

# HENRY GEORGE AND HENRY FORD

OPINIONS differ, I suppose, about the educational value of the recent Henry George Congress at Chicago, which brought together ardent Georgists from various parts of the country for the exchange of views and renewal of faith in their inspiring philosophy of just social relationships. For me the occasion was worthwhile, not alone for the pleasure and inspiration which one derives from contacts with fine personalities; with men of keen mentality and soundly logical processes of thought and expression, men interested in an utterly unselfish way in the solution of the problems of human society.

For another reason, that made an impressive appeal to my interest and imagination, I found my visit to Chicago worthwhile. Let me tell you about it.

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## Henry Ford's Big Show

It was before the closing of that remarkable Century of Progress Exposition on the Lake Michigan shore front. Of all the varied attractions within the gates of that big show the most impressive educational appeals seemed to be those found within the great building of the Ford Motor Company. The Ford Exposition, I am told, attracted immense crowds during the last year. Perhaps the visitors were chiefly interested in the great circular building in which were presented the exhibits illustrating the drama of transportation from the earliest historic period to date. There you could see actual specimens of man's means of locomotion, from the state chariot of King Tutankhamen to the wagons and coaches used before the advent of the first automobile. Then you were able to inspect, specimen by specimen, the motor vehicles, from the earliest crude contraption of not so many years ago to the latest finished Ford car. This transportation exhibit alone was impressive for its significance as a measure of the progress the human family has made in the invention and adaptation of means to ends.

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## But the Spirit of the Thing!

But to me, as a follower of Henry George, there were many things about the big Ford show most interesting and suggestive; things that seemed to breathe a spirit of Americanism in its best tradition of freedom, of knowledge of the essential fundamentals of economic truth and just government. There were legends, for example, painted high and clear at intervals upon the walls of the Hall of Transportation. Some of these legends strongly suggested to me the views of Henry George. To a bright young man in attendance I addressed a question as to the authorship of these wall

preachments. He said, evidently with pride, "Those, sir, were written by Mr. Henry Ford himself!"

It seemed to me then that I could find parallels in the writings of Henry George for most of the texts that Henry Ford placed before the eyes of the multitudes who passed through this great building at the Fair.

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## Ford Texts and Henry George

Since returning to New York, I have found what appear to be definite resemblances between those wall texts of Henry Ford and the views revealed in the writings of Henry George; enough to suggest that, perhaps, the great American industrialist has some acquaintance with the books of the great American philosopher and economist. For example, Henry Ford says:

1

*"Never yet has enough of any good thing been produced for use."*

Now Henry George has preached many a sermon from this text. He puts it briefly in "Social Problems," (p.76) this way:

*"Evidently the glut of markets does not really come from overproduction when, there are so many who want the things which are said to be overproduced, and would gladly exchange their labor for them did they have opportunity."*

And this way in "Progress and Poverty," (p. 267):

*"For while the great masses of men want more wealth than they can get, and while they are willing to give for it that which is the basis and raw material of wealth—their labor—how can there be overproduction? And while the machinery of production wastes and producers are condemned to unwilling idleness, how can there be overconsumption?"*

2

Henry Ford says:

*"High Wages and Best Materials—the only road to low prices."*

Henry George in "Progress and Poverty," (p. 444), says:

*"It is but a truism that labor is most productive where its wages are largest. Poorly paid labor is inefficient labor, the world over."*

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Henry Ford says:

*"If we had more justice, there would be less need of charity."*

In "Social Problems," (p. 86) Henry George says:

"That justice is the highest quality in the moral hierarchy I do not say; but that it is the first. . . . As the individual must be just before he can be truly generous, so must human society be based upon justice before it can be based on benevolence."

4

Henry Ford says:

"*Industry is mind using nature to make human life more free.*"

And in "Social Problems," (p. 80) Henry George says:

"Mind, not muscle, is the motor of progress, the force which compels nature and produces wealth. . . . We have only begun to grasp that dominion which it is given to mind to obtain over matter. Discovery and invention are born of leisure, of material comfort, of freedom. These secured to all and who shall say to what command over nature man may not attain?"

5

Henry Ford says:

"*With one foot on the land and one in industry America is safe.*"

And Henry George says in "Social Problems," (p. 137):

"The occupations that resort directly to nature are the primitive occupations from which, as society progresses, all others are differentiated. No matter how complex the industrial organization, these must always remain the fundamental occupations, upon which all other occupations rest, just as the upper stories of a building rest upon the foundation."

6

Henry Ford says:

"*The farm and the shop each needs what the other produces.*"

And Henry George says in "Social Problems," (p. 120)

"All trade, it is to be remembered, is the exchange of commodities for commodities. . . . Whatever increases the quantity of things offered in exchange for other things at once increases supply and augments demand. And reversely, whatever checks the bringing of things to market at once reduces supply and decreases demand."

7

Henry Ford says:

"*The auto made roads and roads make commerce and civilization.*"

And Henry George says in "Social Problems," (p. 126):

" . . . The greater distances over which produce and goods must be transported, the difficulties which separation

interposes to that commerce between men which is necessary even to the ruder forms of modern production, all retard and lessen production."

And further, "Progress and Poverty," (p. 48):

"Production includes not merely the making of things, but the bringing of them to the consumer."

