HENRY GEORGE: HIS IMPACT ABROAD AND THE RELEVANCY OF HIS VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

by

T.H. Bonaparte, Ph.D.

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The Lubin Schools of Business, Pace University

Dr. T.H. Bonaparte is Vice President for Corporate and International Programs, Dean, and Professor of International Business at the Lubin Schools of Business, Pace University. served as President of the Fulbright Association for International Education and Cultural Exchange, as President of the Middle Atlantic Association of Colleges of Business Administration and as a member of the Board of Advisors of the World Trade Institute of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Dr. Bonaparte is also on the Board of the Fulbright Alumni Association; the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation; InterFuture, Inc.; and the Board of Editors of the American Journal of Economics and Sociology. He was a Senior Fulbright Professor of Management in Liberia and is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He is coeditor with J.E. Flaherty of Peter F. Drucker: Contributions to Business Enterprise, New York University Press.

In this era of VCR's, personal computers, and Trivial Pursuit there is a renewed relevancy to Henry George. Although George's zenith of fame was the latter part of the nineteenth century, when he published Progress or Poverty in 1879, his ideas are still alive today. In addition, among his ideas which continue to command respect and controversy were those found in his book, Protection and Free Trade, published in 1886. This paper deals primarily with George's view toward international trade and his major contributions in that area. It will, however, begin with some of George's fundamental concepts; then, discuss George's impact abroad, particularly in the English-speaking, industrialized world; and, finally, analyze George's views regarding free trade in today's context.

Some Fundamental Ideas of George

In <u>Progress and Poverty</u> George set forth clearly and forcefully the generalizations about wealth and want revealed to him during his experience in California and New York. George was born in Philadelphia, September 2, 1839, of a poor but respectable religious family. He had very little formal education, leaving school before he was fourteen. At sixteen he shipped as foremast boy on an East Indiaman bound for Melbourne and Calcutta; and at nineteen, as a member of the crew of the lighthouse steamer <u>Shubrick</u>, he jumped ship at San Francisco.

During the next twenty years in California, he lived, worked, starved, married, and produced children. After a short, unproductive spell of gold prospecting on the Fraser River in Canada, he was successfully a printer, typesetter, newspaper

reporter, newspaper proprietor, stump speaker for the Democratic Party, unsuccessful political candidate, lecturer, and State Inspector of Gas Meters. As the years passed he became increasingly preoccupied with thoughts about society and social problems, thoughts which eventually resulted in <u>Progress and Poverty.</u> 1

George's ideas about the land question began to be crystalized around 1868, when he published "What the Railroad Will Bring Us" in the Overland Monthly. For the first time he expressed the principle that was to be the foundation of his book: that under modern industrial conditions, progress and poverty march together. He recognized that the juxtaposition of wealth and want was not merely a local or national phenomenon, but was worldwide. He spent the rest of his life preaching this principle, not only in the United States, but abroad as well, particularly in the United Kingdom.

When George visited New York in 1869 he saw the dramatic contrast between wealth and social misery. He later said that he was struck as if by a divine command from heaven:

Years ago I came to this city from the West, unknown, knowing nobody, and I saw and recognized for the first time the shocking contrast between monstrous wealth and debasing want, and here I made a vow from which I have never faltered, to seek out and remedy, if I could, the cause that condemned little children to lead such a life as you know them to lead in the squalid districts.³

George had another insight which led him to take a further step in finalizing his program. While traveling through a landboom area in California, he stopped to ask a passing teamster what land was worth in the neighborhood. The teamster, "pointed to some cows grazing off so far that they looked like mice, and said: 'I don't know exactly, but there is a man over there who will sell some land for a thousand dollars an acre.' Like a flash it came upon me that there was the reason for advancing poverty with advancing wealth. With the growth of population, land grows in value, and the men who must work it must pay more for the privilege. I turned back, amidst quiet thought, to the perception that then came to me and has been with me ever since."

By this experience, George had acquired three of the ideas upon which his book and his life's mission were to be based: the interrelation of progress and poverty, the worldwide nature of the problem — with land monopoly as the cause. To complete his program he needed a solution which came to him eight years before he finished his book. He stated, "when our 40,000,000 people have to raise \$800,000,000 per year for public purpose, we cannot have any difficulty in discovering the remedy in the adjustment of taxation," that is, a "tax upon the value of land." 5

In <u>Progress and Poverty</u> George showed that, in the modern world, the depths of poverty were to be found side by side with the greatest commerical and industrial progress. He said that the source of all wealth was land, and that the inequalities in wealth which "progress" fostered were caused by a monopoly of the land by the few. Such a condition was more than unfortunate, it was unjust, for the land belonged to all the people by natural right. The people should reassert their title, taken from them in the past by the rapacious ancestors of the present landlords.

They should recover their natural title, not by dividing up the land physically, but by imposition of tax equivalent to the total value of the land. Landlords were to receive no compensation for the virtual expropriation of their property.

In its simplest form, this was the basic message in Progress and Poverty; but the problem of delivering this message to the world remained. Unfortunately, his message was not at first taken seriously, especially by economists. He was one of a long succession of economists -- including Adam Smith, Malthus, the two Mills, Ricardo, Chalmers, Sidgwick, and Marx -- with no formal training in the discipline. It was his misfortune to launch his theory just as economics was becoming a specialized profession, as signaled by the founding of the American Economic Association in 1885^6 by scholars, many of whom had done postgraduate study in Germany. Those who presumed to write on economic theory or deliver speeches on topics related to economics, who did not have degrees in the field, were labeled as amateurs by the academic community. George's reaction to the coolness elicited by his ideas in these circles was scarcely calculated to dispel it. It was perhaps understandable and inevitable that this self-taught social reformer, who believed with passionate sincerity in the unassailability of his logic and the imperative necessity of his social program, should impute motives of intellectual cowardice to his scholarly detractors.7

But there were many noted economists who supported him and his "theory." For example, Joseph Schumpeter, to mention but one economist of distinction, said:

He was a self-taught economist, but he was an economist. In the course of his life, he acquired most of the knowledge and the ability to handle an economic argument that he could have acquired by academic training as it then was. In this he differed to his advantage from most men who proffered panaceas. Barring his panacea (the single tax) and the phraseology connected with it, he was a very orthodox economist and extremely conservative as to methods.

