

An Economics Classic and Plutology: The 'Science of Wealth' Reminds Economists That Their Goal Should Be Well-Being for All

Author(s): Frank C. Genovese

Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct., 1984), pp. 455-467

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

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3486124>

Accessed: 15-02-2022 05:44 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*

# An Economics Classic and Plutology:

## *The 'Science of Wealth' Reminds Economists That Their Goal Should Be Well-being for All*

By FRANK C. GENOVESE\*

ABSTRACT. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, published a century ago, laid the foundation for a theory that attracted a worldwide following. He emphasized that *political economy* investigates the way a community produces *wealth* and the proportions in which that wealth will be distributed between individuals. In our day that has been called '*plutology*,' a subdiscipline of political economy. Many of George's critics, then and now, act as apologists of the status quo, in society and in the academy. But the science's purview must be broader than plutology. *Economics*, to be relevant, must be useful in the solution of economic and *social problems*. In redirecting economists to their basic responsibility, *George* made a lasting contribution to economic science. He also was a perennial *influence* on economic scholars, even on some of his most antagonistic critics. But George is neglected because his doctrines were and are a threat to various *establishments*. However, by force of logic and through clarity of expression, he is a goad to the consciences of all folk of good will.

### I

#### George and His 'Critics'

SOME DEGREE OF ACQUAINTANCESHIP with Henry George's classic, *Progress and Poverty*, is held by most educated people. But the term "Plutology," the science of wealth, is surely less familiar to us. It is not my invention and is appropriate here because of its emphasis on wealth and wealth alone. It is used to emphasize the aridity of "positive economics" and the neglect of normative considerations, as well as the refusal to confront the problems and processes of the "art" or application of economic knowledge toward the perceived benefit of mankind.

Henry George (1839–97), who as Professor Neff pointed out in 1950, was "the only American who founded a theory which gained a worldwide

\* [Frank C. Genovese, Ph.D., is professor of economics at Babson College, Babson Park, MA 02157.] This paper is based on one presented before the Atlantic Economic Society at its annual meeting in Boston, Mass., on October 10, 1980, in commemoration of the *Progress and Poverty* centenary.

American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 43, No. 4 (October, 1984).

© 1984 American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.

following,"<sup>1</sup> held a view different from that of the economic 'positivists.'<sup>2</sup> Surely this was why he acquired the worldwide following. His view was as follows:

The science which investigates the laws of the production and distribution of wealth . . . everything that can in any way affect the amount of wealth which a community can secure, or the proportion in which that wealth will be distributed between individuals. Though not the science of government, it is essential to the science of government. Though it takes direct cognizance only of what are termed the selfish instincts, yet in doing so it includes the basis of all higher qualities. . . . And as the development of the nobler part of human nature is powerfully modified by material conditions, if it does not absolutely depend upon them, the laws sought for by political economy are the laws which at last control the mental and moral as well as the physical states of humanity.

Clearly, this is the science which of all sciences is of the first importance to us. Useful and sublime as are the sciences which open to us the vistas of Nature—which read for us the story of the deep past, or search out the laws of our physical or mental organization—what is their practical importance as compared with the science which deals with the conditions that alone make the cultivation of the others possible?<sup>3</sup>

There is much food for thought for the economics profession in the excerpts of George's description of our subject. Indeed, there is a charge in it for us. For myself I can only say, if this be the writing of a crank, as he has so often been regarded in our literature, let us have more cranks!

There has been much condescension towards George and the occasional note of mild tribute or reasoned and perhaps grudging fairness. Professor Ferguson summed him up as follows:

Academic economists at first met the appearance of *Progress and Poverty*, with nearly complete silence. When at length they could no longer ignore the veritable furore occasioned by public debate over his theories, they assailed both his method and the doctrine as a whole with merciless severity. They endeavored to show that "the natural rights" theory is entirely without foundation in fact; that the single tax is too inflexible; that it would fall far short of meeting the expenses of government; that the administrative difficulty of distinguishing between land and the capital invested in permanent improvements would prove nearly insuperable; that wages and profits, instead of rent, absorb most of the increase in income made possible by progress in production; that the tax would unjustly discriminate against those who had invested in land instead of in other forms of property; and that if economic rent were to be taxed on the ground that it is an unearned increment, common justice demands that other unearned increments, such as monopoly incomes, chance business gains, stock market profits, and inheritances should also be taxed to the full. The single tax can in no way be regarded as the sole remedy for modern social problems.

