even than the nomination of Cleveland. On the all-important issue—the issue of free trade against protection: the Democratic platform means something—it comes hot from the heart and will of the masses. It voices a principle on which they are determined to make the issue. All the rest may be thrown to the cats. Here is the heart and the line of the fight.

Thus, at last we have gained the point we have been striving for, and the hope for which we threw ourselves into Cleveland's support in the last election has become reality. The line between the two great parties is now clear and sharp, and the question of all questions—the great labor question—has come definitely into our politics. No matter of mere personality confuses the issue; and minor questions melt away in the great fight. On the one side protection is advanced as in the interests of labor; on the other it is denounced as a fraud and a robbery, and the American people are called on to give their verdict on a principle of such far-reaching importance that beyond the single-tax men there are probably few, or none of those, who will engage actively on either side in this campaign who will see its real significance.

Whoever for the moment wins or loses, there can be in the long run but one result. The thought of the people has been aroused, is being aroused, and will be more quickly and more thoroughly aroused than ever before. And what always gains by the arousing of thought is truth.

All that Mr. Cleveland has to do to be the next president of the United States is to show no fear of his horses.

26
Speech of Hon. Henry George in the New York State Assembly, March 9, 1893

Introduced by Governor Stone: Ladies and gentlemen: The gentleman whose address you have assembled to hear this evening, is one whose name is familiar to the people of the United States and familiar to the people of all civilized and enlightened countries of the Old World.[44] He has given years of patient investigation and much intelligent thought to the prosecution of the investigation and in the study of those great economic and industrial questions which so materially and immediately affect the well-being of society and happiness of men in their individual and aggregate capacities. Whether we may wholly agree with him in all his conclusions and all his views the

sincerity and ability with which he presents them, commands at least, our unqualified respect and admiration. I have the pleasure of introducing to you Mr. Henry George of New York.

Mr. George: Ladies and gentlemen: I was asked this morning by a lady to tell her what the single tax was. Let me try to tell you here tonight. The single tax, as we generally put it, is the proposition to raise all public revenues by a tax upon the value of land exclusive of improvements; abolishing all other taxes. To put it in wider form, it is the proposition to take for public purposes what is known by economists as the "unearned increment," so-called because it is unearned by any individual exertion and comes to the individual who gets it as something which he has no part in producing. That is the skeleton, the external of our proposition.

In its larger sense the single tax means really, democracy: nothing more and nothing less. Democracy; what is its essence? It is "equal rights to all and special privileges to none." That is what we aim at by the single tax. To carry forward to their full expression the principles upon which this government was founded; to carry forward to its fullest ideal the ideas expounded by Thomas Jefferson. Is it not time for a movement in that direction? That American democracy is a failure is as clear as the sun at noonday, to any man who chooses to look. I do not mean by that that the Democratic Party, as we call it, is a failure. I am going to speak my honest opinion. I think that the Democratic Party is not any too much democratic; that it is a one-horse democracy, a democracy afraid of its principles. Here we have this Fifty-Second Congress adjourning after voting a billion dollars of appropriations. In its last hours ordering utterly useless, and worse than useless ironclads.

I mean something more than that. I mean that conditions are surely and steadily arising under which democracy: "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people" comes utterly to mean nothing in anything more than a name. Democracy is only possible where there is something like an equal diffusion of wealth. Democracy is only the best government where among the masses of the people there is no man who may stand in fear of any other man; no man, at least, no large body of men, who cannot get an honest and independent living without fear or favor of any man. Democracy of that kind is steadily becoming more and more impossible in the United States.

We talk today of that rush of office-seekers around Washington. What does it mean? Why, it is simply one expression of the universal truth that all over the country there are great masses of men who are hard-pressed to get a living. Pressure for holding office! Is there not pressure for anything, for everything, that that gives any opportunity for a decent living?—the clergyman, the doctor, the politician, right down to the sewing girl. We proclaimed—

our fathers did, this nation in the beginning, we proclaimed the equal rights of man. We hoped to build up a nation of freemen. We discarded aristocracy. We proclaimed all men equal before the law, and yet today in the United States you find arising men without title, more powerful than any titled aristocrat in Europe.