The remedy that George proposed to end poverty was such a simplistic scheme that it contributed to consigning his writings to near oblivion in economic circles. The full single tax is not a serious fiscal proposal today, if only because there are no political prospects for its adoption anywhere on a national scale. But George's central principle, that the incidence of taxation should bear on the value of land rather than upon productive enterprises and improvements, remains a lively issue Under the general title of "land-value of fiscal reform. taxation" this principle has received wide application in such forms as taxation of the land at a higher rate than the improvements; full or partial exemption of improvements, the lost revenue being made up by an increased levy on the land; a surtax on absentee landownership; and, in the effort to reduce speculation, a high rate of tax on the profits derived from land Such practices are common in Australia and New Zealand, with scattered local applications to be found in Western Canada, the Union of South Africa, and other countries. 9 Denmark provides generous exemptions on improvements, offsetting this by both a higher rate on the land and a national tax on the increment of land values.

In the United States the common practice is to include a tax on land as a component of the general property tax, which otherwise bears most heavily on improvements. Beyond this there are a few "single tax" enclaves in Delaware, New Jersey, Alabama, Hawaii, California, and Pittsburgh and Scranton, Pennsylvania. What is typically sought by land-value taxers today is a modest advance along Georgist lines, such as the enactment of local option laws, which would enable municipalities to free from taxation some or all of the value of improvements by transferring the tax to the unimproved value of the land.

Land-Value Taxation Abroad

To some extent, George's message was accorded a more favorable reception abroad than in the United States. It should be noted that George was not the first to propose the single tax as a remedy for existing social ills, Samuel Milliken in his "Forerunners of Henry George, " traces anticipators of George's single tax as far back as Dio Chrysostom (50-117 A.D.) and painstakingly delineates single tax advocates through history. 10 Thomas Malthus's early writings in 1808 and 1809 in the Edinburgh Review plainly suggest that the single tax on land values was a remedy for Irish poverty. 11

Some seventy years later George was to refer to Ireland in his quest for the single tax. He suggested legislation for dealing with the poverty of this country; methods closely resembling Malthus's. In 1879, the same year George finished Progress and Poverty, Irish discontent had erupted into revolt. In 1881 he published the Irish Land Ouestion. Throughout this

short work he saw Ireland as an extension of an overriding moral dilemma that faced the civilized world -- namely, the proliferation of "progress and poverty" due to the private ownership of land. Thus the "Irish question" was actually a much broader global issue. "The Irish land system, which is so much talked of as though it were some peculiarly atrocious system, is essentially the same land system which prevails in all civilized countries. ..the truth is that the Irish land system is simply the general system of modern civilization."12

George spent a great deal of time delivering his message in Ireland, Scotland, and Britain. He proposed nothing less than a union of Irish, Scottish, and English workers to drive landlordism out of the British Isles. George argued that the Irish cause could be advanced most effectively by carrying the land agitation to Great Britain. "Both England and Scotland are ripe for such agitation and, once fairly begun, it can have but one result — the victory of the popular cause." 13

In the mid-1800s George and his doctrines swept excitedly through Great Britain. Even if his influence were limited to the 1880s when, on five separate visits, he carried his message from Plymouth to the Isle of Skye, George would deserve a place of honor in British political history. But more than that, from 1889 on, his land-tax proposals were an essential part of practical British politics and became major planks in the Liberal and Labour parties' platforms. It was not until 1934, when Philip Snowden's land tax was repealed, that George's doctrines ceased to trouble conservative landowners. 14

Henry George, not Karl Marx, was the catalyst for Britain's insurgent proletariat. The Webbs acknowledged his influence. They credited the rise of the Socialist Party to supremacy in the Trade Union Congress of 1893 to "the wide circulation in Britain of Henry George's <u>Progress and Poverty</u>." The "optimistic and aggressive tone" of <u>Progress and Poverty</u>, according to the Webbs, and the popularization of George's theory of rent, "sounded the dominant note alike of the new unionism and of the British Socialist movement." The British working-class movement ceased its passivity and took on vigorous life with its recognition of George as someone with something to say. 16

George's popularity in Britain and Ireland resulted from the enormous success of <u>Progress and Poverty</u>. Max Beer claimed a "circulation of about 100,000 copies sold in the United Kingdom." He met little opposition from audiences and from civic groups. At only two meetings was there any organized disorder, at Oxford University and at Peterhead, Scotland.

We know that Alfred Marshall was against George's theory from the uproar at the Oxford University meeting -- Marshall asked him to prove that landlordism was responsible for poverty and George merely replied that there was poverty in the country. Arnold Toynbee, in two lectures delivered in London in January 1883, warned against George's influence. His book was banned as a text at the City of London College, he had no friends among the Conservatives, and the Socialists parted ways with him whenever it was convenient to their cause. But, we also know that George Bernard Shaw, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, and Lord Asquith

were supportive of the movement which George had done so much to generate. As Lawrence said:

The true measure of George [in Great Britain] is found in the effect of his crusade against suffering in the minds and the hearts of the British people. His great accomplishment was to describe sincerely and eloquently the conditions under which the worker lived, and to convince large numbers of persons that they could help themselves by resolute action. 18

George's campaigns in Great Britain and the United States won adherents in several other areas, among them, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, Hawaii, Jamaica, India, South Africa, Taiwan, and Canada. Many of these adherents were very supportive of George's principles but were unsuccessful in obtaining passage of legislation to put these principles into practice. For example, in Great Britain, some would call George's influence a failure because neither he nor his followers were able to implement his ideas. But, short of complete success, George's influence did produce two concrete results: It motivated both the Liberal and the Labour parties to write the land tax into their programs, and it was the immediate cause of the Parliament Bill of 1911.19

India, however, was taxing land long before George. The land tax was based on its location in proximity to sources of water and it was proposed by Kautilya, a counselor and advisor to King Chandragupta of Northern India, around 300 B.C.²⁰ India has used a tax on land, called "Land Revenue," for over 200 years.²¹