Yet these same economists rather generally support the view that at least partial taxation of future increases in land values is highly desirable as a supplement to other forms of taxation. They freely grant that George performed a distinguished service in bringing to the fore the issue of justice in distribution, and commend him for his keen thinking on certain theoretic aspects of the relation of wages to rent. Although he cannot be included

in the ranks of scientists, Henry George will long be remembered as one of our great liberalizing forces.<sup>4</sup>

One author, Harris, in excluding George as not “academically respectable” from his category of outstanding American deviants from the main classical tradition in economics, remarks that George’s sin, and also that of Marx, was to draw the obvious conclusions from accepted basic doctrines of classical economics. Thus their service to progress, a very real one, was to call attention “to the absurdity of those doctrines.”<sup>5</sup>

This type of “tribute” does little to indicate the significance of George as an economic thinker. But not all comment runs this way. Davenport admitted sympathy for the idea of preserving equality of opportunity implied in the Single Tax proposal but felt such matters were for sociology and social ethics rather than for economics.<sup>6</sup> That such a posture is inimical to the usefulness of economics and economists is the thesis of this paper.

## II

### George’s Influence on Economists

EVEN REJECTING Henry George’s attachment to natural law, which is, of course, a frequent device used by those who are attacking actual law, and admitting that land is very like capital or even a special class of it, and claiming that all values, not just that of land, are social values, and noting that there are other sources of unearned incomes besides land, one can still approve of the gist of George’s philosophy of taxing land. Although one can say other things, too, should be taxed on the same basis, not to begin this process is “procrastination” says one George scholar, Professor George R. Geiger. He quotes Davenport, “‘And yet it must be clear that whatever is accomplished towards the elimination of privilege and the equalization of opportunity is so far good. Remedy must begin with something: it is well to do the next thing next, especially if this next thing be the most important and the least difficult things.’”<sup>7</sup>

Geiger himself staunchly argues land is a special case unlike reproducible capital, and declares that Brown and Jewitt who participated in the debate in the *American Economic Review* concerning *Progress and Poverty*, are rather in agreement with him.<sup>8</sup>

George also debated Francis Walker in print on the proper use of data, and it is clear that George won.<sup>9</sup> He had mutually respectful relations with John Stuart Mill.<sup>10</sup> George, in his attack on the wages fund doctrine, argued for productivity as a basis for wages. In his dynamic, rather than static, approach

he may be said to have augmented the arguments against the doctrine.<sup>11</sup> He rejected Malthusianism although it was still popular among academic economists.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps it is of interest to note that for George, the wages fund doctrine and Malthusianism were “antiquated lumber.”

In his attack on Utilitarianism as expressed by Mill, he “paved the way not only for the marginal utility approach to value of Jevons, but ultimately of the Austrian School.”<sup>13</sup> It may be no small matter that in the days of Jevons economics was regarded as one of the “moral sciences,” a classification of which George would heartily approve.<sup>14</sup>

George regarded Marx as “a most superficial thinker, entangled in inexact and vicious terminology” and in a letter to Thomas F. Walker said, “As for Karl Marx, he is the prince of the muddleheads.”<sup>15</sup>

Marx, on the other hand, regarded George as “a writer of talent” who had “however, the repugnant arrogance and presumption which inevitably mark all such panacea breeds.” Concerning *Progress and Poverty*, he spoke of it with a sort of “friendly contempt” and regarded it as “the capitalist’s last ditch.”<sup>16</sup> This mutual appraisal of two most influential figures is amusing in the light of one of the “tributes” quoted above. Perhaps Harris rejected economic doctrines because they capture the public mind and missed the opportunity to inquire as to why some writings move mankind, while others do not. He is not alone in neglecting this fertile field.

Marshall rejected *Progress and Poverty*, noting that he “read Mr. George’s book from one end to the other; there was nothing in it both new and true, what is true is not new, what is new is not true.”<sup>17</sup> But we must remember that Marshall was a most reticent scholar who hesitated to allow public scrutiny of his own work.

George’s influence on J. B. Clark and the latter’s development of marginal productivity theory should be well-known.<sup>18</sup> And his exposition and representations in favor of free trade were notable in their service towards seeking to improve the performance of the American economy and raising the standard of living of its people.

