote (9). The one bright spot during that era was the election of Tom Johnson on the Democratic ticket to Congress from Ohio in 1890. He served two terms before he was defeated in 1894. His major contribution to the cause consisted of the publication of George's *Protection and Free Trade* as part of the Congressional Record and the massive distribution of it under Johnson's franking privileges. Another activity considered successful during this period was the Boston campaign from 1896 to 1907 of Charles B. Fillebrowne who attempted to gain good will for the single tax limited in a series of banquets given for various leadership groups in that community (10). Otherwise, the top leadership of the Single Tax movement satisfied itself with quiet efforts. Louis Post was dispatched on several cross-country lecture tours and Henry George concentrated on his writing and foreign travels.

In 1896 George supported the presidential candidacy of William Jennings Bryan despite the fact that he had no confidence in populism or inflation through the free coinage of silver. George and other single taxers including Louis Post (who was now editing the *Cleveland Recorder*) admired Bryan's attempt to unite farmers and workingmen against the nonproductive plutocracy (11). Bryan's defeat was one more disappointment for the single taxers.

In failing health, George agreed again to run for mayor of New York in 1897 in spite of his previous resolutions to the contrary. With Tom Johnson as his campaign manager, George briefly waged a vigorous speaking campaign. This exertion undoubtedly caused his collapse and death at age 58 a few days before the election. The Single Tax movement thus lost its charismatic leader and founder at a time when receptivity to reform ideas was beginning to increase. It seems rea-

sonable to assume that the Single Tax movement would have enjoyed much greater prominence during the Progressive Era had George lived on into the New Freedom period.

After the turn of the century the focus of the Single Tax movement shifted from New York City. Tom Johnson was elected Mayor of Cleveland in 1901 and served continuously until 1909. He led the struggle for municipal ownership of public utilities, the three-cent street car fare, and land value taxation. His efforts earned for him great praise from Lincoln Steffens (himself a single taxer) as the best mayor of the best run city in the country. Johnson attracted support from fellow Progressives and single taxers in Ohio such as Frederic C. Howe, Peter Witt, Newton Baker, and Brand Whitlock. His efforts to capture the state Democratic Party and the governorship of Ohio were not successful but he is credited with introducing reform ideas which bore fruit in that state after his death in 1911 (12). Johnson's affiliation with the Democratic party is another illustration of the inclination which the single taxers have had to identify with the party more attuned to free trade.

In Chicago during this period Louis Post established *The Public*, a weekly, which promoted a wide number of fundamental democratic causes in addition to land value taxation. The publication was a forum for the discussion of advanced Progressive reforms including women's rights, anti-imperialism, proportional representation, municipal ownership and even interracial justice. The columns of *The Public* contained articles and speeches by Jane Addams, Clarence Darrow, Robert M. La Follette, Judge Ben Lindsey, Bryan, Lincoln Steffens, and W. E. B. Du Bois. It supported Democratic candidates in every presidential election except for 1904 when *The Public* declared no preference (13). Post himself became caught up in the activities of the local Democratic party, playing a key role in the decision of Edward F. Dunne to run for mayor in 1905 on a reform platform. Appointed by Dunne to the Chicago school board, Post led an unsuccessful attempt to restructure the school system along Progressive lines.

It seems clear from the experiences of Post and Johnson that single taxers in two important cities became deeply involved in general municipal reform. Rather than continuing to agitate for the single tax along narrow lines, they used it as a long-range goal which could guide them in their support of all reforms which would have the general effect of equalizing economic opportunity. In the process the Single Tax movement ran the risk of losing its separate identity. An excep-

tion to this trend was the activity of Joseph Dana Miller, a poet, whose *Single Tax Review*, published in New York throughout this period, continued to preach pure single tax doctrine (14).

III

SINGLE TAXERS BEGAN a new spurt in activity in 1909 when Joseph Fels, the soap-suds magnate from Philadelphia, set up his Fels Fund which promised to match dollar-for-dollar all other donations to the single tax cause. His pledge of at least \$25,000 per year stimulated activity on behalf of the single tax in several parts of the country. Fels set as his goal the establishment of the single tax on the local level or the state level *somewhere* in the United States within five years.

