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HENRY GEORGE

IN

CANADA.



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BY

THOMAS BRIGGS.

London: WILLIAM REEVES, 185, Fleet St.

HENRY GEORGE IN CANADA.

Mr. Henry George, the great land reformer, was present at a grand demonstration of working men in Hamilton, Canada, on August 4th. All business was suspended, and thousands of people poured into the town from Toronto and from the outlying districts. A great trade and labour procession passed through the main thoroughfares during the day, and in the evening a meeting was held in the Crystal Palace, a building capable of containing many hundreds of people; but, notwithstanding its size, vast numbers could not gain admission. We are indebted to the *Toronto Globe* for the following report of Mr. George's great speech, and to our correspondent, Mr. Thomas Briggs, for drawing our attention to it :—

Ladies and Gentlemen, Sisters and Brethren of the Knights of Labour, I congratulate you upon this demonstration. It is one of the proofs of the increasing interest that is being taken in social questions, and of the growing determination on the part of the labouring classes to improve their condition. I am glad to see such a demonstration under the auspices of the Knights of Labour. I believe in that great brotherhood, and I am proud to belong to it. It has introduced into the organisation of labour some great principles—principles without which no successful advance can be made. The Trades Union is a good thing in so far as it binds together men of the same trade. United, they can accomplish far more than they can individually. But the power it gives is limited, and much greater power is secured when trades are banded together, and that is something that the order of the Knights of Labour has set itself to do. It is not merely a gain of power in the association, but it is a gain of power in the extirpation of those little prejudices between trade and trade that have prevented concerted action. So long as tenpenny

Jack looks down upon ninepenny Jim, so long must labour be disorganised and impotent. And further than that, it is an Association which looks beyond the bounds of a nationality. I, from the United States, meet you men of Canada upon a common platform. Look over the history of the world—what has been the most efficient cause of the enslavement of the men everywhere?

NATIONAL HATREDS,

national prejudices, national hostilities. By appealing to these the few have always been enabled to rule the many, and so long as they exist, so long will they be used for the same purpose. There is a proper national pride, but this thing mis-called "patriotism," which merely sets the people of one nationality against those of another, which merely inculcates a selfish pride, is something which stands in the way of labour's advancement and the enfranchisement of men, and it is time that it should go down. All these little difficulties melt away when we get to a distance. Here, on this side of the water, we look generally upon the American as one thing and the Canadian as another, but when you get to the other side of the Atlantic these differences cease to exist. A few months ago I was in a Welsh town where I was to speak. I came in and sat down in the hotel among a company none of whom knew me. The conversation turned upon America and this man Henry George who was announced to lecture. I listened while I was being discussed, and after a time one man said: "Well, I would not go to hear him, anyhow; all Americans are liars." "Well," I said, "you will make an exception in favour of Canadians?" "No," said he, "they are the worst of all." And the difference between the men on one side of the Atlantic and those on the other melts away when you go into a foreign country where they talk another language and you hear another tongue spoken. No matter, then, where the man who speaks your language was born, his speech it is a passport to your fraternity. I like the Knights of Labour for another thing. The most striking part of your procession to-day was that made up of the ladies—of the women. I believe that in thus attempting to bring the women into the organisation the order has put its hand upon one of the most potent sources of power, and I want to say to you men, if women who must work for their living have, as you agree they have, to come into your association, why should they not have a vote? I believe in women suffrage—only for a little time, however. A gentleman said to me as we were

riding along to-day, "The women are the best men we have." I never realised what power could be wielded by women until I went, two years ago, to Ireland. I saw in the movement there too that

THE WOMEN WERE THE BEST MEN.