The Wisconsin School was kinder to George in adopting his animus. John R. Commons was influenced by him and had much personal involvement in bringing workmen’s compensation legislation to this country. Edwin E. Witte (and I sadly recall hearing him referred to as a “clerk” when he was president of the American Economic Association) was deeply instrumental in writing and securing passage of the Social Security Act. Many Americans owe much to this “clerk,” this kindly and energetic public servant! Martin G. Glaeser set the study of public utilities on a sound basis and helped organize the Tennessee Valley Corporation, and Harold Groves, while serving as a state

senator, helped enact a sensible property tax law. Selig Perlman dedicated his career to the improvement of the lot of the worker through unionism.

Harold Groves has commented “. . . that George’s contributions contain elements of truth that are of enduring importance. They are currently relevant even if only in support of property taxes as against their exclusion, and cost as against percentage depletion.<sup>19</sup> And again; “If it be true there is much reaping without sowing in our system of distribution or that some output is secure in terms of incentive and some is highly susceptible to repression, and if a main purpose of economic strategy in general and tax strategy in particular is to foster growth in the wealth of nations, then discrimination in the selection of tax bases seems worthy of top attention.”<sup>20</sup>

And in a passage very close to the intent of this paper he said:

In recent years too many economists have dismissed all manners of distribution with the easy observation that this is a matter of social philosophy, social preference, and value judgments. What do economists tell their clients when they are asked for advice as to how to order these preferences? They can tell them to consult their favorite priests and poets. In our opinion this is not a satisfactory answer.<sup>21</sup>

We should not ignore the fact that George influenced an enormous number of people and that many legislative attempts to put his ideas into practice, at least in part, have taken place. In countries such as Australia and South Africa, where he has had the greatest influence, are the people less happy because of this?

He deeply influenced Tolstoy, Sun Yat Sen, G. B. Shaw, the Webbs, Lincoln Steffens, William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Francis Adams, Woodrow Wilson, Clarence Darrow, Terrence Powderly, Samuel Gompers, Governor L. F. C. Garvin of Rhode Island, two members of Woodrow Wilson’s cabinet, Franklin K. Lane and William B. Wilson, and congressmen such as his own son (who had the same name) and Thomas L. Johnson. The last, Tom Johnson, also served as mayor of Cleveland and is there memorialized by a statue which, my son Jeremy, who lives there, tells me, holds a copy of a book clearly marked, *Progress and Poverty*.

### III

#### **Why Did George Arouse Antagonism?**

BUT WHY IS GEORGE so neglected—if not abused—by academics today? And is he due for a major revival? No less a personage among the ranks of “accepted” economists than Joseph A. Schumpeter, in his monumental *History of Economic Analysis*, recognized him as a noteworthy economist to whom many economists have been unfair.<sup>22</sup>

An attempt to analyze the rejection of George by much, if not most, of the profession is in order.<sup>23</sup> My own effort will not be a very scientific analysis; perhaps it is a variant of psycho-history, so popular, if occasionally maligned, these days. But let us hope it is at least a beginning for a more incisive review that someone better qualified will be inspired to make, perhaps because of the very amateurish nature of my attempt!

1. His books sold widely. They were addressed to and read by unlettered members of the public. This appeal to the town, rather than the gown, may have been regarded as unseemly, a cheapening of a respectable subject. Indeed, by holding that anyone could understand political economy George might have been threatening the monopoly of knowledge of the universities.

Plain language threatens priesthoods, it exposes their views to the marketplace. It threatens not only their distant respectability but their perceived competence, and George went to great pains to make analysis clear.

2. In addressing the public, rather than the university faculties, he was perceived as showing a disdain for their importance.

3. In stating that much economics, and even theology, supported an unfair order, and illogically justified it, he brought the security and integrity of economists and theologians into question.

4. In threatening land rent he was attacking a major source of funds of religious and educational institutions and many important members of society. Indeed, he said, "it is possible for a civil government to exist without a state church."<sup>24</sup>

5. He had a panacea, the Single Tax. Intelligent people distrust panaceas and well they might. Sometimes, when I am making an address about some problem, I am asked, "Do you have a solution?" I try to make the point that I may have a few ideas which may help but that I am too old to have "solutions."

Thus, the profession did, and I too, would fault George on this single solution, but I would feel much of what he proposed was a step in the right direction. (Of course, after writing *Progress and Poverty*, he explicitly rejected the idea of a panacea.)