Australia has experimented with the land tax on three levels of government. The federal rates were applied to the "total value for land held by one individual anywhere in the

Commonwealth."²² The aims of this tax were "to dismember the great estates and to encourage widespread ownership of land."²³ This tax, criticized by land taxers as not heavy enough, was abolished in 1952 as the revenue yield and the supposed "social benefits" became less important.²⁴

All states except Tasmania now tax property on the basis of unimproved capital value; that is, site value. Until 1975-76 land tax for the state of Tasmania was based on the unimproved land value. This changed with the Land and Income Tax Act of 1976. Tasmania now taxes on the improved capital value of land. Because of the exemptions and low rates, the state land tax is usually considered not fiscally important. Nevertheless, the local real estate taxes are a genuine attempt to capture economic rents. 27

Mary Edwards used multivariate regression analysis in her recent paper on "Site Value Taxation in Australia." She found strong evidence that, where improvements are relieved of taxation and more revenues are obtained from land values, the average value of housing is significantly higher and the value of the housing stock substantially larger. She concluded that, "if a new or reformed tax system is administered honestly, efficiently, and equitably, then a site value tax will result in a more rapid pace of development." Further research and, undoubtedly, additional data are needed to determine the effect of a site value tax on land speculation, on the one hand, and land availability to lower income groups, on the other. 28

It is interesting to note that Henry George's modest triumphs of implementation abroad have occurred almost exclusively in English-speaking and Scandinavian lands. This has been the case for at least two reasons: the need to have a strong industrial base to support "progressive" economic development and the need to have long traditions of responsible self-government. One could not realistically be very sanguine as to its chances for successful application in such countries as Haiti, Nicaragua, Liberia, Bolivia, or even Honduras.

One of George's critics, Father Juan Alcazar Alvarez, a priest in Spain, wrote in 1917 a 383-page tome against Henry George. Alcazar posed a problem that could be quite real for the application of Georgist devices in many countries where conceptions of public probity are not of a high order. He pointed out in the Estudio Filosofico that assessors and tax collectors could be bribed by landowners to adjust their fiscal impositions in proportion to subornations received. It is not surprising that such an idea would occur to a writer in the Hispanic world. As George himself readily conceded, his system is not a panacea. No more than any other social theory can it succeed apart from supportive attitudes and uncorrupted institutions. 30

To George, governments must be honest, with high moral and ethical conviction. "Justice" was a key word, so were "equality" and "freedom." That is why George attributed the miseries of India and China to the repaciousness of governments and especially condemns the exorbitant land and salt taxes imposed by England upon the poverty-stricken producers of India. In this

context, because of a greater degree of political instability in the third world, it will be extremely difficult to see George's views implemented in these countries. And, as a result of Marxism his views will not be acceptable in the "second world" (Communist bloc).

To some, the "Catholic world" has been traditionally opposed The truth is that the reaction to George has been mixed. The negative side probably dates to Father Alcazar, who wrote under the authorization of the bishop and ecclesiastic governor of Madrid-Alcala. It was a reflection of the fear in some circles that George's proposals constituted a threat to the promises by the Church of ultimate salvation from despair. of George's staunchest supporters in New York City, especially among the Irish population, was Father McGlynn. Because of his support for George, Father McGlynn was excommunicated in 1887, but in an unusual reversal of its act, the Holy See removed the excommunication in 1892 and restored Father McGlynn to his priestly functions. 32 We know that Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York had some influence on the papal act, but there is evidence that Catholic opposition to George went far beyond the circles of Archbishop Corrigan. Other high prelates of the Church spoke out strongly against George, and though not actually placing Progress and Poverty on the Index, the Holy Office did rule it to be "worthy of condemnation," which meant that any bishop could rule it to be prohibited reading for Catholics within his jurisdiction³³

On the positive side, George received very warm support from the Catholic clergy in Ireland and from a few Latin American priests, in particular Don Carlos Duarte Costa, Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, who said about <u>Progress and Poverty</u>, "After the Gospel, this is the book that I love and admire the most. It does not surprise me to learn that, after the Bible, it is the most widely published book in the world. I think I do not offend God when I say that <u>Progress and Poverty</u> plays in the material realm the same role that the Gospel unfolds in the spiritual world." 34

From the spiritual world, we travel to the world of Socialism or Communism -- Marxism. Within less than two years of its publication, <u>Progress and Poverty</u> was a runaway best seller, and its author's name, an international household word. By contrast, the only volume of <u>Das Kapital</u> that appeared in Marx's lifetime was scarcely noticed. In Russia, especially, George's ideas had quickened the thought of social students and reformers long before those of Marx gained any appreciable following. Yet today, George is relatively forgotten, while half the world calls itself Marxist.³⁵

Like George, Marx had no formal training in economics, was fundamentally self-educated, and was a compulsive and omnivorous reader. Most of Marx's early years were spent in coffeehouses rather than in lecture halls, and when he finally took his degree it was what we would call today a "cheap" doctorate, from a university where he had never been in residence and that did not require its external students to undergo prolonged examination. 36 Yet, even among those who do not count themselves his disciples,

Marx bears the reputation of a learned sage, while George is thought of as a talented amateur. 37

The greatest alienation, said Marx, manifested itself within societies where capital was concentrating in ever-larger aggregations, and it was within these that members of the proletariat would develop the solidarity and class consciousness which would equip them to effect the most dramatic socioeconomic changes. Henry George, by contrast, held that it was rather in societies where there was a concentration of landownership that such changes would occur. 38 George was obviously the better prophet. Where the Marxist ideology has successfully reinforced revolution -- from Russia and China to Cuba and Vietnam -- these social transformations have been in peasant societies heavily or totally dependent upon agrarian economics. And the major non-Marxist upheavals of the twentieth century, beginning with Mexico, have also been in land-based peasant societies. 39

Marxism is today more "successful" around the world than Georgism because of one important factor -- political action. One derives some satisfaction from knowing that Henry George was considered an important economic theorist in fifteen or sixteen countries around the world. One would be more gratified if his followers had been more effective in translating his ideas into political reality.

