

## GEORGE L. RECORD

A Foreword by James G. Blauvelt

George L. Record was for more than thirty years New Jersey's foremost citizen, and an acknowledged leader in progressive political and economic thought in the nation. He called himself a "Radical," and in the true sense of the word, which is a person who goes to the root of things, this term described him perfectly. He had a passion for truth and democracy, hated hypocrisy and sham, ridiculed most of the liberal leaders as "mugwumps" and their programs of so-called "reforms" as "googooism."

Political parties and shibboleths meant little to Record. He believed in a government of ideas and that both the old parties had sunk to the low level of patronage and graft machines. At first a Democrat, he bolted Bryanism and went over to the Republican Party on the "sound money" issue. He was one of the organizers and leaders of the Progressive Party in 1912, when the Republican National convention refused to accept Theodore Roosevelt's "social justice" program. He supported Robert LaFollette in his independent candidacy for the presidency in 1924. Defeat—the loss of an election—meant nothing to him. He believed in the common people and their fundamental honesty and sense of justice as did Abraham Lincoln, who was his great exemplar, and whom, in many traits,

he resembled.

Record was the inspiration and leader in the so-called "New Idea" movement in New Jersey, early in the century, which popularized the program of reforms that later was adopted by Woodrow Wilson, and made him Governor of New Jersey and President of the United States.

As "counsel for the people" Record fought for and won many battles against utility corporations for lower rates. As corporation counsel for Jersey City for many years, he began and won the long fight to compel New Jersey railroads to pay taxes, at the same rate as that paid by other property owners.

In all his fights and campaigns, Record consistently avoided personalities. He warred always for ideas, against practices and for principles. Many of those who publicly assailed and denounced him, privately sought his advice and assistance. As a lawyer, he knew principles of law and justice which are permanent, but put less stress on laws which are transient and changeable.

Mr. Record and I were friends from early in this century until he passed away. Our friendship was as intimate as our respective duties and callings would permit. I was interested in his kind of politics. He became my political teacher, and after associating with him for a quarter of a century of unusual political activity and listening to his lucid discussions, there grew up between us a warm and lasting friendship. I had often urged Record to write a book embracing the principles of his political "program", which he had so persistently presented and which he had urged on the at-

tention of President Theodore Roosevelt as the basis of a movement to reorganize the Progressive party into a vital permanent party, after the campaign of 1912; and on President Wilson on different occasions, and which plan Wilson eventually realized was right and endorsed, when he was no longer able to advance it; and which Record brought to the attention of President Franklin D. Roosevelt shortly before the final curtain fell on the stage of Mr. Record's activities.

Record had enjoyed excellent health until the last two years of his life, when he was stricken by paralysis, and it was during the periods of partial recovery that he used his returning energy preparing the manuscript of this book. He knew he was not up to his mark, but characteristically he did his best under the circumstances. But he was not proud of it so he hid it away, evidently hoping he would later have another opportunity to improve it, but he still retained it as the embodiment of his program to abolish privilege. When it was found, Mrs. Record who survived, asked me to take charge of it.

The thoughts of Mr. Record are all there, and the program is still beyond accomplishment. Many programs in the time during which Mr. Record was urging his, have flourished and died. They were ephemeral, the kind of programs that seem easy, attractive, vote-getting, but they shrivel and die with one wintry blast of adversity. Mr. Record was out to win the war against poverty by abolishing privilege. He could not be shaken from his purpose. Presidents might come and go, but his task remained the same; to abolish privilege.

He watched with deep concern the plans of Lenin, and observed that Russia had not been satisfied with taking over the land by the state, thus ending unjust private ownership of land, a great reform, but had swung to the left far beyond the point of economic justice by taking as state property the products of labor that were in morals, ethics, and justice, the property of the individual. It was an interesting experiment, and is still, but Record's discerning eye perceived the fatal failure to be just.

