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Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, OCTOBER, 2012, Vol. 71, No. 4, Two Views of Social Justice: A Catholic/Georgist Dialogue (OCTOBER, 2012), pp. 938-955

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

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41721432>

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CAUSES OF WAR

Henry George's Perspective on War and Peace

By ALANNA HARTZOK*

ABSTRACT. This essay examines Henry George's perspective on war and peace. With justice added to the foundation in the way that Henry George proposes, the conditions of inequality and conflict that lead to war will no longer prevail. George saw that trade prohibitions furthered elite rule, militarization, and a worldview of "them" versus "us." George's great contribution was to see how these big issues of War and Peace bore directly upon the constellation of rules governing the relationship of people to planet, humans to humus, earthlings to earth. Social arrangements not based on the fundamental and equal human right to the earth lead inevitably to a gross imbalance of political power and thus to government corruption, odious public debt, war, and preparations for further war. Although he warned us of what might befall the United States if it took the imperialist path, George seemed hopeful that the highest and best moral purpose of our nation would prevail. The paper concludes with an assessment of contemporary devices that protect the interests of the few over the many—subsidies, the ballooning national debt, the ever-widening wealth gap, megacities, and the full-spectrum-dominance objective of U.S. imperialism.

Introduction

"We propose to readjust the very foundation of society." Thus stated Henry George (2006: 254) in *Progress and Poverty*. With justice added to the foundation in the way that George proposes, the conditions of inequality and conflict that lead to war will no longer prevail. Humans will relate to one another in just, generous, and cooperative ways. War would be an unthinkable relic of a distant dark past.

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American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 71, No. 4 (October, 2012).
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George (2006: 276) did not see war and preparations for war as separate from conditions of economic injustice. Rather he saw these perversions of morality and truth on a continuum, much like an initial mild bellyache turns into agonizing paroxysms leading to death by food poisoning: "Conflict includes not only war or preparation for war; it encompasses all mental power expended seeking gratification at the expense of others, and resisting such aggression."

To George seeking gratification at the expense of others meant the private appropriation of land rent, the monopolization of industry, the subjugation of workers, odious public debt, the domination of women by men, and tariffs and other policies that limited the freedom to trade. The ensuing concentration of wealth and power led to ever greater degrees of organization of lethal force (George 2006: 281):

This unequal distribution of wealth and power, which grows as society advances, tends to produce greater inequality. Then the idea of justice is blurred by habitual toleration of injustice. . . . As collective power grows, the ruler's power to reward or punish increases. From the necessities of war on a large scale, absolute power arises. The masses are then mere slaves of the king's caprice. . . . When society has grown to a certain point, a regular military force can be specialized.

He traced the origination of early human tribal conflicts to the diverse natural conditions from which came differences in "language, custom, tradition, religion" from which "prejudice and animosity arise" (George 2006: 278). Warfare then becomes "a chronic and seemingly natural relation of society to each other. Power is depleted in attack or defense, in mutual slaughter and destruction of wealth or in warlike preparations." In the same paragraph he states that "[p]rotective tariffs and standing armies among the civilized world today bear witness to how long these hostilities persist."

Trade

The greatest part of George's writings on war and international conflict are to be found in his book *Protection and Free Trade* (George 1992). Of course George (2009) was well aware of the problem of land grabbing as detailed in *Our Land and Land Policy* with its focus on the Mexican land grants and the railroad land grants. But issues of

tariff and trade policies were more alive in the public mind during George's time than was concern for U.S. foreign policy regarding land and natural resources. George was only seven years old during the land conflict of the Mexican-American War and he died the year before the Spanish-American War. Had he been alive in 1898 no doubt he would have had something to say about the U.S. victory over the Spanish Empire that allowed the victorious power to purchase the Philippine Islands from Spain for \$20 million.

George (2006: 278–279) viewed trade as a great civilizing force: “It is in itself a form of association or cooperation. It not only operates directly—it also builds up interests opposed to war. It dispels ignorance which is the fertile mother of prejudice and hate.” The freedom to exchange goods anywhere and anytime was in George's (1992: 46) views a sort of inoculation against war. “Trade is not invasion,” he said. “It does not involve aggression on one side and resistance on the other, but mutual consent and gratification.”