In 1917 the Marxists seized power in Russia and soon after transformed it into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. One cannot help but reflect that the success of Marxists in attracting the support of millions of followers, and in threatening the rest of the world with ultimate subjugation, results as much from their political strength as from any logic or reason in their philosophy. Marxism operates from a bastion of totalitarian political power. Georgism does not.

When one thinks of the logic of Georgism versus the logic of Marxism and the larger number of people around the world supporting Georgism in 1917, the odds were on Georgism to sweep the world instead of Marxism. That it did not materialize may be attributed in large measure to a singular inattention to political action on the part of the Georgists. Political Georgism died when Tom Johnson left office as mayor of Cleveland in 1909.40 Even Henry George himself, though he ran twice for mayor of New York, tended to reject political involvement and to prefer less boisterous speaking and writing activities. L. Thomas, in <u>Alternative America</u>, points out, "George's followers continued to reject politics and even lobbying and pressure groups and as a consequence struck no very deep popular roots."41 It was appropriate that Henry M. Hyndman, who had been both friend and socialist opponent of Henry George, said shortly after George's death, "he has died in a chivalrous attempt to accomplish the impossible without even organizing his forces for the struggle."42

Today, eighty-eight years after the death of Henry George (and thirty years since the publication of Land-Value Taxation Around the World) 43 we find fewer Georgists organized for the struggle, although there has been an increase in the number of countries adopting land-value taxation; and, therefore, an

increase in the number of different approaches used by governments to solve their economic difficulties.

For example, in Taiwan, land is taxed, but also buildings -which are taxed separately. Valuation of buildings is made by a special staff who utilize processes which are distinctly different from those used in valuing land. The tax rates are not the same. The tax rates, where they apply, are not subject to local control but are governed by principles which apply to the whole country. The actual burdens on land differ according to rules which are unusual. The revenues are divided among levels of government somewhat differently. The separation of taxes on land from those on improvements appears to operate successfully. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China, considered land problems to be of crucial importance. Landlord-tenant relations in agriculture were of special concern to him. writings before the Revolution of 1911, and his thoughts as he developed them later, seem to have followed those of Henry The present-day system in Taiwan is patterned after the George. principles he expounded.

The four provinces of the Republic of <u>South Africa</u> have varied approaches to property tax and valuation. In the Cape Province, land is valued at replacement cost. The improvements are taxed and all farm land is valued, plus any improvements. In Natal, a similar situation exists, except that farm land outside the area of jurisdiction of the local authority is not valued or rated. In Durban, the land is valued by the valuation department and the improvements by the city engineer's department, at replacement cost. Both land and improvements are rated in Natal.

The Orange Free State rates land and improvements -- improvements are valued on replacement cost. Johannesburg is the only city in the world which has never levied a property tax on improvements. George's theories are implemented in South Africa despite the fact that the vast majority of the population -- blacks and coloreds -- are not allowed to own any land.

The rates in the <u>United Kingdom</u> are essentially a tax on the occupier of the property and have always been levied on the occupier, ever since 1601. All transactions in land and buildings in the U.K. have, as one of the underlying characteristics, the fact that the tenant will bear the cost of these rates. The rate varies from year to year at the resolution of the district council, that is, of the elected representatives on the local jurisdiction. The commercial or industrial rate payer is entitled to deduct his rates as a worker expense before computing the taxable amount liable to Income and Corporate Tax. The residential rate payer does not have this privilege. The rates, therefore, in some cases can place a very harsh burden on residential occupiers; so much so that in recent years, legislation has been passed to reduce the impact in relation to low-income earners.

In the U.K., in 1962, a tax was introduced on profits on land where these profits have been made in a very short time. In 1967 the Leasehold Reform Act was passed by Parliament. It enabled leaseholders of long leases of domestic property to require their landlords to sell them the freehold at half value. This act dealt a blow to landlords and the big estates. In 1975

and 1976 the Community Land Act and the Development Land Tax Act were passed. The broad principles of the twin acts are to acquire development values in land and to municipalize land values. These acts are still in operation today, and they relate to the perpetration of the strict code of planning control.

In the third world, the Caribbean nations of Jamaica and Barbados have used Georgist theories of land value taxation in slightly different ways. Jamaica's 2.1 million people inhabit an area of about 4,400 square miles — which is basically agricultural in nature. A mountain ridge runs down the middle of the island, so that the country is considerably more densely populated than the gross figures on land relative to population would indicate. 44 Moreover, most of the agricultural holdings are small, but the relatively few large properties account for a large fraction of total land. Since the population is increasing at just under 2 percent per annum, it is understandable that Jamaica is concerned with efficient land use. Nor is it only agricultural land that is of concern — Kingston, the capital of Jamaica, has all the problems of any urban area.

Jamaica has recently been engaged in an important effort in land taxation. The country has changed the basis of its property tax from improved value, that is, the value of land and buildings, to unimproved value, the value of land alone. The change was accomplished in the agricultural areas of the country by the early 1960s, but since the 1970s the remaining areas have been placed on the new land-value basis also.

In Jamaica the tax change was not merely a switch from one base to another. Associated with the substitution of unimproved

value for improved value as the base of tax, there has been a complete revaluation of properties. Consequently, relative tax burdens have changed both because of the change in tax base and because of the revaluation of all properties as of a common date. Jamaica's experiment is difficult to evaluate because of the depressed land market in the last several years (affected by recent political actions), and the fact that very little has been published on the results of the tax change. Also, it is likely that a number of important effects will emerge only in the long run. ⁴⁵

In <u>Barbados</u> the tax was viewed as a way of charging for government services, while in Jamaica there developed over time an emphasis on taxing property as a way of reaching taxable capacity. In Barbados it was considered a tax based on benefit; in Jamaica it was regarded as a tax based on ability-to-pay. When Barbados proclaimed the unimproved valuation roll as the basis for property tax, a rate of 1 percent was established, applicable to all properties.

