

Editor's Preface

THOSE WHO FIRST pick up this book are likely to share some concern about the problem of poverty; those who finish it may also find some cause for hope. For the great gift that Henry George gave the world was a systematic explanation—logical and consistent—of why wealth is not distributed fairly among those who produce it. But he did not stop there—he also gave us a simple yet far-reaching plan for a cure. It was, and still is, a plan for peace, prosperity, equality, and justice.

Progress and Poverty is an enduring classic. It has been translated into dozens of languages; millions of copies have been distributed worldwide.

Why, then, the need for a modern edition, and an abridged one at that? Simply put, Henry George, like many late-19th century authors, wrote in a style that modern readers may find unduly complex. As editor, I have endeavored to break long and intricate sentences into shorter ones, creating what I call a “thought-by-thought translation.”

Furthermore, references to history, mythology, and literature that do not advance the central argument have been removed. Gender-balanced language has also been incorporated. However, I have not attempted to update financial statistics or technological examples.

I prepared this edition in two distinct stages: modernization and condensation. I have sought to ensure that

nothing of substance was left out.

In modernizing the text, I reduced the average sentence length and increased the number of sentences. Sentences were shortened by about one-third. For example, one passage showed a decline in average sentence length from twenty-eight words to nineteen words. By comparison, the average sentence in *Time* magazine was fifteen words in 1974, perhaps fewer today.

By simplifying language, I reduced the number of syllables per hundred words by about ten percent, to about 1.7 syllables per word. The number of sentences per hundred words was increased by fifty percent.

The combined effect of these changes transformed the text from one comprehensible to only a small fraction of the population to one that can be easily read by a high-school senior. An early test I performed showed that students were able to read the modernized text about twenty-five percent faster than the original, even before condensation. Although no formal testing for comprehension was done, anecdotal reports indicate that comprehension was greatly improved.

In the second stage, I condensed the modernized text by rewriting sentences using simpler language, removing multiple examples where one would suffice, and generally editing for brevity. Although I occasionally rearranged sentences for clarity and continuity, keeping George's original thesis intact was of utmost importance. In doing this, I followed the exposition as Henry George presented it. I endeavored to remove what is excessive and retain what is essential. In the end, this edition is less than half the size of the original.

This project has been a collective endeavor. Many people contributed to the various drafts, starting with those

teachers and students at the Henry George Schools in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia who provided suggestions and encouragement.

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