

## 5. Strikes, Single Taxers, and the Labor Party.

God set our land in summer seas asleep,  
Till His fair morning for her waking came.  
He hid her where the rage of Old World  
    wars  
Might never break upon her virgin rest;  
He gave his softest winds to fan her breast,  
And canopied her night with low-hung stars.  
    John Farrell, 1893.

### Introduction

**B**ehind the sight of large delighted crowds enthusiastically applauding Henry George at every opportunity during his Australian tour, there was opposition. It ranged from the open and undisguised hostility of land-grabbers who feared that their prey might be snatched from them, to the jealousy of other reformers who saw George not as an advanced thinker, but as a competitor. Temperance people distrusted him because they thought he would support the abolition of protection on liquor and thereby contribute to drunkenness. Protectionists distrusted George because they thought that under his system Australian wage-earners and farmers would be exposed to the unrestricted competition of the cheap labour of other countries. Supporters of revenue tariffs distrusted the Single Tax because it proposed to abolish custom-

houses.<sup>1</sup> Socialists and Anarchists positively hated the Tax because it promised to accomplish the end that they were seeking without interference with individual liberty or individual property.<sup>2</sup> *The Bulletin*, too, was a constant and carping critic.

To combat the criticisms, and in order to be better understood, in April 1890 the New South Wales STL released its Manifesto; point one of which read: 'Every man is entitled to all that his labour produces. Consequently no taxes should be placed on any of the products of labour.'

The authors of the document were quick to point out that land as private property was a special case since, to use their language: 'All men are equally entitled to what God had created.' And in order to create equality of access the Single Tax contemplated the removal of all taxes on labour or the products of labour with the exception of one tax levied on the value of land, irrespective of improvements.

While a large part of the Manifesto dealt with explaining 'position,' and 'privilege,' and how these affected 'values,' they did not fail to mention that the Single Tax was not a tax on land, and therefore would not fall on the use of land and become a tax on labour. In short, the Single Tax would call upon people to pay taxes not in proportion to what they produced or had accumulated, but in

proportion to 'the natural opportunities' they held. It would compel them to pay just as much for holding land idle as for putting it to its fullest use.<sup>3</sup>

In essence, it was hoped that the Single Tax would take the weight of taxation off the agricultural districts where land generally had little value, and put it in the cities where bare land sometimes cost hundreds of thousands of pounds per acre. And since the Single Tax would dispense with a multiplicity of taxes and a horde of tax gatherers, it was thought that the Single Tax would make government less costly and more efficient. Furthermore, according to the Manifesto, the Single Tax would do away with the corruption and inequality that was 'inseparable' from the methods then current for collecting taxes which allowed the rich to escape while the poor were ground down.<sup>4</sup> It was also claimed that fraud would be minimized because unlike other assets, land could not be hidden or carried off, and its value was easy to ascertain.

Anxious to bring about the *millenium* the authors listed the wrongs of the world and pressed towards their perfect world railing all the way against Protection. Only through freetrade, or so they said, would it be possible for Australians 'to share through free exchanges in all the advantages which nature has given to other countries, or which the peculiar skill of other people has enabled them to attain.'<sup>5</sup>

### **The Impending Labour War**

took up their case. The Federation then proceeded to widen the struggle by putting pressure on the British-India Steam Navigation Company;<sup>8</sup> the object of which was to prevent the shipping of wool that had been shorn by non-unionists. The means of giving effect to the pressure was through the different maritime unions, who, it was suggested, would withdraw their men from all work to do with the British-India Company unless the company gave assurances that they would refuse to ship any wool from the non-union stations.

To intensify the pressure, meetings were arranged in all parts of the colony in support of the impending strike; and Brisbane tramway workers resolved to 'support the maritime labourers to the fullest.'<sup>9</sup> While pressure was thus being brought upon the British-India Company to involve them in the contest, the Queensland Maritime Council took advantage of the opportunity to assail the company for using non-union labour and to demand that the practice be discontinued. The suggestion was also made that five thousand horsemen should be employed to patrol the South Australian and New South Wales border to prevent non-union men from entering Queensland.<sup>10</sup> And news came in from London where it was intimated that the waterside workers were preparing to block the unloading of wool ships from Australia (though this was coupled with the condition that the colonial unions would have to supply the money which the strike would require).

It was a curious thing that in May 1890 (while Henry George was still in the country), just at the time when Australians were receiving all kinds of compliments from the representatives of English labour on the other side of the world as to the generosity and competence of their trade unions, the colonists were facing the gloomy prospect of extensive strikes in Queensland as a result of a dispute between the Shearers' Union and the owners of four stations on the Darling Downs. In one instance it appeared that as a consequence of this quarrel the whole waterside trade of Brisbane would be paralysed.

Around this time, too, the Rev. Hugh Gilmore was lecturing on the "Coming Conflict" in the Primitive Methodist Church, Wickham, in Newcastle.<sup>6</sup> At the lecture, chaired by James Curley, M P, Gilmore explained that by the coming conflict he meant the approaching 'battle' between the working men and the privileged classes.

Meanwhile in May 1890, the quarrel between the shearers and pastoralists arose from certain squatters insisting on their right to employ non-union labour. The question it seems was not merely one of wages but rather turned on the objection of the squatters to allow union rules to be introduced into their sheds. In essence it was the whole wide issue between some employers on one hand and the principle of unionism on the other.<sup>7</sup> Taking this to be the case, the Shearers' Union laid the matter before the Australian Labor [sic] Federation who warmly

## **The Great Strikes of 1890, 1891.**

Henry George left Sydney on the eve of what turned out to be the most serious confrontation between trade unions and employers up to that time in Australia: the 1890 Maritime (and Shearers') Strike (August – October) and the 1891 Queensland Shearers' Strike (January – June). 'Few, if any, strikes since that time have affected the community so generally.'<sup>11</sup>

The defeat of the unions in what came to be savage class conflicts was to be followed by an equally bitter struggle by Broken Hill miners in 1892, and in 1894 the Shearers were again locked out when they refused to bow to unilateral agreements on the part of the pastoralists.<sup>12</sup>

Broken Hill was involved only indirectly with the maritime strike of August 1890. Within a week of its outbreak the executive sent 500 pounds to the Labour Defence Committee (LDC) in Sydney and imposed a levy on each member.<sup>13</sup> John Howell, general manager of the B. H. P. mine, was concerned that the strike at Port Adelaide and Port Pirie<sup>14</sup> might delay supplies of coal, coke, and timber as every day the area of this struggle grew wider. In response to this fear a union delegation from Broken Hill visited the two ports in early September and persuaded striking unionists to unload coal and coke for the smelters and timber for stoping.<sup>15</sup>

As part of some necessary background, it should be pointed out that the history of trade unionism in Broken Hill began before the city's incorporation as a municipality in 1888 and almost before its first settlement. <sup>16</sup> In September 1884 a public meeting at the Adelaide Club Hotel at Silverton formed the Barrier Miners' Association with the object of promoting 'the mining interests of the silver fields by the close [sic] union and co-operation amongst the classes.' Reconstituted in Broken Hill in 1886 as the Barrier Branch of the Amalgamated Miners' Association (A M A), by 7 November 1889, it claimed a membership of 2,200 out of the 3,000 workers then employed at the mines, and shortly thereafter, had achieved compulsory unionism. 'Co-operation amongst the classes' had so far resulted in labour, always in short supply during the expansive early years, obtaining the upper hand. <sup>17</sup>

During his Australian tour Henry George had often been welcomed by trade unions as a reformer who sympathized with their cause, and he debated "Fretrade versus Protection" with W. Trenwith when he was in Melbourne. Nevertheless some protectionists sought to portray him as the enemy. To correct this impression W. E. Johnson, who was acting as George's campaign secretary, produced the following extract from a New York newspaper giving an account of a farewell demonstration to George on leaving New York for Australia:

Last, but not of less importance than any other feature of the demonstration, was the letter from T. V. Powderly, master workman of the Knights of Labor, wishing that Mr. George's visit to Australia 'may be productive of the greatest good to the cause of land reform,' and expressing the writer's hope that he may be able to welcome Mr. George on his return to America with the assurance that the converts to the true doctrine of taxation have been doubled during his absence. <sup>18</sup>

If George was the enemy of labour, the action of writing this letter by the chief of the largest labour organization in the world was, to say the least, peculiar.

By the beginning of 1890, thirty societies with 20,000 members were affiliated with the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council. In June when George was leaving Australia, there were 53 affiliated groups and their membership had grown to 35,000. <sup>19</sup>

By early September 1890, the Australian colonies were in the throes of an industrial war, the extensive ramifications and serious character of which was almost impossible to exaggerate. At that time the intercolonial shipping trade stood completely paralysed. The steamers running between the various ports were laid up, including those engaged in carrying coal, and thousands of men had voluntarily accepted standing-down or dismissal rather than forego the principles of trade unionism. This condition had arisen not from any sudden impulse, but



was the result of long standing grievances on the part of the men and of dissatisfaction on the part of the ship owners.

The true *casus belli* might now appear, nearly 115 years later, as it indeed it did then, as wholly insignificant and incommensurate with the far reaching and disastrous consequences of the quarrel. It arose from certain demands made by the officers of the steamers running to and from the port of Melbourne for increased pay and privileges which the owners refused to concede. <sup>20</sup>

The demands were not excessive, and would have been granted possibly, if the officers had consented to withdraw from the affiliation of their association with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. The owners argued that it would be completely subversive of all discipline on board their vessels if both officers and crew were members of a powerful labour organization, who possessed mandatory powers and might exercise them at any time to the prejudice of the interests of capital. <sup>21</sup>

Compliance with the claims of the marine officers would also have necessitated an increase in expenditure for wages of about 200,000 pounds per annum, leaving shareholders without a profit for the year. In 1890, and for some years, the dividends paid by the shipping companies directly involved in the initial dispute in Melbourne, Huddart Parker, Howard Smith and Sons <sup>22</sup> etc.,

were at the rate of 5 to 7 per cent., which, considering the risky nature of shipping, was insufficient return for the very large funds invested.

By September the Seamen's Union, wharf labourers and kindred associations had thrown in their lot with the officers (marine engineers remained 'neutral' and continued to work <sup>23</sup>), and trade organizations in New South Wales and Queensland had followed suit. The Shearers' Union was also in dispute; the Pastoralists demanded 'freedom of contract,' and the unionists responded with the demand for a 'closed shop.' In effect, the shearers were 'locked out,' and their places taken by non-unionists. All the trades employed in handling the wool, from the back blocks to the shipping ports, joined the men, and boycotted the wool from all stations where non-unionists had been taken on.

At the end of August stokers at the Metropolitan Gas Works in Melbourne also went out; and it appeared that unless the company could secure unskilled 'free labour' for their purposes the city would soon be left in darkness. There was also the possibility that the trains would stop running, from the lack of sufficient fuel. <sup>24</sup>

When it broke the strike was to involve up to 10 unions in New South Wales with up to 15,000 members as well as many unions and more than 50,000 workers <sup>25</sup> in basic industries throughout Australia and New Zealand.

One of the most serious reactions in connection with the crisis took place in Sydney on 19 September 1890. Early in the morning a number of trollies (flat bed wooden wagons with steel-rimmed wheels drawn by horses or bullocks) were sent to Darling Harbour to load wool stored there and take it to the Orient Company's wharf, Circular Quay, where it was to be loaded on the Orient ship *Lusitania*.

News that the wool was being loaded spread quickly, and a crowd of strikers soon gathered where the work was going on. By the time the loading was completed the excitement was intense.<sup>26</sup> At 10.30 eight loaded wagons rolled into the street, guarded by mounted police, foot police and "specials." Their appearance became the signal for an outburst of shouting and demonstration; and the trollies were quickly surrounded by crowds of men who made several attempts to stop the vehicles.

As the cavalcade wound down George-street, the city's main thoroughfare, the demonstrations became more aggressive, and missiles (including blue metal from between the tram lines) began to fly about freely, and several windows were broken.<sup>27</sup> At the junction of Market and George streets, when a trooper was making an arrest, the trooper, with his prisoner, attempted to get into a cab, but men lining the street barred his way and quickly dragged the prisoner back into the crowd. In the scuffle the cab was badly damaged, and one

of the unionists was nearly knocked senseless by a large piece of blue metal that was probably meant for the officer. Similar disturbances were kept up throughout the whole length of George-street, the wagons making their way as best they could amidst a running fire of threats, jeering and howling, the police having their work cut out to keep the roadway clear.

Around Circular Quay and Flood and Company's warehouses where the wool was to be unloaded, there was a large, excited crowd. The police force had been strengthened along the route, and numerous foot and mounted police had been rapidly drafted down to the wharf, but notwithstanding this it was extremely difficult to keep the crowd in anything like order, and a riot seemed imminent.<sup>28</sup>

As a last resort the authorities decided that the Riot Act should be read shortly after 11 o'clock, when the crowd at the quay – to the authorities at least – 'resembled a vast sea of humanity.'<sup>29</sup> From this action it seems clear that certain of those in charge were, under intense provocation, beginning to lose their nerve.

The Inspector-General, E. W. Fosbery, having given the order for attention, which was the signal for a further outburst of loud hissing and groaning, Nugent W. Brown, read the Riot Act (twice), but his words were, for the most part, inaudible.<sup>30</sup>

Since 1890 much has been written condemning 'police aggression' during the events following the reading of the Riot Act.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless when the order

to charge was given, there were at Circular Quay only 60 mounted troopers under Inspector Latimer; 200 foot police, under Inspector Reid; and 200 specials under Inspector Lenthall (sadly Inspectors Latimer and Lenthall did not appear in Stuart Svenssens's very readable and fuller account of this furore). As the crowd broke up before the police, who, using elementary tactics, simply drove them up side streets leading on to the wharf, and scattered them. To the credit of labour leaders present, it should be noted that most were tireless throughout in urging the men to desist from rioting. Apart from one man who was forced over the wharf who had to be rescued from the harbour, it seems none of the protestors was seriously hurt. On the other hand, Constable E. D. Smith, a mounted troopers from West Maitland, was overturned, horse and all. Smith was injured about the head, and had his right forearm broken.<sup>32</sup>

Unsurprisingly the rioting at Circular Quay did not end the matter. On another occasion local wage-earners resisted when mine owners brought in free labour to work pits in the Illawarra district.<sup>33</sup> In one famous incident miners' wives lay in front of a locomotive to prevent it from hauling non-unionists to a pit. However, a less heroic act was the tarring and feathering of a 'blackleg,' near Wollongong, by some union collier' wives.<sup>34</sup>

In 1890 Broken Hill was a prosperous place, and owing to the extraordinary developments at the mines, growth was such that the population

had increased from 10 to 15 per cent in twelve months. Such figures notwithstanding, amongst the large industrial capitalists, a more militant and more closely organized leadership had emerged. W. P. McGregor, chairman of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company (B H P), perhaps with the backing of powerful shareholders such as the Duke of Manchester and Thomas Playford M P, <sup>35</sup> rushed to lock out their miners before they could strike. The reason for so doing was plain enough; if the miners continued to work, the union levy that they were paying in support the shearers *et al*, would render the working of the mines detrimental to other large capitalists. <sup>36</sup>

Elsewhere, the specific issues which originally motivated the owners' attack quickly broadened into the demand for 'freedom of contract.' Professionals, small traders and the like, were frightened out of their previous relative neutral position and their dislike of big business by the fear of social breakdown. <sup>37</sup> In the strained circumstances the Government mobilized behind the cry of 'law and order.' Some 3,000 specials were appointed in New South Wales, and artillery was dispatched to Newcastle to confront striking mine workers in that city. <sup>38</sup>

Writing on 27 October 1890 for his American readership, Farrell said <sup>39</sup> that while there had been industrial trouble before, 'nothing on a scale so comprehensive as this. It suddenly paralysed the whole of the colonies and almost

brought business to a standstill. Only with the greatest difficulty could the various governments keep the railways running, and for some nights Melbourne was left in darkness through the stoppage of the gas works.' Farrell reported that the strike was nearly over, and lamented the fact that 'all workers who can get back will go at a loss rather than a gain, while non-union labourers under long engagements have taken the places of thousands of the unionists.'

His concluding comments are important in the light of the consequences of the failure of this and the Queensland Shearers' Strike in early 1891:

There is no doubt that in Australian unionism a splendid force exists which, if wisely directed, could accomplish almost anything in the way of legislation. Without question or murmur, in defiance of all risks and losses to themselves, the men threw down their tools everywhere and showed their readiness for any sacrifice whatever. The sacrifices were all in vain, and the complete failure of the strike has opened their eyes to the weakness of unionism when pitted against monopoly.

This strike appears to have failed, partly at least, through the calling out of the shearers in September. More than 20,000 of their number obeyed the call, and their striking, together with the fact that miners were locked out at Broken Hill and Newcastle, seems to have principally served to deprive the other strikers of funds.<sup>40</sup>

In a lengthy analysis of events around September 1890, Farrell wrote in the following January:

The conduct of the strike on the part of the labour leaders has been marked by a series of blunders. It has been the fashion to assume that the leadership of the trade unions of Australia was in exceptionally able hands, and this assumption has been strengthened by the almost unbroken record of success... It would now appear that there has been a sudden deterioration in the capacity of the leaders, or that their former success had not been due to their strength, but to the inherent weakness of a disunited body of employers. At all events we now have the glaring fact that when the united labour bodies are brought face to face for the first time in their history with the united employers, the leadership of the former goes all to pieces... If after this experience, trade-unionists... will allow themselves to be led by the nose in this fashion, to have the principles of trade-unionism discredited and the best interests of trade-unionism sacrificed by a handful of rash incapables, they will deserve all the suffering that comes upon them.<sup>41</sup>

In the meantime, because of his relevance to a later discussion of the Labor Party, it should be noted that as a result of the maritime Strike the LDC sent J. D. Fitzgerald, a compositor, to England to raise funds and support. He was an elegant young man (although Verity Burgmann<sup>42</sup> is critical of his attention to personal care) who once wrote his election manifesto on softly toned paper on



which was carried a delicately pencilled sketch of himself by Percy Spence, one of the country's best illustrators.<sup>43</sup>

His British experience began at Cannon-street railway station, after an overland trip from Naples. He was greeted by Burns, McCarthy, Sims and Michael Davitt,<sup>44</sup> the so-called hard men of industrial politics, representing the Seamen's, Dockers', and General Workers' Unions, and, in Davitt's case, the Land Leagues.

Fitzgerald applied himself to his task with vigour, criss-crossing Great Britain from Portsmouth to Edinburgh; and in a speech at the Dockers' Hall in Mile-End, East London, he called the Fabian Henry Hyde. Champion, then in Australia, a "traitor" [to the working class] for his infamous "lions led by asses" remark. Needless to say the almost wholly male audience of waterside workers were impressed with his aggression, and as a consequence, he was given the honour of unveiling a new banner for the National Amalgamated Seamen's and Firemen's Union, which was unfurled in London on 1 November 1890.<sup>45</sup>

He also took a second-class Cook's Tour to Germany, after visiting France and Italy, and while he was in Berlin met Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, the leaders of German socialism. However, in a very unsatisfying report of the meeting, the Australian said that 'little was achieved because of language difficulties.'<sup>46</sup>

The strikes in Australia had collapsed by this time, and returning briefly to London before taking passage home, he spent the few days left to him with Burns, Mann, Tillett and Hyndeman. And these men, in a parting tribute gave him a phonograph recording bearing a message of solidarity; also on the record, now lost, was a message from T. V. Powderly of the KoL.<sup>47</sup>

During his five months abroad Fitzgerald met, besides those already mentioned, Annie Besant (nee Wood),<sup>48</sup> well-known organizer of the match workers strike in 1888 (less well-known as a member of the Brahmo Somaj cult<sup>49</sup>), and Charles Bradlaugh, the self-admitted atheist M P with whom she was once on trial.<sup>50</sup> Fitzgerald also interviewed W. E. Gladstone, in the Prime Minister's private rooms in the House of Commons with Arnold Morley present.<sup>51</sup> The young visitor also had a meeting with Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Irish Party.

With an eye on the future, he also availed himself of a press-cutting service,<sup>52</sup> and amongst the journals that reported his activities were the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Chronicle and Globe*; the *Bristol Times*; the *Liverpool Post*, and *Manchester Examiner*; And, in Scotland, the *Scottish Leader* and *Glasgow Herald*. The *Irish Times* also reported his progress.<sup>53</sup>

As a postscript it should be noted, too, that Fitzgerald did not visit Ireland on this tour; although he was a cradle Catholic and from the early 1880s, a

regular at Sydney's most socially important Saint Patrick's Day celebrations, namely those at Need's Assembly rooms in Liverpool-street, which were almost always attended by the Premier and leading members of the Cabinet and Opposition.<sup>54</sup>

Fitzgerald's return to Sydney at the end of 1890 coincided with the Labor Council's organization of a number of Labor Electoral Leagues (LELs), and the formation of a committee to prepare Labor's platform.<sup>55</sup> Considerable progress was made over the following few months, and the first LEL was established in Balmain on 4 April 1891.

In passing, the seminal organizational role which Sir George Grey played in these arrangements has been largely overlooked, but it gives him claim to be regarded as far more than a Governor, or as simply someone with whom Henry George and John Farrell had spent time. On 4 June 1891, Sir George took his departure for New Zealand after having spent three months in Australia helping William Sharp, chairman of the TLC, and others, with organizing the Labor Party.<sup>56</sup>

While this work for the Labor Party was going on at the end of 1890, a most significant event for single taxers had arisen in January when Farrell relinquished the editorship of the *Australian Standard* to Frank Cotton. Cotton however was so involved in lecturing, that Farrell continued to assist, even

though the time for Henry George's arrival was fast approaching and he had been offered and accepted a position with the *Daily Telegraph*, which he took up in February 1890.

