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# Henry George and the Progressive Movement

By RANSOM E. NOBLE JR.

THE FORCES that produced the "Progressive Movement" that dominated American politics for a decade and a half prior to World War I were many and varied. The growth of monopoly, the evils of a too-rapid industrialization, and the close alliance between privileged business and corrupt politics were major issues that cried out for reform. The Progressive spirit, which permeated both major parties by 1910 and which caused an open break in the Republican organization two years later, had its roots far back in the nineteenth century: Progressivism was but one of those recurrent upsurges of protest which, from the time of Jeffersonian Democracy through Jacksonian Democracy and Bryanism, kept alive a hope that the American dream of liberty and plenty could yet be attained.

That Henry George was an important influence in the Progressive Movement has long been recognized. But the wide ramifications of that influence, its effects in the field of political as well as economic reform, and the extent to which key personalities were affected by it, have not, I think, been sufficiently stressed. The manifold specific aims of Progressivism can be summarized under two major objectives: to make the government more democratic and to use this democratized government for the social and economic betterment of the people. On both these fronts outstanding leaders drew inspiration from the principles of Henry George.

## I

SOME PROGRESSIVES were so thoroughly identified with George's ideas that their names need only be mentioned here to recall his vital influence in that era. Preëminent was the Cleveland group: Tom Johnson, the millionaire monopolist who was converted to the single tax and devoted the rest of his life to a fight for municipal ownership;<sup>1</sup> Peter Witt, his lieutenant, whose "tax school" was an education in the principles of equitable assessment<sup>2</sup>; Newton D. Baker, who as late as 1914 "avowed himself a firm Single Taxer, hoping that he might some day see with the vision of his master, Tom L. Johnson"<sup>3</sup>; and, of course, Frederic C. Howe, "perhaps the most complete

<sup>1</sup> Tom Johnson, "My Story," N. Y., 1911; Newton D. Baker in "Dictionary of American Biography," vol. X.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Johnson, *op.cit.*, Lincoln Steffens, "The Struggle for Self-Government," N. Y., 1906. pp. 194-5.

<sup>3</sup> At the Fourth Annual Fels Commission and Single Tax Conference, Washington, D. C., Jan. 1914. Joseph Dana Miller, ed., *Single Tax Year Book*, N. Y., 1917, p. 25.

and deliberate single taxer" of the whole liberal group.<sup>4</sup> Equally prominent were men like Brand Whitlock, understudy and successor to Mayor "Golden Rule" Jones in Toledo,<sup>5</sup> and Louis F. Post, assistant secretary of labor in the Wilson administration, whose speeches and writings as well as his long editorship of *The Public* made him an expositor of single tax doctrines second only to George himself.<sup>6</sup>

A somewhat longer word needs to be said about another leading Progressive, William Simon U'Ren of Oregon. U'Ren is perhaps the most interesting example of the effect of Henry George upon attempts to reform American *political* machinery. He is well known as chief architect of that "Oregon System" of direct government which was widely imitated, in whole or in part, during the Progressive period and which gave him a deserved place among the pioneers of state Progressivism.<sup>7</sup> He is also recalled as Oregon's leading single taxer; what needs emphasis (more than it usually gets in current historical literature) is the connection between these two rôles. A direct-government system which arrested the attention of the nation had as its chief *raison d'être* the furthering of the single tax!

U'Ren, its author, was born in Lancaster, Wisconsin, in 1859. The son of a blacksmith and pioneer farmer, he "was brought up in the fear of the poor, the terrible fear of poverty."<sup>8</sup> During the wander-years that preceded his settlement in Oregon two things happened which shaped his career: he read "Progress and Poverty" and he learned about the new political device known as the "initiative." Here was an economic program for the elimination of poverty and a political tool by which to achieve it.

U'Ren's subsequent work for direct government in Oregon is a matter of history. Acting through a series of organizations from the Australian Ballot League to the People's Power League, he and his associates secured in succession laws for the Australian ballot (1891), registration of voters (1899), initiative and referendum (1902), direct primaries including the

<sup>4</sup> G. R. Geiger, "The Philosophy of Henry George," New York, 1933, p. 462.