All over the country, East and West and North and South, you hear the cry of poverty.

Thomas G. Shearman, whom I regard as the greatest statistician probably, in the United States: some months ago, Thomas G. Shearman declared that one-half of the wealth of this country was in the possession of something like twenty-five thousand men, and that thirty-five thousand men hold today probably three-fifths of the aggregate wealth of the country.[45] Today statistics of the Census Bureau show (this statement is made on the authority of the Census Bureau although it has not yet been published), that as well as their investigations allow them to figure, [that] twenty-five percent, [i.e.,] one-fourth of the American families hold three-fourths of the wealth of the country. What did I say; twenty-five percent? No, I am mistaken—that is a mistake—ten percent of the families of the United States hold three-fourths of the wealth; and that ninety percent of the American families hold only one-fourth of the wealth.

Is republican government worthy [of] the name? Is real democracy, long possible under that condition of things? Nor need we go to statistics. In the city of New York, the largest city in the United States, the city which is the type towards which all our American cities are tending, millions every year are expended in the relief on the poor. There are in addition, great charitable societies that raise and disburse great amounts of money. Last week there was dedicated an enormous and costly building as the permanent home of these charitable societies. And in addition, if you will read the New York papers, you will find constant appeals for charity. In the winter for supplies of coal, food, and fuel; in the summer, it may be to take little children who would otherwise die in the large tenement houses; to take those little children out in the country for a few hours or a few days of pure air.

What are those charitable societies for? Here is an article that I picked up as I came along in the railroad car and this is only one of them. I will read it: "This association," it says, "was organized to improve the condition of the working people in their homes . . . to relieve them when necessary, in sickness and in distress."

"To relieve the condition of the working people?" Did you ever think how absurd on its face that is? Supposing in that great city or in any other of the similar cities through the country, there were to come to one of us some night, a visitor from some other sphere, such an one as the men of old thought

occasionally visited them; supposing he were to ask us how that God's creatures on this earth managed to get along: how we found food; how we found shelter; how we constructed these magnificent buildings; how we erected. . . . What would we tell him? That it was by labor. That all that man found on this earth was of no use to him save as labor was applied to it. That food and clothing and shelter and all the comforts and luxuries of life were the products of work. And then we were to take him with us in the early hour of the morning before people had arisen, to see the city, he would see, as he may see in any of our large cities, and increasingly, and more distinctly as they grow, some portions where the houses were large and replete with everything that . . .

And then we were to show him the poorer and more squalid quarters and he would ask what was the difference, and we were to say in those poor quarters dwelt the working people. Would it not astonish him? Working people? If work produces wealth . . . and furnish everything that luxury may desire, surely it would be the fine houses, the houses that were replete with everything . . . and the poor and squalid houses that were tenanted by the people too lazy to work.

All over the world, it was not here so in the beginning but it is so now—all over the world and even here you find that the working class par excellence is a class of the poor people. That it is for this class the charity societies are formed; that it is for that class who must take the wages or charity—the wages of a pauper. Look in every direction, and I think you may see that steadily, through what we have called good times and through what we have called bad times, that it has become in this country increasingly hard to get a living. That in spite of all our inventions and discoveries, in spite of all our advances the struggle for existence with the great masses has become harder and harder, while fortunes of millions and scores of millions and now of hundreds of millions are increasing faster than they ever did in the world before. The condition of an American who has nothing but his ability to labor is steadily becoming lower and harder.

What is the reason of this? There must be a reason and it must be a general reason. It must be a reason that points to a cause that exists all over our modern civilization. And for the man who really wants to find it there can be no dispute as to what this great cause is. What are we? Physically, moral animals . . . and yet for all our physical needs requiring just as the animal requires, food and shelter. What are we but land animals who can only live, if we are to live at all, on land and from land.

What is our production of wealth? But the exertion of labor on land. We are workers but not creators. [If the] whole human race were they to labor to infinity, [people] could not bring into being the tiniest mote that floats in a

sunbeam. All our producing, all our making of things consists in the last analysis, in the changing of the form . . . or in combination of the raw material that we find in the earth. It is only on land that we can live. It is only land that we can work. Deprive man of all that belongs to land and what have you but a disembodied spirit. This very flesh and blood of ours is taken from the land and to the land it must return again.