6. He believed in, and stressed, natural law. To this point I have already addressed myself, so here it remains only to stress that such appeals indicate a desire for great change, and many people fear change itself, especially those who see direct pecuniary loss for themselves as inherent in it.

These fifth and sixth points, however, must be understood in another way. In order to be effective, George needed a cure-all. He remarked regarding the tariff question, "I do not think induction employed in such questions . . .

is of any use. What the people want is a theory; and until they get a correct theory in their heads, all citing of facts is useless."<sup>25</sup>

And theory is useful; it indicates thought has gone into the proposals to which it leads; it indicates seriousness and intelligence on the part of the imparter and his respect for the seriousness and intelligence of his listener. And it was in his character and was part of his concept of why political economy should be studied (as should be clear from the passages quoted above) that George would seek a theory. As Professor John Dewey has said, "His ideas were always of the nature of a challenge to action and a call to action. The 'science' of political economy was to him a body of principles to provide the basis of policies to be executed, measures to be carried out, not just ideas to be intellectually entertained, plus a faint hope that they might affect action."<sup>26</sup>

George was a reformer, and theory for him was the basis upon which reform, to be sound, must rest. It would be unjust to fault the logic of this general approach and the sincerity of his position and to leave unrecognized the exertions he undertook in what he saw as service to mankind.

7. He was the salesman of his own theory. This unusual position for an economist was disturbing to the world of the academy. Resentment at his success was natural to a normally ambitious and yet fearful "community" of scholars who typically are rather complacent, self-assured and even detached. All of these qualities and values were challenged by the acclaim George received. Academics did not hasten to debate him on the hustings, before the common rabble; indeed, they had the example of the reception given to the Duke of Argyll's views.<sup>27</sup>

8. He was a politician. This occupation has not always been regarded as the most noble one. Although Ricardo had secured a seat in Parliament, he had done this by purchase, not by appealing to the mob as American politicians did.

It is appropriate at this point to mention briefly how deeply George was involved in politics since this is poorly reported in most texts. He wrote about politics during a great deal of his career as reporter and editor. He worked with Democratic State Senator, William S. Irwin, later the Governor of California. He served as foreign correspondent in Ireland during a time of great agitation. He ran for Secretary of State in New York. He twice ran for mayor of New York, once against a candidate he had served as economic adviser. He engaged the Pope in written debate. He supported William Jennings Bryan. He supported free trade. He successfully argued for the Australian ballot which came to be adopted in the United States.

9. He spread guilt, a most uncomfortable feeling. And it was in the nature



of a call, particularly a rather theistic call, for action that this was done. Consciously or unconsciously George must have understood, "The sense of sin has been the starting-point of progress."<sup>28</sup>

Barbara Webb acknowledges George as one of those who aided this consciousness, which was not "of personal sin" but "a collective or class consciousness; a growing uneasiness, amounting to a conviction, that the industrial organization, which had yielded rent, interest and profits on a stupendous scale, had failed to provide a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for a majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain."<sup>29</sup>

She quotes Arnold Toynbee's "penitence":

"We—the middle classes, I mean, not merely the very rich—we have neglected you; instead of justice we have offered you charity, and instead of sympathy we have offered you hard and unreal advice; but I think we are changing. If you would only believe it and trust us, I think that many of us would spend our lives in your service. You have—I say it clearly and advisedly—you have to forgive us, for we have wronged you; we have sinned against you grievously—not knowingly always, but still we have sinned, and let us confess it; but if you will forgive us—nay, whether you will forgive us or not—we will serve you, we will devote our lives to your service, and we cannot do more. It is not that we care about public life, for what is public life but the miserable, arid waste of barren controversies and personal jealousies, and grievous loss of time? Who would live in public life if he could help it? But we students, we would help you if we could. We are willing to give up something much dearer than fame and social position. We are willing to give up the life we care for, the life with books and with those we love. We will do this, and only ask you to remember one thing in return. We will ask you to remember this—that we work for you in the hope and trust that if you get material civilization, if you get a better life, if you have opened up to you the possibility of a better life, you will really lead a better life. If, that is, you get material civilization, remember that it is not an end in itself. Remember that man, like trees and plants, has his roots in the earth; but like the trees and plants, he must grow upwards towards the heavens. If you will only keep to the love of your fellow-men and to great ideals, then we shall find our happiness in helping you; but if you do not, then our reparation will be in vain."<sup>30</sup>

It may be amusing to note that in tracing the advance of social legislation in England, Beatrice Webb cites the active role played by Herbert Spencer in opposition to it. The role he played at that time seems remarkably similar to the one Professor Milton Friedman is now performing in our time and thus "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*" George bitterly opposed Spencer's later writings, as I fear I do Professor Friedman's latest works. In his television exultation over the beauty of the Free Enterprise System in Hong Kong he fails to mention that 45 percent of the population live in government provided housing. While one appreciates Mr. Toynbee's guilt, one cannot but feel it is deeply laced with a feeling of class superiority; but then, as now, we are all prisoners of our world.