<sup>5</sup> See Brand Whitlock, "Forty Years of It," New York, c. 1914.

<sup>6</sup> In the opinion of Joseph Dana Miller, "George and His Disciples," *The Libertarian*, vol. 5, Nov. 1925, p. 286. A multitude of others were influenced to a greater or lesser degree: they range all the way from convinced and life-long single taxers like W. S. U'Ren of Oregon and George Record and Mark Fagan of New Jersey to men who were only partial or one-time disciples. Lincoln Steffens, for example, was for a time a member of the Fels Fund Commission; Clarence Darrow repeatedly declared in favor of the single tax; and even Theodore Roosevelt endorsed greater land-value taxation and municipal home-rule in taxation in 1913. See Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 462 ff.; Steffens, "The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens," II, p. 641 ff.; Darrow in *Everyman*, vol. 9, no. 4, June 1913, p. 13 ff.; no. 7-8, Sept.-Oct. 1913, p. 17 ff.; vol. 10, no. 6-7, Aug.-Sept. 1914, p. 27 ff.

<sup>7</sup> See A. H. Eaton, "The Oregon System," Chicago, 1912.

<sup>8</sup> U'Ren, quoted in Lincoln Steffens, "Upbuilders," New York, 1909, p. 291.

popular choice of United States Senators (1904), a corrupt practices act (1908), Presidential preference primaries (1910), and the recall (1910).<sup>9</sup> But these political devices were looked upon in large measure as tools for subsequent enactment of the Henry George program; this was particularly true of the initiative, which provided that measures could be submitted directly to the people either in the form of proposed laws, or, if there was danger of conflict with the state constitution, in the form of constitutional amendments. In either case, a bare majority of those voting in the election was sufficient to adopt the proposal. "This important connection between the initiative and the single-tax movement in the state cannot be made too prominent," wrote a contemporary student of the question. "It is a matter of common knowledge that W. S. U'Ren, in devising the Oregon System, was actuated more by a desire to secure popular endorsement of his single-tax program than to realize popular control of legislation generally."<sup>10</sup>

Having fashioned the most thorough-going system of direct government in the country, U'Ren and his followers were soon using it to further Henry George principles: backed by the Fels Fund Commission they proposed a series of tax reform measures in the elections of 1908, 1910, 1912, and 1914.<sup>11</sup> Conservatives, too, saw the connection: in the 1910 campaign they not only attacked the proposal for county home rule in taxation (which would of course give each county freedom to experiment along single tax lines if it so desired) but also tried to destroy the whole Oregon System. U'Ren declared that but for the literature supplied every voter in the state at the expense of the Fels Fund,<sup>12</sup> the conservatives would have won control of the state government and placed such restrictions on the use of the initiative and referendum, and so amended the direct primary law as to have practically restored the old system. Instead, with the help of the

<sup>9</sup> H. U. Faulkner, "The Quest for Social Justice," New York, 1931, p. 88; A. H. Eaton, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> J. H. Gilbert, "Single-Tax Movement in Oregon," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 31 (Mar. 1916), p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> The 1908 measure to exempt household furniture, manufacturing machinery and certain other labor values in actual use was rejected; in 1910 a proposal for county home rule in taxation was adopted, but repealed two years later; in 1912 a graduated single tax measure met defeat, as did a 1914 proposal to exempt every person from taxes on \$1500 of the total assessed value of his house, live-stock, other land improvements and labor values. In 1912 the people did approve a bill exempting from taxation all household furniture and jewelry in actual use. W. S. U'Ren, "Single Tax," *Annals of American Academy*, vol. 58 (Mar. 1915), p. 224-5. These measures obviously represented a "step-by-step" approach to the single tax.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., W. G. Eggleston, *et. al.*, *People's Power and Public Taxation*, Portland, Oregon, 3rd ed., 1910. This 1910 campaign pamphlet, paid for by the Fels Fund Commission, both supports the proposed tax reform measures and defends the initiative and referendum, direct primary, and popular choice of United States Senators. (New York Public Library).