He watched the developments in Italy where Mussolini rose to power with much blaring of trumpets and flying of banners. The dissolution of senate and making over of departments took place, but alas, no privilege was curbed. The land owners still collect the land rents that should go into the public treasury. Patents are as potent as before, and nowhere is the condition of monopoly or privilege in any way curbed or lessened—they are stronger than ever. This spelt a new control—not freedom.

Hitler came upon the scene as Mr. Record was passing off, but here too his scrutiny failed to find any evidence that Hitler aimed to abolish poverty by destroying or in the least curtailing privilege. The land question is just as archaic as ever.

Record passed from the world in 1933, without seeing the successful culmination of his efforts to destroy privilege and abolish poverty, but possessed of a firm faith that the truth is marching on and its fulfillment is yet to be.

Record was born in Maine, March 13, 1859. His father, Calvin Record, was a lawyer in Auburn, Maine,

and an eloquent speaker. His mother, Melancey Record, from whom George took many of his admirable qualities, was of unusual intellect, tireless in her intelligent efforts to rear him, and she lived to be very proud of his success. She was one of those courageous women devoted to great causes, and encouraged her son in his efforts in that direction.

George was a graduate of Bates College, in Maine, and spent a few years teaching school. He mastered stenography in his spare time. He worked as a waiter in a summer hotel in the White Mountains, and at another time in a shoe factory, in which last occupation his hands were injured in the machinery.

Having saved a little money he came to New York securing employment as a stenographer, soon locating with John Cadwalader, then a leader of the New York bar. George W. Wickersham, afterwards Attorney General of the United States, was managing clerk in Cadwalader's office at that time and the friendship then developed between Record and Wickersham continued until Record's death. Mr. Cadwalader took a lively interest in young Record, and learning that he was taking part in the discussions of public questions at Cooper Union, he attended to hear George, and was delighted with his efforts, and encouraged him to continue them. When George finished his clerkship and was admitted to the bar, Mr. Cadwalader voluntarily loaned him money to open his office in Jersey City, and when George, a short time later, went to pay it back Mr. Cadwalader refused to take the interest. So sensitive to any kindness was George that throughout his life he never referred to this incident but with emotion.

In Jersey City he soon got his footing, at first helping out his finances by teaching night school. He was providing for his father and mother, and now married Eliza Grey Hanscom, daughter of the Rev. Moses Hanscom and Elvira D. Snow Hanscom, of Bodwoinham, Maine. They had been schoolmates, and their early love proved lifelong, devoted and complete. Their only child died in infancy. Mrs. Record survived George. He was also survived by his sister Agnes, wife of Ernest Merrick, of Elizabeth, N. J., and their two daughters.

Mr. Record's practice soon took a turn for litigation to protect the people from the corporations and utility companies operating under monopoly franchises. He took an active interest in politics, but true to his nature he had not entered them before he began his efforts to improve them. He was tireless in his attempts to make elections more effective, to provide remedies that would drive fraud out of Jersey City and Hudson County which then were hot-beds of political corruption under control of the railroads and other public utilities. They were also overwhelmingly Democratic. Mr. Record left the Democratic party and joined the Republican party in the Bryan campaign of 1896 on the 16-to-1 silver issue. He was for the gold standard.

He fought corrupt politics with great ability fearlessly and successfully. He went directly to the roots of political reform. He was the "father" of the "Direct Primary," his bill presented to the New Jersey legislature being the first measure submitted to any state legislature in America to place party primaries under control of the state. This great step forward abolished the convention system and placed the power to nomin-

ate candidates directly in the voters. This was the greatest election reform of this century. He also struck out boldly and successfully for an improved ballot and better regulation of elections. The adoption in New Jersey of the blanket ballot with the names of all candidates on one ballot, with copy mailed to each voter before election, without cost to the candidates, put all on an even footing in this respect and gave the voter reliable information regarding candidates and measures to be voted on.

It has been said that it was the passage of these great election reforms in the Wilson administration that led Bryan to regard Wilson as a real Progressive and turned the tide in Wilson's favor at Baltimore, winning the Bryan support and the Democratic nomination for President.