A committee whose members included Lincoln Steffens and Frederic C. Howe was responsible for parcelling out the largesse to the local projects deemed most promising. The major beneficiaries were Post's *Public*, Miller's *Single Tax Review*, and William S. U'Ren's Oregon campaign.

A convinced single taxer, U'Ren doggedly pioneered the initiative and referendum ballots and other direct democracy procedures in Oregon specifically in order to offer single tax options to the people of that state. U'Ren's forces were successful in 1910 in gaining passage of an initiative which allowed county option in the taxation of land values—single taxers around the nation awaited with breathless anticipation the results of the various referenda in Oregon in 1912. Unfortunately, the voters failed to approve land value taxation in any of Oregon's counties. Moreover, the 1910 initiative providing for county option was itself repealed in the 1912 Oregon vote. A lot of Fels money was expended on lecturers, postage stamps, and elaborate propaganda but the hard-fought campaigns in Oregon produced nothing permanent except greater political visibility for the single tax and an emerging hostility toward the outside agitators of the Fels Fund.

In Missouri Dr. William Preston Hill also led a fight supported by the Fels Fund in 1912 for an initiative petition to exempt improvements from taxation. Advocates refrained from using the term "single tax" in order to avoid scaring off possible converts. To no avail. Missouri farmers, fearing that state taxes would be shifted to their land under the proposal, mounted a well-financed and well-organized campaign against Hill's proposal. The struggle was bitter and more than one single tax speaker reported threats of violence (15).

Similar agitation at about this same time was financed by the Fels

Fund in the states of Washington and Colorado. Pennsylvania adopted a mild form of the single tax in 1913 when its legislature authorized the cities of Scranton and Pittsburgh to assess improvements at a lower rate than the land itself; Pittsburgh's "graded tax" became a classic model in the literature of public finance. Joseph J. Pastoriza, a Houston Tax Commissioner, in 1911 reduced by fiat assessments on improvements in that city. He was the darling of the single tax movement until a court decision in 1915 found his actions illegal.

The period in which the Fels Fund was operative saw a good deal of state and local activity on behalf of the single tax, but by 1914, the year of Fels' death, there was still no place in the United States, save for a handful of tiny and bickering single tax colonies, where the single tax was in operation.

If the single tax cause saw any success it was in the achievements and recognition accorded to individual single taxers in areas in which their single tax identification was not foremost. Tom Johnson was a reform mayor whose achievements were much broader than the single tax. A significant amount of success for single taxers seems to be connected with Woodrow Wilson. Republican single taxer George L. Record of New Jersey claimed to have influenced Wilson along progressive lines (16). William S. U'Ren convinced Wilson of the benefits of direct democracy legislation, and Frank Parker Stockbridge served as Wilson's advance man and publicity agent in 1911 and 1912 (17). All these men were considered to be confirmed single taxers.

As president, Wilson appointed a number of single taxers to important positions. Franklin K. Lane of California became the Secretary of the Interior; Newton D. Baker became the Secretary of War in 1916; Louis F. Post served as Assistant Secretary of the newly-formed Labor Department from 1913 to 1921; Brand Whitlock was made Wilson's ambassador to Belgium; and Frederic C. Howe served as Chief of the Bureau of Immigration in New York. And finally, Joe Tumulty, Wilson's private secretary, is claimed by the single taxers as a loyal adherent of Henry George (18). There was also a handful of single taxers serving in the House of Representatives during the Wilson years. Henry George Jr. was elected to his second term from New York City in 1912. William Kent of California, Warren Worth Bailey of Pennsylvania, and Robert Crosser of Ohio were also among the single taxers in Congress. Despite this welcome increase in governmental influence, no single tax millenium ensued. For the most part the single taxers in government seemed content to support the New Freedom's moves to-

ward free trade and more equitable taxation in the Underwood Tariff. In retrospect, it seems that the view prevailed that the income tax had made the single tax obsolete or unnecessary.