Another event that needs noting that year was the passing of the Sydney General Post-office Approaches Act, a measure largely due to the arguments of the single taxers. This measure gave the State the advance in value that would accrue to the adjacent land, by reason of the formation of a street [Martin Place] facing the Post-office. Although the question of the Single Tax did not directly arise with the legislative action, earlier newspaper articles on land nationalisation, and the unearned increment, familiarised a public usually apathetic to theoretical discussions, with the theories underlying the passing of the Act.<sup>57</sup> It was almost the first recognition of a great principle of public policy, which, Georgists hoped, would not be lost sight of in future legislation.

Balancing this win with his illness and recuperation in New Zealand, it is difficult to accurately assess Farrell's feelings in what were difficult times. He had to face and perhaps solve the problem as to whether he had used the wrong strategy, since in the world around him he saw

a premature hell, (in which) Man...is preyed upon by his kind

His reason has only helped him to bring anarchy to a higher development...the Churches preach peace and goodwill, and the archbishops solemnly bless bands of hired men departing to commit murder. The powerful anarchist seizes what belongs to others...in every aspect and condition of life there is war; every man's hand holds a lifted weapon...the landlord exacts the last possible farthing from his tenant, the tenant is forced to fight those next in order, so that he may get the largest amount of profitable labour for the smallest wage; the merchant must sell at the highest possible price, the most highly adulterated goods. The producer must do battle with all the powers until he is driven back to the verge of starvation. My Lord the Duke who has never worked but who draws half-a-million yearly in rent is the cause. All the others are effects.<sup>58</sup>

With Farrell in this mood, it is interesting to notice in the light of the elections of 1891 where a majority of the new Labor Party were British-born (*The Bulletin* claimed 28 out of 36<sup>59</sup>); that he saw unrestricted, immigration from Britain – rather than the much-maligned freetrade – as the most serious threat to impoverished Australian workers.

They will keep out his work, but let him in  
To work for them here, till women and children  
Slave their souls out for something to eat.  
That's their game – to put gold in their purses,

Wrung from fools who know not what they do,  
Yes the poverty...  
Will be passed, long-eared public, to you! <sup>60</sup>

One of those 'let in' was Joseph Cook (1860-1947), who arrived in 1885 and who, when part of the 'Farrell Circle' (Paul Stenhouse's term) at Lithgow 'was a Republican of the most crimson complexion' <sup>61</sup> who made his first political speech at Eskbank in 1887. Cook was then a Lithgow miner and was known as the 'opium eater' because of his frequent bouts of introspection. <sup>62</sup> Farrell's verdict on the speech at Eskbank was that if Cook had had a gun he would cheerfully have blown off all the crowned heads of Europe, and chanted a triumphant *Te Deum* over the last of the royal corpses.

Not much more than twenty years on, the same Joseph Cook (later Sir Joseph) who in 1890 had been a member of the LDC was to become leader of the Commonwealth Liberal Party. He would have abandoned (or been abandoned by) his erstwhile comrades, fulfilling Farrell's prediction that Cook 'would one day wipe the coal grime from his hands and seek a larger life.' <sup>63</sup>

Cook was elected as the Labor member for *Hartley* in 1891, and served as Prime Minister of the Liberal Party in 1913 into the early months of the war.

Nonetheless in the late 1880s, Cook, along with Frank Cotton, Joe Lesina, Bertram Stevens, T. J Hebblewhite and W. E. Johnson, were all encouraged by

Farrell to serve the 'cause.' Cook as it turned out, served as long as it suited him until, following his natural proclivities, he finished up with new, more powerful friends in the leafy harbour-side suburb of Bellvue Hill, in a home designed by Professor Leslie Wilkinson.<sup>64</sup> However, it should be said that the cause whatever it was, was at that time much in need of some clear definition. "Neither 'Fretrade' or 'Protection' was an unequivocal term, and John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Edward Bellamy and Henry George between them turned simple, seemingly clear terms like 'wages,' 'labour,' 'capital,' 'wealth,' and even 'land,'" <sup>65</sup> into jargon that only 'insiders' understood.

In a related matter, some years earlier in 1887, the Protection Union, a kind of Manufacturers Association, became concerned and decided to set up their own paper, the *Australian Star*, with W. H. Traill as editor. Farrell, through his journals, and the *Star*, argued constantly with each other from 1887 to the last issue of the *Single Tax* in April 1898. The following short poem by Farrell in 1889 was typical:

I'm a failure at graft, that is true,  
I have never got into the knack of it,  
And I find the next best thing to do,  
Is to blame foreign trade for the lack of it.  
What can I do now to earn toke,

I must get it, or else be run in again  
Here a light in his intellect broke –  
“I will write for the *Star!*” said M’Finnigan.<sup>66</sup>

Around the same time the LDC, in Sydney, decided to publish its own paper, *The Australian Workman*, with Dr. Oswald Keating, as editor.<sup>67</sup>

It was not a happy choice. As it turned out, Keating, who had only arrived in Australia in July 1890, was a ‘confidence-man,’ who had been in jail in at least three countries. Nevertheless, the first issue of *The Australian Workman* appeared on 22 September, 1890, and was published at strike headquarters in the Australian Coffee Palace, at 280 Castlereagh Street. It claimed to be ‘the official organ of the trade unions of N.S.W.’ and among its directors were T.E. Colebrook, Chairman, Typographical Society, P.J. Brennan, President of the TLC, T.J. Houghton, Secretary of the TLC, and John Grant, a single taxer, from the Stonemasons’ Union.

The Queensland Shearers’ Strike (or lock-out) was precipitated by a letter from the ALF to the Pastoralists’ Union in January 1891, calling for a conference. The Federated Employers Union replied that this would be agreed if the principle of ‘freedom of contract’ was accepted (that is, individual negotiations for wages and conditions as opposed to collective bargaining through the unions). Victorian unemployed shearers poured into Queensland. With Government help they were



taken to the sheds from a central point at Rockhampton. There were around 150 sheds in Queensland, of which only twenty began shearing in February, so large numbers of men were assembled in a few places, principally Barcaldine and Clermont, where up to 1,000 men were camped; and artillery, volunteer troops and armed police were in position to break up shearers' picket lines.<sup>68</sup> The immediate issue that provoked the dispute was said to have been:

The squatters are offering an obnoxious agreement to bushmen individually, and ignoring their unions, and are instituting sweeping reductions of bush laborers' wages. The agreements offered ignore the eight hours system, put white, yellow, brown and black labour on the same footing as White Australia...Laborers' wages are reduced in Queensland from 19 to 33 per cent.<sup>69</sup>

As tension increased, the police magistrate at Barcaldine was requested by the manager of the Darr River Downs to instruct young men sent from Brisbane to assist the armed special constables and troops, 'in the way they should shoot!' The same magistrate offered free rations and police protection to anyone prepared to return to work.<sup>70</sup>

Plainly put, there was a good deal of provocation during the dispute. There were daily parades by the infantry in the towns, and by mounted men in the countryside.<sup>71</sup> All trains were preceded by a pilot engine to test the safety of the

track, and at Charleville, the police repeatedly read out the Riot Act.<sup>72</sup> Estimates vary, but the historian Joe Harris reported that some placed the ratio of police to unionists as high as one to five in parts of western Queensland.<sup>73</sup>

Acting as a Commander-in-Chief for the Government was R. A. Ranking, the government agent and police magistrate for Rockhampton who, on 25 March with two hundred soldiers in support, had the Barcaldine and Clermont Strike Committee arrested 'without a warrant.'<sup>74</sup> The men were then released and re-arrested on conspiracy charges, and twelve of them were ultimately imprisoned for three years. To many, the men were revolutionaries and sections of the press in Sydney covered the events with their own 'War Correspondents.' Not surprisingly, the *Sydney Morning Herald* encouraged the Government to 'vigorously' suppress the strike.<sup>75</sup>

Dealing with the question of bias and the press's *penchant* for disinformation, in one example Farrell wrote a poem entitled 'O' Calligan's Apple,'<sup>76</sup> about the alleged attempt by unionists to murder a soldier in the Gympie Mounted Infantry who was given an apple which made him ill (but was later shown not to have been poisoned).

However, it was largely the set-backs and opposition in the strikes of 1890 and 1891 that consolidated, if only for a while, the strength of the New South Wales TLC. As mentioned *supra* the TLC had grown more than 50% in

1890; its ranks swelled by the addition for example, of the Amalgamated Navvies and General Labourers' Union with over 1,400 members.<sup>77</sup> With the continuing growth by November 1890 the Council felt secure enough to announce that any societies affiliated with them who were in dispute and who wanted their support, must, before striking, place themselves entirely in the hands of the Council. In no case would the Council support any union not complying with the order.<sup>78</sup> Such an order, however, so bureaucratic in its tone, would be critical in turning workers' thoughts towards new strategies.

It should also be noted that Frank Cotton and Joseph Cook had been prominent in the LDC during the Maritime Strike, and that the secretary of the Royal Commission into the strikes that followed was Percy Meggy, another prominent single taxer. By the end of 1890 however, there was a growing belief – provoked by the Strike – that political rather than industrial action held the key to success. Single taxers were already of that opinion in 1889 and a resolution to set up a third party was, as mentioned *supra*, defeated by only one vote.

That single taxers and others socialists, provided an ideological base on which to erect a political arm for the working classes, as a substitute for the discredited trade union movement in New South Wales is demonstrable. As is the

uncomfortable fact that many historians have largely ignored the influence of the single taxers in the labour movement of the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>79</sup>

The failure of the strikes in 1890 /1891; and the hardship for wage-earners that followed, was to Farrell's way of thinking the consequences of the unsound economic policies held by union organizers. For example, their proposition to intercolonial shipowners during the maritime strike, that instead of competing 'fiercely' with each other, they should lay up some of their vessels and charge higher freight and passenger rates so that they might pay higher wages.<sup>80</sup> But while the proposal was practical up to a point, it was counter-productive 'since the reduction of facilities for trade means a reduction in the volume of trade.' The 'fault' in the suggestion Farrell wrote; 'was that the law of supply and demand is lost sight of.' He continued, 'nor would the workmen as a class be benefited by such a step. By the withdrawal of some vessels a number of maritime workers would be thrown out and left to compete for work with the others. This, even if the shipowners derived any advantage from combination and increase of freight and fares, would enable them to use cheap labour. According to Farrell it was the big landowners who were the real 'villains' by demanding from anyone supplying the public need, be they labourer or capitalist, the highest toll [rent] they can pay. He wrote: 'these landowners are on strike against labour and capital and against the whole community, not intermittently and hopelessly like the

unfortunate wage-earners, who desperately throw down their tools now and then, but all the time and with the perfect certainty of always winning. What was needed was not trade unionism so much - upon which labour had leaned too readily - but an end to land (and other) monopolies.

He also believed Australian workers could learn something from the 'recent defeats' of the KoL.<sup>81</sup> It seemed natural to trade-unionists, in Farrell's view (and here he was specifically addressing his remarks to William Lane), that if a majority workers combined to make demands that were not unreasonable their employers would have no choice but to comply. Nonetheless put to the test at the hour of their supreme strength the KoL failed utterly:

Organized labour was no match for the power of monopoly, which secure in the possession of the avenues of production could bid labour submit to its terms or stay idle and starve. Organized labour found that organized capital fended by a protective tariff from the competition of outside capitalists *but free to pick and choose from outside labour markets* (Farrell's emphasis), was master of the situation.<sup>82</sup>

As an illustration he made the point that unemployed shearers in Victoria or New Zealand were free to cross borders that Victorian or New Zealand wool and other products could not, owing to the tariffs that were imposed. The

consequences of Protection were no different in Australia from the situation of protectionist America.<sup>83</sup>

He held the position, set down in numerous articles, that land and all the raw materials or natural opportunities upon which labour and capital could produce anything<sup>84</sup> was so monopolized that both labour and capital could only get free access to such work as would keep the one alive and reproduce the other. 'Therefore,' he wrote, 'any more productive avenues they seek to use take from them such a portion of their product in rent that they are practically always working at the most unprofitable levels possible.'<sup>85</sup>

Farrell continued

The rate of wages and interest...is determined wholly by the degree of land monopoly reached in any particular country, or, in other words, by the number of labourers or capitalists seeking to use one particular avenue of production. If these are many, rent is high and wages and interest low; if few, the exact reverse is the case. The 'standard of comfort' is controlled by this measure of accessibility of productive power to raw material. And while monopoly has the power to prevent production...I fail to see any possibility of trade unionism having the general beneficial effect claimed for it. Monopoly need not yield an inch to allow the increase in production from which alone the whole field of labour could receive substantial benefit.

To show how private land ownership takes from labour any advantage it might temporarily win, he cited the recent case of workers at the Woolwich arsenal who, having won a rise of 1s a week were asked by local landlords for an extra 6d a week in rent. One of the workmen affected issued a handbill explaining that he had been evicted and was in court for refusing to pay the extra 6d.<sup>86</sup> Farrell lamented that the owners of the working men's houses would take for their permission to live in them, not only half but ultimately all that the advantages that a working man might reap and wondered if there was anyone who did not believe that in good times rent was the first thing to rise, and in depression the last thing to fall?

In a summary of the value of certain ideas then current he wrote:

Trade unionism, co-operation, federation of labour, people's banks and all other such means signify nothing in the large and general sense.

Monopoly has circumscribed the bounds in which labour and capital can work and forced both of them into the same dire straits. Nothing will avail unless it can open the way to the larger production necessary for general betterment.

He continues:

If all the labourers of England banded together they could not under present laws compel the owners of England to open the closed gates or

take less rent. Strikes and industrial cataclysms waste capital and reduce wages, but do not turn deer parks into cornfields. Any gain labour gets through combination and strikes is eaten up beforehand in the cost of getting, while capitalists are reduced to the ranks of labour and set in competition with it. Capitalists, unaided by any monopoly, are continually failing...Of the thousands of small tradesmen who are capitalists without monopoly advantage, how many fail for those who succeed? Of the “blacklegs” who fight organized labour, how many have been, in some degree, capitalists once...Any gain to labour from capital can only mean more blacklegs, while rent picks labour’s pockets of the gain.

He also made it clear that capitalist’ monopolies of factories and mines and so on, would cease with the taxation of land values. In the meantime: ‘trade unionism has no power in itself to better the general condition... of labour, and therefore can only help some labourers to the cost of others... Like Protection by tariff, trade unionism is warfare, and not only warfare between labour and capital, but between labour and labour.’<sup>87</sup>

### **Labor in Parliament**

As background, it should be noted that the Parkes government had resigned in January 1889, when Parkes chose to interpret a snap division against his ministry as a vote of no confidence. Dibbs became Premier for a while but lacked the numbers in the House and was forced to call elections in February, by which time Parkes had resigned the leadership of the Freetrade Party because his



followers seemed to be growing away from him.<sup>88</sup> But the freetraders did well in the election and Parkes gracefully took back the leadership, ousted Dibbs, and entered upon his fifth and last Premiership which was made memorable, in part, by the emergence of the Labor Party.<sup>89</sup>

The election of the Fifteenth Parliament was held on 17 June 1891, and produced some surprising results. Among them, almost one-third of the members of the Assembly had never been in Parliament, and many were young; the average age of members falling from 49 years before the election to 43 afterwards.<sup>90</sup> 'Skilled and unskilled workers made up a record 17 per cent of the total membership and the number of businessmen also increased.'<sup>91</sup> Parkes did not lead his party to victory in 1891 – the Protectionists, won 51 seats, and the Free traders 48; there were also 5 independents<sup>92</sup> and Labor Party candidates were successful in 36 seats out of the 45 seats which they contested.<sup>93</sup> The formidable array of potentially antagonistic members surprised but did not daunt Sir Henry who, resourceful as ever, enticed the new Labor members to support him, and so remained in office.

In spite of the good result for Labor it would be a mistake to assume that their vote represented handworkers or manual workers only. A good deal of their support came from those who would not usually have been regarded as "working men" in the strict sense, and who had no sympathy with the methods employed

by the unions in recent strikes. Nonetheless, many voters were pleased to see workers adopting constitutional methods to obtain the reforms to which they felt themselves entitled.<sup>94</sup>

Others voted for Labor because they thought the party was bound to a certain platform, thinking that if selfish interests were able to retard the useful planks in that platform which the public at large desired, it would be wage-earners who would suffer most. Labor representatives were on trial; and many voted simply to give them a trial.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Billy Hughes said as much when he wrote: 'many middle-class people must have voted for the Labour [sic] ticket.'<sup>96</sup>

Among the causes that contributed to Labor's success two stood out. The lessons learned from the recent strikes was one<sup>97</sup> – the other, the Payment of Members' Act, wisely made by the Fourteenth Parliament which, so it was hoped, would bring the poor but thoughtful wage-earners to the fore.<sup>98</sup>

While J. D. Fitzgerald was one of those elected, it should be noted that in terms of the number of Australian-born Labor candidates who were successful, he was in a minority. Most of the successful Labor candidates were born overseas. Twenty were born in England; two in Scotland; two in the United States; and one each in Ireland and New Zealand. And while it was true that large numbers of visitors and immigrants were constantly entering the country, some of those elected had spent fewer than six years in Australia, and it seems, to this

writer at least, that this period was too short for candidates to become sufficiently “Australianised” to be truly concerned with conditions and social inequalities.<sup>99</sup>

Joseph Cook, who called himself a single taxer might prove the point. In any well-ordered civilization, it’s doubtful if those with such limited residence would ever be permitted to stand for parliament. An extension of this idea is reflected in the American Constitution, where only those born in the United States may become President. Cook, like Hughes and other political chameleons, sold his gifts of oratory, learned as a Methodist lay-preacher, to the highest bidder. It should also be noted that George Smailes (1862-1934), a Primitive Methodist minister, originally won the ballot to represent *Hartley* for the Labor Party. In the ballot taken only in June 1891, Smailes defeated Cook, but inconveniently one day later, became ill and was unable to begin electioneering immediately even though the time for the general election was very close. Hence, in what now might best be described as a coup, Cook’s supporters were able to call an emergency meeting and promote their man who had finished second in the ballot, into the role intended by the rank and file for Smailes.<sup>100</sup>

Of those from overseas and who had spent sufficient time in the country to be genuinely concerned, in this writer’s mind at least, were McGowen, who was born on the ship coming out; Newman, Johnson, Houghton, Newton,

Williams and Hindle, who all arrived young ranging in age from 2 years to 14 years.<sup>101</sup>

Of the two Scots; John Kirkpatrick came to Australia at 31 years of age in 1871, and George Black, two years later, aged 19. While the arrival dates for Danahey and Vaughn [sic], the two Americans are not known, it is known that Andrew Kelly, aged 26, arrived from Ireland in 1881. Of those who were foreign-born Arthur Rae, a New Zealander, completes the list; however, despite the fact that he only settled permanently in New South Wales in 1888, he did have a long-standing association with Australia through John Rae, his famous father who was a colonial painter of considerable note.<sup>102</sup>

The ten successful Australian-born candidates were Fitzgerald, Cotton, Edward Mann Clark (not to be confused with G. D. Clark), Gough, Gardiner, Hollis, Hutchinson, Langwell, Mackinnon and Morgan, and their small number endorses the motion hotly debated by J. S. T. McGowen and the Debating Society at St. Paul's Church, Redfern, where McGowen himself worshipped, on the old complaint that the 'prominence given to sport was prejudicial to the community.'<sup>103</sup> Or more plainly, too much time was wasted on sport.

C. L. Garland, senior member for *Carcoar* refused to stand in 1891 and J. Plumb the junior member, stood again but lost in a close vote. C. J. Donnelly (P),

and C. E. Jeanneret (FT), who 'was a federationist favouring a land tax' <sup>104</sup> and who had been in the thirteenth parliament, won the seat.

At least seven Georgists entered parliament for Labor in 1891, Cook, Danahey, Hollis, Cotton, Hindle and <sup>105</sup> Rae, and George Black <sup>106</sup> who won in *West Sydney*, was the seventh. <sup>107</sup> Others sympathetic to Georgism stood as straight out Freetraders. Notwithstanding, Georgists would do better later since William Hughes, William Holman and George S. Beeby, who had been won over during Henry George's barnstorming tour in 1890, with James Ashton, Walter Johnson (the Commonwealth Parliament) and William Afflick <sup>108</sup> were all at this time single taxers. And, - along with Cotton - Hughes, Holman and Beeby were all members of the Balmain Single Tax League.

Hughes's first published work was a letter to the Editor of the *Democrat* <sup>109</sup> when Farrell was editing it. It was largely due to Farrell's prompting 'that Hughes wrote the series which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* presenting *The Case for Labour* in the early part of the century.' <sup>110</sup> This being said, it should be noted that good writers such as Louis Esson, who also condemned Hughes for moving from the ASL to the Labor Party, found the book, 'dreadful.' <sup>111</sup> However, according to Farmer Whyte, that John Farrell and William Hughes should find themselves on common ground 'was in the natural order of things.' <sup>112</sup>

As we are considering the new party and its relationship to the single taxers, some premises need to be established. For example; the early Georgists, including all those who formed the nucleus of the Labor men in the 1891 parliament, were not opposed to trade unionism. More than that, with the exception of Dr. Hollis and George Black, all were unionists; Joseph Cook was a miner; C. J. Danahey was an engine fitter; Arthur Rae, whose occupations included shearing, mining and general labouring, was involved with the Shearers' Union both before and after his arrival;<sup>113</sup> And Cotton, who has been described as a "bushworker," besides membership of the LDC, represented trade unions on the TLC. In the circumstances it is difficult to see why Bede Nairn came to the conclusion that Frank Cotton's trade unionism was limited, ideologically flawed by Georgism, and hence suspect on the (Trades and Labor) Council.'<sup>114</sup>

Moreover, to charges in the *Australian Workman*, edited by a young poet friend of Farrell's, Edwin Brady, and E. W. O'Sullivan, an old friend, that trade unions opposed the Single Tax in the United States, Farrell replied that the KoL had 'placed the Single Tax prominently on their platform and declared Protection to be a fraud.' And, 'up to 11 June 1893, over 780 branches of unions in the United States had expressed their adherence to the Single Tax theory.'<sup>115</sup> The Secretary of the TLC, J. Riddell, denounced by the *Workman* as 'not a *bona fide* workingman'<sup>116</sup> (whatever that meant), was himself a single taxer.

