

## PACE UNIVERSITY LEFT FORUM PANEL

(from pg. 6)

and did want to fight on the Union side but was out in California during that.

And, as far as aligning with the racist southern Democrats, Toby wrote:

The Republicans were even more Big Business in H.G.'s time than now. Even in a recent documentary on PBS about the robber barons they told about how (Republican president) Taft supported Big Business monopolies & (Democrat) William J Bryan was trying to counteract that. H.G. strongly supported Bryan & said the country was going to the dogs (or words to that effect) when Taft won. So being Democratic was what all those who favored the common working man did. And Hudson equates that with being pro-slavery because the South was Democratic.

I have left some more colorful denunciations of Hudson's view out of this family journal, but they could stand up just as well. There is simply nothing to the charge that Henry George was racist, classist, or even in the traditional sense, a free market libertarian-capitalist in the way it is meant today. As Hudson himself has pointed out on several occasions, when classical economists like George talked about the "free market" they meant a market where the economic rent was collected and business and individuals were otherwise free to produce and keep what they earned. It certainly didn't mean "free to do whatever you want and can get away with." That is a 5-year-old's definition of a free market. Not only is such a market immoral, it is unworkable and criminogenic. George recognized that and railed against it with sophisticated arguments for hundreds of pages in all of his books. It is why, as much for his economic theory, he continues to be read today, when his near-contemporary apologists like Malthus are not - except by those who love doomsday scenarios and do not wish to expend the energy to change them. (A whole sub-industry of economic doomsayers has sprung up to feed, and, in some cases, take money from, those who are too lazy, ignorant, scared, inept, or otherwise incapable of changing external events, or even their own lives. I recently wrote an article about this, "Countering Disaster Porn" for Opednews here: <http://www.opednews.com/articles/Countering-Disaster-Porn-by-Scott-Baker-130626-858.html>. I suspect some Disaster Porn aficionados were in the audience of the Left Forum, as these kinds of events attract passive onlookers looking for affirmation and inclusion, more than activists trying to change things. Often, they cheer the most those who promise the possibility of reform the least. This creates a cycle of passive-aggressive approval that few speakers may be able to resist catering to).

Hudson also seemed to be channeling his 2008 article in the American Journal of Economics and Sociology 67 (January 2008), pp. 1-46. My comments are in brackets [ ].

## Henry George's Political Critics

By Michael Hudson

ABSTRACT. Twelve political criticisms of George were paramount after he formed his own political party in 1887: (1) his refusal to join with other reformers to link his proposals with theirs, or to absorb theirs into his own campaign; (2) his singular focus on ground rent to the exclusion of other forms of monopoly income, such as that of the railroads, oil and mining trusts; [George, writing in 1868 in "What the Railroad will Bring Us" said: "The truth is, that the completion of the railroad and the consequent great increase of business and population, will not be a benefit to all of us, but only to a portion. As a general rule (liable of course to exceptions) those who have it will make wealthier; for those who have not, it will make it more difficult to get. Those who have lands, mines, established businesses, special abilities of certain kinds, will become richer for it and find increased opportunities; those who have only their own labor will become poorer, and find it harder to get ahead -first, because it will take more capital to buy land or to get into business; and second, because as competition reduces the wages of labor, this capital will be harder for them to obtain." <http://www.grundskyld.dk/1-railway.html>] (3) his almost unconditional support of capital, even against labor; [Not so. In an article by Richard Giles, Giles refutes Hudson's repeated charge specifically:

Here one may surmise is the truth about (Hudson's) criticism of George 'his almost unconditional support of capital, even against labour' and the 'alliance of his followers with the right wing of the political spectrum.' They were not a consequence of actions that George had taken. Nonetheless, this still represents a reformist movement akin to that of the physiocrats, one designed to make capitalism work more honestly, equitably, and efficiently. Hudson just does not regard that movement as a reform movement.

Right from the start George opposed (single-tax movement leader) Shearman's narrow and fiscal-driven doctrine of the "single tax limited" but, seeing him as a 'fellow-traveller', George also opposed those who would expel Shearman from the movement. His 'alliance' with Shearman in the opinion of some like Dr. Kenneth Wenzel did not serve the movement well. Hudson makes reference to Wenzel (2000) but does not point out as Wenzel does how Shearman helped turn the movement "from a philosophy of freedom to a nickel and dime scramble" (see esp. 2000, 75). These considerations make it difficult to accept the view that it was George who turned to 'capital' for support against 'labour' and that, in turn, later Georgists followed his path. REFERENCES: Wenzel, Kenneth C. (2000). "The Degeneration of the Georgist (continued on page 8)