Barbadians explain their choice of property tax design in comparison with Jamaica by noting that: (1) The distribution of income and wealth is less unequal in Barbados than in Jamaica; (2) Almost everyone owns land in Barbados; and (3) Paying tax on the land you own is a status symbol. 46 Tom Adams, the current Prime Minister of Barbados, and his government ministers are more satisfied with their program of site valuation than they would be with a valuation on improvements. They believe good improvement

valuations would require considerably more resources than they have available at present.

Although, for obvious reasons, it is more difficult to implement George's ideas in the developing world (in such countries as the Sudan, Mali, and Chad, for example), it should not be taken for granted that all third world countries are The Arab bloc of the OPEC countries, for immune to George. example, represent a strong case for the importance of land-value taxation. The demand for oil today has given fabulous valuation to Arab lands. Once the demand for oil is replaced by a demand for another commodity (or, as in the present situation, the demand is not as great as in the 1970s) the land values of the OPEC countries will plunge to zero. It is, therefore, communal demand and need that gives rise to land values (rent). We cannot generalize on the inability to implement George's ideas solely on the basis of per capita income or growth rates. Also, where there is a heavy influx of multinational corporations, such as in South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, the value of land is greater in urban centers and there is even more reason to implement George's concepts. point is that the need to use land is universal. Almost as obvious is the fact that nature rather than owners created the In point of fact, these are two elements of similarity in countries which differ widely in most other respects.

There are also some dissimilarities we should accept in the developing world which are obstacles to the implementation of George's ideas. For example, in Latin America, the Marxists are very strong. In offering a dogmatic and irreconcilable approach

to social transformation, the Marxists exercise a veto power over other alternatives. Theirs is the only effective message. This is particularly true in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Uraguay, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic. Therefore, the first problem of the Georgists in Latin America is to find the people who can carry their message over the screams and shouting of the Marxist revolutionaries.

Also, except for Argentina and the Dominican Republic, and despite all the clamor for land reform, almost no one in Latin America has ever heard of the ideas of George. Until his death in 1982, Mauricio Birabent led the Social Agrarian Party of Argentina, which espoused doctrines based on single-tax ideas. Today, a distinguished Argentine architect, Juan Carlos Zucotti, represents the same point of view and has important contacts among journalists and followers in Argentina, but he is in exile in the United States. Dr. Hector R. Sandler is an Argentine Georgist on the faculty of the Universidad Antonoma de Mexico and directs an Argentine newspaper called Democracia through his son According to James Busey, a participant in the in Argentina. International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade Conference in England, the Henry George School in the Dominican Republic, under the direction of Lucy de Silfa has, since 1966, graduated over 9,000 students, many of whom are influential in public affairs today. 47

However, Busey points out an obstacle in Latin America which may be characteristic of most developing countries:

An effective single-tax system requires equitable assessment procedures, freedom from

coercion by owners of the land, impartial preparation of tax notices, collection which is impervious to threats, bribes or other pressures, and finally that the money itself go into the public treasury, not into the private accounts of individual officials.⁴⁸

In Latin America, Africa, and other developing areas, there is also the obstacle of preconditions for a viable tax system. In most of these countries there is no such thing as a property tax. How does one introduce scientific assessment of land values only, to a country that has never heard of property tax? Individuals in government have little assurance of continuity in office, much less the educational preparation needed to perform such a specialized role as that of tax assessor, collector, or auditor who controls accounts. In countries like Ghana, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina, and others, there is a cadre of government officers concerned with the situation, but because of political instability, their tenure is not long enough to develop and monitor any sort of long-range tax programs.

Moreover, Fred Harrison, in Land Reform and Red Revolution, points to the role of land monopoly in third world countries largely dependent on agriculture, in keeping down wages among both agrarian and industrial workers. 49 Furthermore, land monopoly has created a special class of extremely wealthy, powerful, nonproductive individuals who play dominant roles in developing countries.

In Argentina some 6 percent of the total number of properties contain over 1000 hectares (2470 acres) each and cover about 75 percent of the total cultivable land of the country. In

Brazil less than 1 percent of farm properties have over 1000 hectares each, but occupy 40 percent of the cultivable land. In Chile 1.3 percent of properties have over 1000 hectares and occupy 72.7 percent of the land; in Peru 0.3 percent of such properties cover 60 percent of the land; in Uruguay, 5.2 percent on 58 percent of the land; and in Venezuela, 1.3 percent on 72 percent. The point is that a tiny minority not only pockets the economic rent produced by a whole nation, but also controls most of the socioeconomic and political power.

Consequently, the best remedy to break the poverty cycle in developing countries is to collect for public use the unearned values arising from landownership, without disturbing possession or use of the land by its present owners. The prescription is that instead of paying taxes to the state and rent to the landlords, one should pay rent to the state and no taxes. theory, this is the solution for the third world, but in reality, we have Marxism, corruption, ill-preparedness of trained officials, political instability, and a tradition of land monopoly which restricts progress and harbors poverty. It may be useful for these countries to use Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic as examples. Particularly the Dominican Republic, where many influential people understand Georgist proposals and where a number of very dedicated and competent individuals, some of them under Georgist influence, may be found at various levels of government.

International Trade

George's theories on international trade are little known, probably because they are not as controversial as his single tax. In a survey conducted recently by Pace University on the relevance of Henry George, 83 percent of the respondents recognized George's contributions in the area of land-value taxation, but only I percent said he had made a contribution on "free trade."