Protection was simply un-American and wreaked of Old World aristocratic arrangements of power and control. Protection was the antithesis of George's vision of a world of fraternal cooperation beyond the artificialities of nation-state borders and boundaries. One of George's (1992: 47) most famous statements is: “What protection teaches us, is to do to ourselves in time of peace what enemies seek to do to us in time of war.”

George (1992: 328) saw that trade prohibitions furthered elite rule, militarization, and a worldview of “them” versus “us”:

Fortifications and navies and standing armies not merely suit the protectionist purposes in requiring a constant expenditure, and developing a class who look on warlike expenditures as conducive to their own profit and importance, but they are of a piece with a theory that teaches us that our interests are antagonistic to those of other nations.

He imagined that many good things would happen if there were free trade between Britain and the United States (1992: 330–331):

. . . we should become one people, and would inevitably so conform currency and postal system and general laws that Englishman and American would feel themselves as much citizens of a common country as do New Yorker and Californian. . . . And with relations so close, ties of blood and language would assert their power, and mutual interest, general

convenience and fraternal feeling might soon lead to a pact, which, in the words of our own, would unite all the English-speaking peoples in a league "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty. . . . Thus would free trade unite what a century ago protectionism severed, and in a federation of the nations of English speech—the world-tongue of the future—take the first step to a federation of mankind.

George was clearly a precursor voice to the movements for world federalism spawned since his time.

George (1992: 329) credits the absence of internal trade barriers as key to the rapid emergence of the United States as a world power. "The true benefits of our Union, the true basis of the interstate peace it secures, is that it has prevented the establishment of State tariffs and given us free trade over the better part of a continent."

Debt

George held deep distrust of the motives of warmongers. He saw that preparations for war and the stirring up of patriot fervor leading to war served elite interests. He wrote at considerable length about the dangers of public debt, warning the middle class people of the United States that this would be a mechanism for their exploitation just as surely as had happened to the British commoners in previous centuries. After a profound exposition of how English public debt corrupted legislatures, supported oligarchies, and crushed civil liberties he tells us how the relationship of war and debt has been a primary instrument of human exploitation and degradation (George 1883: 166):

. . . the device of public debts enables tyrants to entrench themselves, and adventurers who seize upon government to defy the people. It permits the making of great and wasteful expenditures, by silencing, and even converting into support, the opposition of those who would otherwise resist these expenditures with most energy and force. But for the ability of rulers to contract public debts, nine-tenths of the wars of Christendom for the past two centuries could never have been waged. The destruction of wealth and the shedding of blood the agony of wives and mothers and children thus caused, cannot be computed, but to these items must be added the waste and loss and demoralization caused by constant preparation for war.

George was keenly aware of the opportunities taken by elites to incur national debt during the Civil War. The wealthiest grabbed and

gobbled up the government-issued war bonds, which they knew would be paid back to them with substantial interest from the working backs of the common people. In *Social Problems* he makes a scathing attack on William H. Vanderbilt, who he said “expresses the universal feeling of his kind” when he “with his forty millions of registered bonds, declares that the national debt ought not to be paid off; that, on the contrary, it ought to be increased, because it gives stability to the government” (George 1883: 167). “We could have carried on the war without the issue of a single bond, if, when we did not shrink from taking from wife and children their only bread-winner, we had not shrunk from taking the wealth of the rich,” said George (1883: 76).

Here is how he put it all together (George 1883: 164–165):

... if, when we called on men to die for their country, we had not shrunk from taking, if necessary, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand dollars from every millionaire, we need not have created any debt. But instead of that, what taxation we did impose was so levied as to fall on the poor more heavily than on the rich, and incidentally to establish monopolies by which the rich could profit at the expense of the poor. And then, when more wealth still was needed, instead of taking it from those who had it, we told the rich that if they would voluntarily let the nation use some of their wealth we would make it profitable to them by guaranteeing the use of the taxing power to pay them back principal and interest. And we did make it profitable with a vengeance. Not only did we, by the institution of the national banking system, give them back nine-tenths of much of the money thus borrowed while continuing to pay interest on the whole amount, but even where it was required neither by the letter of the bond nor the equity of the circumstances we made debt incurred in depreciated greenbacks payable on its face in gold. The consequence of this method of carrying on the war was to make the rich richer instead of poorer. The era of monstrous fortunes in the United States dates from the war.