He took the people's side in efforts to limit franchises of public utilities, to curb their aggressions, to reduce their charges and to enforce laws they were evading. Here was the captain courageous who could not be daunted, and very substantial victories for the people were won in gas and electric rates, trolley fares, etc. but he soon learned that private monopoly cannot be *regulated* successfully. It must become a *public* monopoly if a necessity, and if not, it must be abolished.

His method was simple in design, but hard to execute. It was to take public matters to the people. Thus he built up a public opinion on public questions that prevailed. When the highest court had by a majority of one reversed the findings in a gas rate case, Record as the leading counsel, learning that one of the judges who voted for the higher rate had a prejudicial con-

nection with or interest in the securities of the gas companies, he immediately presented affidavits to the court disclosing this information, and moved for a re-hearing in which the judge in question should not participate. In order to let the court see that this was not a case that they could get away with quietly he organized the municipal officials of all towns and cities affected to attend the court at the hearing. They attended. When the judges looked down from the bench they beheld official New Jersey entrenched before them, led by an able and fearless champion. The re-hearing was had, the judge in question did not participate with the resulting victory for the people and the lower rate.

Record had great respect for upright, industrious and capable judges who earned their position by honorable service, but no respect for the many who were puppets of privilege, servants of the utility companies, tools of the politicians who were on the bench to defeat fair and impartial trials. He liked to quote Mr. Dooley's saying: "I don't know Hennessey, whether the constitution follows the flag, but I do know the Supreme Court follows the election returns."

During much of this time he was the city counsel for Jersey City. It was a Democratic city, but Mark M. Fagan, a Republican, was elected mayor under Record's leadership. They began, fought through, and won a state-wide movement to make the railroads, which had been paying taxes at only a small fraction of the rate other property paid, to pay the same rate. The fight was bitter. Most of the newspapers were, of course, with the railroads. Record, at first, without a member



of the legislature who would even introduce his bill to accomplish such a just reform, finally turned the state upside down as a result of his tireless attacks, and won four million dollars a year for the public school fund, to which the railroad tax was dedicated. This later was largely increased. Of course he was hated and feared, and shamefully misrepresented by the corporations and their minions in press and politics.

He became a candidate for the Republican nomination for United States senator against John F. Dryden, and then new vials of poison were opened upon him. His opponents had a skin full of fear but backed by practically unlimited money, the support of most newspapers, the political organizations in every county, Dryden of course, won and the "bosses" could sleep again for a while, but they knew that Record had made a campaign that was creating a well-informed public opinion for his platform of election reforms, equal taxation, a public utility commission and the land question. He lost the battle, but he knew and so did they, that he was winning the war. The railroad tax, amounting to millions of dollars a year, dried up an old reliable spring that would no longer supply the machine with the sinews of war. It was in this campaign that Senator Robert M. LaFollette stumped the state for Record, and added his powerful weight to the popularity of a growing cause.

New men were joining the cause throughout the state. One was outstanding. I refer to Edmund Burke Osborne, late state senator from Essex County. His coming was as a great host joining the colors, for he was a mighty force. Record loved him. Osborne was

such a forthright, energetic, honorable and intelligent man. He had seen life. He had served and suffered as only a great man would. He was a student and a searching one. When he tackled Progress and Poverty, the foundation, of course, of Record's land program, he ate it up. The processes of his mind were sure. He had built up a large business, the Osborne Company, the largest art calendar company in the world. He knew how to sell his wares, and when he took the stump he was virtually a crusader for the cause. He ran for the State Senate from Essex County, and won. He took a new bite on the bit and prepared for what lay before him, a lone Progressive in a hostile senate with an unfriendly Governor. Record had hopes to run Osborne for governor at the next campaign. He would have won. He had the prestige of having beaten the machine in the controlling county of Essex, as well as the character, the ability, the ingratiating personality and the high purpose which with the energy and grace of a forceful speaker, in politics are irresistible. He died suddenly when he had been only a few months in the senate. That was a sad blow to Record, and to all associated with him. I know of no defeat that so shocked him. It was the only time I saw him depressed and broken. It was the greatest loss of his life while I knew him, and Osborne was worthy of this reverence.