That being the case it follows inevitably, that we began a country, or a world, if you please, in which the land is the property of all but a few of the members, and the great mass of the people, had no rights to the use of the land save as they might buy it from day-to-day, from week-to-week, from month-to-month, or from year-to-year, and there you must have a class of great wealth and a class of deep and deepening poverty.

There is a simple explanation of the fact. All over the world the advances and discoveries of our nineteenth-century civilization has not tended to make easier the lot of the worker. Why, in spite of them all, poverty and pauperism prevails. Why, in spite of them all, poverty and pauperism is increasing and the struggle for existence grows more and more intense. Steadily, steadily [over] the years, the ownership of the land of the United States has been steadily tending into the hands of the few and a larger and larger proportion of our people have become mere buyers, mere renters, mere livers on sufferance in their native country.

Jefferson thought he did a great thing. When he abolished in Virginia primogeniture and entail.[46] . . . And yet, steadily our conditions have been more and more closely approximating to that of Europe, because more and more steadily the ownership of the soil of the country was passing into fewer and fewer hands. . . . In the beginning of our Republic not merely a majority but an overwhelming majority of American farmers were owners of the farms they tilled.

After the Revolution, slowly and steadily, by the irresistible force of natural causes, the landowning farmers of England so steadily disappeared that by the beginning of this century the English owner who owned the land he tilled, was as . . . the descendant of the sturdy yeomanry of England into the agricultural laborer, . . . Working all his life for a poor living and when old age came, retiring to the almshouse. And steadily the same causes have been working in the United States.

This also I am about to read to you is from the investigations of the Census Bureau, as yet only partially published:

> There are in the United States, according to the census, [1]1,558,213 families. Of these families—of those 11,432,633 families [sic], the families who own either the land they till or the ground on which they live, are but 3,078,077. The nonowning families amount to 8,354,455. Of these 6,871,699 are tenants, hiring the land they cultivate or the houses they live in; 1,483,356 are nominal owners but are really tenants under mortgage.

But 3,000,000 out of the 11,000,000 . . . families of the United States have any legal right whatever to claim one foot of this land as their own, one foot of this vast country on which they stand, without paying tribute to some other fellow creature. That tendency all over this country, as observation shows, as the records of the Census Bureau declare is steadily increasing. Is it any wonder that our democracy seems to fail? Is it any . . . that democracy in anything worthy the name, is becoming absolutely impossible in the United States?

Wealth is power, poverty is weakness. A man who owns as his, that on which a man must live, if he is to live at all, I care not what you call him, he is the master, and the other man, I care not by what title you may seek to gild his claims, he is a slave. What shall we do about it? There is only one thing to do: only one thing that will avail. If we want to preserve the Republic, if we want to continue a republic, if we want to save our children from the deregulation and suffering that must certainly come to the masses if this tendency continues, we must go back to the first principles and strike out at the root. We must assert in its fullness the democratic principle. We must assert the equal, the inalienable rights of man; the right to life; the right to work; the right to hold securely the results of his work.

Now, how shall we do it? These simple rights are on every side tonight in this so-called Republic of ours. We start with the beginning: Here is a young man going into life ready to work in any part of our well-settled states. What is it necessary for him to do? There are two things that he may do; he may either go to work for himself or he may go to work for somebody else. No man has a right to demand employment from anyone else. No man has a right to say to another: "You must furnish me employment, or you must give me such and such wages." But surely every man has a right to demand an opportunity for employing his own labor. And there is the heart and root of the wages question. Men will not work for others, all things considered, for less than they can get working for themselves.

If you find, as you find today, men suing for employment, men forming organizations and making strikes for the purpose of raising wages by arbitrary means, you may be certain that back of that lies the difficulty in men employing themselves. Let a man come from Europe to one of our great cities on the seaboard, or born of American parents, grow up in one of your central states, he desires to go to work. . . . Where will he find that opportunity? The natural opportunity is abundant everywhere. He may go from the Atlantic to the Pacific and he will everywhere find land not used, or land

only partially used, . . . but everywhere he will find the land that he would be glad to use, already held by somebody, and as a condition for employing his labor he will have to pay some monopolist or someone who has . . .