Fund, Progressives not only defeated these attacks but also secured the adoption of the Presidential preference primary law.<sup>13</sup>

The Oregon story is only the most spectacular example of the connection between Henry George principles and the reform of political machinery during the Progressive era. As early as 1893 the National Single Tax Conference at Chicago had adopted a resolution favoring both the initiative and referendum and proportional representation, while in the early nineteen hundreds the Fels Fund Commission gave support to the direct legislation movement in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Arkansas, Minnesota, and Ohio as well as in Oregon. In fact, some single taxers criticized the Commission for devoting too much attention to this subject.<sup>14</sup> In Missouri, conservatives were so alarmed by the use of the initiative for single tax proposals that in 1914 they tried, unsuccessfully, to obtain a constitutional amendment which would prevent a popular vote upon any measure relating to taxation.<sup>15</sup> These instances are sufficient to indicate, at least, the commanding part played in the direct legislation movement by the followers of Henry George.

## II

ACROSS THE CONTINENT from Oregon, the state of New Jersey offers a less publicized but equally important illustration of the significant rôle of Henry George men in the Progressive Movement. Starting slowly just after the turn of the century, the liberal forces in that state gradually infiltrated both major parties, compelled the old guard to make grudging concessions in railroad taxation, utility regulation, and reform of political machinery, and laid the basis for the culminating Progressive program of Woodrow Wilson's governorship.<sup>16</sup> Of the three outstanding Progressive leaders in the Republican camp—George Record, Mark Fagan, and Everett Colby—the first two were devoted followers of Henry George.<sup>17</sup> Record was frequently, and accurately, described as the brains of Republican Progressivism in New Jersey, and was undoubtedly one of its outstanding leaders anywhere. Both Fagan, reform mayor of Jersey City from 1901 to 1907, and Colby, who won a national reputation as a liberal leader, owed much of their success to Record's political generalship.<sup>18</sup> He was influen-

<sup>13</sup> W. S. U'Ren in *Single Tax Year Book*, New York, 1917, pp. 42-3.

<sup>14</sup> A. N. Young, "*The Single Tax Movement in the United States*," Princeton, 1916, pp. 239-40.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>16</sup> R. E. Noble, "New Jersey Progressivism Before Wilson," Princeton, 1946. Wilson was Governor of New Jersey in 1911-13.

<sup>17</sup> As were a number of other New Jersey Progressives, notably Record's close friend and fellow-worker James G. Blauvelt. Noble, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Noble, *op. cit.*

tial with Progressives in both party camps: he helped Democratic Governor Woodrow Wilson achieve the remarkable legislative successes which stamped him as an outstanding presidential possibility,<sup>19</sup> and he was an active worker in Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose campaign of 1912. To the end of a full life he continued to press his ideas for economic and social betterment upon all who would hear. Lincoln Steffens was so impressed with the "Record of George L. Record" that he called him "one of the most courageous, continuous, and unselfish leaders that democracy has ever had . . . in all history."<sup>20</sup>

The influence of single tax principles is apparent throughout Record's career and in his writings. Particularly interesting from the point of view of this essay is a series of articles which he wrote for the *Jersey Journal* (then an independent and fair-minded publication) at the height of the Progressive period. From January 1910 to October 1911 he conducted a daily column in that newspaper—well over 400 articles in all—many dealing with purely local political questions, but others containing penetrating comment on the major issues of the day. In them Record worked out a coherent program based upon Henry George premises, a program worthy of analysis as an illustration of the influence of Henry George upon one of the Progressive Movement's outstanding leaders. To that analysis the larger part of this essay will be devoted.