Considering the Single Tax and Socialist Leagues, Nairn also said: 'both reflected the deep concern with many colonists the paradoxical misery that seemed to deepen as industrial capitalism expanded. The humanity of members of these Leagues clashed with their missionary zeal, but this did not prevent them from appealing to a variety of radicals, some of them trade unionists.' In fact it was mainly the unionists among them who 'fanned the fires of reform,' <sup>117</sup> and in the case of the single taxers, held the Labor Party together through the crises of 1891 and the years following to 1895. <sup>118</sup>

Despite claims that neither single taxers nor socialists 'had a framework of rural support to compare with the bush auxiliaries' of the Trades and Labor Council <sup>119</sup> we find that by 17 September 1891 the TLC had recognized eighteen Labor Electoral Leagues LEL, of which fifteen were in the city, and three in the country, while in July 1890 there were seven city Single Tax Leagues, and twenty four country. <sup>120</sup> The bush base of the Single Tax Leagues was its strength: 'and the Electoral Leagues set up by the TLC after the debacle of the 1890 / 1891 strikes were in many cases grafted onto an already existing Single Tax League body.' <sup>121</sup>

Moreover, it is an oversimplification for Nairn to claim that single taxers had been 'invited into the [Labor] Party,' but 'had to be kept in their place, fixed by their minority status, however useful their ideas.' <sup>122</sup> The single taxers

welcomed proposals to establish a “Labor Party;” they were its vigorous advocates in both city and country, they joined the LELs, and when their loyalty was tested in October 1891, we find that the seventeen who remained faithful to their pledges, (out of the original 36 members) included all of the single taxers.

It might also be claimed that without the socialists and the Georgists the LELs would have been toothless tigers, if they could have been formed at all. The parliamentary Labor Party was less a creature of the trade union movement, than a product of idealistic unionists and non-unionists disillusioned with ineffectual industrial action. What was to become the platform of the first Parliamentary Labor Party was drawn up by three trade unionist of whom one, Frank Cotton was a dedicated single taxer (assisting Farrell to edit the *Democrat* at the time), while the other two, T. J. Houghton and R. Boxall, were protectionists. It is a tribute to Cotton’s oratory powers that almost all the planks of the single taxers were included amongst the 16 finally approved by the TLC.<sup>123</sup> But the fact remains that many of the delegates were convinced single taxers. Even Houghton commented to the *Star* that some of the strongest protectionists on the Council voted for the land taxation plank, and added that the adoption of the plank ‘points to the majority... (being)... land taxers.’<sup>124</sup> Houghton, in this instance, was actually defending Cotton and Labor unity against attacks in the *Star*. The *Bulletin*, too, opposed the Single Tax and during the election campaign of 1891,



claimed: 'There is no doubt they [the Georgists] are using the Labour [sic] Party... that they have great power is equally certain...are the single taxers leading the Labour Party by the nose?' <sup>125</sup>

Similarly, at a meeting of the TLC on 2 January 1892, Cotton's enemies at the National Association grudgingly reported that the platform of the LEL had been drafted by Cotton and that: 'the whole of the delegates were single taxers who wished to conduct its business without the authority of the Council which brought it into existence.' <sup>126</sup>

By 1891, the notion of a tax on the unimproved value of land had become a tenet as basic as protection to many in the labour movement. If single taxers worked for that, a single tax, they were prepared to applaud any moves in what they considered the right direction. Farrell encouraged the socialists provided they supported land value taxation:

The socialists are the first considerable body of reformers who have recognized that labor [sic] has rights, that what men want is not better payment and shorter hours in the way of concessions or favours, but that every human being has an indefensible right to life and to all that may be requisite to satisfy its needs. They are at least on the right scent in that respect and between them and the advocates of the single tax there is no quarrel. They agree with us that land must be nationalised, but feel that something further is necessary, namely the nationalisation of all means of

production, exchange and distribution. We, on the other hand, believe that with the nationalisation of land everything they seek to accomplish will be done... and join with the Socialists... in striving to secure equality of access to natural opportunities of production among men.<sup>127</sup>

In his important work, Bede Nairn argues that one of the weaknesses of 'other political groups, concentrating on single panaceas' was that they 'were incapable of perceiving the real needs of the times.'<sup>128</sup> Those who judge that a tax that would shift the burden of taxation from the poor to the rich; end land speculation; and settle large numbers of people into prosperous agrarian communities, and so on,<sup>129</sup> will make their own judgement. But it should also be noted that Farrell had argued vigorously for the Payment of Members for years. And in answering the question of what it was that single taxers wanted? Cotton answered: 'The whole unearned increment.'<sup>130</sup> He was also wanted to bring in old-age pensions, and reduce postal and telegraph rates.<sup>131</sup> 'All reforms under the Single Tax would,' Cotton said: 'be achieved without "bloody revolution," without any sudden disorganization of the social order, and without any dangerous upheaval of existing institutions.' A final point that might fully test Nairn's claim that Georgists did not perceive the 'real needs of the times.'

### **Freetrade or Protection?**

The fiscal question was being tested and debated in all the advanced nations when Labor came into the parliament in New South Wales in 1891. No conscientious representative could ignore it. It mattered very much indeed, especially to wage-earners, whether they had to pay custom house duties on all of their purchases. The two systems were antagonistic. Choosing one over the other was vital, touching as it did food, clothing, building materials and the supply of all goods into homes, factories and farms. <sup>132</sup>

But certain election results show how empty was the cry of “sinking the fiscal issue,” with which injudicious leaders had shackled Labor. Cotton, an avowed freetrader, ran for Labor against a freetrade candidate at *Newtown*. In accordance with Labor rules, Cotton, while maintaining that all forms of taxation, except those on land values were an anathema, said in the same breath that the fiscal issue must be sunk. <sup>133</sup> In the circumstances it was improbable that his apparent change of heart won him the vote of a single elector with a protectionist bent; nor would the change have endeared him to freetraders. In the seat of *Wellington* J. Riddell “sunk the fiscal question” in accordance to the new policy of negation, and was himself sunk. Clearly the declaration of indifference to taxation schemes on the part of any candidate endorsing the LEL’s platform was a transparent insincerity. Plainly put, Riddell was ‘gagged,’ and thus prevented

from making any honest declaration of his fiscal beliefs. Not surprisingly he found the voters unwilling to accept his silence on the matter, nor would they trust him to choose whatever course he thought best afterwards.

As for the colony's best known political figure, Parkes's run as Premier in 1891 was shorter than he would have liked. Shortly after the election he became unsettled when Labor put its policy of support in return for concessions into effect, and did not try to retain their support when the party stood firm on the eight-hours clause of a coal mines regulation bill.<sup>134</sup> He took advantage of a procedural defeat to resign in October 1891, and left the Treasury benches for the last time. Labor then swung its support behind Dibbs, whose protectionist ministry held office until the elections in 1894. G. H. Reid succeeded Parkes as opposition leader.

Between July and November there seemed to be an inclination among a small section of the parliamentary Labor Party to abandon their past position on the fiscal issue and put their relations to that question in an entirely new light. Sympathizers with the strategy, argued that Labor members had no right to oppose Dibbs in bringing protection forward if he kept his word and gave electors one vote each ('one-man-one-vote'). They also argued that if Dibbs brought it in, people could reject or endorse the policy at the next election with plural voting abolished.<sup>135</sup>

Such thinking was, however, simply a specious plea for the abandonment of views they had hitherto held on the subject. The fiscal question was not sunk during the general election by the Labor Party, or afterwards, because it was not important. On the contrary, it was widely recognized as being of the very greatest importance. But by November the prevailing sentiment amongst Labor members was that to wage-earners other measures were more urgent and should be dealt with first. In response to this notion, they decided to vote solidly against any discussion of the fiscal question that would delay consideration of these measures; and generally expressed the view that a plebiscite should be taken when the time came for dealing with the tariff issue. Once Dibbs came to power, however, he did not propose to give equality of voting to the electors, but only a 'bogus' bill before attempting to alter the fiscal policy over the heads of the people and relegate to the background all the legislation which labor members had once supported.

The latent divisiveness of the fiscal question became clear on 10 December when Reid moved a motion of censure against the government designed to appeal to the freetrade Labor members;<sup>136</sup> eighteen Labor members voted against the government and sixteen voted with Dibbs. If the protectionist Laborites had voted with their freetrade colleagues, Dibbs would have fallen. As

it was, all the protectionists except McGowen voted with Dibbs and saved the government.

The no-confidence debate closed at 9 a m on 11 December and around midnight, J. H. Cann (who voted with the government) made a speech which profoundly affected his confreres. Directly he took his seat, others followed, declaring that they would not combine to throw out the government merely for the sake of returning the old party which had so often 'barred' progress in New South Wales. J. D. Fitzgerald lamented that the Labor members who were opposing the government were single taxers and made the personal point that 'he declined to be dragged at the wheel of the single tax fad.'<sup>137</sup>

By what means some members of the Party were induced to split, some voting against the government in accordance with their pledge, and others voting for Dibbs, against their party, was not known. Their action however did show how little faith could be put in electioneering speeches and promises.<sup>138</sup> According to Farrell, from December onwards the individuality of the Labor Party was 'gone.' The members had been cunningly divided against themselves in freetrade units or protectionist units. 'This was the one thing' he said; 'he had always regarded as inevitable.' But he thought it was 'better for the country' as 'the attention of the House need no longer be compulsorily given to what are regarded as "labor" questions.'<sup>139</sup>

The LEL Conference met in January 1892 and denounced the Labor members who voted for Dibbs in the December fiasco. The Labor rebels headed by Fitzgerald and Houghton and protectionists from the Trades Hall, tried to set up an alternative party made up of the parliamentary dissidents and a few others who were protectionists. The scheme fell into abeyance when Trenwith was brought from Melbourne to effect a reconciliation. Farrell noted that such an attempt implied that Labor voters could be fooled twice, and as the matter developed, time would prove him right.

Of the seventeen rebels who voted protectionist against their pledges, only four (Cann, Nicholson, Edden and Morgan) won a second term in 1894, and only Cann as an official Labor candidate. Of the eighteen who voted for the party platform, eleven were returned in 1894, of whom six were single taxers, although three only returned as official Labor candidates (Davis and Kirkpatrick, both freetraders, and McGowen, the protectionist). The others were returned as Labor members, but non-solidarity – more often than not because of the pledge or the protectionist tendencies of the TLC. Fitzgerald and Houghton, the ringleaders, were among those who lost their seats.

But it is very difficult to give reasons for the defeat of all those who held seats in 1891 simply because among those who were rejected or did not seek re-election, in some order, were Sir W. P. Manning, Allen, Barton, Bowes, Booth,

Burdekin, E. M. Clark, G. D. Clark, Cotton, Dale, Danahey, Darnley, Dickens, Fitzgerald, Hindle, Houghton, Hoyle, Hutchinson, Hutchison, Inglis, Johnston, Kelly, Lonsdale, Melville, Murphy, Neild, Rae, Scott, Sharp, Sheldon, Bruce Smith, Torpy, Traill, and Vaughn.<sup>140</sup>

All things considered, perhaps the aspect that Farrell liked least about the events of 10/11 December was the betrayal of the LEL, and he accused the rebels of accepting the platform merely to get elected. The fact that labour supported land value taxation was the reason that freetrade constituencies returned Labor members who, though protectionists, were supposedly committed to the tax. ‘No intelligent man,’ he wrote, ‘could read the platform to which Fitzgerald gave allegiance... without believing that that he was prepared to tax the monopolies of the rich rather than the necessities of the poor.’<sup>141</sup>

What is more, in contrast to Fitzgerald and the others who were censured by the LEL, no single tax or freetrade Labor member was called upon to defend his vote by the Leagues; In fact the reverse was the case, most received votes of confidence.<sup>142</sup> But bloated egos, and petty jealousies ensured that this did not end the matter. At the LEL conference in January 1892, the protectionist Glebe branch expelled their delegate, J. Skelton, because he was a single taxer, and on account of the hostility to protection evident during the Conference. By March,



TLC delegates were withdrawn from the Committee of the LEL because it had ‘unquestionably become practically a single tax body!’<sup>143</sup>

By February 1892, a power struggle had developed between the parliamentary party, the TLC and the LEL, compelling Farrell to remind readers that there was a time when the TLC did speak with the voice of organised labour. He also remembered the days when its deliberations were on matters that at least had the appearance of real interest to the organizations represented. By 1892, however, it appeared to have become merely a refuge for the belated protectionists labour elements which were being left behind by the ‘growing enlightenment of the workers.’<sup>144</sup> It appears that some time previous the TLC endorsed the platform of the LEL, without appearing to comprehend ‘that it was loaded.’ ‘The strong freetrade tone of the platform, however, was generally understood, save, perhaps, in the case of a few successful parliamentary candidates.’ Since the adoption of Labor’s platform by the Council there was plenty of evidence to show that it truly reflected the fiscal opinions of the majority of organized wage-earners in New South Wales. Those who had secured places in the Legislature through promising loyalty to its provisions and who had broken their pledges knew in early 1892 what the wages of political sin were going to be, as their desperate efforts to get back among their comrades who had stood firm plainly showed. Furthermore the LEL branches, which had grown up

under the *aegis* of the Council, had clearly indicated that they no longer regarded that body as worthy of the representative power it once had.

Indeed, there was growing disillusionment with the TLC, and in conference the United Laborers' Union reprimanded them for 'carrying on political faction fights instead of attending to its proper function.'<sup>145</sup> The conference put on record its disgust of the waste of time that took place whenever it met, and a motion was also tabled for the withdrawal of the union altogether from representation on the Council. The union disaffiliated, as did seventeen other unions by July 1892, and deteriorating finances led the TLC to re-examine its priorities.

Strategies adopted in March 1892 confirmed Farrell in the view that the Labor Party needed more than well-intentioned trade unionists with socialist leanings to represent them in parliament. Deputations of unemployed were demanding the government begin relief works that would save them and their families from poverty. There was little money in the Treasury, but private enterprise was willing to build a railway for the government, and even put up the necessary funds if Labor would withdraw their opposition to what was called "Simpson's Railway Bill." But it seems investors were being warned off by the very men who were supposed to represent labour. Farrell presumed that the laborites were under the impression that by limiting private enterprise they were

moving towards State Socialism. He wrote 'the Labor members take the attitude that unless the work is done by Government it shall not be done at all.'<sup>146</sup> In blocking the work he believed labour's 'representatives' had 'deliberately doomed hundreds of their number to the trials and privations of idleness for an indefinite period.'<sup>147</sup>

In spite of the political arguments, June 1892 found Farrell in good spirits and as committed as ever. He told his American readers that the old free trade body, after attempting to get a renewed lease of life under the title of Free Trade and Liberal Association, was dead.<sup>148</sup> A little over a year later he would tell them that Dibbs' government had not only voted in favour of land value taxation, but for Cotton's direct single tax amendment on Austin Chapman's land tax motion.<sup>149</sup> There was further good news with the LEL Conference of November 1893, when delegates reduced the number of planks in Labor's platform to six, and instead of being 13<sup>th</sup> as it was in 1891, the land value taxation issue became plank No. 1.<sup>150</sup>

This is not to say that everything was going as hoped. In August 1893, John Pulsford, owner and publisher of the *Armidale Chronicle*, and well known freetrader, contributed three articles to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the *Value and Taxation of Land*, which blatantly misrepresented the STL. The very title

showed a desire to mislead and confuse. Certainly Pulsford would have understood the difference between a land tax and a land value tax. Farrell wrote:

The owners of valuable land, that is, the owners of land which would be subject to taxation under a tax on land values, are, as Mr. Pulsford knows, only an insignificant minority of the population, and could do comparatively nothing to stem the tide of progress were it not for the ignorant support of the owners of valueless land...These owners of poor land are taught by the *Herald*, *Star*, *Truth*, and Mr. Pulsford that a land tax is coming upon them in addition to their present burdens, and are therefore urged to range themselves on the side of conservatism and monopoly, and to fight against a movement which not only means no tax upon them, but also means remission of imposts and duties, which a treacherous and insincere Freetrade party – of which Pulsford was secretary – allowed to disgrace the name of Freetrade...<sup>151</sup>

Pulsford's ramblings aside, despite Labor's elevation of the land value taxation plank, Farrell realised it would be sometime before the breaches that Protection had made could be healed. Writing for his American readers in the *Courier* he said: 'If the Labor Party could agree on two or three of the planks in their platform, upon which a majority of the community are also agreed, they would form the only compact political organization, and with the free trade and

land reform bodies and the single tax leagues, would secure a large representation in the next parliament.’<sup>152</sup>

As for the Protectionists, when the results of the 1894 election came in Dibbs had lost. And in his monumental work on the Parliament, Geoffrey Hawker noted that Dibbs did not immediately resign and rumours were soon circulating that he intended recommending eight or nine (later twelve) new appointments to the [Legislative] Council. ‘It is incredible,’ Reid said, ‘that any Governor would allow himself to be made use of in this tampering with, if not actually nullifying the results of the elections.’<sup>153</sup>

Notwithstanding, the general election clearly demonstrated that the electors did not want protective tariffs. The victory for the Freetraders was convincing, and went far beyond reasonable expectations. Split up as the revenue tariff party were between the B. R. Wise and William McMillan factions, and with several candidates fighting each other in the name of freetrade for each seat, with Labor candidates, and solidarity Labor candidates splitting the votes, it seemed, to Farrell at least, that the protectionists would have retained government.<sup>154</sup>

That said, the most conspicuous gain to the STL in 1894 was the election of James Ashton, who was well known to readers of the *Single Tax*, and William Afflick, in *Yass Plains*, was another. Dowell O’Reilly, who secured *Parramatta*,

was another, as was the Rev. G. W. Smailes who won *Granville*. David Storey (later Sir David), who won at *Randwick* by defeating Edmund Barton, and W. H. Wilks who won *Balmain North*, were other new men from whom much was expected.<sup>155</sup> One other was Edmund Lonsdale from New England (Lonsdale went into the Federal parliament in 1903).

The Rev. Hessel Hall, a Methodist minister, challenged for *Albury* as a straight out single taxer in 1894 but was defeated in a close vote in what Farrell described as ‘the most bitter and passionate fight...that New South Wales had ever seen.’<sup>156</sup> Out of the very large vote (1,600 electors) Hall lost by only 60 votes.

In 1894 Labor could win only 10 rural seats, 2 city seats and 3 suburban seats, for a total of 15; and from being almost 25% of the House in 1891, fell to a disappointing 12%. This defeat, however, should also be seen as a set-back for the single taxers and socialists amongst the Labor supporters who still held out high hopes for the party as a reforming body.

The new Labor Party of fifteen members was made up mostly of unionists, except for Hughes, Law and Griffith. As for religion, of the 36 Laborites elected in 1891, only four were Catholics [J. D. Fitzgerald, G. F. Hutchinson, A. J. Kelly and J. Morgan], although Bede Nairn<sup>157</sup> identifies J. Newton as a Catholic. However, this is doubtful since he was also an Oddfellow

and a Mason.<sup>158</sup> But Newton aside, there were no Catholics elected in 1894, that is until Michael Loughnane was elected following a bye-election at *Grenfell* in November that year.<sup>159</sup> The historian John McRae points out that Labor at the time was making an attempt to 'stack' the parliament with young lawyers of whom Loughnane was one.<sup>160</sup>

Nairn also suggests that Catholics 'seemed to be accommodated, however uncomfortably, in the protectionist mansions, where Slattery, O'Sullivan and Garvan resided, and to where Fitzgerald, Hutchinson, Kelly, Morgan and Newton had moved.'<sup>161</sup> Why? Were Catholics more attracted to Protection than Anglicans, Baptists, or Methodists? From the evidence of the United States where Catholics were very much a minority, we might assume they were not. Perhaps the action of Fitzgerald, Hutchinson and company reflect some sort of Catholic ghetto mentality? If so, this is at best a half-truth, but where did this leave Farrell who was a vigorous freetrader? And equally perplexing, how does Sir Joseph Abbott, a high-profile Anglican and Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales who served as leader of the Protectionist Party in 1887, fit in? To the extent that Catholics supported Dibbs [no one knows how many or why because of the secret-ballot], it might be argued that many did so in the hope that educational privileges, not enjoyed by others, would be conceded.<sup>162</sup> Catholics hoped that with a change of administration [in 1889, 1891 and 1894], that

regardless of which side won, parties would be so evenly divided that a concession might be won from a weak government; and it was the education system and not protection that united [if it ever did] the Catholic vote.<sup>163</sup>

In July 1894 following the election, Farrell was convinced that a victory of the 'old Parkes kind' would not have made a great deal of difference to the well-being of the colony.<sup>164</sup> But he was pleased that there was no such victory. Every Labor member was pledged to land value taxation, and he believed that the 'advance guard' of the Free-trade Party under B. R. Wise, would move quickly to repeal the Dibbs tariff.

Sadly, he was to be disappointed. Shortly after winning government, Reid introduced two Bills, the Land and Income Assessment Bill, and the Crown Lands Bill. The former proposed a tax of 6d in the pound on income, and of 1d on land value, with an exemption allowed in the case of the latter, of 475 pounds.