George was, as the British would say, “spot on” with his analysis of the Civil War and issues of tariffs and public war debt.

Recent historical research demolishes the view that Lincoln opposed the secession of the South because he wanted to abolish slavery. In his summary of Thomas J. DiLorenzo’s (2006) book, *Lincoln Unmasked*, David Gordon (2007) wrote:

Following his mentor Henry Clay, Lincoln favored a nationalist economic program of which high tariffs, a national bank, and governmentally financed “internal improvements” were key elements. This program, he

thought, would promote not only the interests of the wealthy industrial and financial powers he always faithfully served but would benefit white labor as well.

DiLorenzo (2006: 57–59) found support for his views from a leading abolitionist and libertarian theorist, Lysander Spooner, who saw that the primary motive of Lincoln and the war party was to preserve and consolidate Northern control of the Southern economy. Spooner wrote that the war “erupted for a purely pecuniary consideration,” and not for any moral reason. He labeled the economic lifeblood of the Republican Party, Northern bankers, manufacturers, and railroad corporations, “lenders of blood money’.” To Spooner the Northern financiers of the war who had lent money to the Lincoln government did so not for “any love of liberty or justice,” but for the control of Southern markets through “tariff extortion.”

DiLorenzo (2006: 126) quoted Lincoln himself to support his views, pointing to his first inaugural address:

Lincoln shockingly threw down the gauntlet over the tariff issue, literally threatening the invasion of any state that failed to collect the newly doubled tariff . . . “[T]here needs to be no bloodshed or violence, and there shall be none unless it is forced upon the national authority.” What was he [Lincoln] talking about? What might ignite bloodshed and violence? Failure to collect the tariff, that’s what. He further stated that it was his duty “to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion.” In other words, Pay Up or Die.

Spooner said, and DiLorenzo (2006: 59) agreed, that “[t]he Republicans did not end slavery as an act of justice to the black man himself, but only as a ‘war measure,’ which were the exact words that Lincoln himself used in *The Emancipation Proclamation*” (“as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion”—Lincoln 1863). The result of Lincoln’s aggressive prosecution of the war was “the killing of one out of four males of military age while maiming for life more than double that number” (DiLorenzo 2006: 28).

George was against borrowing money to wage war, any war, anywhere. This stance naturally follows from the entire sequence of his political-economic analysis. He clearly saw how the land problem related to trade issues, the ever growing divide between the rich and the rest, myriad symptoms of social and economic injustice,

government debt, outbreaks of internal conflicts, and war between nations. George's great contribution was to see how these big issues of War and Peace bore directly upon the constellation of rules governing the relationship of people to planet, humans to humus, earthlings to earth. No wonder Leo Tolstoy loved him.

Dwight D. Eisenhower had just begun to glimpse our state of affairs when at the end of his presidency he warned us of the military-industrial complex. Seventy years previously George had loudly and clearly forewarned us of the military-industrial-prison-financial-mortgage-land-and-natural-resource control complex. That's a mouthful so let's just say "neocon"—the "new controllers"—different bunch, same brand.

"The same disease which rotted the old civilization is exhibiting its symptoms in the new," said the seer (George 1992: 165).

War

It had become crystal clear to George that social arrangements not based on the fundamental and equal human right to the earth would inevitably lead to a gross imbalance of political power and thus to government corruption, odious public debt, war, and preparations for further war. With his profound knowledge of the injustice that leads to war, George would have had little use for concepts and considerations concerning "just wars." He would assuredly take offense to the very idea of a "just war" and view anyone putting forth such reasoning as a propagandist for the elite-ruled status quo:

The passions aroused by war, the national hatreds, the worship of military glory, the thirst for victory or revenge, dull public conscience; pervert the best social instincts into that low, unreasoning extension of selfishness miscalled patriotism; deaden the love of liberty; lead men to submit to tyranny and usurpation from the savage thirst for cutting the throats of other people, or the fear of having their own throats cut. They so pervert religious perceptions that professed followers of Christ bless in his name the standards of murder and rapine, and thanks are given to the Prince of Peace for victories that pile the earth with mangled corpses and make hearthstones desolate! (George 1883: 166–167).