Organisation is good, so far as it goes, but it can accomplish nothing without education. All over the world the masses of mankind have had, at some time or other, the whole power in their hands. All over the world, under every form of government, the masses have it to-day. Why have they everywhere been enslaved? Simply because they do not think. It is brain, not muscle, that rules the world, and always must rule it, and until men exercise their brains they can do nothing. I have come to believe that one of the most efficient means of educating mankind in social questions is to secure the co-operation of the women. When these questions are talked about in the family circle, when the young man talks of them to his sweetheart, when the mother talks of them to her child, then you will have a strength and power that can be secured in no other way. I say the masses of mankind have the power in their hands. Here in Canada your laws are enacted by the Queen, "by and with the consent," and so on. But in Canada, as in the United States, the real power is in the hands of the people—on our side of the water formally, and what is the result? In the United States every party is anxious to please the working man. Look at it in this Presidential campaign, what do you find? All hands want to protect the working man. The politicians would tumble over one another in their eagerness to do anything the working class wanted. And yet what has been the result? What is there that we of the United States can point to, I won't say with pride, but with any satisfaction, as being the result of our efforts? If wages have been higher on this side of the Atlantic than on the other, if we have had a higher and more general standard of education, if invention has been quicker and more active, what is the reason? We have had the temperate zone of a continent to overrun, and we come here unfettered by the institutions of the other side of the Atlantic. After all this talk about the protection of American industry, after all this legislation for years and years, after parties have held power term after term, professing no desire but to help the working classes, look at the state of affairs to-day. You never heard of anybody

WANTING TO PROTECT CAPITAL.

You never heard of anybody wanting to protect the rich, it is the working classes they are solicitous about,

the horny-handed working men, and this is the result. I see that I am announced to speak here to-night as a land reformer. I do not believe that land reform is one thing and other reforms are other things. I am a land reformer, if I can be called that, simply because I want to do what I can to raise wages and to improve the condition of the masses of the people. I believe that the labour question resolves itself ultimately into the land question. That is why I am a land reformer. There is one great central question of our time, one question that every man should put to himself—how is it that while labour is the creator of wealth all over the world, the labouring classes are always the poorer classes? We have got so used to that that we do not look at it as we would had it come to us new; but, when you look at it, it is a most astonishing and unnatural thing. Why, imagine, if you can, a man who knows nothing of the present condition of society, or imagine still better an intelligence from some other sphere who knew nothing of how we live in this world of ours. He would see that men came into the world weak and naked, with almost nothing prepared by nature to protect them from the weather or from the attacks of wild animals, or to enable them to support life. Supposing you were asked how do you get these things. You would at once reply we get them from labour. Nature has done nothing for us, but she furnishes the raw material. All we have to do is to work it up. That is the way we get our food; that is the way we make our clothes and build our houses; that is the way everything in the way of wealth is secured. Then supposing you were to take such an intelligence as that, knowing nothing of the way we do things on this earth, to one of our great cities, to London or New York, for instance. Supposing that you showed him some of the magnificent houses there, he would say at once, "The man who lives in that house must be a hard working man." The fine quarter with its palaces and carriages he would at once suppose to be the quarter of the labouring people. Imagine his astonishment when you told him that was not so, and took him into the poorer quarters as the places where the working people live and allowed him to contrast it with the place where the people live who do no work. What would he say? That the men who work must give of their labour to those who do no work, or they are robbed of what they owned. As a great Englishman has said, "There are three ways of getting wealth—by working, by begging, and by stealing," and all mankind, in the last analysis,