<sup>165</sup>

W. E. Johnson deplored the linking of a tax on income with a tax on land, and wrote that Reid had coupled the taxes to force the Labor members and other sympathetic to Georgism, to compromise themselves. He claimed the Premier saw only a popular method of raising revenues, and of 'bursting up the big estates in land value taxation.'<sup>166</sup>



In a similar attack, Farrell thought that Reid had displayed ‘a good deal of the foolish wisdom of the serpent.’<sup>167</sup> Single taxers supported land value taxation not merely because they wanted wealthy landowners to pay their share of revenue taxation, but because of the social wrongs arising from treating land as private property. They saw their method as the means for asserting public ownership of the value which attached to land by reason of the presence and growth of the population. But income tax was another matter. It was the result of some form of industry, and to tax that was to take from a person what was rightfully theirs by reason of that person having produced it. Ergo, income tax constituted ‘a violation of liberty.’

Georgists believed the fundamental principle of land value taxation was to secure to each – without distinction – the full reward of their labour. But this principle was violated by every tax that fell on the results of human effort, hence the reason why single taxers demanded the abolition of all taxes save those on land values.

The only ethically justifiable taxation for these Georgites was that on the unimproved value of land. And while the largest incomes were drawn from rent, by the Burdekins, Astors, Westminsters and so, and represented ‘pure spoliation,’ a land value tax would reach such incomes, more certainly and effectually than could be reached by any other system of taxation. ‘Furthermore,’ Farrell argued,

‘the majority of incomes represent the earnings of labour... and rightfully belong to those who earn them *because they earn them*’ (his emphasis).

Continuing the attack he wrote: ‘Since some large incomes are the result of legalised appropriation in no way justifies the State in making a wild, indiscriminate raid on all incomes beyond a conventionally determined amount. If in any vocation that is open to the free, unfettered play of competitive forces, a man earns an income...it may be at once concluded that he is rendering proportionate service to those with whom he is brought into a business relationship. If he is a Dickens or an Edison, his income will be great, but not even Mr. McMillan [the former Treasurer] will insinuate that he is not giving full value for every penny.’<sup>168</sup> In defending his position further, Farrell wrote: ‘The ground rents levied by the Astors and Westminsters do not represent services of equivalent value rendered by the Astors and Westminsters’ rather, they were just like the tributes ‘ground out of the Armenian peasants by voluptuous pashas. To class in the same category an income derived from the monopoly value of land, and one earned by the production of say *David Copperfield* or *Les Miserables*, indicates either a gross incapacity to distinguish irreconcilable principles, or an intention to deceive the unthinking masses.’<sup>169</sup>

Of books of perhaps more interest to single taxers, he might also have mentioned Louis Berens’ and Ignatius Singer’s book *The Story of My*

*Dictatorship*. This was a work of fiction depicting political and social conditions under an imagined regime of the Single Tax,<sup>170</sup> which was extremely popular and due for release in a 'cheap' edition. It would have been timely, too, to mention *Socialist – Populist Errors*, by Arthur H. Dodge. This work demonstrated, to the unnamed critic at the *Single Tax*, 'that part [of life] where politics and parties were used to conflict issues, arouse personal ambitions, and tempt reformers from that impregnable ground of abstract and uncompromising principle to that of expediency and party success.'<sup>171</sup> The title of Dodge's work was by no means a misnomer, and showed clearly that many of the Populist ideas and demands were 'directly linked to State Socialism.'<sup>172</sup>

Of the two labour papers in Sydney, the *Worker* had been a consistent supporter of land value taxation for some time; and in September 1894 it seemed that the *Workman* was moving in the same direction. Farrell wrote: 'It [the *Workman*] refers to the "wobbling" on the land question by those who now say a penny in the pound is absolutely required for revenue purposes, and then remarks: "If not required now, its necessity can very easily be made by the abolition of the unjust indirect customs taxation imposed by previous freetrade and protectionist governments, which falls so heavily on the poor."<sup>173</sup> But as it was only a short time since the *Workman* was palpably protectionist, the change of policy was 'interesting.'

In other events that year, the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) was formed in a merger between the Amalgamated Sheraers' Union and the General Labourers' Union (the organization of shed-hands). <sup>174</sup>

It should be also be noted that Joseph Cook, Farrell's Lithgow protégé, was appointed Postmaster General by Reid, thereby becoming the first Labor man appointed as a Minister in any Australian government.

Other matters to do with Georgists at this time need not detain us, except to notice the untimely death of Luke Gulson, Farrell's friend from Albury, in 1895. <sup>175</sup> And, in April 1897, Conrad Von Hagen's speech on Federation in which he warned of the danger to democracy that would come from the Convention trying to saddle the people of New South Wales with two powers higher than the Parliamennt – the Federal Government and the Federal Judiciary.

<sup>176</sup>

But most importantly there was the Annual Conference, again in April 1897, when single taxers, many of whom had hitherto been working in the Labor Leagues, passed a motion to completely disassociate from Labor on account of their declaration for State Socialism. <sup>177</sup> Which begs the question, by what right, then, had the Party to proclaim to represent labour? By this device they had always succeeded in capturing a number of votes that would never have gone to them had they called themselves by their true name, the "Socialist Party."

But with the advent of the Labor Party to the field of politics, an entirely different element had been introduced. In 1891 it called itself Labor, but in 1897 it showed it was really Socialist, and Socialism [or Communism] was, to paraphrase Marx and Engels, everywhere supporting revolutionary movement in an attempt to overturn the existing social and political order of things.<sup>178</sup> To talk of Protection, Free Trade or the Single Tax in the circumstances was to ignore the vaster potentialities of the situation. Henceforward, it was no longer possible to speak [if it ever was] of the labour movement and the Labor Party as one and the same thing.

Finally, some evaluation of how the parliament performed between 1891 and 1894 will be attempted. In February 1894 Superintendent Joseph Creer presented the Annual Report of the Labour Bureaux,<sup>179</sup> and while his report is too extensive to be dealt with here, a few points should be made. For example, Creer visited Newcastle on three occasions throughout 1893 and found a large number of able-bodied men in 'great poverty.'<sup>180</sup> In response, his policy was to send them into 'old golf fields' where they could 'fossick' for a living. Those whom Creer found in 'destitute circumstances' received 'in addition to a miner's right and railway pass, 10 lbs flour, 5 lbs sugar, and half-a-pound of tea, costing 2s 6d each.'

From Sydney, the number of unemployed men sent fossicking was 2,989; from Newcastle 857; from Greta, 49; from Wollongong, 99; from Lithgow, 52; and from Goulburn, 148. The number of miners' rights issued to fossickers during the six months to February 1894 was 3,623, at a cost of a little more than 1,200 pounds. The number of miners' rations issued in the same period was 2,278; at a cost of 285 pounds 10s 2d.

An adult ration given out by the Bureaux was made up of 4 lbs bread, 3 lbs meat, 2 lbs sugar, and a quarter pound of tea. The cost per ration was 1s 6d. In special cases of sickness in infants and sick mothers were allowed a little milk, sago or oatmeal, which Creer said helped to prevent an increase in infant mortality (and possibly of crime) in the city.

Every applicant for relief was forced to fill out forms which were then handed to inspectors (not recognized for their leniency), who thereupon visited the applicant's home and upon the report of the inspectors was based the issue or refusal and quantity of rations. In the same bureaucratic manner, to give shelter to the homeless, a shed was opened at Woolloomooloo wharf on 1 June 1893 [for the Winter], and closed on 27 September 1893 [in the Spring]. In the period the shed was available it was used nightly by an average of '503 men.' 'The cost of administering this relief was about 80 pounds; and in connection with the shed,

tea was supplied at 1d per head some distance away at the Mission Hall in Sussex-street.’

In such difficult times it should also be noticed that Governor Duff’s salary in 1893 was 583 pounds per month,<sup>181</sup> a gigantic sum in a world where skilled tradesmen who once got by comfortably on three or four pounds a week were being reduced to penury. In the New South Wales parliament that sort of division of the public purse between the Governor and the unemployed was wholly unsatisfactory. However, perhaps of more long-term significance was the Land Bill of 1894.

Like similar Acts that proceeded it, the bill was promoted as the legislation that would end monopoly by opening up the Central Division to closer settlement. The division, which included the towns of Coonamble, Hay, Forbes, Parkes, Dubbo, Moree and Walgett, extended from the Dumaresq River to the Murrumbidgee, and contained 18 million acres, upon which, mainly foreign loan and mortgage companies pastured 26 million sheep and about 250,000 head of cattle.<sup>182</sup>

In 1893, Henry Copeland, Minister for Lands, issued a proclamation to the effect that no further leases would be issued after 1894, as the land would be required for *bona fide* permanent settlement. However, in a challenge by the English, Scottish and Australia Bank (ES&A), Chief Justice Darley, and judges

Innes and Windeyer, decreed that Copeland's proclamation was *ultra vires*, and that the present lessees were entitled to renewals for five more years.

The spirit of the new Act was further abused when the land board at Grenfell began renewing applications for extensions in the same old way. Thus, the properties of native Dog, Bank of Australasia; Morangarell, Union Bank of Australia; Bogo Bolong, Australian Joint Stock Bank; Euroka, Bank of N.S.W.; and Curraburrama, City Bank, (all together more than 200,000 acres), all had their leases renewed for between three-and-a-half, and five years, within two months of the new Act being introduced.<sup>183</sup>

It was also noteworthy that Carruthers, and old-boy of the Rockdale STL, who replaced Copeland, should have acquiesced so quietly in the interpretation of the Act by the judges. Arthur Desmond, who was working with Billy Hughes on the *New Order* at the time, called for an appeal to the Privy Council, but was, not surprisingly, ignored. The minister reminding journalists that his department could not be charged with 'incurring the expenses of a heavy bar.'<sup>184</sup> In New South Wales it seems, such inaction was what passed for statesmanship.

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- <sup>105</sup> See Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, NSWUP, 1988, hereafter referred to as *The Making*. Markey grants only three seats for single taxers, p. 299. Markey writes, too, that Henry George toured Australia in 1889; the correct year was 1890.
- <sup>106</sup> See George Black, *The Origin and Growth of the Labor Movement in New South Wales*, Sydney, PLL Executive, 1915, hereafter referred to as *The Origin*.
- <sup>107</sup> Paul Stenhouse (Farrell's great grandson claims that he was), 'Pegasus,' p. 244.
- <sup>108</sup> For Afflick as a Georgist, see Errol-Lea-Scarlett, *Queanbeyan, District and People*, Queanbeyan Municipal Council, 1968.
- <sup>109</sup> 5 December 1891.
- <sup>110</sup> Farmer W. Whyte, *William Morris Hughes – His Life and Times*, Sydney, Angua and Robertson, hereafter referred to as *Hughes*, p. 26.
- <sup>111</sup> Esson's review is found in *The International Socialist*, Sydney, Marxian Press [Harry Holland] 16 July 1910. Esson called the work 'trivial, confused, and cowardly,' p. 3.
- <sup>112</sup> Farmer W. Whyte, *Hughes*, p. 27. .
- <sup>113</sup> 'The New Parliament,' *Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1891.
- <sup>114</sup> Bede Nairn, *Civilising*, p. 41.
- <sup>115</sup> John Farrell, 'Henry George and the Labor Cause,' *Daily Telegraph*, 26 August 1893.
- <sup>116</sup> F. Picard, 'Henry George and the Labour [sic] Split of 1891,' *Historical Studies*, 6 (1953-1955/21-24), hereafter referred to as *George*, p. 54.
- <sup>117</sup> Paul Stenhouse, 'Pegasus,' p. 247.
- <sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>119</sup> Bede Nairn, *Civilising*, p. 48.
- <sup>120</sup> Paul Stenhouse, 'Pegasus,' p. 247.
- <sup>121</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>122</sup> Bede Nairn, *Civilising*, p. 95.
- <sup>123</sup> Labor's 16 planks were all part of the platforms of the two major 'parties' long before Labor came into the parliament in 1891. For examples see *Protestant Standard*, 27 June 1891.
- <sup>124</sup> *Australian Star*, 19 May 1891.
- <sup>125</sup> *The Bulletin*, 30 May 1891.
- <sup>126</sup> *Plain Talk*, Sydney, 12 May 1894.
- <sup>127</sup> John Farrell, 'Trade Unionism and Socialism,' *Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1890.
- <sup>128</sup> Bede Nairn, *Civilising*, p. 32.
- <sup>129</sup> *Single Tax*, 20 October 1893.
- <sup>130</sup> Frank Cotton, 'Our Programme,' *Single Tax*, 20 August 1893.
- <sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>132</sup> *Protestant Standard*, 27 June 1891.
- <sup>133</sup> 'The Fiscal Question,' *Daily Telegraph*, 2 June 1891.
- <sup>134</sup> G. N. Hawker, *The Parliament*, p p. 178-179.
- <sup>135</sup> John Farrell, 'The Labor Party and Protection,' *Daily Telegraph*, 24 November 1891.
- <sup>136</sup> G. N. Hawker, *The Parliament*, p. 180.

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- <sup>137</sup> *Silver Age*, 12 December 1891.
- <sup>138</sup> John Farrell, 'The End of the Labor Party,' *Daily Telegraph*, 12 December 1891.
- <sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>140</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 21 July 1894.
- <sup>141</sup> John Farrell, 'The End of the Labor Party,' *Daily Telegraph*, 12 December 1891.
- <sup>142</sup> *SMH*, 8 January 1892.
- <sup>143</sup> Picard, *George*, p. 63.
- <sup>144</sup> John Farrell, 'The Trades and Labor Council,' *Daily Telegraph*, 17 February 1892.
- <sup>145</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>146</sup> John Farrell, 'the Blocking of Private Enterprise,' *Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 1892.
- <sup>147</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>148</sup> *The Standard*, 13 April 1892.
- <sup>149</sup> *Single Tax*, 20 September 1893.
- <sup>150</sup> *Single Tax*, 20 November 1893.
- <sup>151</sup> *Single Tax*, 20 September 1893.
- <sup>152</sup> *Courier*, 18 January 1894.
- <sup>153</sup> *SMH*, 27 July 1894, quoted in G. N. Hawker, *The Parliament*, p. 185.
- <sup>154</sup> *Single Tax*, 20 July 1894.
- <sup>155</sup> Storey was Secretary of the Freetrade and Land Reform League and Wilks, a promoter of the Land Reform Association.
- <sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>157</sup> Bede Nairn, *Civilising*, p. 115.
- <sup>158</sup> A.W. Martin and P. Wardle, *Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1856-1901*, Canberra, ANU, 1959, hereafter referred to as *Members*, p. 150.
- <sup>159</sup> John McRae, 'Early Catholic Labor Politician,' *Annals*, Sydney, Chevalier Press, Volume 102, No. 8., September 1991.
- <sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>161</sup> Bede Nairn, *Civilising*, p. 115.
- <sup>162</sup> *Protestant Standard*, 2 February 1889.
- <sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>164</sup> John Farrell, 'The Month,' *Single Tax*, 20 July 1894.
- <sup>165</sup> Sic! Farmer Whyte, *Hughes*, p. 65, but see Gollan, *Radical*, p. 191.
- <sup>166</sup> W. E. Johnson, 'Legislative Quackery,' *Single Tax*, 20 December 1894.
- <sup>167</sup> John Farrell, 'Principle of Revenue Raising,' *Single Tax*, 20 December 1894.
- <sup>168</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>169</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>170</sup> Henry George Jr., *The Life*, p. 533.
- <sup>171</sup> 'Socialist Fallacies Exposed,' *Single Tax*, 20 January 1895.
- <sup>172</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>173</sup> 'Progress Notes,' *Single Tax*, 20 January 1895.
- <sup>174</sup> Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1979, p. 10.
- <sup>175</sup> 'Death of Luke Gulson,' *Single Tax*, 20 April 1895.
- <sup>176</sup> Conrad Von Hagen, 'The Federal Convention,' *Single Tax*, 1 May 1897.
- <sup>177</sup> *Single Tax*, 1 May 1897.

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<sup>178</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party,' published in *The Essential Left*, London, Unwin Books, 1960.

<sup>179</sup> New South Wales Legislative Assembly Annual Report on Government Labour Bureau. 1894.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>181</sup> John Farrell, 'Fair Wages,' *Single Tax*, 20 November 1893.

<sup>182</sup> Arthur Desmond, 'Statesmanship and Brigandage,' *New Order*, Sydney, 1 September 1894.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibidem.*

## 6. The City, Books, Land and Land Settlements.

What of the years of Englishmen  
What have they brought of growth and grace.  
Since mud-built London by its fen  
Became the Briton's breeding place?  
What of the village where our blood  
Was brewed by sires half-man, half-brute,  
In vessels of wild womanhood  
From blood of Saxon, Celt and Jute?  
- John Farrell.

### Introduction

As Farrell continued his mission of promoting the Single Tax, other writers particularly in the United States and Great Britain were similarly employed, and numerous new titles from around the world were available for purchase through the League. In the mid-1890s these titles included the first issue of a journal published in New York by the Association for improving the conditions of the poor, AICP, entitled *Cultivation of Vacant Land*. The journal gave a detailed account of the efforts being made in various American cities to enable the poor, by cultivation of vacant allotments, to help themselves. The Association lent the necessary tools, and paid wages to the workmen, recouping itself from the sales of produce.<sup>1</sup>

The Single Tax was gradually permeating the mass of agricultural workers throughout England, owing to the efforts of the “Red Van” lecturers who, year after year, travelled across the country lecturing and distributing literature on the land question. In 1895 the English Land Restoration League published a book on the work entitled; *Among the Agricultural Laborers with the Red Vans*. There were at least two other propagandist societies in active work in England; namely the Fabian Society, which had issued many tracts, not only on the land question, but municipalisation of the docks, gas and water supply, tramways, railways, and so on. Then there was the English Land Nationalisation Society, with two “yellow vans” and a cart carrying five speakers – one of whom was A. Brittlebank, one time secretary of the Albury branch of the STL.<sup>2</sup>

Through the League all of Henry George’s books were available, including his ‘answer’ to Herbert Spencer called *A Perplexed Philosopher*. Of straight out Single Tax journals, the list of foreign titles was formidable; predominant was *The Single Tax Courier*, edited by W. E. Brokaw, and published in St. Louis. Other American journals included: *The National Single Taxer*; *The Equitist*; *The New Earth*; and *The Star*, the oldest Single Tax paper in the United States. From Britain came *The Brotherhood*; *Land and Labour* and *The Financial Reformer*; from Scotland, *The Glasgow Single Tax*; and from Germany *Frei (Free) Land*.



There was also *The Arena*, a Single Tax journal published in New Zealand, and *The Beacon*, published in Melbourne by Max Hirsch. There was a booklet by A. Hiscock in Adelaide with articles on *The Single Tax* and *The New Social Spirit*, illustrated by selections from the poets, Longfellow, Lowell and Mackay. Hirsch was also represented by *A Statistical Romance*, a reprint of a series of articles published in the *Argus* in reply to Benjamin Hoare's *Twenty-five Years of Protection*. Hoare's statements and the 'statistics' employed by him in support of his plea for Protection were analysed, and shown by Hirsch to be incorrect. The THC in Melbourne refused to go into the matter. The Free-trade and Democratic Association then appointed an independent committee, including Rev. Dr. Bevan, Professor Harrison Moore (Melbourne University), and R. J. Ellery, late Government Astronomer, who went over the disputed statistics. The report of this committee was then published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 4 August 1896. The report found Hirsch's figures to be correct, and suggested that the *Argus* was guilty of publishing false and misleading material.

*Idlers in the Market Place* was the title of a pamphlet by J. Medway Day, published at the Sydney *Worker* Office, setting forth practical suggestions towards the solution of the unemployed question.<sup>3</sup> The pamphlet followed directions indicated earlier in his *Political Economy in a Nutshell, for Young Men and Women*. Medway Day, who in 1893 edited the Sydney *Worker*, came to the

job *via* the *Voice* and [South Australian], or the *S. A. Register*. And, to quote the concluding words of his latest pamphlet: 'This much, however, is certain. If we have gone a long way on the wrong road we can only get back on the right road by retracing our steps. And the land tax is the first stage of the return journey.' <sup>4</sup>

In the mid-90s *Euality*, the sequel to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* was available; although single taxers still puzzled over Bellamy's confusion. In one section of *Looking Backwards* he wrote: 'the single tax would antagonise all but the "poorest classes," in another; 'it [the single tax] is suspiciously popular among millionaires.' <sup>5</sup> The Hon. Auberon Herbert's *Free Life*, the organ of voluntary taxation could also be had. This was a well-written paper advocating the individualism of Emerson and Spencer. Amongst a stream of Australian titles, probably the best in the early 1890s was William Lane's *Brisbane Worker*, and later Harry Holland's *Northern People*, both of which went only part of the way with Henry George. Patrick Dove's *The Theory of Human Progression* could also be bought, and for all those who were thinking about fairer voting systems Prof. J. R. Commons explained the Hare-Spence system in *Proportional Representation*.

There was of course nothing new about discussing the land question in literature. But what these titles brought was a new approach: namely the Single Tax. However, the fact that so many were engaged in the enterprise in Australia

and overseas is to this writer, very significant. Notwithstanding, like Cotton and Farrell the works of E. W. Foxall <sup>6</sup> are now largely forgotten, as are the paintings and drawings of W. E. Johnson (see plates). In the case of some other participants in the early labour movement, that writers were ‘forgotten,’ was generally by design rather than lack of public awareness. For example, in the 1915 edition of his *Origins and Growth of the Labour Movement in New South Wales*, George Black included John Norton as one of the outdoor propagandists of the Republican Union. Revising the book for a new edition, Black, ‘with the objectivity of a Stalinist rewriting Russian history, struck Norton’s name from the record.’ <sup>7</sup> In another example, Thomas Batho, when writing of ‘the early Socialist pioneers of Australia,’ fails to mention William H. McNamara, founder and joint first-secretary of the ASL. <sup>8</sup> On the other hand, J. D. Fitzgerald <sup>9</sup> could graciously write: ‘The fine rhetoric of *Progress and Poverty*, and the optimistic spirit in which it was written, profoundly influenced us’ (i e., Fitzgerald and his friends in the labour movement).