During Viet Nam War days members of my generation who opposed the war were appalled by warmongering Christians. We had

a phrase that mocked them—"kill a Commie for Christ." Henry George understood the distortions of Christianity in its mainstream institutionalized form. In *The Science of Political Economy*, George (1962: 174) first describes the several perversions of the field of political economy as developed in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* that "did away effectually with any fear that the study of natural laws of the production and distribution of wealth might be dangerous to the great House of Have."

Christianity and Empire

In the next paragraph George (1962: 174) stated:

So far from showing any menace to the great special interests, a political economy, so perverted, soon took its place with a similarly perverted Christianity to soothe the conscience of the rich and to frown down discontent on the part of the poor.

George at all times took the moral high ground. He believed in the "unity of the Creative Mind" (1992: 31) and in natural law spawned from "the All-originating, All-maintaining Spirit" (1962: 174). He greatly treasured not only the teachings of Jesus but nuggets of wisdom that he found in ancient texts of both Eastern and Western philosophy. He was a man who felt and experienced a deep guiding force of meaning, mission, and purpose. But he could not comfortably fit in with the dogmas and doctrines of either the Catholic or the Protestant traditions. Some of us view him as most closely aligned with the teachings of the early patristic period prior to the First Council of Nicaea and the codifications of the Nicene Creed.

The First *Council of Nicaea* was the first of the seven so-called ecumenical councils—bureaucratic exercises of bishops held to codify and regiment the teachings of Christianity, the last one being held in year 787. Note that the word "ecumenical" is from a Greek word that literally means "inhabited" and was originally a figure of speech referring to the territory of the Roman Empire since the earliest councils were all convoked by Roman Emperors (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_council).

The purpose of the First Council of Nicaea, convoked by the Roman Emperor Constantine in year 325, was to resolve disagreements in the

Church of Alexandria over the nature of Jesus in relationship to the Father; in particular, whether Jesus was of the same substance as God the Father or merely of similar substance. Three hundred and eighteen Christian bishops out of 1,800 in the Roman Empire attended the council. In other words, 17 percent of Christian Bishops in the Roman Empire in 325 AD adopted Roman Christianity's official position on the nature of Jesus, the Holy Ghost, and God as the Holy Trinity (Antoine 2002). It was called the Nicene Creed.

The research of theologian Michael Rivage-Seul (2007), put forth in a paper presented at the May 2007 International Philosophers for Peace Conference, shows the Nicene Creed to be a repackaging of the myths of the supreme Roman God Jupiter who, along with the goddesses Juno and Minerva, formed the Holy Triad. The temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill was dedicated in 509 BC to this trinity. As such the Nicene Creed can be viewed as a cooptation of the Jesus movement by the Roman state and a carefully scripted evasion of Jesus' main teaching to love one another in the here and now (Rivage-Seul 2007: 6):

The Creed jumps from the conception and birth of Jesus to his death and resurrection. It leaves out entirely any reference to what Jesus said and did. For all practical purposes it ignores the historical Jesus and pays attention only to a God who comes down from heaven, dies, rises, ascends back to heaven and offers eternal life to those who believe. It's a nearly perfect reflection of "mystery cult" belief. The revolutionary potential of Jesus' words and actions relative to justice, wealth, poverty and revolution are lost. Not only that, but subsequent to Nicaea, anyone connecting Jesus to a struggle for justice, sharing and communal life is rendered suspect and is very often classified as heretical. That is, mystery cult becomes "orthodoxy." The example and teaching of Jesus (and of the early church) becomes heresy.