must be divided into those three classes—the workers, the beggars, and the thieves. After all it is not so? There are many ways of begging besides going round and holding out your hand asking some one for a ten cent piece, and there are more ways of stealing than by taking a man by the throat and demanding his pocket-book, or creeping into his house at night and taking what he has hoarded up. There are conventional ways that bring no opprobrium with them, ways that a man even with some conscience may indulge in, saying “This is authorised by society, and if I don’t do it somebody else will.” But nevertheless it is stealing, if stealing means taking from a man what he rightfully owns without his consent. What is the title to wealth? Labour. Men talk about brains, and it is true that brains are a more efficient instrument in production than muscle. The brain directs the muscle, but nevertheless no amount of brain work will get one iota of wealth unless some human muscle contracts. And further than that, what is this brain-work of which we talk so much, in great part. Lots of men work hard playing poker. Lots of men toil and strain, and scheme and rack their brains in efforts to swindle their neighbours. That is not work in the sense in which I use the term—productive industry. Nor are the gamblers and speculators of Wall Street, nor any of the great pirates of the stock market, legitimate workers. It is impossible, I believe, utterly impossible, for a man to accumulate by labour, either of the brain or of the hand, anything like even the smallest of these great fortunes that are growing up, and if a man gets that which he does not produce it must necessarily and inevitably be that some person who produces wealth gets less than he earns. I notice in a newspaper that a friend handed me

AN EXPRESSION FROM MR. GOLDWIN SMITH

that slavery was formerly the lot of the working classes generally. I only alluded to that because it is one of a class of expressions too common. Men of a certain type are constantly speaking as though slavery was the natural state of man, as though things to-day are not what they ought to be, yet the labouring classes ought to be contented when they look back on the condition of their forefathers and see what great progress has been made. That is all humbug. The natural state of man is that of freedom. Slavery has never existed save as the result of war or social crime of some kind. The old rhyme of our forefathers in

one of those risings which shook the growing aristocratic power in England,

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"

embodies a vast amount of truth. Professor Thorold Rogers has shown conclusively, as Hallam states, that the condition of the labouring classes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was better than at present; that with all the enormous progress which has been made in every direction since that time there are millions of people in Great Britain who are worse off than were the lowest classes in the times we are accustomed to look upon as the dark ages. Here we are hoping for the success of the eight hours' movement. Well, in those olden times, as Prof. Rogers has shown, the eight hours' system was the common system in England. Certain classes of writers have been spending their efforts in dwelling on the great advantage this century has brought to the condition of the working classes. Now, I don't deny that there has been an improvement, but I maintain that it has been nothing like as general as Mr Blaine, one of our candidates for the Presidency, who points to the great increase of wealth in the country in the past thirty years, maintains. It is true there has been a great addition of wealth, but among the vast masses of the people it is harder to get along now than it was then. I have in my mind a significant remark of the Rev. Chas. Spurgeon. In a recent interview he said that

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

was far harder to-day than when he was a young man, and I say that where improvement has taken place it is due not to inventions or science, but to organisation, to the struggle of the trades unions. I believe, as John Stuart Mill said, that looking to all the improvements of the age it is impossible to show wherein they had improved the condition of the labouring classes. The artificial means are not the way to raise wages. Restrictions are bad in themselves, and even restrictions imposed for good are good only as the crutch is to the lame. Now, restrictions on child-labour are good as far as they go, but child-labour is a result. It is a result of the poverty of the parents, and it can never be amended without going to the root. Natural wages are not, as English economists say, that which will support a man in ordinary style of comfort. Natural wages are the full earnings of labour, and in the proper state of society labour would get its full earnings, and here is where I differ from the Socialists and Communists of

Germany. I don't believe that the State should take all things and reconstruct and distribute. You will cure the worst of the evils by

REMOVING ALL RESTRICTIONS

and barriers against the right. The primary wrong that robs labour of its earnings is the monopoly of land. That is why I am what is called a land reformer. All over the civilized world, no matter how other institutions may differ, you will find land made private property, and with that you will find the depression of labour and the tendency of wages to the lowest on which it is possible to sustain life, and it must necessarily be so. Land is the element on which, and on which alone, man can depend for subsistence. Even this flesh and blood of ours is of the soil—from the land we come, and to the land we must return. Give to one man the land on which his fellow-men must live, and he is their master even to life and death. What difference would it have made if Robinson Crusoe on his island had greeted Friday as a man and a brother, and proclaimed him a fellow-citizen, and then said, "This is my island." Friday was necessarily his slave. So it is when in any country you have 10,000 Crusoes and 10,000,000 Fridays. It is only in countries where land is plenty labourers are few. Why did the ship captains bring loads of slaves to this country and not to England. To the Old Country it was no use bringing slaves. The man who did not own land had to go to the land owner, and beg or buy it. Why should the English millionaire buy slaves? When they could not work he would have had to maintain them, but he could buy the labour of others cheaper, and when they could not take care of themselves he could throw them on the parish. An equal right to land is the inalienable right that attaches to every human being that comes into the world, and you can see that the infringement or denial of this right is the fundamental cause not necessarily of everything, but the beginning and the primary cause of

