

planning, economic geography, international development and development studies will find this book very useful, as will those generally interested in South Asian studies.

References

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Edward O'Donnell Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality

Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, pp. 376, paperback edition, \$35.

Reviewed by Franklin Obeng-Odoom

During the Gilded Age of the 19th Century, Henry George was a household name in political economic analysis of growth, inequality, and poverty. However, as Mason Gaffney shows in his famous work, 'neoclassical economics as a stratagem against Henry George', published in *The Corruption of Economics* (1994), the rise of neoclassical economics pushed Georgism into obscurity. Until recently, most political economists thought of Henry George merely as an advocate of land tax, while most development practitioners knew next to nothing about George's penetrating analysis of inequality. However, some resurgence of interest in Georgist political economy may result from the publication of John Pullen's *Nature's Gifts* (2015), a major book on Henry George's lectures in Australia, its review by Frank Stilwell in this journal (Stilwell 2016) and the recent release of P.J. Bryson's major book, *The Economics of Henry George: History's Rehabilitation of America's Greatest Early Economist* (2011), positively reviewed in the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* by Columbia University professor M.M. Cleveland (2013). The book under review - *Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality* (2015) - is yet another testament of the renewed interest in Georgist political economics in the modern gilded era.

The book is original in its aims and focus. Although, like Pullen, O'Donnell documents George's speaking engagements, O'Donnell covers a much wider scope. He provides a more detailed account of the social circumstances that gave rise to Georgism as well as how Henry George and the Georgists sought to transform those conditions. Unlike *Nature's Gifts*, which is centred on George as a famous speaker and reformer, the book under review looks at how George rose from obscurity and hardships to become the intellectual force behind a global movement against inequality.

Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality (2015) is divided into three parts. The first (pp. 3-68) is a personal biography of Henry George. The second (pp. 69-168) analyses the context within which Henry George developed his analysis and theories, while the third (pp. 169-276) identifies the attempt by George and workers to take control of the political system in New York City. The book contains an epilogue (pp. 277-82) where the author reflects on the significance of Henry George in the political economy of the Gilded Age. O'Donnell concludes that George was a colossus, glorified even by critics such as Frederick Engels' who observed that: 'The Henry George boom...was an epoch-making day...The first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the movement is always the constitution of the workers as an independent political party, no matter how, so long as it is a distinct workers' party. And this step has been taken, much more rapidly than we had a right to expect' (p. xxiii).

The approach taken by Professor O'Donnell – focusing on the political statements and activities of Henry George in contrast to focusing on his economics – is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength because it clearly distinguishes the book from other books such as *The Economics of Henry George* (2011) by Philip Bryson. It is a weakness because at least one of its major claims – that Henry George changed his principles and became less and less radical as he aged and lost the bid to become Mayor of New York – is apocryphal. Although seemingly well analysed by looking at how George backtracked on his statements in favour of socialism and his increasing friendship with the middle classes, his emphasis on land as the primary source of contradiction rather than the conflict between labour and capital, ignores or misunderstands the central tenets of Georgist political economy. This central tenet is *NOT*, contrary to what is claimed throughout the book, the 'single tax'. Rather, George's principal commitment was to equal access to land (not single

tax and not land value equality), a point strenuously argued by Richard Giles in his book, *The Theory of Charges on Common Land* (2016).

In spite of this limitation, *Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality* (2015) clears much fog over Georgism. It reveals that boycotts, protests, and working class organisation, while not on the menu of most Georgists today, were, in fact, a key part of Georgism. George endorsed them, encouraged them, and his early followers undertook them (see pp. 146-7). The book also reveals – contrary to what most political economists believe – that the support of George was mainly from workers. George was the candidate of the workers' party, the United Labor Party (ULP). Indeed, Marx and George were spoken of in the same sentence, as equals, both during and after their lifetime. So, 'special occasions like the return of Henry George or the death of Karl Marx were also marked by large rallies' (p. 141). Given that, today, the two movements are seen as opponents, the book's analysis of the historical alliance between Georgists and Marxists, is very useful and might be an additional reason why this book can be called 'revelations'!

Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality (2015) contains many substantial takeaway points. For a labour historian, the detailed analysis of the nature of the Gilded age, including an account of many cases of labour's success in its struggles with capital (see, for example, part 3, 'the great upheaval, 1886-1887') can show the effectiveness of labour's tactics of strikes and boycotts, including picketing 'boycotts' in front of offending employers. For political economists seeking to make an appearance in the field, the analysis that describes George's social impact (pp. 153-66) is a must read. This book also has much to offer to studies in global inequalities and development. Important lessons include the critique of philanthropy, whether of the Herbert Spencer-type (UK) or William Graham Sumner-type (America), the emphasis on working class struggles and the recurrent emphasis on growing inequalities as the key development problem. Regardless of which lessons is taken, we cannot overlook how unequal access to land casts a spectral shadow on every march of progress.

Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality is highly recommended to all political economists, particularly to those interested in global economic inequalities and development.

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Anne Haila

Urban Land Rent: Singapore as a Property State

Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2015, pp. 304, paperback edition, \$44.95.

Reviewed by Franklin Obeng-Odoom

In development studies, Singapore is often cited as a shining example of how adopting a culture of hard work and advanced capitalist behaviour can lead to the success of entire societies. The world development agencies are particularly notorious for presenting the Singaporean case thus and then proceeding to recommend a Singaporean Model. Others, emphasising cultural superiority, tend to claim that it is the 'Asian values' held by Singapore that explain its meteoric rise. So, the culture of poverty is scorned in favour of a Singaporean culture of progress.

In *Urban Land Rent: Singapore as a Property State*, Anne Haila disputes these claims and, in their place, advances a new thesis: that the rise of Singapore is best explained in terms of how the state owns and uses landed property. Singapore is regarded as a property state because it uses its land for social and economic transformation of the city-state and its peoples. Specifically, land is put to public uses such as public housing. Unlike the holy grail of privatisation advocated by the World Bank for the slimming down of the state, Singapore has taken a path of investing