

Georgist History: Best-Kept Secret in the US

Recently The Progress Report, the online magazine edited by Hanno Beck, published an interview with Prof. Mason Gaffney. The main topic was Gaffney's book The Corruption of Economics, but interviewer Adam Monroe took the discussion far afield. In the excerpt below, Gaffney responds to the question of whether Henry George was represented fairly in the writing of US history.

I do not teach history, nor own any history textbooks, but even when I was in high school in the 1930s, even during the great depression when radicalism was in flower everywhere, my history text and teacher passed over Henry George quickly, and obviously with no understanding. In fact, the evasive, garbled, confusing answers I got at that time were a major factor stimulating my own study of George.

Parts of George got into the texts, but without credit. We all learned about the vast railroad land grants, for example – a scandal first broken by George in his first book, 1871, *Our Land and Land Policy*. We learned about the effect of the frontier on American character, a thesis that Frederick J. Turner cribbed from George without credit. We learned about the electoral reforms – secret ballot, direct election of Senators, repeal of property qualifications, open primaries, initiative and referendum and recall, votes for women – without a word about George and his leadership toward those reforms. No one told us, for example, that George favored enfranchising women, and his enemies like F.Y. Edgeworth and Vilfredo Pareto were male chauvinists of the most extreme kind. No one revealed that Carrie Chapman Catt, who led the fight for women's votes and then founded the League of Women Voters, ran in 1920 for Vice President, on the Single Tax ticket. No one told us that Cleveland had a run of two single tax mayors, who lowered the carfares to three cents. One of them, Tom Johnson, was earlier a US Congressman; the other, Newton Baker, was a prominent member of Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, along with three other single taxers. No one told us that three of Wilson's closest advisers were single taxers: Joseph Tumulty, Edward House, and George L. Record.

All that interesting Georgist history is blanked out of most history books.

You can find the entire interview at:

www.progress.org/archive/gaffnint.htm