Between 1909 and 1916 the Single Tax Movement was loosely held together by the Fels Fund's annual meetings. Rough estimates by single taxers claimed between 25,000 and 50,000 loyal adherents to the principles of land value taxation in the United States (19). Nevertheless, at its August 1916 meeting in Niagara, New York, the Fels Commission voted to disband (20). This left Joseph Dana Miller's National Single Tax League and *The Public*, now under the control of Mrs. Joseph Fels, as the only remnants of the national movement. Mrs. Fels moved *The Public* to New York where it became a Zionist organ before its final demise in 1919.

The war had a severe impact on the single taxers. Many of them tended to be idealists and pacifists who grew bitter over the support given by people like Post and Baker to wartime propaganda. German-American single taxers such as Daniel Kiefer who had saved *The Public* from financial disaster in 1908 became especially alienated from their former friends. Waldo R. Browne, editor of *The Dial*, was another single tax liberal who bitterly criticized Post in the pages of *The Public* for Post's acquiescence in the suppression of free speech during wartime (21).

Despite the efforts of a few diehards in the post-World War I period, the Single Tax movement, which had never been well-financed, particularly strong or very well organized, faded rapidly from the scene. Key figures such as Tom Johnson, Joseph Fels, and Henry George Jr., had died. The leading single tax journal, *The Public*, had folded. *The Freeman*, edited by Francis Neilson and Albert Jay Nock, held the single tax banner aloft from 1920 to 1924, but it became known as the best written American weekly review, not as the American counterpart of the *Economist* of London; its laurels were for literary excellence, not for its radical liberalism. Joseph Dana Miller's *Single Tax Review* changed its name to *Land and Freedom* and after his death went eclectic, plumping for co-operatives and other compatible reforms; but in the Great Depression it died.

The Fels Fund was gone. The war had created a world which was very different from the one which Henry George had addressed in 1879. Louis Post, active into his 70s, ended his public career by fighting valiantly the illegal efforts of the Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, to deport alien radicals. This was very courageous, and in line with

Henry George's libertarian thinking, but it had little to do with the Single Tax movement. Remnants of the movement kept alive by Neilson and Nock's *Freeman* supported the LaFollette coalition in 1924 and an abortive Commonwealth Land party in the next decade but then public activity ended. The Single Tax movement had been eclipsed by other reforms and the Henry George philosophy relegated to the underworld of economics (22). There it remained until the early 1930s. Then a small group of men and women—Lawson Purdy, Robert Schalkenbach, John H. Allen, Oscar H. Geiger, John Dewey, George Raymond Geiger, Eduard C. Lindemann, John C. Lincoln and Francis Neilson were among them; later they were joined by the distinguished historian, Charles Albro Barker, the economists, Harry Gunnison Brown, John R. Commons, John Ise, Jens Jensen, Harold Hotelling and E. C. Harwood, and a small host of other scholars—rejected the single tax panacea and (in Dewey's words) translated George's 19th century conceptions of nature and natural rights into contemporary language and returned to George's comprehensive social philosophy. On the basis of George's libertarianism, his firm faith in ethical democracy, his utopian vision of a free society and his clear understanding that human intelligence, if freed from the fetters of vested interests, outmoded patterns of thinking and the inertia of tradition and custom—"the matrix in which mind unfolds" George wrote—was capable of evolving rational solutions to people's problems by mutual aid and common effort, they achieved a renaissance of a movement now called (by them) Georgist to distinguish themselves from mere fiscal reformers and to emphasize their dedication to the total reconstruction of society.