Labor is turned back to drive men from the employment of employers into a cutthroat competition with each other. Now this is perfectly clear: That if we are all here with an equal right to life we are all here with an equal right to land, for land is the first and absolute necessity to life. If we are all citizens of the Republic, if we are . . . if we are all entitled to equality before the law, surely we are all entitled to the equal natural advantages possessed in . . . of this Republic.

How shall that be secured? It cannot be secured by dividing land out; it cannot be secured by giving every man a farm or every man a town lot. If equality could for a moment be secured in that way it could not be continued. Steadily, with the growth of civilization, values change, becoming enormous where cities arise. The vicissitudes of human life must steadily tend to make what began as equal, unequal as population increases and civilization develops.

But even in the beginning such a device could not assure equality. What . . . is necessary. . . to secure equality and to preserve equality, is to give to all not an equal piece of land, but an equal share in the value of land, the principle being this: That every man has a right to the use of land that no one else is using. But that when land by the growth of society comes to have a special and peculiar value, . . . then that value, to secure the equality of all must be taken for the common uses of all. In other words, that the state should appropriate for the benefit of all, that unearned increment which political economists call rent, as well as all other unearned increment that there may be. Now, that is what we propose to raise by a single tax. The tax is levied not upon land, but upon the value of land irrespective of. . . .

Now let me put our proposition to you in another way, from the standpoint of justice. There is a sure foundation for the right of property. There is what the great French Assembly justly called "the sacred right of property."[47] That which a man makes, that which by any exertion of hand or brain he produces, that is of natural right his, as against all the world. His to use, his to sell, his to give, his to bequeath, his to do anything he pleases with so long as in its use he does no injury to anyone else. There is a foundation of the right of property. If a man builds himself a house, if he raises domestic animals, if he raises . . . or wheat, if [he] does anything that produces wealth, that wealth is or ought to be his. It is not merely unjust—it is by natural law a crime to take it from him without his will.

Now then, look what we do. Here by our system of taxation how do we seek to raise public revenue? Here are men to begin on the Atlantic coast, here are men who having produced grain or cotton or lumber or whatever it

may be, have sent those things abroad and received in return, productions of other kinds. The moment they try to bring these things into the United States they are met by a tax gatherer who demands for permission to bring these things into the country, one-fourth or one-half, and even more, of the value of those things. That in its essence is unjust. It is wrong. It is a violation of the right of property. Here is another man who takes land that never was put to use, who works and toils, he and his wife and his children; he puts up a house where there was none; he plants trees. . . . Down comes the tax gatherer and says because you have done these things the state taxes you, takes something of what is justly yours, for the benefit of others.

We say that is wrong. . . . We say that all those lessen the wealth of the United States and concentrate in fewer hands what there is of it. We say in the first place, that it is in the interest of the American people that we should have more wealth. We want more clothes; we want more and better houses; we want more of all the comforts and luxuries. If so, are we not then foolish for taxing men who produce those things? . . . Tax such things and there will be less of them. Tax houses, and houses will be fewer and poorer. Tax horses and there will be fewer horses and they will cost more. . . . Tax railroads . . .

On the contrary, we say tax land values all you please and you won't have any the less land. Tax land values all you please and instead of it[s] being harder for the man to get land who wants land. . . . This value that attaches to land as population increases and the state develops, is simply to put a premium on monopoly: simply to produce an incentive in abundance to which men will everywhere get not only the land they want to use but all the land . . . that they think sometime or other, other people will want to use . . . from the men who produce wealth upon it.

Therefore, what we propose by the single tax is to abolish all taxes that bear upon production, or exchange, or accumulation of wealth in any of its forms, no matter what they be, and to take for public uses the unearned increment, that value that is the greatest value in the unearned increment and the bottom value—that value that attaches to land by the growth of the community. This is just. It is wise.