Other “influences,” too, came undoubtedly from a small group of young painters; Tom Roberts (a close friend of J. D. Fitzgerald), Arthur Streeton, Fred McCubbin and company, <sup>10</sup> who became popularly known as the Heidelberg School. And while these artists liked painting city street scenes in the rain or at dusk, <sup>11</sup> or painting their friends, <sup>12</sup> it is their depictions of ‘pastoral Australia

under a midday sun with a bright “impressionist” palette’<sup>13</sup> which remain their most popular images. But it should be pointed out that these painters were strongly influenced by the French artist Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884) and the American painter James McNeil Whistler (1834-1903);<sup>14</sup> neither of whom ever visited Australia.

It should also be said that members of the Heidelberg school were not bushmen but urban bohemians; like their counterparts in the Dawn and Dusk club (to which Tom Roberts also belonged). And far from depicting authentic pastoral Australia, many of their works were constructed amidst what was left of the bush close to Melbourne, around Mentone and Box Hill,<sup>15</sup> following years of clearing and land speculation.

Another brilliant oil painter of the ‘bush’ in the Dawn and Dusk, was Frank Prout Mahony who, since his work was widely reproduced in the *Picturesque Atlas*<sup>16</sup> is now chiefly remembered as a ‘black and white’ artist. And, of the writers in the Dawn and Dusk, Fred Broomfield, Henry Lawson, Bertram Stevens, E. J. Brady and Victor Daley, were all friends of Farrell who, preferring the company of his family and being at home, ‘was never known to have attended their ‘swarreys.’<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, that the artists of the Heidelberg School were influential or even dominant in creating a picture of life in the Australian bush that thousands

have accepted as the authentic one, is demonstrable.<sup>18</sup> For such reasons, after years of being successfully shown in Australia, 1898 saw the Exhibition of Australian Art at the Grafton Galleries in London.<sup>19</sup> But essentially they were of the city. In 1894, Streeton and Roberts shared a studio in Vickery-chambers in Pitt-street, (where Sydney Long also had a studio), and among their clients was Sir Henry Parkes; A.B. Paterson and Harry “Breaker” Morant were also regular visitors to the studio.

But in any discussion of art in Australia it should be remembered that in 1906 there began ‘something akin to a public frenzy, amounting nearly to hysteria, not seen since the days of the Gold Rush in the 1850s. No exhibit of any kind, no manifestation of any sort, had ever kindled such public enthusiasm as did the arrival [that year] of a painting by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB), entitled “The Light of the World”<sup>20</sup> Hunt’s design shows Christ, wearing simple plain robes, right arm raised, knocking at a closed door.

While such popular art has generally been ignored, the ‘authentic’ voice of Australian life is widely believed to have been recorded at *The Bulletin*. Most notably by Phil May (1864-1903), an Englishman who introduced the grating Cockney dialect into Australian cartooning, and by the American Livingston Hopkins, “Hop” (1846-1927), who lived in the Sydney harbour-side suburb of

Mosman<sup>21</sup> very far from bushworkers in the west. In the circumstances it seems that ‘art’ (something specially constructed) and ‘politics’ had become indistinguishable.

Hence, it is in this sense we notice that in Bruce Scates’s well-known work John Farrell’s audience is labelled ‘predominately middle class.’ But how does Scates know the class of those who purchased the *Enterprise* at Lithgow? or anywhere else? The term middle class, considering the carefully chosen drawing on the book’s cover by the English socialist Walter Crane,<sup>22</sup> while ambivalent, one assumes is intended as a criticism.<sup>23</sup>

For the sake of the record, in Farrell’s *Jenny - An Australian Story*, we ‘see’ the inside of Farrell’s home on the Loddon, his scrub house at Major Plains, and according to his great grandson,<sup>24</sup> many of the homes in which he and Elizabeth raised their children.

First, the surrounding ‘farm,’

Dead trees amid the wheat stood white and ghostly  
And blackened stumps their stunted forms upreared.  
The timber thereabouts was ringbarked mostly,  
Some years before the cockatoo appeared;  
And as the settler found it rather costly,  
To have it even moderately cleared,  
He let it be, and garnered in his sheaves  
Diluted largely with dead twigs and leaves.<sup>25</sup>

Second, inside the house,

A hybrid dog, not high bred, please, is lying  
Upon the floor, before the damsel's feet,  
Largely alert, and vigilantly eyeing  
An ebon bucket wherein boils the meat  
Corned in a manner, there is no denying,  
Alike by salt and by the weary sweat  
Of the poor wretch who tills the soil for bread,  
And gets it – outside cinder, inside lead.<sup>26</sup>

Farrell was comfortable describing, in sympathetic detail, many of the things with which he was most familiar; as in the picture of Jenny's slab house –

...a tenement not high and splendid,  
But small and rough and marvelously clean,  
Whose walls were slab, most dexterously blended  
With puddled clay to stop the gaps between.  
The roof of shingles visibly was mended  
With shining squares that spoke of kerosene;  
Outside the garden fence were ploughs and harrows,  
And inside – chiefly vegetable marrows.<sup>27</sup>

In somewhat better circumstances in the 1890s, until his death, John Farrell lived in a modest, double-fronted cottage in Dulwich Hill, about six miles from his office at the *Daily Telegraph* in King-street in the City.

### **The Advocates of Land Values Taxation**

For years single taxers had been pushing the message that land speculation (the natural result of the absence of a land value tax) was undermining the whole of the commercial and financial systems. And in July 1893 when Farrell launched *The Single Tax*, there were few people in Australia who had not heard of Henry George's proposals, and grown to associate with them the term Single Tax. At its launching, Farrell admitted that ignorance of the tax was widespread; and it was to defeat ignorance, that the *Single Tax* was begun.<sup>28</sup>

*The Single Tax* came into existence at the behest of a large number of friends who, with the demise of the *Australian Standard* and *Democrat*, wanted the work to go on. Their 'target' audience was identified in the fact that it sold for 1d a copy; one of the least expensive journals in the market place. No one but the printer was paid for any work done in connection with it, and those who did the work thought they were investing their services for the ultimate good of society.

<sup>29</sup> In the meantime their spirits were buoyed by occasional small wins. The rejection in the Assembly of the freehold clause of the Menindee Irrigation Bill,



and the creation of new branches at Smithfield, Fairfield and Enfield,<sup>30</sup> being just some examples.

The Rev. J. O'Connor, was elected Vice-President of the branch at Smithfield; while at Parramatta, in the general area, the Rev. George Smailes, late of Hartley, was also voted into a Vice-Presidency.

By the middle of the 1890s, Parramatta branch meetings were held in the local School of Arts; In the city, the metropolitan branch met at Quong Tart's Rooms at 137 King-street; in Albury, at Menz's Australian Hotel; Rookwood, the Royal Oak Hotel; Newtown, Thorne's Rooms, 112 King-street; Dulwich Hill, Maybanke School, corner of Frazer-Street and Wardell-Road; Rockdale, next door to the Masonic Temple in Bay-Street; Redfern, the Forester's Hall in Botany-Road, and later in rooms in St. Paul's Anglican Church in Cleveland-Street; Marrickville branch met in a tailor's shop near the tram terminus; Annandale, at the Primitive Methodist School, Trafalgar-Street. Other suburban branches were at Merrylands, Leichhardt and Granville.

After almost a year the *Single Tax* had attracted few advertisers; and of the few that did buy space, *The Worker*; William Brooks the city printer; Taylor Brothers, a jam maker at Annandale; John Hunter Shoes; Bonnington's Irish Moss; the makers of Tanglefoot 'sealed sticky fly paper' and J. N. Knibbs a wine and spirit merchant at Petersham were the only businesses of any real size; other

advertisers, such as Brett's Café, generally employed fewer than a dozen persons. Other small advertisers included Dahms, a jewellery manufacturer;<sup>31</sup> Joseph Hawke, a 'merchant' tailor;<sup>32</sup> J. Harradine, the "Single Tax" hairdresser;<sup>33</sup> J. S. Marshall, tobacconist;<sup>34</sup> "Sir" Robert Bear, book importer and publisher<sup>35</sup> ('Bear's title was self-awarded by deed poll as his way of celebrating the [Queen's] jubilee'<sup>36</sup>); and H. B. Linthorn, a Marrickville boot seller. Also from Marrickville was R. G. Brereton, who ran a chemist shop. Other regular advertisements came from A. S. Fasher, a stationer and bookseller in Hay; and from A. G. Reid, licensee of the Red Lion Hotel. There were also occasional advertisements for J. H. Menz's Australian Hotel at Albury; and for the Wollondale Brewery, Crookwell-road, Goulburn.

Of those who gave public lectures on behalf of the STL, Frank Cotton stands out, and he continued this work even as an MP. For example, on 14 July 1893 he lectured in Albury, and later – at Hay on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Narrandera on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Yass on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Cooma on 1<sup>st</sup> August, and Queanbeyan on 3 August. Later in the month Cotton was due to speak at Cobar, Forbes, Rylstone and Mudgee. During August, A. H. Sampson addressed meetings at Merrylands, Fairfield, Smithfield, Auburn, Marrickville, Redfern, and at the League's Rooms in the city. Messrs. Hindle, MP, and W. E. Johnson addressed a meeting at St. Thomas'

School-room, Enfield, on 4 July. With the addition of Lesina and Foxall, these were the League's most prominent and effective lecturers.<sup>37</sup>

The Annual Conference of the Single Tax League of New South Wales was held on Easter Monday, in April 1894. The proposal that the STL should become an active political party running its own candidates for parliament, was again raised and discussed, and again rejected. The general feeling of the delegates on this matter seems to indicate that they saw the formation of new branches, the distribution of educational literature, and continuous and active propaganda in the holding of periodical public meetings, to be the more urgent needs for the coming twelve months.

It seems a cruel irony that Farrell, who in a number of articles, had dwelt on the need to transform the STL into a party, was outbid on this by D'Arcy Wentworth Reeve, one of the leaders of the movement in England, who was briefly in Sydney. Farrell was distrustful of Reeve since he told him that 'it was to the men of the upper middle class...who, with a few of the most prominent labour leaders, form the London County Council,' that he [Reeve] thought would accomplish most.<sup>38</sup> In response Farrell suggested that Reeve had unrealistic expectations of the House of Lords. Nevertheless according to the visitor who was trustee of their funds, a propagandist movement based on the English "Red

Vans” system would better meet the needs of the people of New South Wales than forming a fourth party.

To this end John King, secretary of the STL in 1894, meekly announced that ‘anyone with a conveyance... would render valuable aid by placing the same at the disposal of the Secretary.’<sup>39</sup> Lacking the individualism and systematic approach of the American single taxers, it seems the English Land Restoration League had become the example that Australians would imitate. In this way arrangements were made to carry on a ‘vigorous’ outdoor campaign, until the general-election, throughout the districts within a radius of 30 miles of Sydney.

Meanwhile, in the United States on 15 March 1894, Henry George was called to address the New York Assembly on the cause of prevailing social conditions – the first official recognition he had ever received in his own country. Around the same time one of his foremost supporters, Father Sylvester Malone, had been elected by the Legislature to the distinguished position of a Regent of the State University. He had been a constant friend of both McGlynn and George, and might perhaps, like McGlynn, have been removed had he not been so popular that his desposition would surely have caused a scandal.<sup>40</sup> That year also marked the fiftieth anniversary of Malone’s continuous service as a priest in the same church in Brooklyn.

### **Labour Settlements**

According to the well known Congregationalist leader, the Rev. Thomas Roseby, <sup>41</sup> Hon. Secretary of the Board of Control of the Pitt Town Co-operative Settlement, the 'great industrial problem' of the early 1890s was 'what to do with the vast army of the unemployed.' <sup>42</sup> He saw the solution in the village, or, labour settlement scheme; a scheme which Farrell described as an 'incongruous admixture of paternalism, red-taped charity, and nauseous goody-goodyism.' <sup>43</sup>

The Act to establish and regulate labour settlements on Crown Lands was passed in June 1893, and under the Act the Minister set apart land to establish three settlements with which to begin, namely, at Bega, Wilberforce, and Pitt Town.

Regulations governing these settlements, however, were somewhat different in principle. The Wilberforce group was more of a company of shareholders, who put down so much money each, which had to be all spent before any government aid might be forthcoming. In February 1894, there were 38 men; 22 women; and 69 children living in the Wilberforce settlement.

At Bega, each settler had their own portion of land, but was co-operative in principle. Their population in 1894, comprised 18 men; 18 women; and 61 children.

The Pitt Town settlement consisted mainly of unemployed men

who were without means. The funds for carrying on this settlement were advanced by the government under the regulations, viz., 25 pounds for a married man with a family, 20 pounds for a married man without a family, and 15 pounds for a single man. Under the Act, Creer, Superintendent of the Labour Bureaux, was appointed to receive and register all applications and report on the fitness of applicants to become settlers. Up to February 1894, 733 applications had been received, consisting of 614 married men, with 1,986 children, and 119 single men and widowers. The number of married men and wives living at Pitt Town at that time was 180, with 265 children; there were also 6 single men, making 451 persons in all.

For the most part, any of those whom Farrell described as ‘breadless wretches,’ wishing to take part in Copeland’s village settlement schemes, were forced to exile themselves from their family and friends for three or four years before the land would yield them a return. And what were they to do in the meantime? Single taxers believed the scheme was simply the means ‘for shoving starving workers out of sight.’<sup>44</sup>

Single taxers on the other hand had no intention of settling anyone on the land, in the sense that the term was used by Henry Copeland; that is, blindly laying hands on the unemployed and dropping them into settlements with 25 pounds of State money in their pockets by way of a start.

Georgists saw their role as merely clearing the way for those who, by dint of personal predilection or training, wanted a life on the land. 'Such people were the only ones likely to succeed, and the role of the STL lay in helping them follow their natural bent without having to pay tribute to any monopolist.' <sup>45</sup>

Such attitudes towards the unemployed, of getting them out of sight, exhibited by Copeland and others, fitted snugly with recently published articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the purpose of which was to show that the Depression was nearly over. <sup>46</sup> Various loose and mixed metaphors had been used to express this idea, but as far as could be gauged, the most popular was the phrase – "We have turned the corner!" <sup>47</sup> But what corner? and just who had made the turn?

In such headlines the SMH was reflecting the hopes and desires of the favoured commercial class that lived off the wool industry; an exercise in what is now called 'talking up the market.' This class included more than wool-growers and big squatters; it accommodated clerks, accountants, teachers, share-brokers, insurers, bankers, professional men, and speculators of all kinds. Like much of the wealth of Australia, wool came from the hinterland and had to be carried by rail, road or river boat, for export at Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Newcastle and so on. Consequently life in the cities was brighter, with a greater range of entertainments. And with the money generated by wool [and mining],

restaurants, theatres, coffee houses and hotels were plentiful. Moreover, because most of the wealth came from commerce (where there was little heavy lifting), life in the cities was physically easier and more comfortable, generally speaking, and jobs were more plentiful and of greater variety than in the bush.

In the circumstances [of having ‘turned the corner’] it was scarcely surprising that the SMH reported <sup>48</sup> that ‘the prospects of the wool clip have had a steadying influence on Bank Stock, and have assisted a number of banks to dispose of a large number of new shares.’ To which Farrell replied:

What does a successful wool-clip mean? To the wool-growers it means the payment of a small portion of their indebtedness to the Banks, and a fresh lease of worry and anxiety for the future caused by fears of foreclosures, or floods, or droughts, or shearers’ strikes. To the Banks it means the payment at the other side of the world of an amount of coin,...and a consequent temporary cessation of the continuous drain upon their cash resources. It means, too, that they will be enabled to pay the bulk of such proceeds away to their shareholders and officers in dividends, and fees, and salaries, and make a flourish about “returning confidence.” And it means that their power to keep land out of the market, except at prices which compel the land user to make himself their virtual bonds slave, will be buttressed up for a little while longer. <sup>49</sup>



While conditions for many living in Sydney were often abysmal, it can be argued that conditions were worse in the west. In many cases the way some people lived let down the dignity of the plain people. Farrell's later efforts to introduce pay for parliamentarians <sup>50</sup> 'struck at the heart of this Australian-style feudalism and the untouchable and untaxable pastoral empires that so alienated Australia's land as to drive settlers away in search land and freedom of spirit.' <sup>51</sup>

### **Back to the Land**

The first such exodus to foreign places took place in 1843, at the height of a financial depression, <sup>52</sup> when 5,000 disaffected land seekers left the country; with at least six boatloads of these emigrants heading for Valparaiso, Chile. This was about fifty years before William Lane's better-known establishment of settlements in Paraguay about which more will be said later.

These early emigrants to Chile may have been influenced by Etienne Cabet (1788-1856), a French communist who went out to Texas in 1847 to found an 'Icarian community,' so named after his *Voyage en Icarie* (1840), a 'philosophical and social romance,' describing a communistic Utopia. <sup>53</sup>

The land Cabet's people had chosen was malarial, and a number of his followers subsequently died of fever. Accordingly, the community abandoned the few huts they had erected and moved to New Orleans from where they travelled to the old Mormon town of Nauvoo in Illinois. In 1845, when the population of

Chicago was about 8,000 persons, Nauvoo had 15,000 inhabitants, and was the most prosperous town in the State.<sup>54</sup>

However, as in Robert Owen's New Harmony (where Owen abandoned capitalism) and in Lane's New Australia, the autocratic spirit of the leader, which grew to despise every instinct of liberty, began to make itself felt. Cabet forbade the community to have tobacco or brandy or even to speak during working-hours!

55

Not surprisingly his supporters were soon split into two camps, those who would accept Cabet's authority, and those who would not. It seems that those who were opposed to his narrow and arbitrary methods were the majority, and in October 1856, he was formally expelled. At the beginning of November he, with a faithful minority of 180 persons, left Nauvoo for St. Louis; a week later, on 8 November 1856, he succumbed to a sudden stroke and died<sup>56</sup>

The major issues concerning the Icarian communities after Cabet's death need not detain us beyond the fact that with the evaporation of the early communistic ardour, various scissions led to a rupture in 1879, when twenty-eight members left the colony and the remaining twenty-four struggled on painfully until their final extinction in 1888.<sup>57</sup>

As far as labour settlements were concerned Farrell, who did not like the concept, occasionally mused as to why the magnificently rich soils along the line

from to Sydney to Penrith and Campbelltown had not been better utilized? It should be pointed out, however, that certain Anarchists catered for themselves with properties at Smithfield and Pitt Town, which were both in the general area prescribed by Farrell.

In the early 1890s, dozens of village settlements sprang up in South Australia and the Eastern states. 'In Victoria, the Reverend Horace Finn Tucker's Village Settlement Association (1892) established communities, mainly for unemployed men and their families, at Jindivik, Wonwondah East, Red Hill, Moora Moora,'<sup>58</sup> and so on (about 250 Settlements were established or planned in Victoria, but from the beginning they all had declining populations and a number soon went out of existence).<sup>59</sup>

The twelve co-operative settlements set up in Queensland, in 1893 and 1894, namely, Protestant Unity, Reliance, Resolute, Industrial, Nil Desperandum and so on – comprising 69,000 acres<sup>60</sup> - disintegrated within two years. Similarly Henry Copeland's experiment for resettling the poor achieved very little, and the Bega, Wilberforce and Pitt Town settlements had all but dissolved by 1896.<sup>61</sup>

In any discussion of the Queensland settlements it should be pointed out that in 1887, William Lane, who had only arrived in Australia in 1885 at the age of twenty-four,<sup>62</sup> was evidently thought sufficiently qualified to help form the State Aided Village Settlement Committee in Queensland.<sup>63</sup> It seems the notion

of settlements was an idea 'whose time had come,' and in 1891, as a result of the shearers' strike, a co-operative village was developed at Alice River [near Barcaldine].<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile in New South Wales, there were more labour settlements than those at Bega, Wilberforce and Pitt Town. Likewise, beside Creer's shed at Woolloomooloo, in 1892 the Government also provided emergency accommodation for the dispossessed at the Exhibition Building in Prince Alfred Park, near Redfern railway station. John Dwyer, an important though often overlooked member of the labour movement with Sydney's Active Service Brigade (ASB), has left a description that might partly explain why some of the unemployed were attracted to village settlements:

I got back to the Exhibition Building in the evening as men were being issued with tickets for the next morning's meal... There were 700 men preparing to camp for the night. Not half of them had blankets, newspapers did duty for rugs, boots for pillows... I counted 700 of them, and the thought came of how many a mother, or father, far away, wondered how their boy was, and here he was among the unemployed, hungry and penniless, who, but for the Exhibition Building, would that night have had nothing to eat and nowhere to go.<sup>65</sup>

Dwyer, too, saw part of the solution to the social problems in terms of a labour settlement, without the autocratic leadership. And while William Lane's expedition counted its membership by the hundred and charged each person 60 pounds for the privilege, <sup>66</sup> Dwyer's group comprised just seven men, namely; Mark Merton, Frank McKenzie, Francis Donnelly, Philip Lace, Patrick Boyce, James Wilson and Angus McNeil; none of whom was charged a penny. Moreover, though small in number they chose an eminently suitable name for themselves – the Robert Emmett Section. <sup>67</sup>

Robert Emmett (1778-1803), was an Irish 'patriot' who left Trinity College to join the United Irishmen. He travelled extensively on the Continent, and in 1802, discussed Ireland's hopes with Tallyrand and Napoleon. He returned the following year to spend his fortune of 3,000 pounds on muskets and pikes, and with a few confederates plotted to seize Dublin Castle and secure the viceroy. Unfortunately for him, the rising resulted only in a few murders. He was ultimately arrested, tried on 19 September 1803, condemned to death, and hanged the following day. <sup>68</sup> He apparently faced death with great courage, and many myths and folk legends quickly attached to him. It is likely, too, that Dwyer had some Irishness in his background, and the name might have been chosen in deference to that fact and to the pride that the 'rebel' inspired.