How much more humane and reasonable is the comment of 86-year-old Pauline Newman who went to work at age eight at the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

Even when things were terrible, I always had that faith. Only now, I'm a little discouraged sometimes when I see the workers spending their free hours watching television—trash. We fought so hard for those hours and they waste them. We used to read Tolstoy, Dickens, Shelley, by candlelight, and they watch the "Hollywood Squares." Well, they're free to do what they want. That's what we fought for.<sup>31</sup>

And what is so morally uplifting about the leisure-time activities of the rich?

#### IV

#### **A Challenge to Economists**

THIS PAPER IS A PLEA for more pertinency in economics and more involvement of economists in needed social change. Some of the prejudices of position which inhibited the acceptance of the messages of Henry George may still apply in various degrees. But this is a more proletarian and democratic age, and thus there may be more hope that more pertinency and involvement might be forthcoming. Also there is simply more usual and systematic involvement of economists with government, as its employees and as lobbyists for various public and private causes. While economists have sought out government, government has sought out economists as advisors and appointees to a host of agencies.

And yet, while momentous events such as war and depression have caused more involvement, much of the teaching of economics has retained its purist character. This may be implicit in the training of economists who often attain a Ph.D. without having taken significant work in accounting, finance, marketing, and corporate, tax, and labor law. They are ill-equipped to deal with the problems of our economic society. And the need for training in mathematics has crowded out some of the traditional courses in ethics, sociology, history, comparative systems, the history of economic thought and the like which tended to be part and parcel of our "moral" subject.

We still need much development in economic theory, and it should be, it seems to me, addressed to an understanding of social problems and how they may be somewhat rectified. We need reindustrialization, but must it be accomplished by reducing the taxes of the rich? We need price stability, but must it come through the reduction of social programs and foreign aid? We need study of relative labor conditions in developed countries and an agenda for American labor. It was remarkable to see Polish workers demanding things

U.S. workers do not have. We need intellectual and moral fibre not to announce our support for "Free Enterprise" as a rubric to cover the whole of the U.S. industrial order. We need to understand how the dynamics of corporate ownership and control, and institutional stock-holding have produced a capital shortage in this country. We need to stop a process of government palliatives for illness of an economic system ravaged by inflation. And we need to know how to be effective in applying what our studies tell us should be done.

My aim, and may I state it in the vernacular, was to lay a little guilt upon the profession. Rather than being teachers of economics, we should be professors of political economy. We should address ourselves and our students to the problems of humanity and help them find and implement solutions. Nor should we hide behind our students and rely upon "our academic freedom" or indirection in our classrooms. We should take our ideas into the marketplace of reality and exercise our rights of free speech. We are the privileged intellectual class; we have time and facilities provided partly by general tax exemptions. We have a duty to humanity—we have a duty to ourselves.

"IF THE CONCLUSIONS THAT WE REACH RUN COUNTER TO OUR PREJUDICES, LET US NOT FLINCH; IF THEY CHALLENGE INSTINCTS THAT HAVE LONG BEEN DEEMED WISE AND NATURAL, LET US NOT TURN BACK."<sup>32</sup>

### Notes

1. Frank Amundus Neff, *Economic Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), p. 370.

2. Milton Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics," in *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953); reprinted in Frank Hahn and Martin Hollis, eds. *Philosophy and Economic Theory* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979).

3. Henry George, "The Study of Political Economy," *Popular Science Monthly*, March, 1880, *passim*. Reprinted as a pamphlet by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York, and in the *Collected Works* published by the foundation. George's article was based on a lecture that he gave while he was being considered for a professorship of economics at a California university. Some scholars think his forthrightness cost him the coveted appointment. It is relevant today and worth pondering. George goes on:

"How is it then . . . that a science so important is so little regarded? Our laws persistently violate its first and plainest principles, and that the ignorance thus exemplified is not confined to what are called the uneducated classes is shown by the debates in our legislative bodies, the decisions of our courts, the speeches of our party leaders, and the editorials of our newspapers. . . . while thousands of new discoveries in other branches of human knowledge have been eagerly seized and generally utilized, and the most revolutionary conclusions of other sciences become part of the accepted data of thought, the truths taught by political economy seem to have made little real impression, and it is even now a matter of debate whether there is, or can be, a science at all.