IV

WHAT, THEN, ARE WE to conclude about the Single Tax movement? Henry George influenced a lot of people. Historians have traditionally given high marks to Henry George and *Progress and Poverty* for inspiring a whole generation of reformers. Otis Graham compares the book to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its impact, converting an "astonishing" number of people to the Progressive cause (23). The Single Tax movement claimed a wide number of adherents, sympathizers and friends (24). John Chamberlain and Eric Goldman also credit *Progress and Poverty* with enormous influence on the thinking of Progressives (25). Arthur Link sees George as the chief connector between the reform movement of the antebellum period and the Progressive Era (26). George Mowry's profile of the Progressives in *The Era of Theodore*

Roosevelt is studded with illustrative references to Post's *Public* (27). Robert Weibe does not emphasize George and the Single Tax movement and Hofstadter's *Age of Reform* does not specifically treat George and his followers. Of course George's biographers have stressed the influence of his ideas (28). The consensus seems to be that George was a major intellectual inspiration to the Progressives.

George introduced a number of ideas which played a significant role in reform thinking. He pointed to the social uses of taxation as the reform-Darwinist tool for manipulating the environment. The Single Tax movement, with its emphasis on land and natural resources, also encouraged a sensitivity toward conservation; a Georgist, Amos Pinchot, was, with his brother Gifford a leader in the field. Perhaps most important for modern social science is the fact that George's philosophy endorsed the idea that poverty is institutional and not necessarily a product of personal failure. George's concepts did help mightily in dissolving the conservative steel chain of ideas at the end of the 19th century as Goldman points out (29).

However great and influential, these ideas and perceptions did not translate into a well-organized and powerful *political* movement. George's philosophy is not radical enough to command fanatical loyalty. It accepts reformed competitive capitalism as a sound and humane system. Yet the philosophy presented enough of a threat to draw stiff opposition from propertied interests and farmers. There were simply too many landlords in the nation who remained distrustful of any system which placed the whole burden of taxation on landholders. It could also be argued that the various land and real estate taxes in the country were already taking in a good share of the ground rent. Moreover, Henry George ultimately proved to be a poor political tactician in allowing the substantial support which he enjoyed from socialists and organized labor to melt away in the years after 1886. It was also probably a mistake for George to shy away from the populists in 1892. On the other hand, George's support for the Democratic party in the 90s and the later support of other single taxers helped to bolster the Bryan wing in favor of free trade and general reform which lasted through Wilson's presidency. Single taxers like Johnson and Post worked actively in behalf of democratic progressivism.

The single tax experience has a number of things to tell us about the nature of Progressivism. First, there is the matter of chronology. The Single Tax movement began in the middle 1880s and continued as a middle class urban reform movement at a fairly steady pace until

World War I. This is in general agreement with the position of the urban historian, Melvin Holli, who suggests 1893 rather than the traditional 1898 as a good starting date for urban reform and the Progressive Era (30).

The non-radical nature of the Single Tax movement is such that even Gabriel Kolko should not be surprised that they did not succeed in introducing socialism to American life. Perhaps the single taxers' break with socialism ultimately hurt the more radical movement's chances for eventual success. In any case, the single taxers accepted capitalism but attempted to perfect it, in the same way that most American reformers in the Progressive Era and later have attempted to bring about liberal changes to a basically good system.

Geographically, the Single Tax movement was strongest in the mid-west with some appeal in all sections of the country outside the South. There it had the support even of Farmer-Labor elements and of Catholic family farmers. Because other farmers often interpreted the proposed tax on land values as an attack on their interests, very few farmers elsewhere belonged to the single tax movement. This is in keeping with the general opinion that Progressivism tended to be an urban and non-Southern phenomenon.

The middle class aspect of the Single Tax movement is very strong. Publicists, small businessmen, lawyers and their wives were the backbone of the group. It is not easy to divine whether this group suffered the kinds of status anxieties which Richard Hofstadter assigns to middle class Progressives. Certainly a quick glance at the single taxers would reveal that these middle class professionals were not terribly powerful within their larger geographic communities. One easily imagines that the steady stream of meetings, conferences, and committees indulged in by the group helped to make them feel important and to soothe their status anxieties. On the other hand, there is very little evidence that the movement got bogged down in the cultural issues of immigration restriction and prohibition in an effort to relieve their status anxieties. And though George ran against the Tammany Machine in 1886 and 1897 and condemned its corruption, he did not attack the immigrant groups who traditionally supported the Bosses. He and the other single taxers, however, remained distrustful of the Catholic hierarchy for its bitter opposition to Georgism. Nowhere in the reports of single tax meetings have I found any indication of active working-class participation or rank and file labor union involvement after 1890. This, in spite of the fact that most of the single tax reforms were meant to