The Robert Emmett Section established their small settlement, with its own coal mine, in the beautiful Blue Mountains near Wentworth Falls, about 80 miles west of Sydney. And such were the conditions of the day, that the men agreed to accept, in return for working a 48-hour week, the princely sum of one pound a year plus meals and a weekly ration of tobacco. Dwyer also undertook to supply each man with two pairs of boots, three pairs of socks, one pair of trousers, one hat, two shirts and two handkerchiefs. The scale of rations per week was: 7 lbs of meat, 14 lbs of flour, 7lbs of vegetables, 2 lbs of sugar, 8 ounces of tea, and 8 ounces of tobacco; for which each man was required to do his share of mining, digging, sawing, gardening and so forth, indeed any work necessary for the good running of the settlement and the mine.

Coal was in fact the main product of the enterprise, supplemented by the sale of timber and fine clay (for pottery). Yet despite the problems of a limited range of products, limited manpower, and competition from much larger enterprises nearby, by the end of 1895 it seems that this experiment in harmonious co-operation was a success. Success, such as it was, being measured by the fact that while many other government-backed settlements had failed, “Wentworth Falls” was still in operation. Their continued existence might also have owed something to the Labour Currency Notes that Dwyer issued; ranging in ‘value’ from three shillings to one pound. These privately-issued notes which

the public could take up, but which had no 'asset' backing in the sense that the generally corrupt banking system used the term, nevertheless 'entitled an investor to a 'fair' return in either coal or cash.' <sup>69</sup>

### **Tinkering With the Effects**

In January 1894, the Rev. W. S. Frackelton, a Presbyterian minister, paid a midnight visit to the Sydney Domain in search of the unemployed homeless men and women whom he had heard were living there. What he found was over 300 persons 'camping out;' some of whom gave him a short lecture on the delinquency of the Church. A number of the interviewees, striving to maintain their dignity in humiliating circumstances, said they 'no longer cared about religion.' <sup>70</sup> Others who were shaken from their slumber complained that the Christianity of the 1890s was not the Christianity of Christ. These criticisms, and his desire to lift any reproach from the Church, led Frackelton to propose starting up a village settlement on strict Presbyterian lines. Such a scheme, according to Farrell, was analogous to taking out a few selected people from the slums of London's East-End while leaving undiminished those forces which, despite the best efforts of charitable Christians, only filled up the empty spaces again. <sup>71</sup>

Put plainly, the position of the unemployed and homeless could be easily expressed: 'Until the leaking in the ship's side was staunched, Christian pumping

was a perpetual and futile task; but this did not imply the impossibility of plugging up the holes.’<sup>72</sup>

While village settlements and charity were the outcome of a genuine desire to overcome major social problems, the ‘leakage’ of wage-earners falling into penury was constant. And single taxers could lament the fact that while it was almost universally admitted that the land question was in some manner closely connected to the labour question, the way in which the connection was made was only vaguely perceived.<sup>73</sup> ‘The irreversible law imposed upon man,’ Farrell writes:

is that only by labour can he maintain the life in him. It may be the labour of the brain or the muscles, or both...but labour there must be as a condition precedent of existence. If a man will not work he must starve, unless he can obtain...the results of somebody else’s toil. Labour, either his own or someone else’s is an indispensable condition of life. This is the first great fact, which lies at the base of any rational enquiry into the causes of human misery entailed by the want of employment on the inequitable distribution of wealth. The second fact...is that all which ministers to our necessity, everything falling under the designation of “wealth” comes from the land as the result of the living forces of labour thereto. These two facts are the pillars that support the world.



Notwithstanding, Farrell suggested a moral side to the question. And Saint Thomas-like wrote: 'All men, being the creation of the Power behind the universe... have the same equal right of access to the land,

any other conception than that of equal natural rights involves us in intellectual difficulties that are insoluble, except on the hypothesis that God and morality and right and wrong are only phantoms of the imagination... Natural rights, follow necessarily from a belief in the moral government of the universe. How are we to apply them to the problems immediately at issue? Certainly not by extracting a few Presbyterians from the mass of the unemployed or of those who toil is so miserably rewarded as to barely keep the wolf from the door, and carting them to a Presbyterian settlement, leaving other connexions [sic] to look in a similar way after their own wandering sheep.

In his criticisms, Farrell might have been over vigorous when he went on to describe Australians as 'the best colonizing race on the planet.' Nonetheless, his observation that there were sufficient quantities of labour [the 300 sleeping in Domain was proof of this point], land, and capital, the three factors of industry, was correct. And again, in language reminiscent of the 'Angelic Doctor' he wrote: 'Restore natural rights... and test whether Providence... did not make ample provision, without alms-giving or other "eleemosynary" manifestation, for all the sons of men.' <sup>74</sup>

The Rev. Moulton, a Wesleyan, was another minister with whom Farrell publicly disagreed. It seems that in an 'extraordinary' speech delivered at the Wesleyan Conference in February 1894, Moulton talked about the 'immorality and crime' growing out of the 'suffocating congestion' of Australia's over-populated cities; but it seems he 'contended himself with the truism that the discovery of a new rich goldfield would resolve the congestion in a fortnight.'<sup>75</sup>

In the aftermath of his speech Moulton was to learn very quickly of the disadvantages of speaking to a subject about which he knew little. And whilst Farrell agreed that people would flock to new goldfields, such expectations, he suggested, 'were as helpful as looking for the return of the Arabian Nights and the return of the wonder-working genii of the lamp and the ring.' While Moulton's contention that nothing could act so expeditiously in relieving the pressure on city life was accurate, it was important to know why this was so in order to find a permanent remedy for at least some of the more urgent problems of the day. A basic understanding of human behavior was necessary, as Farrell explained: 'Men naturally flock to goldfields, because, as was the case in the early days of Victoria and New South Wales, the prospect of making better wages – getting bigger returns for their labour – were brighter than in the city.'<sup>76</sup>

Most men were driven he argued, by a 'law' of human nature which leads them to satisfy their desires 'at the least cost of exertion, pain, or inconvenience.'

Thus ‘they flock to the city because they are under the impression that prospects are better there than in the country, and not, as some assume, from shiftlessness.’ Theoretically there were two explanations for the trend [towards urban congestion]. Wages were steadily rising in the towns, or they were steadily falling in the country; either would account for the constant migration from country to town, which was a feature of modern life in Western Europe and the United States. Wherever wages are the higher, there will the tide of population set in until the adjustment has been made according to the economic ‘law’ of supply and demand.<sup>77</sup> And where the Rev. Moulton apparently relied upon chance for a solution to the social problems of the 1890s, the Single Tax, by promising to render unprofitable the holding of valuable areas out of use, would actively encourage land using. In a Georgist solution the tendency of settlement would therefore be towards the richer, more fertile, easily accessible lands; where returns would be proportionately greater.

### **“Free Land, Free Trade, Free Men.”**

If there was just one of the ‘leading lights’ of the 1890s who disagreed with Henry George’s cry of “Free Land, Free Trade, Free Men,” it must surely have been William Lane, the emigrant English journalist. But only John Farrell amongst the leading lights of the New South Wales STL would have agreed that

this was so. W. W. Head from Wagga and A. Brittlebank <sup>78</sup> from Albury, went with Lane to Paraguay, as did Farrell's good friend Mary Cameron; Cotton wrote at least one glowing endorsement of the project <sup>79</sup> and Peter McNaught, a member of the League's advisory committee, <sup>80</sup> served as Lane's Deputy-Chairman. <sup>81</sup>

But why was Lane going to South America? Behind his mask of 'John Miller,' the part answer he gave is edifying. "Give a man a mask and he will tell you the truth," <sup>82</sup> was one of Oscar Wilde's sayings. The character of John Miller is Lane's mask in the following tirade (it should be pointed out that Lane himself was slave to a 'club foot' the relevance of which will soon become apparent). But Lane also used the disguise of a woman, 'Lucinda Sharpe;' a practice about which readers will draw their own conclusions. But as John Miller Lane writes:

There was a time, not long since even, when the women of our people regarded maternity as holy. Now, abhorring motherhood, they stifle the race-life unconceived. It is so. Every doctor in Australia knows it is so. And side by side with this, vices unknown before are creeping in among us, poisoning our little ones, smothering energy, lapping us insidiously in the death-drowse of decay. Men think not. Well, it is so. Only men are so sensitive it is so that they shrink from discussing it, as a lame man instinctively shrinks from talking of lameness. <sup>83</sup>

### **William Lane, and Associated Matters.**

On 19 November 1887 a weekly newspaper, the *Boomerang*, was produced for the first time. It was published by Alfred Walker 'for unspecified proprietors' at the office of the Boomerang Newspaper Co., Adelaide-street, Brisbane, and its secretary was William Lane.<sup>84</sup>

Its first cartoons were by E. H. Murray, and in an example published in December 1887, he takes up the popular theme of resentment of British governors imposed without consultation. 'John Bull' is shown trying to foist one of a troop of effete aristocrats and worn-out, and in one case crippled military types on a young colonial stockman. 'What, Boy! Cries John, 'You won't have them as a gift...And *sotto voce*, 'If you weren't so big, I'd jolly well make you take them.'<sup>85</sup> This 'resistance' towards authority was displayed in many cartoons at the *Boomerang* and later in the *Worker*; especially in the works of Monte Scott who, when the Duke of Edinburgh visited Australia in 1867-69, was commissioned to paint his portrait for 250 guineas - the highest fee then known in the colonies.<sup>86</sup> Scott's pay rates at the *Worker* were disappointing by comparison, and was part of a wide process in which artists became "proletarianized," that is, without the regular patronage of earlier times (particularly from the Church), they sold their labor [sic] power.<sup>87</sup> In other words, painters like Scott 'alienated' their ability to create art; and the process of

proletarianization led them almost instinctively to an emotional identification with the 'poor' working man, which they maintained through easily accessible cartoons. This identification was the result of the artists' own situation. And while most saw industrial working-class struggles as real, they did not consider them their own; painters [like Scott] 'never regarded themselves simultaneously as both artist and worker.'<sup>88</sup>

However, Lane's early success with the *Boomerang* led him to look at establishing similar papers in each state, and he proposed a system of exchange of literary matter between the labour papers so established. Following through with this idea the *Hummer* in September 1892 changed its name to the *Worker* and from then on appeared as a composite – one half printed in Brisbane and the other half printed at the ASU office in Wagga.<sup>89</sup> Wagga branch continued to produce the *Worker* until March 1893, when the six other branches in New South Wales decided to come in, and the plant was moved to Sydney – J. A. Ross was manager, and Walter Head and Arthur Rae were editors. In July 1893 the Queensland agreement came to an end and from then on the whole paper was printed in Sydney. J. Medway Day was the first professional editor of the *Worker*, and under his leadership the journal appeared for three weeks in 1894 as a daily; the failed experiment cost 2,000 pounds.<sup>90</sup> In terms of Scates's observation of John Farrell and his 'single tax ventures,' the ability of Medway

Day to meet these costs 'demonstrated the advantage of a captive clientele and predominantly middle-class audience.'<sup>91</sup> In 1893 the *Brisbane Worker*<sup>92</sup> carried a lengthy series of articles by John Farrell, on the wisdom of Lane's Socialist and Utopian solution to the problems confronting wage-earners. Others living in Sydney were also linked to Lane, most importantly, J. D. Fitzgerald, who, sadly has been largely ignored by historians. In Anne Whitehead's prize-winning book<sup>93</sup> (as in others), we find no reference to Fitzgerald, to whom Lane wrote: 'If I happen to be arrested I rely on you... to come right on to Queensland and take hold of the *Worker*.'<sup>94</sup> In an earlier example of the intimacy between the men Lane writes: 'My dear Jack... I enclose for you an introduction to Fischer'<sup>95</sup> the artist... he is a very quiet fellow but really decent... I've been appointed editor of a new labour paper here and hope to make it hum. We are going to sell copies here for 3d but I have arranged to sell outside the colony for a penny in order to push the federation movement... Ever yours, William Lane.'<sup>96</sup>

Farrell was opposed to Lane's Paraguayan scheme from the start, as he showed in his articles for the *Brisbane Worker* entitled 'For Those Who Remain.' Certain of Lane's criticisms of capitalism, too, relied upon industrial imagery imported from the United Kingdom; the women at Cradley Heath for example. These were female chain and nail makers who, because of the 'Gehenna-like' conditions under which they laboured, worked semi-naked at their forges.

But because of the lack of secondary industry, there was no equivalent of Cradley Heath in Australia.<sup>97</sup> At that time, too, discussion of capitalism was sometimes distorted by a confusion of ideas and the language of Marx, Bellamy, George and so on, only added to the confusion. What socialists really meant by capitalism was the modern system of industrialization, which tends to concentrate all the means of production in the hands of certain individuals or groups.<sup>98</sup>

On the other hand, Farrell was in favour of capitalism *per se*; warning that some of those advising working men were very careless in the terms and definitions they used to describe capitalism or industrialization. He reported a 'recent' incident in the Domain where it was laid down that labour must wage unceasing warfare against capital; but reminded himself that the fight was against monopoly not capital and that 'every navvy who owned a pick and shovel was a capitalist.'<sup>99</sup>

That said, to return to the realities of Lane's venture, it was saddening to wander round among the women on board the *Royal Tar*. Almost without exception, they showed traces of a hard fight with the world. 'Faces,' Farrell wrote, 'once young and comely, [were] now blanched and wrinkled from want of food, or freckled and tanned from exposure to Australian suns. But all, maid or matron, wore the same look of a strange contentment. There was not a



little in it of that pathetic look one may see in the eyes of bullocks outside the shambles.’<sup>100</sup>

To those looking beneath the surface, the exodus of Australians to Paraguay was an event of terrible significance. Nevertheless, to some of ‘dishonest ease and stolen wealth’ it was a matter of indifference.<sup>101</sup> Farrell reminded his readers: ‘We are permitting hundreds of stalwart men [sic] to leave our shores in quest of land to till, while within a day’s walk of the spot on which Captain Cook landed a century ago, enough virgin land may be found to absorb them and thousands more. And we are allowing the owners of this land to keep it idle and prevent others from using it.’

The *Royal Tar*, with Lane and 250 pioneers, left Sydney in July 1893 for Paraguay, where he started the colony of New Australia a few miles from Asuncion. Eleven months later Farrell reported their experiences in an essay he titled “The New Australia Failure.”<sup>102</sup> He suggested the experiences of the settlement showed proof of the difficulty of carrying out successfully any scheme that disregards, or seeks to supercede, ordinary human instincts.<sup>103</sup>

But had the venture realised Lane’s highest expectations, it would have proved little, for its members were specially selected. Physically, the men were ‘far above’ average, and the fact that membership involved casting all possessions into the common fund was proof that the pioneers were more

altruistic than many in the population. Had the settlement flourished it would have proved nothing beyond the fact that where feelings of altruism were dominant, it was possible, by appealing to higher conceptions of duty, to found a place in which selfishness was subordinated to the wider and inclusive love of all for all. <sup>104</sup> This doubtless, would have been a triumph. It would have shown what, under favourable conditions, might be achieved; but that it would have, as the pioneers hoped, changed the tenor of human thought 'or reversed the dominant and deeply-rooted habits and instincts of humankind,' was questionable. 'In seeking to brighten the world' Farrell writes:

What we call selfishness is only a warped quality, which, under happier circumstances, would be conducive to prosperity and progress. It would be a dead, dull world if all emulation were destroyed, and men had no nobler aspiration than to satisfy their animal desires. Possibly most of the common attributes of every-day, self-seeking humanity are, in themselves essentially good. It is the strain to which mankind [sic] has been subjected, that has twisted these attributes, and brought about deformity and ugliness, where, but for the sinister influence of such conditions, there would have been regularity and gracefulness.

Humanity had rarely had an honest opportunity to show what it really is. Farrell's oft-repeated theme for over a decade was still valid: But the lesson to be

learned was, while it was possible to change the law, and radically modify society, there was no warranty that could effect change in the essential characteristics of mankind. Nor were people justified in assuming it would be a good thing if they could: "Infinite wisdom planned the universe, and it may be the very thing which, in the inverted organisation of civilization, work endless mischief, only need be given the free scope, which it was designed to have, to lead to good and happiness transcending all dreams of what is possible." <sup>105</sup>

The New Australia scheme seemed, with good reason, to have been wrecked on the same authoritarian reef that had brought so many similar projects to naught. Lane was not content with changing the externals of industrial life and the relationships which, in any intelligently organized society, the units must hold one to another, but he aimed at an arbitrary reversal of some of the most stubbornly ingrained characteristics of the race.

The *Royal Tar* arrived at Montevideo on 13 September 1893, and by December three of the men, White, Westwood and Brittlebank, had been expelled for 'persistent' violations relating to drinking. <sup>106</sup> It may be argued that Lane was justified in his actions by the terms of the 'Declaration of Principles,' contained in the mutual agreement signed by Lane and the pioneers. But in a manner reminiscent of certain reactions to authority in the recent shearers' strikes, the 'expellees' refused to leave. Lloyd Ross tells the story where, shortly thereafter,

Lane disappeared, only to and return with a body of Paraguayan soldiers and with their assistance and with this display of physical force, the three were driven out.

<sup>107</sup> Quoting Ross directly:

Lane's dictatorial acts were a sudden release of his thwarted emotions, like a thunderstorm breaking across the Australian desert...Even his friends were amazed at the intensity of the uncompromising wrath and cruelty of one who had been so humanitarian and tolerant...Rival fractions [sic] sprang up. Petty intrigues polluted the body politic. <sup>108</sup>

Precisely the same experiences befell William Lane as had befallen Etienne Cabet forty-four years earlier. The colonist before long took to quarrelling and in accusing Lane of tyrannizing over them; for not only had he expelled at least three of their number, he had done so while refusing to hold a ballot to test the feelings of the membership on the matter.

Almost inevitably charges of favouritism were made against Lane and his henchmen, and people were becoming tired of the situation wherein he did the thinking and the colonists did the work. <sup>109</sup> Not surprisingly, in 1894 no less than a third of the colony seceded of their own accord. And, on the arrival at this juncture of 190 newcomers who had been attracted to New Australia by delusive

reports, Lane was himself deposed, and started off at the head of a few followers to found another settlement, which he named Cosme.

For a few years the two colonies struggled on until, in 1899, Lane abandoned his experiment at Cosme and returned to Australia. By dint of employing native labour on the hated wage system they had set out to destroy, the Cosmians partly succeeded in restoring their shattered fortunes; but before long Lane's 'Socialist' principle was recognized as a failure and abandoned by both settlements in favour of Individualism.<sup>110</sup>

While this was so, it should be pointed out that what some have described as socialism, Nesta H. Webster has called 'Syndicalism.' Ramsay McDonald<sup>111</sup> once described Syndicalism as "largely a revolt against Socialism."<sup>112</sup> And while there are as many versions of syndicalism as there are socialism, certain of Lane's ideals, especially his initial non-violence, was not "revolutionary" in the sense that some socialist in the 1890s used the term, rather it harked back to the guilds and corporations.<sup>113</sup> It seems some syndicalists thought regretfully of the days before the introduction of cut-throat competition - in the industrially advanced countries - when people worked (so the story goes) peacefully and co-operatively at their trades, bound together by ties of comradeship ["mateship"] under *patrons*, [usually the Church], who showed concern for their welfare.<sup>114</sup>

But to help readers reach an informed conclusion in the matter, in the “Aims” of Lane’s organization we read: ‘An Association of *bona fide* workers has been formed... to put into practical shape the co-operative ownership by the workers of land and machinery, the co-operative conduct by the workers of the industries by which they must live, and co-operative protection by the workers against the risks that [under present conditions] constantly threaten men, women, and children with misery.’<sup>115</sup>

On at least one occasion, in 1893, Lane himself described the Paraguayan experiment as socialism. On that occasion, quoting him directly he said: ‘Those who believe in the same general idea of complete co-operation in industry, that is in the socialistic form of industry as opposed to the competitive form, shall join hands together and start a large settlement, where they can live in the right way.’<sup>116</sup>

But, as the modern saying goes: ‘The devil was in the detail.’ The “Declaration of Principles” placed a heavy stress on “authority,” and religion was not recognized. Yet Walter Head, as secretary of the New Australia Co-operative Settlement Association, signed off (without much thought) on principles of the most stringent kind which he, nevertheless, assured readers would ‘render it impossible for one to tyrannize over another...’<sup>117</sup>

The subsequent adventures by the settlers have been well described by, among others; Lloyd Ross,<sup>118</sup> Gavin Souter,<sup>119</sup> Anne Whitehead,<sup>120</sup> and Stewart Grahame.<sup>121</sup> But it is doubtful if any described the basic flaw in Lane's 'vision' better than Farrell when he said:

It sought, with the best humanitarian intention, to over-rule what, through centuries of hereditary transmission, has come to have all the imperative authority of natural law, and failed, as all such endeavours must. The fundamental law of freedom is the right of every man to himself; and, therefore, the right to all that is the product of his own labour; and, to supersede this primary principle, on any pretence...is not an advance, but a falling away in everything that constitutes liberty. If successful, it could only be perpetuated at the cost of all that is most noble and godlike in humanity.<sup>122</sup>

### **“Bosship.”**

However, it was not only Farrell who was against Lane, or thought that his 'Utopia' was poorly run. Some un-credited writer at the *New Order* (probably Billy Hughes), thought the New Australia venture was based on little more than emotions. More importantly, he referred to William Lane as 'the boss charlatan,' and came very close to libeling Walter Head and Arthur Rae over money matters relating to the enterprise.<sup>123</sup>

The unknown writer went on: 'No criticism was permitted in the Australian Labour press unless it parroted... Lane and his chloroformed followers. Within the organization it was an autocratic despotism cloaked over with a democratic mosquito curtain. There was no board of administrators, or any open settling of affairs, such as [there should have been] in a communal state. It was the gospel of mateship – on paper, preached and never practiced. Boss-ship was the only prevailing principle; and this was enforced... by one of the many ambitious adventurers of the time.' <sup>124</sup>

#### **A “Roman” Solution.**

It is fitting that this chapter conclude with one example of where the 'village settlement' ideal was successful. It is even more appropriate when one considers that William Lane would have thought the participants racially inferior; and dismissed them in his usual offensive manner. The settlement was the little-known, New Italy, and the reason as to why it was not widely known had to do with its relative remoteness in a large country with a small population; and to the fact that its people could not speak English and most visitors could not speak Italian.