All this time Record was urging the consideration of the land question, the greatest of all privileges. In our cities the land rents that should go into the public treasury were and are going into land owners' pockets, making them rich, fabulously rich, with money they should never be allowed to take. Of course this is the

big question, and both parties try to blink it out of sight. As a matter of fact, many people don't see it. They will see it. Mr. Record, by far the most effective speaker I have heard on the subject, planted the seed that will yet flower in victory.

These matters are alive, vital and will not die. No man can stop them. Because there are those who are not familiar with the Henry George plan to take the rental value of land by taxation into the public treasury, and because laws to advance it in New Jersey have not yet been adopted, it has been thought wise to add as an appendix to this book an article by A. W. Madsen, B. Sc., of London, on "Land Value Taxation in Practice." This appendix was originally written as an appendix to the new work "Land and Freedom" by Frederick Verinder, and is reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, at the Hogarth Press, 52 Tavistock Square, London, W. C.

Mr. Madsen is also the editor of "Land and Liberty," a monthly magazine published at 94 Petty France, London, S. W. 1, which is a general clearing house of information regarding the Henry George movement throughout the world.

The appendix should be read to get a conception of the legislation that has been adopted throughout the world to put the Henry George idea in effect. There is justifiable hope that it may come in before you realize it is here. It is the doctrine of Plenty. We have tried under the present administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt the doctrine of Scarcity. I think it is generally admitted that the Scarcity doctrine has been dis-

credited. Many Henry Georgeists believed that the Scarcity plan had to be tried and found wanting before the idea of Plenty could be tried, and therefore many awaited patiently the outcome of the experiment, believing that that kind of progress was being made that one makes when obstructions are being cleared away.

We can open the land to use. Millions can be happily put to productive labor that they like, and at which they can secure a satisfactory living. By taxing the rental of the site value—created by the community—into the community treasury, all tax on buildings and labor products may be abolished to the great relief of all workers and all business, industry and home owners. So please read the appendix and see how far-reaching and vital is the great movement Mr. Record so ably and persistently advocated; while others jeered: "It can't happen here."

This is but a sketchy outline of some of Mr. Record's public services, very inadequate indeed. The late James Kerney, able and clear-minded editor and owner of The Trenton Evening Times, and the intimate and worthily trusted adviser of Woodrow Wilson from the beginning of the Wilson campaign for the nomination for Governor until his death, wrote "The Political Education of Woodrow Wilson," a most interesting political history of Wilson, in which he pays high tribute to George L. Record. Those desiring to know Record should read this book. It is there that will be found the letter Record wrote by request to Wilson when the latter was at Versailles, the famous letter defining the causes of war and the necessity of destroying privileges if we are ever to have peace. As is

characteristic of Record he strips the question clean.

Other books will probably appear from pens better able to do this great servant of public good the credit and praise that are justly his. This is written primarily to perpetuate his political program to abolish unjust poverty by the abolition of privilege and thus secure the peace and plenty that are the heritage of mankind.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mr. Amos Pinchot, the very talented publicist, for his warm and kindly introduction. They were friends for many years in which Mr. Record came to regard the writings and approval of Mr. Pinchot as priceless. Grateful acknowledgment is also made of the very valuable suggestions and assistance of George Montgomery Hartt, editor of the Herald-News of Passaic, N. J. and to Herman B. Walker of Newark, N. J. in preparing this book for publication. Mr. Hartt introduced me to Mr. Record, and has been a mutual friend of his and mine for many years. So has Mr. Walker, and I am sure they were only too pleased to contribute as they did to perpetuate this statement of the political program of Mr. Record, for which they labored loyally and proudly.

"And they shall build houses and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat."—Isaiah.

