



Henry George, Fr. Edward McGlynn, and Pope Leo XIII

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The following is a paper delivered to the International Conference on Henry George, November 1, 1997, at Cooper Union, New York; Professor Edward O'Donnell, Chair

1. Turbulent times

It was a different time, but often the same place (Cooper Union) in American history. It wasn't radio, but the age of spellbinding orators. Two of the best were Henry George and Fr. Edward McGlynn, who came together in 1886 to roil the waters of American politics and ideology. Through the Irish and Vatican connections, they also roiled world politics and ideology.

It was a time when the Republican Presidential candidate of 1884 (James G. Blaine) could be nominated by a professional atheist (Robert G. Ingersoll); and lose New York's Irish Catholic voters, and the election, for a casual slur accusing them of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion."

It was a time when Fr. Edward McGlynn, the most popular Catholic priest in NYC and the nation, could dispute the Pope and support public schools, marriage for priests (this point is disputed), the Fenian raids, abolishing poverty by public action, Henry George, and the single tax. His Parish, St. Stephens, was the largest and most influential in the U.S.

It was a time when the two leading candidates for Mayor of NYC in 1886 both declared they did not want the job.

Henry George was told Tammany would not let him win and he could "only raise Hell"; he replied he would run, to raise Hell. Abram Hewitt said he only wanted to prevent the election of Henry George, "the greatest possible calamity." Hewitt's later conduct in office, after winning by fair means or foul, demonstrated he had, indeed, little interest in the office itself. In eulogizing George in 1897, Fr. McGlynn said it was a blessing George lost, so he could devote his life to more important things. What was going on? Both candidates recognized the office as an extraordinary bully pulpit from which to broadcast ideas, as well as a commanding height with a great balance of power in the U.S. Electoral College.

It was a time of class warfare, when hundreds of thousands of workers were on strike.

2. Heritage of those times

It's been said that "All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today." If so, it follows that the flowers of today were in the seeds of yesterday. Professor Nic Tideman has recounted how his great grandfather from Sweden learned English by reading Henry George, and began a long Georgist dynasty. Drew Harris has told how he was sixteen before he realized that not all Quakers routinely discuss Georgism at dinner.

The exploitation of Ireland by offensive alien landlords produced the core, or at least the bulk, of Georgism in the U.S. I am a product of that, although, unlike Harris, I was past my

teens before I began to piece it together. My father's professional survival had demanded he be discreet before blabbering kids. His father had been an active Fenian, joining the raids on

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Oregonians Wake Up and Smell the Taxes

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It was front-page news. On October 19, Sunday (the day of largest circulation), Portland's major daily, The Oregonian, lead off with "Crowds overflow anti-growth conference". People came from as far away as Canada and the Frisco Bay area. Over 650 were registered for the rally/symposium at Portland State University; at least another 50 were turned away at the door (fire code permitted only 500 at one time in the ballroom, the plenary meeting room). Sponsored by dozens of local groups and agencies, "Alternatives to Growth" featured over 30 workshops with specialists.

Big names in the environmental movement addressed the sympathetic crowd. Alan Thein

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