"This cannot be on account of the paucity of politico-economic literature. . . .

"It seems to me that the reasons why political economy is so little regarded are referable partly to the nature of the science itself and partly to the manner in which it has been cultivated.

"In the first place, the very importance of the subjects with which political economy deals raises obstacles in its way. The discoveries of other sciences may challenge pernicious ideas, but the conclusions of political economy involve pecuniary interests, and thus thrill directly the sensitive pocket-nerve. For as no social adjustment can exist without interesting a larger or smaller class in its maintenance, political economy at every point is apt to come in contact with some interest or other. . . . Macaulay has said that, if any large pecuniary interest were concerned in denying the attraction of gravitation, the most obvious of physical facts would not lack disputers. . . . It is not ignorance alone that offers that offers opposition, but ignorance backed by interest, and made fierce by passions.

"Now, while the interests thus aroused furnish the incentive, the complexity of the phenomena with which political economy deals makes it comparatively easy to palm off on the unreasoning all sorts of absurdities as political economy. And, when all kinds of diverse opinions are thus promulgated under that name, it is but natural that the great number of people who depend on others to save themselves the trouble of thinking should look upon political economy as a field wherein any one may find what he pleases. But what is far worse than any amount of pretentious quackery is that the science even as taught by the masters *is* in a large measure disjointed and indeterminate. As laid down in the best text-books, political economy is like a shapely statue but half-hewn from the rock—like a landscape, part of which stands out clear and distinct, but over the rest of which the mists still roll. . . . that it is so, you may see for yourselves in the failure of political economy to give any clear and consistent answer to most important practical questions—such as the industrial depressions which are so marked a feature of modern times, and in confusions of thought which will be obvious to you if you carefully examine even the best treatises. Strength and subtlety have been wasted in intellectual hair-splitting and super-refinements, in verbal discussions and disputes, while the great highroads have remained unexplored. And thus has been given to a simple and attractive science an air of repellent abstruseness and uncertainty.

"And springing, as it seems to me, from the same fundamental cause, there has arisen an idea of political economy which has arrayed against it the feelings and prejudices of those who have most to gain by its cultivation. The name of political economy has been constantly invoked against every effort of the working classes to increase their wages or decrease their hours of labor. The impious doctrine always preached by oppressors to oppressed—the blasphemous dogma that the Creator has condemned one portion of his creatures to lives of toil and want, while he has intended another portion to enjoy 'all the fruits of the earth and the fullness thereof'—has been preached to the working classes in the name of political economy, just as the 'cursed-be-Ham' clergymen used to preach the divine sanction of slavery in the name of Christianity. In so far as the real burning questions of the day are concerned, political economy seems to be considered by most of its professors as a scientific justification of all that is, and by the convenient formula of supply and demand they seem to mean some method which Providence has of fixing the rate of wages so that it can never by any action of the employed be increased. Not is it merely ignorant pretenders who thus degrade the name and terms of political economy. . . .

". . . Even the intellectually courageous have shrunk from laying stress upon principles which might threaten great vested interests; while others, less scrupulous, have exercised their ingenuity in eliminating from the science everything which could offend those interests. . . .

“. . . I want to draw you to its study by showing you how clear and simple and beneficent a science it is, or rather should be. . . .

“In its calculations the science of wealth takes little note of, nay, it often carefully excludes, the potent force of sympathy, and of those passions which lead men to toil, to struggle, even to die for the good of others. And yet it is these higher passions, these nobler impulses, that urge most strenuously to its study. The promise of political economy is not so much what it may do for you, as what it may enable you to do for others.

“I trust you have felt the promptings of that highest of ambitions—the desire to be useful in your day and generation: the hope that in something, even though little, those who come after may be wiser, better, and happier than you have lived. Or, if you have never felt this, I trust the feeling is only latent, ready to spring forth when you see the need.

“Gentlemen, if you but look, you will see the need! You are of the favored few, for the fact that you are here, . . . bespeaks for you the happy accidents that fall only to the lot of the few, . . .