THE ENSLAVEMENT OF LABOUR.

All wages in their gradations depend on the wages in the largest and lowest class. This is fixed by the opportunities of employing labour by obtaining access to land. That is the reason, all other things being equal, wages are higher in sparsely settled communities, that is why wages are higher here than across the water, that is why emigrants steam to this country when a purchase price is demanded of man for labour,

or when he is compelled to pay part of it in rent. The wages left to him are necessarily smaller. But people ask how it is possible to acknowledge the equal right of all to land. It is not necessary to give each an equal share of the land. That would be as absurd as it would be to cut a horse in three parts because three men owned it. It would be impossible too to give each man an equal division, and further, if you once made it the equality of to-day it would not be the equality of next year. Population is increasing, and the value of land is constantly changing. There are other ways of doing it than cutting it to pieces. All that is necessary is to divide the income that comes from the land, to let those use it who will pay the highest for it, and divide the revenue among the people. We have to raise a certain amount of revenue by taxation, therefore it is easy to shift the taxation in the value of land. I have been asked by one of the Hamilton papers if I would take the whole value of land. The whole value belongs to the community, but I would leave a little surplus in the hands of the land owners as a means of assessing and collecting the revenue. That is only a matter of detail, however. The point is to make a beginning, and that can be done by putting a

TAX ON THE VALUE OF LAND.

The value of land is something that belongs not to the individual but to the community. It is created not by the individual but by the community. Let a man go into a new country, take up land, and build up houses and barns; there is a value there, but it is not attached to the land. A fire sweeps away everything, and the value is gone. Land has no value till people come about it and settle in the neighbourhood. A fire here in Hamilton might destroy a building, but the lot retains its value. The site has a value given to it by every man who comes here and settles and does something that increases its worth. The immense land values in London and New York come from the crowded communities that live there. Take from London all its population save the land owners, and what would the land be worth? There you see the reason why this value should be taxed for the community. Consider it as a matter of expediency, what is more stupid in a community where wealth is wanted to grow than to tax a man who produces wealth? Why should a man be fined in the shape of a tax because he builds a house? Is not a house a good thing? Then again the tax on land is the only tax that can be levied without pressing hard upon labour or without freighting away capital. We do not become rich

by tariff, my friends, we have tried that in the States. Tax houses and there will be fewer houses, tax horses and there will be fewer horses, tax capital and it will move away, tax land and there will be no less land, nor will it have less value. Land value is a monopoly or scarcity value. Put a heavy tax on land and who can hold unused land merely to get a higher price for it in future? As for the justice of the question, I say it is not an injustice to assess it; it was an injustice not to do so. Because men have been wronged in the past, gives no warrant for wronging them in the future. The only injustice is in continuing the present state of things, which involves the constant robbery of labour. I am reminded here of a conversation which took place in a Scotch railway carriage in a discussion on this question. "We have held our land for so many years that it would be robbery to take it from us now," said a member of one of the great land-holding families of Scotland. He was asked how this land was won, and said that his ancestors had led men to battle for their country. And

HOW MUCH DID THE MEN GET?