The moment we put that in operation, see what we do. On the one side we remove all the restrictions that are now put on the production of wealth. We say to the farmer, improve all you please for your taxes will not be a penny heavier; improve all you please and you will not be taxed any more than he who holds land of equal value and holds it idle. We say to the speculator, pay for the land that you are holding idle just as much as would be paid by the farmers who are using it. We say to the men of the cities, build, improve, manufacture, add to wealth in any way you choose, grow as rich as you honestly can grow, we won't tax you one penny more.

A man who has put up a fine building will have no more taxes to pay than the man who is holding a similar lot with nothing on it. What will be the result of the restriction removed from production on the one hand, and the opportunity for production opened on the other hand? . . . Under that system of taxation no one could, no one would want to hold land that he was not using. Under that system of taxation the clutch of the "dog in the manger" would be released, the speculator would let go. . . . Under that system such a thing as overproduction would be impossible . . . so long as men were willing to work for the things they wanted. Test this, try this in any way . . . that it conforms to every dictate of sound public policy; to every axiom of political economy; to every injunction of the highest and purest religion. . . .

I suppose there is no one here who does not in some way know, no matter how he may formulate, that we do not make ourselves. That we are the creatures of some higher intelligence, whose providence, whose design is shown by the world and by what we call natural law. If that be so, then he must have intended the advance of man to be an advancing civilization, an advance in the way of living together, and that is the only way in which man is raised above the brute, above at least the very men of which we can conceive. That is the line of all human advance.

Now, if [that] be so, then it is perfectly clear that in the law that rules this world it was intended that public revenue should be raised as men develop in society, as they leave the rude forms of life and congregate together. Government becomes necessary for higher functions are required. And as those functions develop and extend, larger and larger revenues are needed. Now, if that be a law, something that arises by virtue of natural conditions, then there must also be some natural, some right way of raising revenues. It certainly is not by taxes on. . . . Taxes on . . . inevitably develop robbery and perjury and fraud. It cannot be by taxes on wealth, by attempts to tax men according to what they have, for those same taxes, as all human experience shows, never can be collected . . . always develop evasions and bribery and fraud of all kinds.

Now what tax is that that meeting the requirements of justice can be collected easily and certainly and without endangering these moral wrongs? There is one—the tax on land values. And if you look at this fact that as society develops, as the state grows, as cities arise, and larger revenues are required, and at the other fact that just as the state develops, just as society grows, just as cities arise, there are taxes . . . a value due to the whole people that is to the individual simply an unearned increment . . . for land lies out of doors—you cannot hide it, and its value is more definitely and certainly determined than any other value. That can be collected with the least machinery, and moreover, can be collected without checking production, without making unjust the distribution of wealth; nay, that must be taken in order to keep the greatest monopolies from arising. It seems to me perfectly clear that that is the intended way.

27

Address of Henry George Before the New England Tariff Reform League, at the American House, Boston, April 20, 1893

The closing dinner of the season of the New England Tariff Reform League was given at the American House, April, 1893; and Henry George, of New York was the guest of the occasion.[48] A distinguished company was present. . . .[49] The president introduced Mr. George, who spoke as follows:

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the Tariff Reform League: I am to talk to you a little while about free trade. What is trade? Why, if you want to indicate the gulf which separates man so widely from the brutes, you may define him as the only trading animal. Trade! Trade is that mode of production that has enabled man to rise from the lowest savagery. Take away trade, and how would you bring such a body of men together as I see before me here—each man carrying his own provisions, and each man the architect of his own clothes?

Trade! It is trade that makes human advance possible. It is as trade arises that civilization grows. It is as trade extends widens and develops that civilization grows. And trade, in its essence, in its very nature, is free. Trade is the exchange between men of services or commodities. It is trade only when carried on by the free will of both parties; and, under that condition, it must always, save in case of accidental misadventure, benefit both.

What is the incentive for me to trade? It is that I want something that the other party has to give me more than I want what I am to give him. By such exchange both are benefited. It is only by trade and through trade that we can gain the advantages of differing climes, of different natural opportunities, of differences in skill and acquirement. It is only by trade, through trade, and by reason of the enormous increase in power that trade gives us, that capital can grow, that great works can be undertaken, that knowledge can increase.

And free trade: what is free trade? Free trade is no more than natural trade. Free trade consists in simply permitting men to trade as they want to