To George, free trade meant "the natural trade -- the trade that goes on in the absence of artificial restrictions." 51 Protection is wrong, morally and economically. George asserted that:

The protection of the masses has in all times been the pretence of tyranny -- the plea of monarchy, of aristocracy, of special privilege of every kind. The slave owners justified slavery as protecting the slaves. British misrule in Ireland is upheld on the ground that it is for the protection of the Irish. But, whether under a monarchy or under a republic, is there an instance in the history of the world in which the "protection" of the labouring masses has not meant their oppression? The protection that those who have got the law-making power into their hands have given labour, has at best always been the protection that man gives to cattle -- he protects them that he may use and eat them. 52

One must recall that during the latter part of the nineteenth century and particularly during the 1880s and 1890s, the free trade versus tariff protection debate was in full swing in Europe and the United States. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the infant-industry argument for tariffs enjoyed a vogue in the United States. The country had just started its industrial development and sought to shelter its

young manufacturers from foreign competition. At about the same time, the <u>distributional</u> argument was used in Great Britain with opposite intent — to reduce existing tariffs. Just as the United States was moving toward protection, Great Britain was moving toward free trade. The United States had taxed its imports from its very birth as a nation. But its early tariffs, though protective in effect, were chiefly designed to raise revenue for the federal government. In those days there was no income tax, and the government relied on excise levies to finance its spending. Tariffs were the most important of those levies.

The free-trade movement started in Great Britain as part of a broader assault on the ancient powers of the aristocracy. sought to end the political hegemony of the rural gentry, who were the chief beneficiaries of the tariffs on imported grain known as the Corn Laws. As in the United States, therefore, tariff policy was entangled in broad constitutional questions, including the issue of parliamentary reform. But the free-trade movement also owed intellectual debts to Adam Smith, who made an allocative case for free trade fully 50 years before the debates on the Corn Laws; and, David Ricardo, who made the distributive case against the tax on grain. Ricardo contended the Corn Laws were doubly injurious to the wage earner. First, tariffs raise food prices, reducing the purchasing power of the worker's wage. Second, tariffs increase land rents at the expense of business profits, and low profits mean less saving, less investment, and less demand for labor.

Between 1860-1890, a period that had a dramatic effect on Henry George's views on free trade vs. protectionism, American tariffs did not come down as fast or as far as European tariffs in the middle third of the nineteenth century. After 1860, they rose somewhat further. In 1861, Congress passed the Morrill Tariff Act, giving new protection to the iron and steel industry; and in 1862 and 1864, it approved a sweeping increase in most other duties. After the Civil War high import duties were instituted which had an awesome productive effect. American tariffs reached a postwar peak with the McKinley Tariff Act of Meanwhile, European countries, particularly France and Germany, were very successful, they believed, with protection. Bismark, in 1879, brought forward a new tariff affording substantial protection to industry and agriculture. followed Germany in the 1890s, when a coalition of industry and agriculture reversed the low-tariff policies of Napolean III and enacted the famous Meline Tariff, to promote industrial development.

This was the context in which Henry George wrote his views on free trade. He was at the time in the minority, certainly against the popular wave of protectionism. The arguments used in his book, Protection or Free Trade, published in 1886, were influenced by Adam Smith, the Physiocrats, David Ricardo, and Frederic Bastiat. In particular, an English language translation of Bastiat's book, Sophisms of Protectionism, was published in the United States in 1881 and, although George makes no mention of Bastiat in Protection or Free Trade, he must have read the work of the recognized exponent of free trade at the time.

There is not much on free trade in <u>Progress and Poverty</u>, which makes it clear this was of secondary importance to the central thesis of this work, namely, the elimination of poverty through land-value taxation. Free trade, according to George, cannot in itself solve the basic problem confronting the economy, He noted, for example, that "free trade has enormously increased the wealth of Great Britain without lessening pauperism. It has simply increased rent." 53 As George saw it, free trade, without the elimination of the private receipt of ground rents, could do little to eradicate the fundamental problem of inequitable distribution of income and wealth.

Any examination of George's writings must acknowledge that he made a substantial contribution to the field by writing Protection or Free Trade that has been little noticed. As we said before, in 1886, it was unconventional to support free trade, and George had few admirers on this subject. In Protection or Free Trade George discusses meeting the leader of a Pittsburgh brass band on the train who said:

"Look here, stranger, may I ask <u>you</u> a question? I mean no offense, but I'd like to ask you a straight-forward question. Are you a free trader?"

"I am."

"A real free trader -- one who wants to abolish the tariff?"

"Yes, a real free trader. I would have trade between the United States and the rest of the world as free as it is between Pennsylvania and Ohio."

"Give me your hand stranger," said the band leader, jumping up. "I like a man who's out and out."

"Boys," he exclaimed, turning to some of his bandsmen, "here's a sort of man you never saw; here's a real free trader and he ain't ashamed to own it. " And when the 'boys' had shaken hands with me, very much as they might have shaken hands with the 'Living Skeleton' or the 'Chinese Giant,' "Do you know stranger," the band-master continued, "I've been hearing of free traders all my life, but you're the first I ever met. I've seen men that other people called free traders, but when it came their turn they always denied The most they would admit was that they wanted to trim the tariff down a little, or fix it up better. But they always insisted we must have a tariff, and I'd got to believe that they were no real free traders; that they were only a sort of bugaboo."54

But Henry George was not simply a "free-trader." He believed that free trade had to be seen in the context of its effects on labor. In this approach, he was different from the other "free-traders" of his time, such as Professor W.G. Summer of Yale and others. In reading Protection or Free Trade, one gets the impression that George is saying little that is new on the subject. This is certainly the case for most of the book. Up until chapters 24 and 25 there are the typical arguments against protection and in favor of free trade. George dismisses protection as a universal need, stating:

We cannot stop with protection between state and state, township and township, village and village. If protection be needed between nations, it must be needful not only between political sub-divisions, but between family and family. If nations should never buy of other nations what they might produce at home, the same principle must forbid each family to buy anything it might produce.

In <u>Protection or Free Trade</u>, George discusses the importance of trade which he feels enables us to utilize the highest powers of the human factor in production. He makes reference to the

point that all men cannot do all things equally well. Men of different nations trade with each other for the same reason that men of the same nation do — because they find it profitable; because they obtain what they want with less labor than they otherwise could. He believed the restriction of importations would lessen productive power and reduce the fund from which all revenues are drawn. George points out the difference between revenue and protective tariffs; discourages protection of "infant industries"; supports the proposition that exports and imports are complementary and to impose any restrictions on the one, necessarily lessens the other; and, identifies the negative effects of protection on American industry.