But it is not just William Lane who should be singled out. At the local level there was some initial animosity because the ground upon which they flourished had long before been rejected by the locals as waste lands. The



colonization of this apparently barren locality, showed the Italians recognized certain properties in the soil that had totally escaped the notice of others, and their success was ample evidence that such land, of which there were millions of acres lying idle, could be profitably cultivated.

New Italy was situated in the county of Richmond, in the north-east portion of the colony at the junction of a road from Swan Bay, 6 miles from the Bay, 8 miles from Woodburn, and 16 miles from the Richmond River.<sup>125</sup> The whole of the colony was only 3 miles square, and consisted of fifty-three selections, ranging from 40 to 120 acres, occupied by about thirty families. Each selection was securely fenced, and small areas were given to horticulture and wine growing, the Italians believing in the superior tillage of small areas as against the indifferent cultivation of larger properties.

Nevertheless, it was owing to the failure of a scheme arranged by a certain Marquis de Ray in 1881, who hoped to colonize portion of New Ireland, about 350 miles north-east of New Guinea, that proved New South Wales' gain.

In January 1879, Charles du Breil, Marquis de Ray, then French Consul for Bolivia, issued a prospectus for a colony in Oceania to be called "New France." He offered 40 acres of land and a stone or brick house, plus free transport and food for six months to every family who accompanied him, all for 1,800 francs in gold<sup>126</sup>

As the marquis hoped nearly 800 vigneron and labourers of Northern Italy took up the offer, among others, and sailed to New Ireland aboard the steamer *India*; leaving Barcelona on 9 July 1880. The detail of what followed after their arrival in New Ireland in October 1880, need not detain us beyond the fact that the captain of the *India* was obliged to take the Italians, who had suffered much, to Noumea, where his ship was condemned as unseaworthy by authorities and sold.<sup>127</sup>

After a series of bitter experiences, about 200 Italians were provided with free passage to Sydney by the French government, and duly arrived there on 7 April 1881. They were housed in the Agricultural Hall in the Domain and almost immediately were confronted with the prospect of being dispersed into the wider community; despite pleas from the *Sydney Morning Herald* that they be permitted to stay together.<sup>128</sup> The deaths, up to the time of landing in Sydney, had reached 44, ranging from newly born babies to those in their seventies.<sup>129</sup>

Notwithstanding, the Italians were dispersed, although contributions toward their support were coming in from public meetings, and in some cases offers to engage them on large estates, *in globo*.<sup>130</sup> However, it was dispersion that had the effect of sending one Rocco Comminitti to the Richmond district where, in April 1882, he selected 40 acres.

Comminitti was quickly followed by a few of this compatriots, Pietro Mazzer, Antonio Melare, Guiseppe Manttinuzzi and others, and on the strength out what they had saved out of their earnings of the previous year, after arriving penniless, they set to work and, utilizing the strength of each family, began to build New Italy. By September 1887, the colony had its own church (all were Catholics) and a population of more than 250, with children under 16 making up more than half the number. What is more, no deaths were reported at child birth, this being attributed to the skill of Mrs. Nardi, the midwife.

Giovanni Battistuzzi was one who earned extra money from 'road contracting' and was paid 1s a yard to break the metal; and although unable to read and write, he was able to calculate the amount of metal he had worked.<sup>131</sup> Many of the women as well as the men cut sleepers, a major source of income during the lean times.<sup>132</sup> The sleepers which mainly went to Melbourne and New Zealand, were well cut and the colonists could earn, at 1s and 6d per sleeper, about 2 pound a week doing such work.

Every household grew fruit, vegetables and flowers as well as grapes and wine for their own use, and for sale. Each family also fattened a pig, and in the winter the neighbours helped each other to make salami. The making of salami was a festive occasion, as it had been in Italy.

It seems too that the Italians were law-abiding, and in 1910 it was reported that there had never been a single conviction recorded against them in the local police courts.<sup>133</sup>

The demise of New Italy came only slowly. As the colonists made enough money, they sold their farms and moved to better places. Over the course of many years, young people tended to move to nearby towns, to find work, some moved to Sydney and into Queensland, but the majority stayed around the Richmond River. Giacomo Piccoli was one who travelled extensively, but he always returned to New Italy. He was the last of the original settlers. He died on 8 July 1955, and was buried in the local cemetery.

The success of New Italy, if it proved anything, proved Farrell's assertion that even without an autocratic leadership, any attempt to take butchers, and bakers, and tailors, and make farmers out of them was bound to fail. And, as previously stated, the Sydney Georgists had no intention of ever settling anyone on the land who did not want to be there. Their only purpose was to prepare the way for those who, by training, or gifts, or ambition, had a natural desire to adopt a life on the land.<sup>134</sup> It seems the farmers at New Italy had such qualities in abundance, to say nothing of their physical endurance and strong sense of community.

Finally, had William Lane ever come to know Giacomo, instead of becoming the angry old pro-war advocate that he became, he might have at least become a better singer.

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## 7. “Georgism” and the “Utopians.”

But He who commandeth the sea and skies,  
Whom we see but faintly with our dim eyes,  
He will make bright those dark mysteries.  
--- John Farrell.

Landowners in the nineteenth century in the British Isles and other places found their claim to an exclusive and absolute right of possession, so exclusive and so absolute, that they could, as they deemed, and as they often did, drive away the cultivators of the soil and others who had inhabited the land for centuries, like so many beasts, having no right of occupancy or habitation. <sup>1</sup>

At a demonstration for Home Rule in Ireland in Broken Hill in 1888, The Rev. E. Rorke made the point that landlordism was a problem that bedevilled the world. In Scotland for instance, Vanderbilt, the American multi-millionaire had taken up 260,000 acres simply for shooting grouse. <sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, fractures within the labour movement inhibited the discovery and early implementation of a solution to the land question in Australia. For example, when it was announced that Michael Davitt would be coming to Sydney the ASL refused to form part of the welcoming party because E. W. O’Sullivan, Henry Hoyle and F. B. Freehill, all Catholics, were members of the Official Reception Committee. <sup>3</sup>

Such attitudes were not new, and equally as intolerable was William Lane's bitter animus against the Chinese. Joseph Symes, the publisher, writing in his own journal told Lane to confine himself to problems that 'really mattered.' According to Symes 'the great curse' was landlordism.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, in one early editorial Farrell made it clear that far more was involved in George's movement than 'mere political change.' 'To the "pure-minded," 'like Huntington and Garrison [in America] *Progress and Poverty* comes as an appeal from Sinai.'<sup>5</sup>

This was not far from the position taken by some churchmen, particularly in Britain, who had taken to challenging the 'conspiracy of silence' maintained by Spurgeon and Dale for example, interdicting ministers from dealing with political questions from the pulpit; the adverse effect of which was to leave law-making in the wrong hands for fear of offending rich and influential members of the congregation.<sup>6</sup>

As the argument unfolded, one unknown writer for the *Primitive Methodist* journal in New South Wales suggested:

It is the duty of the church to declare the "Laws of the Kingdom" as Christ proclaimed them. The cure for this poverty lies straight before us... We want absolute equality of the opportunities of production to all. That means freedom of access to, and use of the land... The cry must go up

'Landlords, 'Wobblers,' and the Labour Movement.'

“Back to the Land!”...But the cry must be inverted to be made possible. Instead of the people going back to the land, the land must come back to the people... This is the Mosaic Law of land tenure; it is God’s law. Do as you like with the land, only recognize this truth, the land belongs to the people. Recognize this, then civilization will be natural, and the poverty problem will diminish.<sup>7</sup>

Hessel Hall, a prominent single taxer, was a Wesleyan minister who found himself in trouble for preaching politics. Hall was born in Sydney at Waverley on 4 August 1861, the eldest son of Reuben Hall, one of the few men of ‘advanced’ years who joined the STL in its early days (and was still active in the mid-‘90s). Thus it was to his father that Hessel owed his democratic sympathies, and his high-class education. After attending Sydney Grammar School he went on to the University of Sydney where he took a B A degree with Honors in science; and in competition for the Belmore Medal<sup>8</sup> acquired a specialist knowledge of scientific agriculture which later proved an advantage when he became a primary producer.

### **A Wesleyan Minister**

On leaving the university he entered the ministry, and in the course of his work travelled over a large part of the colony, experiencing exceptional opportunities of seeing the country and mingling with all classes. Following on

about eleven years in the work, his active interest in public questions led to friction between himself and church authorities, which ultimately led to his ejection from the ministry. A public debate with E.W. O'Sullivan at Queanbeyan, in which Hall performed creditably, was the beginning of the trouble. While the circumstances surrounding this case are interesting, there is no reason to enter into the controversy here. It is enough to say that Hall won the ensuing case for damages in the Supreme against the newspaper that charged him with "neglecting his church work to take up politics." <sup>9</sup>

### **Study of Political Economy**

Hall's interest in politics began with his reading of *Progress and Poverty* (a gift from one of Albury's pioneer single taxers) whilst living at Corowa. The book had a strong effect and seemed 'to take hold of him.' He later told how he fought against George's conclusions, and carefully read others in an attempt to shake his reasoning. He followed up George with the study of standard writers such as Adam Smith, Rogers, Mill, Aristotle and Marx, only to find his belief in the Single Tax even more deeply rooted. <sup>10</sup>

Continuing his studies, Hall took his Master of Arts degree also at Sydney, in philosophy, and this with his earlier reading made him one of the best informed men on political and economic questions in the colony, and enabled him to speak with great force and assurance on social issues.

Later, whilst living at Adelong near Tumut, Hall was elected to represent the local Freetrade Association in Sydney. He took a prominent role and was publicly complimented by George Reid, who urged him take up politics. He refused, at least until his forcible ejection from the ministry freed him from any conscientious scruples and he contented himself with taking only that active part in public affairs which he believed was the duty of every clergyman as a citizen, to take.

As a well-known freetrader, he was invited by J. H. Mentz, secretary of the Single Tax branch at Albury to contest the 1894 general-election against John Wilkinson (1852-1934), the sitting member. In a campaign in which Wilkinson was heavily supported by the National Association, Hall lost although he did manage to reduce the majority against the Freetraders from 300 to 60 votes.<sup>11</sup>

Hall had been expelled by the Wesleyan Conference at the end of 1893 on account of preaching politics, and for a subsequent debate with E. W. O'Sullivan.

<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding, on 25 March 1894 he preached in a church at Penrith, and did not discard his clerical dress. He intended to wear it until the Church paid his arrears of salary. The Conference had repudiated this obligation, and he hoped that whenever people noticed his special attire they would remember what it meant.

When his connection to the ministry was severed, he still had to face life with a wife and four children dependent on him; but by dint of some early planning he was not without resources, and with the money from a surrendered insurance policy he purchased 20 acres at Lapstone Hill and sufficient materials for building a house.

The site was rocky and scrubby, a difficult place from which to earn a living. Still by hard, intelligently directed toil, he and his wife established an excellent apiary, garden, and poultry run and supported themselves out of the produce of their own ground.

Although it might be said that he was already living a popular version of the Single Tax idyll, he was nevertheless developing plans for entering parliament. Thus, he remained active in the STL and in 1895 with Peter McNaught, Master Workmen of the KoL, John Farrell, and the MPs Frank Cotton and Dr. Leslie Hollis, remained within the inner-circle that served as the League's Advisory Council.

Taking the story forward somewhat, it is known that his attempt to enter the parliament ended less than triumphantly when, as a member of the branch at Emu Plains he stood in 1898 as the League's candidate at Darlington, 30 miles away in the inner-city.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, on 20 November, the work in Darlington commenced in earnest when 2,000 copies of the November issue of the *Single Tax* were distributed throughout the constituency. Moreover, within each copy was a circular, announcing a torch-light procession and public meeting to be held on the following Wednesday.

In response, about one hundred people gathered on the due evening at Eveleigh railway station, and around 8 o'clock formed lines, and under the glare of torches marched through Darlington to the Royal Hotel (still standing), at the corner of Abercrombie and Codrington streets, the advertised place for the meeting.<sup>14</sup> The meeting was addressed by C.T. Renshaw, Hessel Hall, and J. Trant Fischer, a well-known local identity.

The Darlington campaign of 1897, in which it was necessary to overcome William Schey, a prominent Protectionist, had been decided on as a first step in a scheme with the three-fold object of giving an immediate and practical aim to the movement, bringing the platform of the League more prominently before the public, and of reaping a better result from the League's educational work.

Further justification for this course, was a general consensus that the time had arrived for more aggressive action. And the executive believed it was better to seek the return of a straight-out single taxpayer like Hall, than to spend their energies in assisting to Parliament those who, while professing a belief in



Georgist principles, ceased – after the election – to do anything for the movement. Sadly, for all their hopes there was no triumph. Hall was overwhelmingly defeated, receiving little more than 3 per cent of the vote.

Following shortly upon the death of Henry George in October 1897, Hall's defeat plunged the League into crisis. However, his defeat came – it should be admitted – when the best days of the movement were over. For while freetrade was still popular, and would remain so, when Hall went to the polls the *Single Tax* journal was winding up, and with George's death something of the essential vigour was gone from the movement.

Seven years earlier in 1891, all things were still possible. That was when George Smailes (1862-1934) a Primitive Methodist minister and single taxer won the ballot for selection of the Labor Party candidate for *Hartley*, only to lose the candidature later in a coup arranged for the benefit of Joseph Cook.

Smailes, who was born in England, had the right labour credentials. After all, he started work at the age of ten at a mine near Durham and studied at night to enter the Methodist Church. He arrived in Australia as a minister in 1882 and was given charge of a church at Lithgow where he met John Farrell. He came to Parramatta in Sydney's West in 1891, and was soon elected president of the local STL. In 1894 he won the seat of *Granville* for the Labor Party; and won the same seat again in 1895.

In July 1893 in an article that mirrored Smailes' thoughts, Farrell wrote: 'One fact is indisputable; up to a certain point Socialists and Single Taxers are in full agreement.'<sup>15</sup> In this article Farrell was trying to unite the ideas of Smith and Ricardo to those of Proudhon and Lassalle; to show that *laissez-faire* opens the way to a realization of the dreams of socialism; to identify social law with moral law, and to disprove ideas which in the minds of many cloud grand and elevating perceptions.<sup>16</sup>

Both Smailes and Farrell believed that the conditions of workers might be improved by socialism. Yet each was alive to the dangers that lurked below the surface of methods which, whilst they seemingly furthered the temporal welfare of wage earners, taught him to disregard the rights of property, the liberty of action and the respect due to all rightfully constituted authority. And, in so far as the claims of the poor and labouring class were justified by the 'natural' law,<sup>17</sup> as an advocate of people's rights Smailes was a Christian Socialist, in every sense legitimate and conducive to the public good.

Henry George, who knew the history of socialism, wrote: 'Modern socialism is without religion and its tendency is atheistic.'<sup>18</sup> To which the German socialist Bebel added: "Christianity and Socialism stand towards each other as fire and water."<sup>19</sup>

One other zealous, not to say over-zealous Christian single taxer was John Hindle (1857-1927) founder of the Christian Endeavour Movement <sup>20</sup> and Labor Party member for *Newtown* in 1891. Politically speaking, Hindle's short career ended on the 20 February 1894 one day after he had been preaching at a Harvest Thanksgiving service for the Primitive Methodist Church at Lithgow. <sup>21</sup> It seems that in his homily he told Christians to pressure members of parliament to reform the liquor and land laws. He also made the point that the temperance faction to which he belonged had been repeatedly 'tricked' into voting for special interests by 'notorious drunken blackguards' who were standing for re-election; and warned people against them. However, since he failed to mention anyone by name, in the petty and spiteful vindictiveness of the 'bear pit' he left himself open to the charge that he had vilified every member of the House.

The parliamentary attack on Hindle was led by William 'Paddy' Crick (1862-1908), one of Cyril Pearl's "Wild Men of Sydney" who thought it important to recall that many great men had 'enjoyed a drink.' Thomas Walker (1858-1932) then warned Hindle not to compare himself with Nicol Stenhouse's brilliant protégé, Daniel Deniehy (1828-1865), 'who had died a drunkard's death.' <sup>22</sup> But it was John Henry Want (1846-1905) who perhaps hurt Hindle most when he trivialized his homily with the tag the 'Sermon on the Mount – Mount Victoria!' <sup>23</sup>

While this was an absurd manner in which to deal with an important issue, it was left to John Lionel Fegan (1862-1932) a strong Methodist <sup>24</sup> to put the matter into perspective. He said the notion of privilege in Hindle's case had only been brought on because the member for *Newtown* had been preaching the Single Tax and because he dared to speak from the pulpit on the matter. <sup>25</sup>

Despite Fegan's vigorous defence the charge against Hindle was upheld by 61 votes to 20. A partial list of those supporting the claim is edifying since it included members from all parties: Barton, Cann, O'Sullivan, Crick, Dibbs, Reid, Carruthers, Haynes, Copeland, Mackinnon, Fitzgerald, Morgan, Sheldon, Newton and Scott. Among those who voted in support of Hindle were Cotton, Hollis, McGowen, Rae, Cook and John Cash Nield, Grand Master of the Loyal Orange Lodge of New South Wales.

The Christian duty that single taxers like Hindle felt was attached to their political duty, owed much to George's own beliefs, and his perception of himself as leading a holy crusade against poverty. The earnestness with which George pleaded the case, and his references to Scripture to support his doctrine of equal rights in land, were compelling. He won people over by his sincerity and fervour. One Democratic candidate for the presidency and long-term supporter, William Jennings Bryan, said of him: 'He was as guileless as a child and as earnest as a martyr.' <sup>26</sup>

Farrell's thoughts might be judged from his poem *Two Sonnets to Henry George* (1889) in which he seems to be suggesting George could bear comparison with the Master:

Speak till the ghastly faces, wet with tears  
That lift to hear thee from all footworn ways  
Of Pain and Want, grow manlike in the rays  
Of Hope, outshining from the atoning years

Thou bearest messages of, when earth's fair ears  
Which God's large hand of bounty lays  
For mankind's feast, no more shall mock their gaze;

Speak! till each glutton King and Priest who hears  
Shall tremble, knowing that the hour has come  
When they who knelt before him, blind and dumb,  
Have seen the morning glow of truth afar,  
Lit up by him who seeks to raze the sun  
Of wrongs and suffering that warp and mar  
This life – who comes, a Christ-like guiding star.<sup>27</sup>

When the delegates to the Single Tax conference in 1889 voted against forming a third party, certain excellent people who might have been STL

candidates went in to parliament as members of the Labor Party and this included the Rev. James Blankby a Primitive Methodist minister from Newcastle.

One historian from the same city, Tony Laffin,<sup>28</sup> informs us that between 1888 and 1893 one of the most locally debated aspects of Christianity was the “Sermon on the Mount.” But not only did churchmen like Blanksby visit the theme repeatedly; so did the secularists. In a period representing increasing trade union and labour activity, such debates were common place across the English speaking world. In Newcastle the Hall of Science and the Sunday meeting at Islington Reserve were an essential part of the city’s political and intellectual world; as indeed were the Domain and Gaeity Theatre in Sydney.<sup>29</sup> In such places religion was an essential part of the debating craze, as was Home Rule for Ireland and votes for women.