Anyone attempting to fully live and embody this teaching became a threat to the elite rule status quo. This Council, convened by a Roman Emperor, was an attempt to tame the wildfire of Christianity and gut its core teachings. The Nicene Creed took the heart, soul, and embodied spirit out of the Jesus movement, eliminating the voice and wisdom of women in the process, as only men participated in these codification Councils.

The Nicene Creed made Jesus a God instead of a highly evolved being guided by a profound moral mission on planet Earth. Jesus came down from heaven, was born by a virgin, killed, buried, and then went back to heaven, end of story. He did this “for us men for our salvation” (Nicene Creed). The Nicene Creed, the core document of faith of organized, institutionalized Catholic and Protestant Christianity, repeated countless millions of times in churches and catechisms since the year 325, gave us bookends only. It tells us nothing of what Jesus actually did and taught during his time on earth. This must have been precisely the point of the exercise. Henry George (2006: Chapter 38) well knew that the forces that “perverted Christianity” were the same ones he was up against in his mission to “readjust the very foundation of society.”

The lowest common denominator of love is justice, treating each with fairness during our brief sojourn on earth. This truly Christian ethic bears directly on the human relationship to the basis of physical life itself—the earth. The early Christian land ethic was that of “*koinonia*.” The Creation was for all to share for the “*autarkeia*”—self-sufficiency—in securing physical needs of each and everyone. The true Christian teachings of love and justice in the here and now were squarely at odds with the Roman land laws of “*dominium*,” which legalized lands gained by conquest and plunder.

When Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, the early Christian teachings on land were overtaken by the Roman land laws. A corrupted Christianity, uprooted from its early teachings on land ownership, too often went hand in hand with the exploitation and degradation of centuries of colonial conquests (Hartzok 2004).

Augustine, writing after the First Council of Nicaea, was in alignment with the early Christian land ethic. According to Charles Avila (1983), Augustine saw that the poor are poor because they have been deprived by the propertied few of the wealth that should belong to all. He laid the blame for this unjust situation squarely on the doorstep of an absolutist and exclusivist legal right of private ownership. He reminded his audience that they were all “made from one mud” and sustained “on one earth” under the same natural conditions, having the same essence, and called to the same destiny. He rejected the legalized status quo as inappropriate for human living. Holding that legal arrangements of

property rights were of human origin, he asserted that they should be changed, in theory and in practice, in function of a faith-informed ethic based on the true meaning of ownership.

Unfortunately, Augustine, who also helped bring us the doctrine of original sin, is much better known for his “just war” theory than his land-rights stance. One can surmise that then as now the class with the greatest capacity to promulgate their own interests came to shape and spin the words and thought of Christian theologians in such a way as to not “be dangerous to the great House of Have.”

As the Roman emperors were trying to tame, control, and contain Christianity, so perhaps Augustine, with his “just war” theory, was trying to tame the Roman empire. But Augustine thereby compromised and corrupted the pacifist teachings of Jesus who, though he did create a bit of havoc that day in the temple when he overturned the money-changers tables, never threw a stone at anyone let alone amassed an armed force.

The Augustinian corruption of Jesus’ teachings via “just war” theory sounds forth to this day from the lips of radical fundamentalist warmongering Christians who thus play nicely into the hands of those holding grossly excessive wealth and obscene powers to manipulate, control, and exploit other human beings. “God is pro-war,” said Jerry Falwell (2004), titling an article about Iraq for a fundamentalist web site. Some of the ayatollahs probably preach the same thing to suicide bombers. Former President Jimmy Carter (2005), writing in his book *Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis*, characterized radical Christian fundamentalism as a core threat to America.

Henry George walked with Jesus, not with Augustine. Avila (1983), doing his research into early Christian teachings on land ownership after discovering the plight of landless peasants in the Philippines, considered George to be in the lineage of the patristic pre-Nicene Creed period. Avila searched through the Latin and Greek writings of the early Christians and discovered that imperialist Roman law had indeed corrupted the teachings of Jesus—a tendency shared by modern social thinkers (Avila 1983: 8–9):

The concentration of property in private hands began very early in Rome and was indeed based on the foundational and legitimizing idea of absolute and exclusive individual ownership in land. This was the same

idea which would come to form the basis of the slave-owning, the feudal, and the capitalist (including the pseudo-socialist, or state-capitalist) economic systems successively. Modern civilization has not yet discarded this antiquated ownership concept, which was originally derived from ancient Rome. In fact, it seems to us, this is one of the main roots of the present global crisis, in which the rich become richer because the poor become poorer. . . . [Modern social thinkers] advocate the promotion of social justice without stopping to think that individual ownership of nature's bounty might be socially unjust in itself. And yet patristic thought insisted long ago that there can be no real justice, or abolition of poverty, if the *koina*, the common natural elements of production, are appropriated in ownership by individuals.