asked the interrogator. The landlord had to confess that the men got none, but he added, "We have had it now for 400 years." "Then," asked the other, "don't you think you have had it long enough?" Simply because the people submitted to spoliation for so long they should not continue to submit to it. Why should the landlords be placed on a basis different from all other classes? A tax on land values does not involve compensation for landlords. When some new process is introduced which throws thousands of men out of work in which they have spent their lives, do they get any compensation from the public treasury? But I am told this tax on land will bear heavily on the poor man who has by long toil accumulated enough to purchase some land. It will not. He will pay no tax on his income, nor in any of those indirect ways that add to the cost of living. He would profit by the impetus to labour, and the prosperity and additional wealth of the community. The only class who would lose would be the dogs in the manger. The men who are holding land for which they have no use, such as the Astors, on this side, and the Duke of Westminster across the ocean. They might be less rich, but they would

STILL BE RICH ENOUGH.

I would agree, as the Scottish Restoration Society proclaims, to let bygones be bygones, so that there should be an equal distribution in the future.

In answer to a question from one of the audience, Mr George said, "Land has many other values than the agricultural value. Land has no value from what the person who uses it gives it. It has no value so long as equally good land lies along side it which he who chooses may occupy. It has value only when two men want it. The tendency to concentrate in great cities is implied in and behind the question asked me as to how I would apply the value of agricultural land to the cities. This tendency is an ominous sign of the times. In France, where the population is stationary, the great cities are increasing; in Ireland, where it is decreasing, the cities of Dublin and Belfast are growing, and in England the great cities take up two-thirds of the population. See the unnatural state of society in the cities where men are herded together, and packed like sardines in a box. Put a tax on the value of land, and the people will scatter; instead of being in the cities they will be diffused in the country. They will be brought together and enjoy more of the comforts and advantage of society. Man under

THE PRESENT SYSTEM

takes all the land he can get in the hope that he can keep it till it increases in worth. Our system makes it impossible for any man to profit by locking up land. Population would become thinner in the cities and denser in the country, and I hope we shall see the day when every man shall have not merely his own houses, but his little patch of ground about it. This great struggle is soon to be fought out, and it is the duty of every man to take his part in it. Be sure you are right, and then go ahead. Elevate the lowest classes and you elevate the whole structure of society.

On account of the difficulty of making himself heard, Mr George spoke for a shorter time than he had intended. District Master Vale promised that Mr George would come again before the winter and speak in the Opera House, where all could hear him comfortably. The Palace was brilliantly illuminated by the electric light for the first time. About 2,000 people listened to the lecture, and about 1,000 men carried Chinese lanterns in the procession to the Palace grounds, making a magnificent spectacle. The pleasure of the afternoon and morning was slightly marred by occasional light showers, but the rain damped nobody's ardour, and no more successful celebration was ever held in this city. A vote of thanks was tendered Mr George by the chairman, Mr James

Ailes, and the audience gave him a round of cheers. Mr George left Hamilton to-night for his home in Jamaica, Long Island.

THE WEST INDIES.

The following letter was sent to the *Times* on the 21st August, 1884, by Mr. Thomas Briggs, of Bela House, Dulwich, and rejected :—

SIR,—Having read very carefully the correspondence in the *Times* this morning, and that of the *Times* of the 18th inst., I am more firmly convinced than ever of the truth of the following proposition, viz.—“It is the system of universal tariffs on commodities that is the root-cause of universal friction, by introducing, so to speak, sand instead of oil into the revolving shafts of the world’s social and economic machinery.” The arguments of your correspondents, both *pro.* and *con.*, prove this conclusively. In your editorial in the *Times* of the 15th inst. are some excellent hints. You say—“The whole tropical world has taken to cultivating the sugar-cane.” Again—“They can grow sugar in abundance, but cannot find a remunerative market for it, and are apprehensive that ere long they may be unable to find any market for it at all.” Now, all that need be done to find a market is to repeal the tariffs on bacon and hams, wheat flour, rice, meat, refined sugar and soap; but more especially the export duty on their own produce (see established statement in Rice Miller’s letter in *Times* of 18th inst.); and I would add that inasmuch as we produce calico in abundance, they might increase their output of sugar to mutual advantage if they would repeal the taxes on calico, &c., in return for our untaxing their sugar. This would give a spur to trade on terms of mutual benefit. As regards differential duties, they are to be denounced as having been tried and found wanting. All civilised countries, as communities, have more to gain than to lose by making their Revenue Laws bear principally on realised property, by way of direct taxation, and the repeal of all indirect taxes. I quite agree with your correspondent in the *Times* of the 18th inst. (page 3, column 2) when he says—“But what is most urgently wanted in the Islands is the enforcement of sound economical principles upon which the social fabric must ultimately rest.” I also endorse the following—“No Government has a right to interfere arbitrarily in matters which must in the end depend on supply and demand.” How is it that the Imperial Government cannot see that the prosperity and peace attending the Straits-

