

substantial fieldwork and data analysis he undertook in three urban centres where the economic and social transformations have been most striking. It offers deeper insight into the more complex transitions that have been occurring and the impacts on peoples' work and livelihoods.

According to Barnes, the key element in the story is the mass employment of informal labour. He demonstrates that there has been both a strong concentration of informal wage workers in formal sector enterprises and substantial growth in the number of waged workers employed in small enterprises. The fieldwork that he undertook in Mumbai, Bangalore and New Delhi gives a 'grounded' view of the nature of the jobs in areas of concentrated employment and the associated incomes and living standards of the people. It is a story of uneven and combined development, featuring industrial powerhouses, diverse forms of work in small businesses, deep inequalities based on caste, gender and class, sometimes bonded workers and recurrent industrial relations tensions.

The book ends with observations of the forms of resistance to the effects of the 'informalisation' processes that have been occurring. In his own words, 'Informalisation marks the most recent phase in India's historical development, intersecting with the neoliberal economic policies by successive governments. It has generated new modes of dispossession and exploitation among India's hugely diverse 'classes of labour'. Hope for the future lies with the resistance of these workers' (p.171).

John Pullen

Nature's Gifts: the Australian Lectures of Henry George on the Ownership of Land and Other Natural Resources

Desert Pea Press, Sydney, 2014, 225pp.

Henry George's influence as a political economist more than a century ago should not be underestimated. His best-known book, *Progress and Poverty* (first published in 1879), sold in prodigious quantities worldwide (passing 2 million by 1905). Some argue that neoclassical economics developed, among other reasons, to counter George's widely discussed views. The Australian Labor Party was strongly influenced by Georgist policy concerns in its early days. Yet today few students of economics

ever hear of him or engage with the socio-economic issues with which he was concerned. George's primary focus was 'the land question', explaining the injustices that arose from allowing land to be a source of unearned income. He made the case for site revenue collection by the state to be the principal basis for funding all government spending. His followers – the 'single taxers' as they came to be known - were numerous in frontier societies like the USA and Australia where the conversion of land from its natural state into private property created patently obvious inequalities between the 'haves and have nots'.

This new book by John Pullen's describes in detail what Henry George did after he came by ship from San Francisco to Australia in 1890. George's 98 day visit took him to 34 Australian cities and towns where he made extensive speeches to packed public meetings. Everywhere he attracted widespread interest because of his personal magnetism, strong arguments and ethical social concerns, often inspiring a 'semi-religious fervour' among his audiences (p.21). There was no recording of his speeches nor any lasting lecture notes for Pullen to use, but he carefully identifies George's main themes, drawing from newspapers that reported on the speeches he made during his crusade down under. Among other topics, George expressed affinity for trade unions, distinguishing them from his general opposition to monopoly and his advocacy of freedom of trade.

At first sight, Pullen's book looks to be primarily of interest for its detailed historical research. It transports us back to an era when public meetings were a mainstay of political activity and workers' education. Its attention to historical detail conveys a strong feeling for the events, atmosphere and concerns of that time.

It also has significant modern resonance. A thoughtful reader will be stimulated to ponder the consequences of governments' failure to implement the policies that Henry George advocated. Among the severe socio-economic problems in modern Australian cities, the inequalities associated with high-priced housing stand out starkly. Those high housing prices are driven mainly by rising land prices, fuelled by speculative processes. The consequence is unaffordable housing for young people and other households on below-average incomes, while wealthy landowners derive massive 'accumulation without production'. Perhaps the book should have ended with the plea 'please come back to Australia, Henry George, now we need you more than ever'.