High Hopes for the American Republic

George profoundly grasped the sequence leading from the land problem to unwarranted wealth to unlimited power. Although he warned us of what might befall the United States if it took the imperialist path, he seemed hopeful that the highest and best moral purpose of our nation would prevail, as evinced by the following (George 1992: 329):

Already in her sixty millions of people, the most powerful nation on earth, and rapidly rising to a position that will dwarf the greatest empires, the American Republic can afford to laugh to scorn any suggestion that she should ape the armaments of Old-World monarchies. . . . The giant of the nations does not depend for her safety upon steel-clad fortresses and armor-plated ships which the march of invention must within a few years make, even in war-time mere useless rubbish; but in her population, in her wealth, in the intelligence and inventiveness and spirit of her people, she has all that would be really useful in time of need. No nation on earth would venture wantonly to attack her, and none could do so with impunity. If we ever again have a foreign war it will be of our own making. And too strong to fear aggression, we ought to be too just to commit it (p. 329). . . . A nobler career is open to the American Republic than the servile imitation of European follies and vices. Instead of following in what is mean and low, she may lead toward what is grand and high. This league of sovereign States, settling their differences by a common tribunal and opposing no impediments to trade and travel, has in it possibilities of giving to the world a more than Roman peace.

If Henry George were alive today, he would note that the tariffs morphed into subsidies, the national debt ballooned to monstrous

proportions, and the enormous wealth chasm between the super-rich and the rest is nearly beyond comprehension.

Subsidies

In George's time the federal government gave excessive amounts of public land to railroads and other private corporations. Today we let big landowners and businesses gorge at the public trough. Subsidies are today what the tariff was in George's time. Both protect the interests of the few over the many.

Between 1995 and 2010 the federal government gave out \$261.9 billion in subsidies (Environmental Working Group 2011). The top 10 percent of big business farms received 74 percent of all subsidies while more than half (62 percent according to USDA) of all farmers and ranchers receive no subsidies. As a result, small farmers here and millions around the world aren't able to compete. The federal government has paid at least \$1.3 billion in subsidies for rice and other crops since 2000 to individuals who do no farming at all (Morgan, Gaul, and Cohen 2006).

National Debt

What would George say of our current state of affairs regarding the national debt? According to the U.S. National Debt Clock (Hall 2012), as of February 14, 2012 the U.S. National Debt was \$15,367,058,901,083.27. The estimated population of the United States is 312,220,819. Each citizen's share of this debt is \$49,218.53. The national debt has continued to increase an average of \$3.98 billion per day since September 28, 2007.

The accumulation of ever larger current-account deficits over the past quarter-century has played an indispensable role in transforming the United States from the world's largest creditor nation into the planet's biggest debtor nation (Cuadra 2011).

Wealth Gap

Although the focal point of George's great work was the wealth gap, he would probably be stunned by the magnitude of the numbers. A

Congressional Budget Office (2011: ix) analysis of income-distribution trends between 1979 and 1997 revealed the following:

- For the 1 percent of the population with the highest income, average real after-tax household income grew by 275 percent between 1979 and 2007.
- For others in the 20 percent of the population with the highest income (those in the 81st through 99th percentiles), average real after-tax household income grew by 65 percent over that period, much faster than it did for the remaining 80 percent of the population, but not nearly as fast as for the top 1 percent.
- For the 60 percent of the population in the middle of the income scale (the 21st through 80th percentiles), the growth in average real after-tax household income was just under 40 percent.
- For the 20 percent of the population with the lowest income, average real after-tax household income was about 18 percent higher in 2007 than it had been in 1979.