Settlement are results of free trade? and yet they are Crown Colonies as well as Jamaica, &c. Why do they withhold from Jamaica the blessings which are conferred on Singapore, Penang, and the other islands of the Malay Peninsula. In Singapore we find, through the adoption of entire free trade, the development of commerce has been such as to lift the place from a nest of pirates to a contented and prosperous community where "all their ways are ways of pleasantness, and all their paths are peace," and this in comparatively a few years, and they are now turning over a trade of £38,000,000 sterling per annum, their shipping approaches in amount of tonnage to that of the Clyde. and their nationalities include Malays, Hindoos, Moors, Arabs, Klings, Hokkins, Taychine, Hailames, Hakkins, Cantonees, and other Chinese tribes, with the usual sprinkling of Europeans, that is—Germans, French, Italians, Britons, &c. Such is the happy family, and such are the results of a policy of Free Trade (absolute). Anarchy and bloodshed have been replaced by happiness and peace, and what will surprise your readers is this—that a vast majority of the above community are Chinese, so much despised in America and our Australian Colonies, and, moreover, as a proof of the benefits of absolute free trade, these Islands are maintaining themselves in wealth, peace, and happiness, under a pressure of a population of upwards of 750 to the square mile. The best way of convincing Europeans of the folly of the Bounty System is to thank them for giving us their sugar so cheap, and that will show them we do not suffer an injury from cheap sugar.—Yours, &c.,

THOMAS BRIGGS.

THE FABIAN SOCIETY.

WHY ARE THE MANY POOR !

The following letter was written to me in reply to one sent to the writer along with a tract issued by a Society calling itself "The Fabian Society" asking his opinion of it.—T. BRIGGS.

MY DEAR MR BRIGGS.—I did not send you the pamphlet from the Fabian Society. It is a poor thing. I have no sympathy with such ideas. The world was not intended to be one dead boil. What we want is a fair field and no favour for every one and the way to obtain that is to destroy Landlordism and indirect taxation. To devote ourselves to any other remedy is to "spend our strength for nought, and our labour for that which satisfieth not." Why do I care about muzzling the House of Lords?

Because thereby I can obtain the more readily, reform of the Land Laws and of Taxation. Why do I care about an extension of the Franchise and an equitable Redistribution? Because I believe the People, when they have power, will first claim the Land Tax and then make short work with taxes on trade. When these two objects are obtained food will be cheap and trade brisk, so that labour will be able to snap its finger at any tyrannical efforts of capital, and I feel that all Radicals should at this juncture sink all their other wishes and go (as the Yankees say) bald headed for them alone. I hope the House of Lords Reform League will be a success, but some of the men who have joined are most zealous and very crotchety, and unpractical and inclined to attempt the impossible. I want them to understand that we cannot take the House by storm, but we can undermine it and so cause it to be weak as well as worthless whilst tottering to its fall. I return your pamphlet with thanks.

Chester,

Yours truly,

August 9th, 1884.

T. NICHOLSON.

Newcastle-on-Tyne :

PRINTED BY G. W. HAVELOCK, 28, WESTGATE ROAD.

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 its bill. I return you my thanks.



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