The fundamental problem of land monopoly Record approached along single tax lines. As a first step he urged legislation allowing municipalities to exempt any class of property from taxation; this, of course, would enable local governments to exempt all personalty, buildings, and improvements and raise their total annual revenue by a tax on the value of land alone.<sup>21</sup> On the question of railroads and utilities, which played such an important rôle in the Progressive period, Record at first wavered between regulation and outright public ownership. At times—like many Progressives<sup>22</sup>—he seemed hopeful that regulation would prove an adequate remedy; he once declared that fifty-cent gas, three-cent trolley fares, and heavy reductions in express, passenger, freight, telephone and telegraph charges would be the "reasonably probable results" of a state utility commission with power

<sup>19</sup> James Kerney, "The Political Education of Woodrow Wilson," N. Y., c. 1926, p. 100 ff.; A. S. Link, "Wilson, the Road to the White House," Princeton, 1947, p. 239 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Steffens to Kerney, quoted in Kerney to Record, July 14, 1931. *Record Papers*. The *Record Papers* were lent by the late Mr. James G. Blauvelt of Ridgewood, N. J.

<sup>21</sup> *Jersey Journal*, Dec. 3, 10, 1910; May 26, June 28, 1911.

<sup>22</sup> Regulation of utilities by state commissions was of course part of the Progressive program in many states. From 1905 to 1907 fifteen states created new railroad or railroad and utility commissions. G. G. Huebner, "Five Years of Railroad Regulation by the States," *Annals of American Academy*, vol. 32 (July 1908), p. 139.

to value property and fix rates.<sup>23</sup> But a year later he was writing: "All history proves that corruption and bad service result whenever the State allows private interests to perform what are naturally public functions."<sup>24</sup> The only remedy was government and municipal ownership and operation.

The passing of time confirmed Record in this view. His efforts on behalf of Governor Woodrow Wilson's public utility commission law of 1911 and his work as a lawyer representing municipalities before the commission (which made up a large part of his practice for the next fifteen years) placed him in a unique position to observe the operation of the regulatory technique. "As a result of this experience and the experience elsewhere," he declared not long before his death, "I became utterly disillusioned in my hopes of substantial results from this policy of regulation. It is my opinion that it has completely failed to reduce rates, and has entailed on several of our municipal governments and upon the customers of these utilities a heavy burden of expense, and it has cost the state hundreds of thousands of dollars to maintain the commission." The two chief obstacles to regulation he found in "the disposition of the Commissions to take the point of view of the utilities in making valuations" and the decisions of state and federal courts which refused to allow valuations on the basis of original cost alone. Public ownership, he reiterated, was the only solution.<sup>25</sup>

In considering the question of industrial monopoly, Record again showed the strong influence of Henry George principles. He had little patience with attempts to break up these combinations by anti-trust acts and lawsuits; "the whole trust structure of this country," he wrote, "is built up not upon Jersey charters or upon holding companies"<sup>26</sup> but "by railroad favors or direct governmental privilege like a patent or the failure to enforce some law."<sup>27</sup> The way to smash the trusts was to remove the privilege. The first step would be such an effective government control of the railroads (which in the last analysis would mean government

<sup>23</sup> *Jersey Journal*, Jan. 24, 1910.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 10, 1911.

<sup>25</sup> Manuscript of a radio address by Record, "What is the Next Step in Public Utility Regulation in New Jersey?" Jan. 26, 1933. *Record Papers*.

<sup>26</sup> *Jersey Journal*, Mar. 11, 1910. Compare Record's later criticism that Governor Woodrow Wilson's New Jersey anti-trust acts (the "Seven Sisters Laws") were based upon "a false economic idea that trusts can be created by corporation laws which are open to use by everybody. Trusts obtained their power to control markets not by anything in their charters unless they were granted exclusive privileges by the State in the charters, which the corporation laws of New Jersey do not do, but because they have after incorporation acquired some natural resources, patents or illegal privileges like transportation rebates." Record to John Bauer, Jan. 2, 1932, *Record Papers*.