It would seem that nothing had changed from the era of the 1880s. Lord Peter Bauer, an economist at the London School of Economics, recently wrote an article in <u>The Wall Street Journal</u> on "Myths of Subsidized Manufacturing." He said:

State support of manufacturing is practically universal in the third world. It is widespread also in the West, but there agriculture also enjoys massive state assistance . . . support of manufacturing takes the form of tariff protection, quantitative restrictions (quotas), direct subsidies and special fiscal consessions. But why should manufacturing be supported at the expense of the rest of the community? . . The oldest argument is the 'infant industry' which is invalid. . . . popular argument is that the relatively greater importance of manufacturing over agriculture in the West shows that manufacturing is necessary for economic There is nothing in this progress. argument. . . . The heavy economic cost of state support of manufacturing is well known . . it has developed into large-scale economic control and indeed, wholesale politization of economic life . . . second,

much of the cost falls on farmers through higher costs of supplies and consumer goods, high interest rates, and increased taxes on cash crops. 56

Today, since the publication of Protection or Free Trade, all the models show that free trade is beneficial to all participating countries. Each country can escape the confines of its own resource endowment to consume a collection of commodities better than the best it can produce. Why then is it necessary for Peter Bauer to write his recent article in The Wall Street Journal? Why do we still hear so much clamor for protective tariffs and trade barriers? The answer is that many fallacious arguments against foreign trade are easily refuted but have peculiar immunity to logic. Economists can demolish the protectionists' arguments, but speeches about, "cheap foreign labor," "Japanese invasion," "buy locally-made products," and "free trade causes more poverty" have enormous popular appeal. These speeches also mean that Bauer will have to write another article on "The Arguments against Protection," and that some form of protection will be with us for the foreseeable future. is especially true for the developing countries that use trade barriers to stimulate domestic employment, to facilitate economic development, and to redistribute income.

It is here that Henry George makes his contribution because he did not see the removal of trade barriers or "custom houses" as the panacea for international trade and economic growth and development. As we said, three-quarters of <u>Protection or Free Trade</u> refers to the fundamental and traditional arguments espoused by economists from Smith to Lord Peter Bauer. The last

quarter of the book deals with what George calls "True Free Trade." He states:

Free trade, in its true meaning, requires not merely the abolition of protection but the sweeping away of all tariffs — the abolition of all restrictions (same as those imposed in the interest of public health and morals) on the bringing of things into a country or the carrying of things out of a country. Free trade applies as well to domestic as to foreign trade, and in its true sense requires the abolition of all internal taxes that fall on buying, selling, transporting or exchanging, on the making of any transaction or the carrying on of any business. . . . Thus the indirect taxation of whatever kind, and the resort to direct taxation for all public revenues. 57

The freeing of trade, according to George, is beneficial to the country because it is also freeing production. Therefore, we should not tax anyone who adds to the wealth of the country by bringing valuable goods and services into it, and we should not tax anyone who produces within that country valuable goods and services. Consequently, free trade requires that we not only abolish indirect taxes, but all direct taxes as well. There should be no tax upon the production, accumulation, or possession of wealth, leaving everyone free to make, exchange, give, spend, or bequeath. The only taxes by which, in accordance with the free-trade principle, revenue can be raised are taxes on land values. George believed that:

True free trade, in short, requires that the active factor of production, labor, shall have free access to the passive factor of production, land. To secure this, all monopoly of land must be broken up and the natural elements must be secured by the treatment of the land as the common property in usufruct of the whole people.

George's main point is that he had seen that the gradual reduction of trade barriers and the movement towards free trade in England has little effect on the welfare and development of the people. Richard Cobden and Thomas Briggs, the British freetraders, made an invaluable contribution by persuading Great Britain to replace its protective tariffs with a revenue tariff, to be "a free trade country" in 1846. However, labor remained degraded and underpaid, and the improvements that were made for labor were not traceable to the abolition of protection, but to trade unions. George asked the question: "How will free trade affect the working man?" The answer he received was that "Free Trade will increase wealth and reduce the cost of commodities." This was not enough -- George wanted the working man to share in He had seen the cost of commodities greatly reduced without the working man finding it any easier to live. the weakness of free trade, that the advantages did not reach the working man. He, therefore, believed that the free trade movement had not been played out to its final conclusion. should have dealt with the removal of all injustices, the removal of all direct and indirect taxes, save one, on land values. sees in George's ideas a fundamental need to help human kind -free trade was a tool to achieve this basic objective. As he said:

He who follows the principle of free trade to its logical conclusion can strike at the very point of protection; can answer every question and meet every objection, and appeal to the surest of instincts and the strongest of motives. He will see in free trade not a mere fiscal reform, but a movement which has for its aim and end nothing less than the abolition of poverty, and of the vice and

crime and degradation that flow from it, by the restoration to the disinherited of their natural rights and the establishment of society upon the basis of justice. He will catch the inspiration of a cause great enough to live for and to die for, and be moved by an enthusiasm that he can evoke in others.

Oh, how we wish George's ideas were implemented at that time, in 1890; we would have had a different world; one that is free from all rigidities and restrictions; "with justice for all." Today things have grown worse and it is even more difficult to think realistically of free trade being implemented in the world. We have more trade barriers now than in 1890 and there are probably less "free traders" on trains going to Pittsburgh than in 1890.

For example, let's look at agriculture. American farmers traditionally have been strong advocates of free trade. Recent years have seen a dramatic slowdown in world trade in farm products. In stagnant or slowly expanding markets there are strong pressures, on the one hand, for subsidies and other measures to promote exports at any cost, and on the other hand, for protection from world markets. The United States has tried to protect its trading position against these pressures. Unfortunately, the current international trading rules do not give us an opportunity to reap the full benefits of our clear comparative advantage in agriculture. And even these inadequate rules may be severely circumscribed by new protectionist measures and proposals that would perpetrate and expand the use of export subsidies.