benefit working class people. In addition, the names on the lists do not seem to include any new stock types of Polish or Italian origin. But women did play an important role in the movement. Alice Thacher Post was co-editor of *The Public* as well as chairman of several Fels Fund Conferences and Mrs. Joseph Fels carried on the work of her husband after his death and also served as editor of *The Public*.

Although it is clear that the movement was basically WASP (White Anglo-Saxon protestant), several black single taxers, including Frank Warren of Mackinac, Michigan and Ida Wells-Barnett of Chicago participated in various meetings (31). In fact, the 1911 Single Tax Conference was moved from Chicago's LaSalle Hotel in protest against that establishment's refusal to provide equal service to Negroes at the conference banquet (32). Single taxers were also proud to include William Lloyd Garrison Jr., Edward Osgood Browne of the Chicago Urban League, and C.E.S. Russell, a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, among their members. Apparently the single tax element of the Progressive movement was not burdened with the racism that characterized white America during that era.

Although predominantly middle class, the Single Tax movement could probably not have survived past the mid-1890s had it not been for a few wealthy supporters. Joseph Fels contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cause and Tom Johnson contributed heavily to his own and George's mayoral campaigns and he repeatedly bailed Post's *Public* out of financial straights. A good deal of Henry George's royalty money was also plowed into the movement. Thus we can see the role that substantial wealth played in keeping alive the single tax idea.

The single taxers had nothing particularly to gain from their reform. They were relatively comfortable in their economic status and in some instances the establishment of the single tax would have worked to their personal disadvantage. Yet it seems clear that their altruism motivated them to try to create a better world for the less fortunate and to chastise the privileged. The whole matter became a moral and intellectual challenge rather than an economic necessity. Consequently, the single taxers could be content with Fabian tactics and the waging of educational campaigns, or with simply influencing events in the direction of fundamental democracy. Their's were not bread and butter issues; they could afford to lose without facing personal hardship. Their's was also a consumer type of movement which would benefit a lot of people to a small degree and improve the general welfare, but

they could not command intense support from any of the narrow interest groups. Indeed, many of the single taxers were quite willing to push their cause into the background while they worked on parallel crusades for direct democracy, women's rights, free speech, and the like. In a phrase of Robert Weibe they were "genial eclectics" (33). When they did experience any degree of political success as with George in 1886 and Johnson in Cleveland, it was in coalitions with self-interested new stock immigrants and labor organizations.

One final note: the Single Tax movement seemed to be small enough to create a clannish type of feeling among its members. Under the messianic leadership of Henry George the movement had a quasi-religious quality with *Progress and Poverty* as its Bible. News and gossip of career developments, recent deaths, speaking engagements, and local activities played a significant role in *The Public*. It is clear that the "nationwide" network of reformers had strong in-group feelings toward each other and that they created the kind of non-geographic community that Weibe talks about in *Search for Order* (34).

In conclusion then, our study of the Single Tax movement indicates that the movement was rich in ideas and inspiration but short on organization and tangible accomplishments. These are the kinds of reformers on whom historians lovingly focused twenty years ago—middle class, altruistic, and attractive, but not very effective. It was for others, touched less directly by George's ideas or organizations, but with a tangible economic stake in the outcome who would create permanent changes through legislation on the state and national levels in the Progressive Era and later during the New Deal period.

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1. Eric Roll, in a critique that apes Karl Marx's, calls it "petty-bourgeois." See *A History of Economic Thought* (New York: Prentice-Hall, rev. ed., 1942), p. 464. Cf. George Raymond Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 237-39.