<sup>27</sup> *Jersey Journal*, Dec. 1, 1910.

ownership<sup>28</sup>) that favors to particular shippers would be impossible. Secondly, the patent laws should be revised: every invention should become the joint property of the inventor and the government, and should be open to use by anyone upon a royalty basis.<sup>29</sup> In this way patents would stimulate competition instead of becoming a foundation for monopoly. Thirdly, the tariff—that prolific breeder of trusts—should be removed, both because it is privilege, “the taking of money from the consumer in higher prices in order to give it to certain favored manufacturers,” and because it is indirect taxation which the public pays without realizing it. Like other forms of privilege the only way to handle the tariff was to abolish it.<sup>30</sup> And finally, monopolies which depend upon control of natural resources should be assailed with the tax weapon. The steel trust, Record pointed out, held vast ore beds out of use; these should be taxed at 4 per cent of their value which would force the trust either to use them itself or turn them over to someone who would.<sup>31</sup> In either case production would be increased and prices lowered. Record returned again and again to this point: “The land question,” he wrote with characteristic Henry George emphasis, “is at the root of this monopoly, as it will be found to be at the root of many other trusts, when the truth is known. The utter folly and stupidity of the policy which allows a few men to gobble up untold millions of natural resources like iron ore, which they never produced, which they never bought from any one who did produce them, and the original title to which was founded upon fraud and force, will some day be apparent to all the people; and then we can begin at the trust problem with some hope of making rational progress.”<sup>32</sup>

Record thus believed that with the privileges of railroad favors, patents, tariffs, and monopoly of natural resources removed, the trusts would collapse and competition would be restored. He had no faith in Theodore

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, June 7, 1911.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, May 31, 1911. Record would have the royalty divided equally between the government and the inventor; the government, he argued, by issuing the patent makes profit to the inventor possible, and should therefore share in the returns.

<sup>30</sup> Record felt that any Congressional attempt to revise the tariff in the public interest would fail because the average legislator could not resist the pressure of the protected industries. He admitted that some enterprises might need aid to compete with low-cost foreign goods; these, he believed, should be given a direct bounty from the federal treasury “on proof before a proper tribunal of the amount of production and the cost of production here and in competing countries.” With the tariff removed, federal, state, and local taxing systems should be co-ordinated on a basis which would eliminate indirect taxes entirely. *Jersey Journal*, June 7, 13, 1910, Feb. 4, Mar. 18, 1911.

<sup>31</sup> *Jersey Journal*, July 10, 1911. He later advocated that the government condemn a portion of the natural resources of the steel, oil, and anthracite coal trusts and lease them to competitors upon a royalty basis. Record, “How to Abolish Poverty,” *Jersey City, c. 1936*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> *Jersey Journal*, Aug. 11, 1911. See also July 13, 1911.



Roosevelt's proposal that the government control them through a special commission just as it was trying to control the railroads through the Interstate Commerce Commission. Such regulation was sure to break down, especially if the government undertook the gigantic task of fixing the prices of all trust-made products.<sup>33</sup> Record carried his devotion to competition<sup>34</sup> even into the field of banking and currency. Like many citizens he was alarmed by the spectre of the "money trust" and declared that of all the methods of robbing the public "the most dangerous is perhaps the control of money and credit." As a remedy Record advocated free banking. The government, he proposed, should coin all gold and silver offered at the market ratio of the day of coinage; it should authorize banks to be established without limit and with power to issue money up to their paid-in capital (or, perhaps, their free assets), and should secure this currency by collecting a small insurance tax. The government should issue no bills itself but confine its activities to supervising the acts of the banks. This system, Record believed, would provide an elastic currency, prevent the piling up of money in the great centers, stop hoarding, and insure free competition in the supplying of money and credit to all businesses.<sup>35</sup>

### III

THIS, THEN, was Record's program to restore health to the competitive system in which he believed. As he summed it up in one article: "If the government owns and operates the railroads, the telegraph and the telephone, and the local municipalities own and operate the local utilities, and the currency laws are changed so as to make an elastic currency and so as to bring about free banking, and the patent laws are changed so as to destroy monopoly and allow everybody a license to manufacture a patented article on paying a proper royalty, and the tax laws are so changed as to exempt buildings and all personal property from taxation, we will restore competition, and there will be no need of the Government attempting to regulate or control industrial trusts."<sup>36</sup> The program is a striking example of the influence of Henry George upon one of the leading figures of the Progressive movement.