“. . . you cannot fail to see enough want and wretchedness, even in our own country today, to move you to sadness and pity, to nerve you to high resolve; to arouse in you the sympathy that dares, and the indignation that burns to overthrow a wrong.

“And seeing these things, would you fain do something to relieve distress, to eradicate ignorance, to extirpate vice? You must turn to political economy to know their causes, that you may lay the axe to the root of the evil tree. Else all your efforts will be in vain. Philanthropy, unguided by an intelligent apprehension of causes, may palliate or it may intensify, but it cannot cure. If charity could eradicate want, if preaching could make men moral, if printing books and building schools could destroy ignorance, none of these things would be known today.”

4. John M. Ferguson, *Landmarks of Economic Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1950), pp. 237–38.

5. Abram L. Harris, *Economics and Social Reform* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958); *cp.* also Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 171, where George is part of the underworld, . . . “of cranks and heretics whose doctrines . . . failed to attain the stature of respectability” and George Soule, *Ideas of the Great Economists* (New York: The Viking Press, 1953), p. 109.

6. George R. Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 106 n.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 107 n.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

9. Anna George de Mille, *Henry George, Citizen of the World* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 121.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Geiger, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–84.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

14. Wesley C. Mitchell, *Lecture Notes on Types of Economic Theory*, Vol. II (New York: Augustus Kelley, 1949), pp. 5–6.

15. de Mille, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 130. *Cp.* George J. Stigler, “Alfred Marshall’s Lectures on Progress and Poverty,” *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (April, 1969), pp. 181–226.

18. Geiger, *op. cit.*, pp. 115, 118; John Bates Clark, *The Distribution of Wealth, a Theory of Wages, Interest and Profits* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), pp. v, 9.

19. Harold M. Groves, *Tax Philosophers*, Donald J. Curran, ed. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1974), p. 130.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

22. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954, pp. 864–65.

23. I originally wrote "by the profession," but of course this would be ungracious to the membership of the Atlantic Economic Society, which has welcomed this paper. And then I remembered that the American Economic Association and the History of Economics Society—to their eternal glory—devoted a concluding session of their 1979 annual meeting to commemorating the centenary of the publication of *Progress and Poverty*. Professor Mason Gaffney of the University of California, Riverside, and a panel of equally eminent economists presented critiques and appreciations of George that summed up years of research upon the man and his doctrines. See: Gene Wunderlich, "The U.S.A.'s Land Data Legacy from the 19th Century," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (July, 1982), pp. 269 ff; Terence M. Dwyer, "Henry George's Thought in Relation to Modern Economics," *ibid.*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (October, 1982), pp. 363 ff; Aaron B. Fuller, III, "Selected Elements of Henry George's Legitimacy as an Economist," *ibid.*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January, 1983), pp. 45 ff; Warren J. Samuels, "Henry George's Challenge to the Economics Profession," *ibid.*, pp. 63 ff; Professor Kenneth Boulding, speaking extemporaneously, delivered an equally impressive appreciation. And economists, some followers, some opponents of George, were among the distinguished social scientists and professional philosophers who collaborated in Robert V. Andelson, ed., *Critics of Henry George* (Teaneck, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1979). The fiscal economists, who were among the first to honor George by submitting his proposals to rational analysis, celebrated the centenary with a conference in 1978 at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Mass., convened by the Committee on Taxation, Resources and Economic Development (TRED). It produced a notable contribution to the literature: Richard W. Lindholm and Arthur D. Lynn Jr., eds., *Land Value Taxation: The Progress and Poverty Centenary* (Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1982); see especially Kenneth E. Boulding, "A Second Look at *Progress and Poverty*," *ibid.*, pp. 5–17. Also, the counterparts of the A.E.A. in Australia and New Zealand marked the centenary in similar fashion, as did universities in several parts of the English-speaking world. Indeed, when one thinks of it, the record is one of which the profession can be proud.

24. *Progress and Poverty* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1955), p. 369.

25. Geiger, *op. cit.* p. 66 n.

26. John Dewey, in introduction to Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. x.

27. de Mille, *op. cit.*, pp. 135–37.

28. Webb, *op. cit.* (statement attributed to the Rev. Samuel Barnett, Rector of St. Jude's), p. 174.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 173–74.

31. *New York Times*, September 1, 1980, p. A2.

32. Neff, *op. cit.*, p. 380.