2. See George Mowry, *The California Progressives*, (Berkeley, 1951), and *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: 1962); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: 1955); Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: 1967); Russell Nye, *Midwestern Progressive Politics* (East Lansing, Mich.: 1951); Gabriel Kolko, *Triumph of Conservatism* (New York: 1963); Jack Tager, "Progressives, Conservatives and the Theory of Status Revolution," *Mid-America*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July, 1966), pp. 162-75; J. Joseph Huthmacher, "Urban Liberalism and the Age of Reform," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 49 (September 1962), pp. 231-41; and Samuel Hays, "Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 55 (October 1964), pp. 157-69.

3. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York, 1900 edition), p. 454.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 317.
5. Charles Albro Barker, *Henry George* (New York: 1955), p. 478.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 504.
7. Louis F. Post, "First American Single Tax Conference," *The Public*, Vol. 14, No. 700 (September 1, 1911), pp. 903-13.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 909.
9. Arthur Nichols Young, *The History of the Single Tax Movement in the United States*, (Princeton: 1916), p. 151.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
11. Louis Post, "Farmers and Workingmen," *Cleveland Recorder*, September 11, 1896, p. 2.
12. Hoyt L. Warner, *Progressivism in Ohio, 1897-1917*, (Columbus: 1964), 79.
13. Dominic Candeloro, "Louis Post's *Public* and Progressivism," *Mid-America*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (April 1974), pp. 109-123.
14. Young, p. 249.
15. *Ibid.*, 194-195.
16. Ransom E. Noble, "Henry George and the Progressive Movement," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April, 1949), pp. 259-63.
17. Barker, p. 630. On Stockbridge see Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, Vol. 3 (Garden City, N.Y., 1936), p. 192. Also see Frank Parker Stockbridge, "The Single Taxers," *Everybody's*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (April 1912), pp. 507-22.
18. Barker, p. 631.
19. Young, p. 291.
20. Joseph Dana Miller, ed., *Single Tax Yearbook* (New York: 1917), p. 25.
21. Waldo R. Browne, "Mr. Post and the Constitution," *The Public*, Vol. 20, No. 1025 (Nov. 23, 1917), pp. 1135-36.
22. Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers* (New York: 1972 edition), pp. 177-84.
23. Otis Graham, *The Great Campaigns, 1900-1928* (New York: 1971), p. 15.
24. The following is a partial list of well known and moderately well known figures of the period who were regarded as friends of the single tax: Lyman Abbott, Warren Worth Bailey, Louis Brandeis, Carrie Chapman Catt, Champ Clark, John R. Commons, Clarence Darrow, John Dewey, James H. Dillard, Paul Douglas, Edward F. Dunne, Mark Fagan, Hamlin Garland, Lucius F. C. Garvin, Samuel Gompers, Margaret Haley, Norman Hapwood, George Harvey, Colonel House, Frederic C. Howe, Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones, Scott Nearing, George Norris, Fremont Older, U.S. Senator Robert Owen of Oklahoma, George Foster Peabody, Amos Pinchot, Louis Prang, Herbert Quick, Raymond Robins, U.S. Senator B. F. Shively of Indiana, Upton Sinclair, Lincoln Steffens, John Z. White, William B. Wilson.
25. John Chamberlain, "A Farewell to Reform" (New York: 1932), p. 43; and Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny* (New York: 1953), p. 76.
26. Arthur Link, *The American Epoch* (New York: 1963), p. 14.
27. See Ch. 5.
28. See Barker, *Henry George*, and George R. Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George*, especially Ch. 7.
29. Goldman, p. 66.
30. Melvin Holli, "Urban Reform in the Progressive Era," in Lewis Gould, ed., *The Progressive Era* (Syracuse, N.Y.: 1974), p. 133.
31. "Fels Fund Conference," *The Public*, Vol. 17, No. 825 (Jan. 23, 1914), p. 79; *Second Annual Single Tax Conference* (Cincinnati, 1912), p. 40.
32. Post, "Race Snobbishness," *The Public*, Vol. 14, No. 713, (Dec. 1, 1911), p. 1209.
33. Wiebe, p. 143.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 111.