8

Henry Ford says:

"*If you stabilize anything it is likely to be the wrong thing.*"

Henry George says, "Progress and Poverty," (p. 319):

"Governmental regulation of industry and accumulation are the substitution of governmental direction for the play of individual action, and the attempt to secure by restriction what can better be secured by freedom."

9

Henry Ford says:

"*The growth of food, the making of tools, and transportation—three basic jobs.*"

And Henry George in "Social Problems," (p. 99) says:

"Food, clothing, shelter, all the articles that minister to desire and that we call wealth, can be produced by labor, but only when the raw material of which they must be composed is drawn from the land."

10

Henry Ford (who plainly believes in freedom of trade) says:

"*It is not good business unless buyer and seller both gain by it.*"

Henry George says in "Science of Political Economy," (p. 316):

"It is by exchange and through exchange that man obtains and is able to exert the power of cooperation which with the advance of civilization so enormously increases his ability to produce wealth. The motive of exchange is the primary postulate of political economy, the universal fact that men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion. This leads men by a universal impulse to seek to gratify their desires by exchange wherever they can thus obtain the gratification of desire with less exertion than in any other way. . . ."

11

Henry Ford says:

"*Individualism is what makes cooperation worthwhile.*"

And Henry George says in "Science of Political Economy," (p. 18):



"To consider in like manner any one of the many and great advances which civilized man in our time has made over the power of the savage, is to see that it has been gained, and could only have been gained by the widening cooperation of individual effort".

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### Basic Materials in a Ford Car

The social and economic philosophy revealed by this partial quotation from Henry Ford's little preachments to the multitude at Chicago seems clear enough. But the analogy and correspondence with the teachings of Henry George seemed particularly noticeable in one particular exhibit at the entrance to the main Ford Building at the Fair. Here was set up a large revolving hemisphere, probably twenty feet high, surmounted by one-half of a Ford V8 car split longitudinally. As the sphere revolved it revealed to the eye colored sectional pictures in bas-relief showing the sources of all materials that went into the construction of the car. Thus, life-like representations followed one another of men laboring beneath the surface of the earth, or in the fields or forests, to produce iron, copper, zinc, glass, cotton, wool, rubber, asbestos, cork, aluminum, and soy beans. From each picture as it passed, an arrow extended pointing to the section of the car on the top which was supplied with the material whose source was thus graphically depicted. At the top was the legend: "The Basic Elements of Earth Combined by Creative Genius."

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### "Man Must Go to the Earth"

Nearby, a compact box of little samples of iron, copper and zinc ore, and of the various other basic materials, going into a Ford car was sold to visitors for ten cents, bearing at the top the legend "*Man must go to the Earth for All Materials.*"

Thus was shown Henry Ford's educational aim—to illustrate and emphasize graphically the fact that the basic elements which labor produces by access to mine, field and forest, when "combined by creative genius," constitute the sum total of all that is necessary for the limitless production of wealth for the satisfaction of human needs and desires. This exhibit, it seemed to me, would have delighted Henry George, were he in the land of the living, as it delighted Mrs. Anna George de Mille, his daughter, when she visited the Ford exhibit in my company. This last described exhibit might well have carried this legend from "Social Problems," (p. 132):

"As wealth consists of materials and products of nature which have been secured, or modified by human exertion so as to fit them for the satisfaction of human desires, labor is the active factor in the production of wealth, but land is the passive factor, without which labor can neither produce nor exist."

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### "Work and Wages for Everybody"

Henry Ford may not be a Georgist; may never have read any of Henry George's books. Unmistakably, however, it would seem that his mind has grasped many of the essentials of George's philosophy of social regeneration through economic freedom. Recently, in an illuminating interview reported by Anne O'Hare McCormick in the *Times*, Mr. Ford is vehement in scorning unemployment insurance as a solution of the unemployment problem.

"That is a typically political solution" he says, "and one of the best ways to insure having unemployment."

"In general," reports Mrs. McCormick, "Mr. Ford scouts the idea that the satisfaction of human wants cannot and should not supply work and wages enough for everybody."

CHARLES O'CONNOR HENNESSY.

## A Radiant Science

SKYSCRAPERS and slums and vacant lots are results of a common cause, land monopoly, which is in its turn the result of a faulty system of taxation. And the whole question of the right to the use of the earth is interwoven with the need for revenue in such manner that political economy instead of being the dismal science it has been called, becomes the most fascinating of studies. Any science may well be attractive but the one dealing with human relations is doubly so now that Henry George has put the law of wages upon a solid foundation and given a basis for economic reasoning wherein each step is logical and orderly.

ALBERTA GEISER, in *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*.

FOR the benefit of steel trust employees Congress put an enormous tariff on steel. Since they are not getting the benefits the employes are threatening to strike. This being the case any one who honestly believes that the tariff is intended to protect labor would immediately conclude that it might as well be abolished and would tell the steel trust so, which would promptly bring the steel trust to its knees. But how many honest protectionists are there in Congress? Just as many as have given the steel trust this warning. Have you finished counting them? Neither have we.

BY strangling the land taxes the Chancellor has deprived himself of one fruitful and just source of revenue. He has done this to entrench landowners in their monopoly. They are to continue to appropriate socially-created wealth, while the rest of the community are to bear the ever increasing taxes on the necessities of life.

PHILIP SNOWDEN.

THE nine thousand words used in the Darrow report were a waste. They could have been boiled down to this: "The New Deal is an effort to resist nature and nature is irresistible."

FOR good results a trusty brain will beat a brain trust any day.