Record supported with enthusiasm the changes in political machinery

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, June 7, 1911.

<sup>34</sup> Which he once described as "a wholly beneficent natural device which operates to keep everybody at his best level of efficiency and to divide with exact justice between labor and capital the whole of their joint product." *Ibid.*, May 12, 1911.

<sup>35</sup> *Jersey Journal*, June 19, 1911. Record's laissez-faire ideas on the money question are perhaps the least convincing part of his economic proposals. In later years he used to say, "We have got to learn more about this money question. We are not up to date." Introduction by Amos Pinchot to Record, "How to Abolish Poverty", p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> *Jersey Journal*, June 9, 1911. Record's basic economic program changed little with the passing years: compare his "How to Abolish Poverty," published posthumously in 1936.

which Progressives were advancing, but—like U'Ren and other single taxers—always insisted that they were only means to an end—the attainment of greater economic and social justice. He himself was one of the pioneers in the field of the direct primary,<sup>37</sup> and in his columns he championed vigorously the initiative and referendum, the popular election of United States Senators, the direct nomination of president and vice president, the recall, the short ballot, and corrupt practices legislation.<sup>38</sup> But all these, he declared, “while good in themselves, are surface reforms and will not add a dollar to any man’s income and will not procure a job for any man who is out of a job, and will not aid any man in making reasonable provision against sickness or old age. These reforms are merely measures to put power in the hands of the public and take away in our elections the great influence of money. We have most of these tools now in our hands. The supreme question now confronts us, what are we going to do with them?”<sup>39</sup>

Record’s paramount concern with the underlying economic problem saved him from ever becoming an advocate of mere “good government” for its own sake. Political corruption he saw as “the price we have got to pay for franchise, tariff, and tax exemption granted by law. In the end privilege, that is, the right to charge more than the service is worth, if created or protected by law, can only be maintained by the debauchery of the people.”<sup>40</sup> He did not expect the underprivileged to become enthusiastic over political reforms: pointing to the frightful living conditions in certain Jersey City tenements (where 80 persons including parents, children, and numerous boarders were found occupying 12 rooms) he asked, “What possible chance is there to appeal to these men as voters and as citizens? . . . Can any advocate of the commission form of government, for example, make up in his own mind an argument calculated to influence the votes of citizens living under these horrible conditions of poverty?” How would the election of “good men” to office increase their income? “It is perfectly plain, therefore, that the appeal ordinarily made on behalf of good government must fall upon deaf ears when it is addressed to people who have been reduced to the necessity of living under these dreadful conditions. . . . The cause is monopoly, and the removal of it is the task of the statesmanship of our time.”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Noble, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., *Jersey Journal*, June 23, Aug. 9, Aug. 29, 1910; Jan. 6, Feb. 15, Mar. 3, Mar. 27, Apr. 4, May 1, 1911.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, June 17, 1911.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 4, 1911.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8, 1911. On one occasion Record went so far as to say that honest and economical city government alone—without more fundamental changes—would actually

That the statesmanship of the Progressive period did not solve the problem of monopoly has long since become painfully evident. Record himself was at first hopeful that leaders adequate to the task would arise, but as the years passed he came to feel that all the major political figures of Progressivism—Bryan, La Follette, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson<sup>42</sup>—had been equally futile in their approach to the fundamental problem of destroying privilege. The collapse of the Progressive Movement both nationally and in the states, Wilson's preoccupation with world politics to the detriment of domestic issues,<sup>43</sup> and Record's own unhappy experience with the progressive attempt to regulate utility privileges, all help explain his shift of view. In a remarkable letter written in 1930 he gives this unflattering estimate of the liberal leaders:

Bryan was essentially a preacher. He hated what he called plutocracy, the workings of which he never understood, and he loved humanity and was genuinely anxious to do something to better the conditions of the average man.

Wilson never had any passion for anything because his temperament was cold, but his attitude was very much like Bryan's when you analyzed his intentions, but Wilson never understood privilege, or if he did could not see any way to fight it without risking his political future.