W. Allen Wallis, the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, before the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture on October 18, 1983, said:

We generally think of protectionism in terms of measures such as tariffs or quotas on imports. Equally important and of great concern today are export subsidies, which also threaten to close markets to our Subsidies force U. S. farmers to products. compete with foreign governments, not foreign farmers. Unlike tariffs or quotas, export subsidies do not necessarily reduce total trade, but they do lead to distortions within the exporting country and within the world markets as importers shift to lower-prices, subsidizing suppliers. . . . High price supports lead to high profits for large, capital-intensive farmers, affecting the demand for farm machinery and for other inputs into the agricultural sector. Diversion of resources to the agricultural sector cuts profits in the non-agricultural sector. 60

If Henry George were alive today he would probably say: "I told you so! We should not have started the use of export subsidies, which only create inefficiencies, and, more important, permit land monopolies to prosper and small farmers to suffer -- there is no justice for the workingman in today's system."

Are Henry George's views on international trade relevant today? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" Primarily because George's views on protection and free trade were not restricted to international trade, but also dealt with how best to get economies to function in a way that would improve the quality of life in the world. The problem was not free trade vs. protectionism — this was as irrelevant then as it is today. For whichever side "wins," we will all lose. The struggle will continue to go on for a time, but it will not decide what kind of

world we are to have. We need a new concept of global economic growth to deal with the present situation -- one that incorporates the graduate removal of some barriers, such as, export subsidies, quotas, etc; one that, at least, recognizes the problems of the developing countries and the European Common Market and other economic integration entities; one that strives to bring equality into international trade.

Realistically, considering the current trade talks with the Japanese; the Group of 77's interest in protectionism; the debt problems of Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and others; the strength of the U.S. dollar; worldwide unemployment; and, the record inflation rates in most countries today, it is important for America to take the lead in a major program for world trade expansion.

We now live in an interdependent world. It is a fact that the irreversible trend is toward increasing economic interdependence. But we will delude ourselves if we think that protection can be completely overthrown in America by a movement along the lines of 1840s "Cobden Club" in England. Even George did not think it was possible in 1886.61 What we have to do is to address the problem of shrinking world markets. We need to develop short-run and long-run solutions to the problem.62

In the short run, we should:

- 1. Abolish tariffs and non-tariff barriers in certain key areas, such as textiles and automobiles. This should be the approach rather than offering across-the-board solutions. It would make it easier to see the results and measure their impact on the rest of the economy.
- Reduce the charges made on imports -deposits, port taxes, administrative fees. This

is an area where quick progress is possible because of the complexity and undisciplined nature of these charges. It will go a long way to establishing good will among governments.

- 3. Agree on principles governing the case of protective quotas. Quotas are unfortunate, but less so than other import devices. Since contrived uncertainty is the worst business deterent, flat quotas at least let businesspeople know where they stand. But an understanding to pare them down should be pressed.
- 4. Place limitations on the amount of tariff increases permitted when raw materials become manufactured products before being exported. Duties tend to rise steeply after processing. By curbing that escalation, the chance for broader production and more trade would rise.
- 5. Consider granting extra industrial concessions in return for agreement by other countries to buy more American farm goods. This would benefit most nations in the end because American farm productivity could be an overall plus for the world while access to the United States markets would create more jobs abroad.

In the long run, the developing countries must be able to get firm assurance of steady access to the markets of the advanced countries. We have to be careful because the newly industrial countries (NIC's) would flood the advanced countries with their products. However, whatever we promise, we must be prepared to be firm and act with the highest integrity. We have to be reliable trading partners.

All the so-called "first world" countries should join in arranging loans over and above the debt repayment needs of "third world" countries. This is important for long-run amiable relations and can take the form of mixed government and commercial bank loans.

Probably, the greatest help in the long run has come from the private sector -- the multinational corporations (MNC's). The United States is far behind Europe and the Japanese in terms of investment in the LDC's. Currently, about three-quarters of U.S. investment in the LDC's is in Latin America and this amounts to only 10 percent of the total of U.S. investment abroad. The Japanese investment in developing countries amounts to 60 percent of their total investment. It is interesting to note that the flow of investment to developing countries is declining, with 40 percent in ten countries -- Argentina, Brazil, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Phillippines, Singapore, and Trinidad. The United States has become an importer of capital. Our share of direct investment, according to the IMF figures, has fallen to less that 28 percent in the 1980s, from more than 60 percent in the late 1960s.63

We need to encourage more direct investment abroad, by reducing the taxes for U.S. MNC's. The notion that this would send more jobs abroad was dismissed by Henry George in 1866⁶⁴ and by others since. It makes more profits for stockholders and increases employment at home. U.S. multinationals can also help in transferring technology and skills which would perhaps instill a more positive attitude towards the work ethic.⁶⁵

The government officials in the developing world do not want to take away the industries in the industrialized world. Most of them do not want to be Marxists anymore -- they don't want to go to the Soviets. They are saying to those in the industrialized world: "Today, you need us as much as we need you -- you can live without us and we can live without you with our belts

tightened, but we both can do better. You need customers. We need to develop our human resources, which will give us the strength to deal with the other injustices in our society." This statement is related to the current situation, but if Henry George were alive today, he would agree with it.

Summary and Conclusion

We have traveled through history with Henry George. We discussed some of George's fundamental ideas as stated in Progress and Poverty. We looked at his influence or impact abroad and discovered that, indeed, he still has a tremendous following. At the turn of the century, it was much greater even than Marx. Today, many countries have adopted land-value taxation -- South Africa, Australia, Taiwan, Sweden, Denmark, Jamaica, Barbados, New Zealand, India. In the United States, Hawaii has also adopted this system; however, Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, Scranton, Harrisburg, McKeesport, and New Castle) has made the greatest strides to implement George's ideas. 66

George's views on international trade were mainly in favor of free trade. Indeed, he was in favor of "freedom" and, therefore, any restrictions on things moving in and out of a country would be intolerable. Furthermore, he believed in justice, compassion, ethics, and fair play. He was for human rights and against self-interest and corruption. He was for equality!

Here is the conclusion of the whole matter: that we should do unto others as we would have them do to us -- that we should respect the rights of others as scrupulously as we would have our own rights respected, is not a mere counsel of perfection to individuals, but it is the law to which we must conform social institutions and national policy if we would secure the blessings of abundance and peace.

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