All of the Forbes 400 are now billionaires (<http://www.forbes.com/forbes-400/>). The United States has 412 billionaires while 15.1 percent of the nation's population lived in poverty in 2010 (\$17,552 or less for a family of three)—the highest proportion since 1993 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010: 61).

Megacities

In its State of World Population report, the United Nations Population Fund (2011: 77) said that “the global rural-urban balance of populations has tipped irreversibly in favour of cities” and “[m]etropolitan areas spreading over large territory are absorbing or overtaking compact cities, sometimes merging with other metros along heavily populated corridors.” The report warned that “[w]ithout planning, cities can grow absent-mindedly, spread over every available empty space and overrun the ability of public services, where they exist, to meet demands or cope with the growth of slums.”

George would be concerned about the explosive growth of megacities. He viewed this concentration of population with alarm from his own early vantage point of the late 1800s (George 1992: 165):

Population and wealth are concentrating in huge towns and an exhausting commerce flows from country to city. But this ominous tendency is not natural, and does not arise from too much freedom; it is unnatural and arises from restrictions. It may be clearly traced to monopolies, of which the monopoly of material opportunities is the first and most important. In a word the Roman system of landownership, which in our modern civilization has displaced that of our Celtic and Teutonic ancestors, is producing the same effect that it did in the Roman world—the engorgement of the centers and the impoverishment of the extremities.

U.S. Imperialism

If in 1883 George was concerned about the damage that “destructive agents” such as nitro-glycerin could do to destroy the city of London (1883: 5), he would shake in his shoes to learn of the thousands of nuclear weapons poised for immediate launch in this now highly interconnected world. If alive today George would know that we did not solve the land problem and that we did tread the path of imperialism. He would learn that “full spectrum dominance” of the globe on land, sea, air, and outer space is now official U.S. foreign policy. He would be able to peruse maps on the internet showing the 700 to 800 military bases that the U.S. operates and/or controls worldwide with an underlying land surface of 5,443,054 acres making the Pentagon one of the largest landowners on the globe (Dufour 2007). He would learn that the United States has structured the earth as a battlefield divided into five spatial units and four unified Combatant Commands each under the command of a General. Total active-duty military personnel is of the order of 1.4 million (Global Firepower 2012). U.S. defense spending (excluding the costs of the Iraq war) have increased from 404 billion in 2001 to 685 billion dollars in 2011 (United States Department of Defense 2012: 1-1).

But military auditors admit that they cannot account for 25 percent of what the Pentagon spends. And in 2002 then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made the astonishing admission that “according to some estimates we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions” (Sirgany 2009). This works out to \$8,000 for every woman, man and child in America.

This writer believes that if Henry George were alive today he would take a deep look at the evidence surrounding the events of 9/11 and

conclude that they did indeed make it happen, the “new Pearl Harbor” (Griffin 2004) event to stir up war fever, thus manipulating the masses into a war on Iraq for the purpose of geopolitical control of Eurasia as a key to the neocon elite power drive for full-spectrum dominance.

Thus Spake Henry George

If George were alive today, after surveying our current dangerous and insane situation and recovering from the shock of what he discovered, he would likely join with movements to abolish war and dismantle the military-industrial-financial complex.

George would rage and rail like the prophet that he was.

He would focus progressive movements on the land problem, knowing as he did that “[p]ublic debts and standing armies historically were products of the change from feudal to allodial (i.e., private) land tenures” (George 2006: 255). He thus might rekindle the hope that “[a]s intelligence and independence grow among the masses, standing armies would soon disappear.”

Given what we are faced with at this moment in time, George's words seem overly optimistic. But dark despair and paralyzing pessimism did not rule the spirit of this man who said “[r]eligion and experience alike teach us that the highest good of each is to be sought in the good of others; that the true interests of men are harmonious, not antagonistic, that prosperity is the daughter of good will and peace” and then asked “[c]an we imagine the nations beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks . . . ?” (George 1992: 31).

Yes, Henry, we must imagine the possibility of peace on earth, or else we are doomed.

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