Roosevelt never understood privilege but so far as he did believed it belonged to another generation to fight it by fundamental change. His idea of fighting privilege was to get elected to the presidency and then make the managers of the big interests behave themselves by threats of adverse legislation if they did not.

La Follette's idea was that privilege which he never clearly understood, should be dealt with by regulation.

As to all of these men the outstanding criticism which will count in history is that none of them understood privilege as Lincoln and Seward understood slavery, and they did not educate the public as to the real sources of the trouble and they had no constructive plan to deal with the trouble.

Wilson and Bryan were exactly alike in that they were primarily preachers. Wilson thought if you could create an atmosphere of hatred of injustice that the beneficiaries would be ashamed of themselves and behave, which is a preacher's point of view, and as applied to practical life is ridiculous.

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increase the difficulties of the average man. "Good government means less taxes, less taxes means higher values of land, which in turn means higher rents and harder living and business conditions. The only way to avoid that result is to tax land alone and exempt all buildings from taxation." He did recognize, however, that political corruption is one of the bulwarks of special privilege and monopoly and that any changes which simplified city government made it more difficult for monopolists to hoodwink the public. *Ibid.*, Mar. 27, July 31, 1911.

<sup>42</sup> Record was never impressed with Bryan, but had many good words to say about the others in his columns. See *e. g.* *Jersey Journal*, Apr. 2, July 7, 28, Aug. 22, Sept. 8, Oct. 1, Dec. 24, 1910; Jan. 19, Mar. 25, Apr. 25, Aug. 4, 1911.

<sup>43</sup> See Record's famous letter to Wilson in Kerney, *op. cit.*, p. 438 ff.

Bryan was also a preacher but he had the additional weakness of believing that democracy meant that the rank and file of the people was the foundation of wisdom and from them came cries for relief and remedies and that he did not have to examine these remedies, but that the voice of the people being the voice of God all he had to do was to find out if the people wanted something and that that was a revelation from Heaven and he had to stand for it. . . .

The outstanding fact is that Bryan together with these other leaders led the people up a blind alley and the work all has to be done over again. . . .

Those of us who approach the problem of privilege from the standpoint of practical politics realize most keenly the fact that the difficulty of our job has been greatly increased by the profound disappointment of the people who trusted La Follette, Roosevelt, Bryan and Wilson only to discover that neither of them had any program which led anywhere.<sup>44</sup>

Or, as he wrote two years later:

. . . None of these men stood for anything that I think is fundamental or lasting. The most that can be said is that they undertook to regulate privilege and monopoly, and all history shows that that can not be done. About all that they accomplished was to show that their efforts to accomplish something through regulation failed, and to that extent we ought to be wiser as the result of experience.<sup>45</sup>

The inadequacy of these leaders, Record felt in retrospect, extended to the whole Progressive Movement. "I think if you are going to write the history of that movement," he advised a student, "you ought to write it from the standpoint that it was a failure, and that these leaders were unlike Lincoln in that they did not analyze the elements of the problem."<sup>46</sup> Only a more basic program, along Henry George lines, could bring lasting results.

Record's retrospective judgment of the Progressive Movement, though too harsh, contains a large element of truth. Many of the reforms it attempted *were* superficial in nature. But it did set up more democratic political machinery (available if we have the will to use it), extend civil service, eliminate the most flagrant railroad tax privileges, take steps toward a more enlightened labor policy, experiment with techniques of utility regulation in many areas and government ownership in some, and help keep alive American faith in popular government. The definitive history of Progressivism has yet to be written, but when all the evidence is in, the influence of Henry George (unless I miss my guess) will be found to be much greater than has hitherto been realized. It is hoped that this essay has been useful in calling attention to some examples of that influence.

*Pratt Institute*

<sup>44</sup> Record to Charles H. Ingersoll, Oct. 14, 1930. *Record Papers*.

<sup>45</sup> Record to William M. Barr, July 12, 1932. *Record Papers*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*