As a remedy for poverty Blanksby urged the ‘practice of the socialism of Christ,’<sup>30</sup> and argued for a progressive land tax and the nationalisation of rent and interest.<sup>31</sup> Addressing the congregation of the Wickham Primitive Methodist church in September 1890, Blanksby said:

When we speak of slavery, we generally refer to black slavery in America. But the labour service of British speaking lands has been and still is, but a species of slavery... Gradually the toiling masses

have learned something of the possibilities under which they laboured... But under the present system, by which labour is made a marketable product, to be bought cheaply and disposed of to the best advantage, the inevitable tendency is to press down wages to the lowest possible limit... Capital and Labour are thus placed in perpetual conflict... The years coming must witness still increasing struggle... The light of the Gospel truth will direct the solution.<sup>32</sup>

William Henry Newman (1839-1904), who won the seat of *Orange* for Labor in 1891 – and as an independent for three successive elections thereafter – held many of the same views. Before going into parliament Newman was president of a Christian group at Lucknow in the Central West, and in May 1890 he called for an amalgamation of the churches. What he proposed, however, was a union of three, viz., Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox.<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding, during the social unrest of 1894, when Henry Tregarthem Douglas of the ASB was being victimized for his political views, Newman stepped in to play the peacemaker. Douglas had been charged with using an ‘improper’ word whilst addressing miners at Plattsburg. He was found guilty and fined ‘3 pounds or one month,’ which the miners offered to pay, but Douglas declined their offer. Therefore, to the Maitland jail he went, to wear a felon’s uniform and live on bread and water until relieved by the kindness of Newman who, in the hope of preventing further unrest, took it upon himself to pay the outstanding fine.<sup>34</sup>

A similar act of kindness occurred during the trial of Thomas Batho and Harry Holland, in 1896, when Joseph Creer charged them with criminal libel for publishing an article entitled, "Joseph Creer, Blackleg."<sup>35</sup> Without labouring the details, sufficient to say Holland was fined thirty pounds or three months' jail, and Batho, five pounds or three months.<sup>36</sup> The accused appeared in the Water Police Court where, in the first instance, their barrister reserved their defence, and the men were committed for trial in the Quarter Sessions. In the meantime, Bail was allowed for each with sureties of twenty-five pounds for Batho and fifty pounds for Holland. Sureties for Batho (who avoided jail altogether) were paid by Messrs. Isaacs and Schwartz (unknown to this writer), and for Holland, who did go to jail, his surety was paid by Frank Cotton MP.<sup>37</sup>

In such matters Hindle, Smailes and Blanksby, were often influenced by the debate on land ownership in Great Britain where ministers such as the Hugh Price Hughes, Editor of the English *Methodist Times*,<sup>38</sup> argued that the 'violent' opposition of the Conservative Party to Home Rule was organized merely to 'divert' the public's attention from reform of the land and other necessary reforms.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, the Reverend L. A. Lambert, Editor of *Freeman's Journal* in New York, claimed the Single Tax doctrine afforded 'the safest barrier to Anarchic Socialism.'<sup>40</sup>



Other reverend gentlemen who might have agreed were T.M. Dalrymple (Bathurst), R.S. Willis (Crookwell) and B. Smith (Leichhardt). Each of these Churchmen had also been a delegate at the second annual conference of delegates composing the Single Tax League (as was Dr. W.E. Malony, M.L.A., Melbourne, [a pioneer of the KoL], and J.E. Anderton, (Redfern).<sup>41</sup>

Of other churchmen, Cardinal Manning won praise from wage-earners for his part in the 1889 'Dockers' Strike.'<sup>42</sup> And Dr. Nulty, Bishop of Meath wrote: The land... of every country is the common property of the people of that country, because its real owner, The Creator who made it, has transferred it as a voluntary gift to them.<sup>43</sup> Thus it followed that any attempt to exclude even the humblest from their share of 'the common heritage,' i. e., the land; 'was an impious resistance to the benevolent intentions of His Creator.'

Perhaps at this stage it might be pertinent to mention Pope Leo XIII and his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (of new things), generally called 'On the Condition of the Working Classes,' which was the most famous of his Leonine Corpus.<sup>44</sup> In the work the Pope protested against the errors both of the *laissez-faire* school of economics and of the socialists of his day, and outlined a solution of the social problems on Catholic lines.

One of the myths of the Labor Party maintains that the nascent organization was strongly influenced by the Encyclical. However since there

were only four Catholics among the 36 members elected for Labor in 1891 whilst thirteen were Anglican and the rest Protestant, it is difficult to see how this was so. What is more, the work was only published in Rome on 15 May 1891, and the general-election began in New South Wales barely four weeks later.

We should also point out that were we to accept the case argued by Celia Hamilton<sup>45</sup> and Patrick Ford,<sup>46</sup> i.e., that the nascent party was strongly influenced by *Rerum Novarum*, what then should we make of Leo's equally famous Letter, *Humanum Genus* (1884), which was his vigorous condemnation of Freemasonry? Or for that matter, his Encyclical on Freemasonry in Italy, *Dall'alto Dell'apostolico Seggio* (From the Heights of the Apostles' Throne) (1890), or 'the eight different Popes [up to 1950] who forbid Catholics membership of the Masonic Lodge?'<sup>47</sup> A logical but slightly cynical view might be that Newton, Hollis, Edden, McGowen and Cann, who were all Masons, barely noticed, as was likely the case with most Australians.

However, against the religious vacuum of modern politics, there was also Henry George. It has been said that he left a threefold economic legacy: political, intellectual and moral.<sup>48</sup> This might be seen in his works *The Land Question* (1881), *Property in Land*, a debate between George and the Duke of Argyll (a relative of Mrs. Karl Marx<sup>49</sup>) published in 1884, and *An Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII*, a response to *Rerum Novarum*.

In the *Land Question* George took the outrage of the Irish people against absentee landlords as an example of the misery caused by land abuse to point up the worldwide misappropriation of land.

*Property in Land* is essentially a debate between two intelligent men arguing for and against. Following the Duke's attack on *Progress and Poverty*, George replied in the *Reduction to Iniquity* that was printed as a pamphlet together with the Duke's attack under the title of *The Peer and the Prophet*.

As for *Rerum Novarum*, George thought the Encyclical condemned his teaching, although some of his Catholic friends disagreed, and he decided to reply, not to debate the Pope, but to define his own views.<sup>50</sup> His reply proved to be an important essay on utopianism and Christian socialism, interlarded as it was with quotations from Aquinas and other Church authorities. 'What I have aimed at,' he wrote, 'is to make a clear, brief explanation of our principles, to show their religious character and to draw a line between us and the [state] socialists. I have written for such men as Cardinal Manning, General Booth and religious-minded men of all creeds.'

Leo XIII was evidently encouraged by George's reply in his refusal to uphold Archbishop Corrigan of New York's contention that the Single Tax was contrary to the natural law.<sup>51</sup> And although there were many to whom George's views seemed communistic, analysis shows that all landowners prepared to use

their land, as opposed to holding it in speculation, would retain their property. His approach was, like the debates on the “Sermon on the Mount,” part of the plain people’s investigation into “Building Heaven on Earth,” and was entirely consonant with the existing political prejudices and the Victorian religiosity of the majority of those who heard him and read his books.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>*Liberator*, 26 February 1888.

<sup>5</sup>*Australian Standard*, 9 March 1889.

<sup>6</sup>Reuben Hall, ‘Politics and the Pulpit,’ *Single Tax*, 20 January 1895, hereafter referred to as ‘Pulpit.’

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<sup>8</sup>From the *Nepean Times*, 11 January 1896, re-printed in the *Single Tax*, 8 February 1898, hereafter referred to as *Nepean*.

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<sup>10</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup>*Deniliquin Chronicle*, 7 April 1894.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup>Hughes and Graham, *Voting for the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1890-1964*, hereafter referred to as *Voting*.

<sup>14</sup>*Single Tax*, 6 December 1897.

<sup>15</sup>John Farrell, ‘For Those Who Remain,’ *Brisbane Worker*, 9 July 1893.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup>See *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Socialism, 18 December 1878.

<sup>18</sup>Henry George, *The Science of Political Economy*, Quoted in Rev. William Stang, *Socialism and Christianity*, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1905, p. 20.

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<sup>20</sup>*New Order*, Sydney, 9 June 1894.

<sup>21</sup>See *Daily Telegraph*, 20 February 1894.

<sup>22</sup>*New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Fifteenth Parliament, session 1894. Vol. LXIX, hereafter referred to as *Debates*.

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<sup>24</sup>Tony Laffin, *The Freethinkers’ Picnic*, Singleton, Toiler Editions, 1998, p. 58.

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- <sup>25</sup> *Debates*, p p. 956-958.
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- <sup>29</sup> Gaeity Theatre.
- <sup>30</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 1891.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.
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- <sup>33</sup> *Protestant Standard*, 10 May 1890, see also *SMH* 23 June 1891.
- <sup>34</sup> *SMH*, 10 September 1894.
- <sup>35</sup> *The Socialist*, 6 June 1896.
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## 8. A Conclusion.

For them a continent undreamed of, peerless,  
A realm for happier sons of theirs to be,  
One land preserved unspotted, bloodless, tearless,  
Beyond the rim of an enchanted sea  
Lay folded in the soft compelling langour  
Of warm south airs, like an awaiting bride,  
While strife, and hate, and culminating anger  
Raged through the far-off nations battle-dyed.  
---John Farrell.

Before entering into any conclusions on the land question, it is proposed to first restate the problem, which as Henry George saw the matter was: 'Why as the wealth of a country increases, does the workers' struggle become harder, and why is it that in the highly civilized countries, where poverty is most intense, wealth exists in its most luxurious form?' In theory, the purpose of *Progress and Poverty* was to explain the paradox of poverty accompanying progress, and to solve the riddle of industrial depressions alternating with boom periods. George saw the answer to these questions in the increasing monopolization of the land by a few. He argued that the rent of land increases with material progress, and landowners reap the benefit whilst the wages of the landless are continually forced down. Moreover, rising rent encourages speculation, which leads to such high speculative rents that some labour and capital, unable to pay those rents and

still employ themselves at a profit, stop producing – in short – a depression develops. However, while he recognized other proximate causes of depression, in-built faults in the monetary and credit systems, and so on, he maintained that land speculation was the basic and ever present cause <sup>1</sup>

Anxious to demonstrate why this was so, Farrell pointed out that three classes shared in the making of wealth; workers, capitalists, and landowners. Therefore, the kernel of the whole question was a matter of simple subtraction: if three classes shared a certain sum of wealth, the shares of two could only diminish if the share of the third was increased. And, since in New South Wales in the 1890s, the share due to the workers and to the capitalists was diminishing, Georgists argued that the cause was found in the fact that as soon as the country showed signs of progress, there was an immediate and upward movement in the value of land. <sup>2</sup>

James Ashton, a single taxer who won the seat of Hay in 1894, explained that land values, in Sydney, had risen from zero in 1787, to fifteen hundred pounds per frontage foot one hundred years later. And rises in values meant increased rentals, or the expenditure of larger sums to secure a fee simple. He also pointed out that the increased payments could only be drawn from manufacturing or other wealth producing activities. Or more plainly, as land values rise, the draft made upon the wealth of the country by the landowning

class, becomes greater, and again, by the law of subtraction – the share of one of the three classes dividing a certain share of the nation's wealth cannot be increased unless the share of the other two is diminished. Hence it follows, land values rise, only at the expense of labour and capital.<sup>3</sup>

As for land moving into fewer and fewer hands, in the Riverina counties, County Waradgery, for example, where the chief town was Hay, ten persons owned all the alienated land in average holdings of 37,000 acres.<sup>4</sup> And a similar situation prevailed around Albury, in County Hume, where ten persons owned 62% of the alienated land in lots of 42,000 acres.

Not surprisingly, for single taxers, such figures were pregnant with meaning, since such holdings were potentially amongst the most productive in the country. Hundreds of thousands of acres of deep alluvial soil fringed either a river or a railway line, and was, therefore, eminently suitable for closer settlement. But the people who would have willingly worked it, to get the best from it, were barred from so doing in order that sheep remained pre-eminent. Furthermore, the aggregations of immense freeholds along the river frontages forced those who were looking for land on which to make family farms to walk through thousands of acres of rich agricultural land until they reached the west where land was of a quality, that, in the battle for existence, predetermined that making a bare living would be hazardous.



To understand why land nationalisation excited such interest, it is necessary to appreciate the extent to which land had accumulated in the hands of the few, not only in Australia, but most countries. In 1887, when the first modest meeting of land nationalists in New South Wales was organised by Frank Cotton MP, then just plain Frank Cotton, about seven hundred persons owned three-fifths of Ireland; twenty-two persons owned nearly the whole of Scotland, and barely two thousand persons owned nearly half of England. In all, fewer than ten thousand persons owned the entire area of England, Scotland, and Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, as the matter stood, in theory at least, a few thousand landowners could legally evict most of the inhabitants, and, with the backing of the army and police, drive them out of the United Kingdom altogether. In New South Wales, in the same period, just five hundred and thirteen persons held amongst them 17,215,000 acres, or an average of 33,628 acres each, and one hundred and thirty persons held 10,700,000 acres at an average of 82,000 acres each.<sup>6</sup>

In the whole scheme of things, however, perhaps there was a time when Australia was the 'working man's paradise;' certainly thousands had left the land of their birth to face the uncertainties of life in a new land, precisely because the country promised so much. And probably there were only a few, from the vast number of those who came, who had not, at some time, dreamt of owning their

own small holding from the millions of broad acres that were just waiting, apparently, for newcomers to take them up.

Yet the fact remained, that in terms of their access to the land, newcomers were as poorly served in New South Wales as anywhere else. What is more, by the 1870s, patterns of ownership had clearly emerged that were just like the worst features of the British system. At the top of the pyramid in Britain were the landlording families; Salisbury, Churchill, and Harrington, as well as the Dukes of Westminster and Newcastle and so on.<sup>7</sup>

Such people could extract more than two hundred million pounds per annum from their tenants throughout the British Isles.<sup>8</sup> Even Lord Carrington, who had 10,000 a year as governor (up three thousand from his predecessor Lord Loftus), earned 42,000 pounds a year as a landlord in Britain. However, in what some might see as further evidence of the mind's amazing ability to accept contradictions, seemingly no one took offence when his Masonic brother, Jim McGowen, a future Labor premier, arranged for Carrington to lay the foundation stone for the new Trades Hall in Dixon-Street, in 1888.

In Australia, the counterparts of the Salisburys and Churchills, were the Elders, McCaugheys, Wilsons and Tysons, who between them, in 1889, owned nearly seven million acres of New South Wales.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, only a few years later, there were in the colony, in 1893, more than a quarter-of-a-million landless voters, and under the liberal franchise, imperfect as it was, it was nonsense to pretend that the pastoralists were the stumbling block to reform. The fact was that in terms of the ballot-box, the pastoralists were in a hopeless minority numerically. The real stumbling block, as John Farrell saw the matter, 'lay in ignorance.' Most people then, it seems, as in the present, accepted the situation and adjusted to it. Henceforth, if one were trying to describe, in a single sentence, what Farrell set out to achieve, it might be that he saw his task as educating Australians to a full understanding of the land question in all its implications.

In the political circumstances of colonial Australia, in 1887, where for historical reasons there existed many advantages in being a wool producer, the usual practice had been for big landholders to grab all the acres that they could; land being the only form of property not subject to taxation, direct, or indirect.<sup>10</sup> Land also increased in value proportionally with public activity and expenditure. It was therefore hoped, that by implementing the Single Tax, those who had been accumulating large holdings, could, by peaceful means, that is, the taxation of land values, be persuaded to provide jobs for the unemployed, or sell the land to those who would make fuller use of it.<sup>11</sup> The Single Tax also offered simplicity, in that it was a tax on one thing, not many. Thus, by extension, it was argued that

the tax would reduce the cost of government, and perhaps reduce corruption, by reducing the number of tax inspectors and investigators.

However, since Cotton and Farrell's earnest and persistent advocacy of the Single Tax did bring the principle of land value taxation as a means of reform into the realm of practical politics, around 1889, the constant cry of the vested interests opposing them was that the tax would be ruinous to the struggling farmer and industrious artisan.<sup>12</sup> In such a climate, it was scarcely surprising that little was ever heard of how the tax would effect the Burdekins and Coopers, and the other large city land owners, upon whom, if the single taxers were to have their way, the burden of taxation would fall most heavily. As far as Farrell was concerned, such men contributed little to the cost of government, despite the fact that, *via* the unearned increment, they had enormous rent rolls and were the principal beneficiaries of the country's material progress.

### **Freetrade or Protection**

'The backward elements,' was a favourite phrase of Farrell's which he used to describe certain supporters of both Freetrade and Protection. The phrase referred to those who wished to exclude workers from political influence, reduce wages, and keep the land in the hands of the squatters. And, in the manner that politics was played in the 1890s, it wasn't long before Protectionist elements infiltrated the Freetrade Party and began undermining the system, and Freetrade

elements, having similar goals, infiltrated the membership of the Protectionist Party. What is more, these same elements were hard at work within the STL.

Protection, especially in Victoria, was considered a working class policy. *Ergo*, any union that existed did so for the protection of its members against employers and other workers. Thus, in times of financial depression, as in the early 1890s, vigorous efforts were taken to prevent the importation of unemployed fellow-toilers from the bush or from the other colonies. In so doing, a case could be made that hundreds of good men, and their families, were left to starve for the personal advantage of petty union officials and their supporters.<sup>13</sup>

Georgists believed that Protection could only survive in an atmosphere of ignorance: It followed, therefore, that its strongholds were in the backblocks, where books and newspapers were scarce. And, according to Farrell, old platitudes about the 'Sunny Southern Cross,' 'shoddy foreign goods,' and 'pauper labour,' were an essential part of its ideology. He also suggested, that if such beliefs were carried to their natural conclusion, Protectionists would be against schools of art, public libraries and government schools, because these offered a wide scope of knowledge even to the most humble.

However, traditionally, many held that Protection made work. Yet it only made work in the sense that 'shovelling away a sandhill in order to replace it with another,' made work. Single taxers on the other hand held that work was not the

great *desideratum* of life, and argued instead that people, as a rule, took regular work mainly only out of necessity.

As for freetrade, in 1879 when *Progress and Poverty* was first published, there were many who thought of economics as a sort of mega accountancy, rather like adding up the sums of all the book-keepers in the country. Not to deny the usefulness of that idea, George suggested that economics springs from something much more fundamental and simple; that is, the quite natural inclination of people to save effort in getting what was needed in order to live.<sup>14</sup>

To do this people swap things, since they differ in their skills. Thus economics becomes the study of these exchanges, and as such, it is the study of what is the very root of the well-being of society. In short, Georgists argued that freetrade was about plenty, and that exchanges promoted prosperity. Significantly, in an economic act of exchanging, both parties obtain, fundamentally, the saving of effort.<sup>15</sup> And, more than that, freetrade is natural, and consists of permitting people to trade as they want to trade.<sup>16</sup>

### **Difficult Choices.**

As Farrell viewed the matter, there were two forces at work in the early 1890s – one tending towards the extension of government, which involved the ‘belittlement’ of the individual and the gradual ‘negation’ of personal rights, and

the other tending towards the simplification of government, and the consequent enlargement of the power and dignity of the individual. <sup>17</sup>

However the pity was, that in the struggle for bread, few could identify these forces. Consequently large amounts of energy were misdirected. There was also the spectacle of the unemployed, which because of their difficulties, led many to argue that the government should do something for them. They therefore proposed increased government powers, ostensibly for the benefit of the majority, without considering the dangers that such powers were to be entrusted to men who would wield them, either ignorantly, or by design, for totally different purposes. <sup>18</sup>

Farrell also warned that parliamentarians were always passing laws, to prevent this, to discourage that. Yet when the desired effect was not produced (as with the numerous laws to promote closer settlement), the methods used to produce the failure were left practically unquestioned, and the process of agitation for another law, to do what the former had failed to accomplish, was repeated with blind perversity. <sup>19</sup>

At some later stage, however, the advocates of 'repression, restriction and interference,' according to Farrell, unwilling to admit the failure of their *nostrums*, yet unable to ignore the persistence of the troubles that their 'quackery' failed to cure, try to shunt the responsibility upon those who pointed out the flaws

in their actions, that is, writers and preachers and so on. And, 'it is at this point,' Farrell wrote: 'That terms such as "socialism," "anarchy," "single tax," and "nihilism," are used [by the daily press] as if they were synonymous.' <sup>20</sup>

In contrast to other political organisations, Georgists would have argued that the evils of society were fundamentally moral evils. Orthodox political economy in Henry George's time saw little further than its own formulae and shibboleths, 'Supply and Demand,' the 'Iron Law of Rent,' and so on. He helped to elevate the study, and in so doing, wrote the only book on economics that was read by millions. And, writing from the viewpoint that he did, Farrell praised him as the first [since Medieval times] to teach that labour and capital were indissolubly linked, and rejected the idea that the labourer was the slave of the capitalist.

Orthodox economists, on the other hand, had been beguiled by the Darwinian hypotheses, and the analogy of the physical world where *nostrums* such as the 'survival of the fittest,' were declared to be the supreme law of life and progress. Such ideas, mixed with the 'rantings' of Thomas Malthus, were simply taken up to engender a sense of 'helpless pessimism.' <sup>21</sup>

Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), an English economist despised by Georgists, taught that society would always be hindered by the miseries flowing from the 'tendency' of population to increase faster than the means of



subsistence.<sup>22</sup> The consequence of accepting such material, which was little more than a tract on ‘over population,’ went to the heart of George’s belief that God would provide, and to his ideas that Malthusian theory was really only a gratuitous attribution to the laws of God, of results which really sprung from the mal-adjustments of men.<sup>23</sup>

In the circumstances, it was little wonder that the Irish were the chief victims of such ideas. ‘I doubt,’ George wrote, ‘if a more striking instance can be cited of the power of a pre-accepted theory to blind men to the true relations of the facts.’<sup>24</sup> And, far from over population being the cause of Ireland’s troubles, her troubles were caused by landlordism.

Finally, Farrell would go to his grave arguing against landlordism, and warning people that Australia risked sharing Ireland’s gloomy fate. Meanwhile, he worked with all his strength, as did Cotton and Johnson, and a host of others, now largely forgotten, who made it their life’s work to end poverty. And having set his hand to the wheel, in the late 1890s, when the going was toughest, he would write: ‘It is a great privilege to have helped forward this movement. It will be a very pleasant thing to think of, regardless of our religious opinions, when we come to die...’ “To him that much is given, of him shall much be required.” ‘The thin edge of the wedge of the Single Tax has been inserted in New South Wales. Let us do our part – with the sound of all the misery that might be prevented

ringing in our ears – and drive it home like men. Future generations will ask how the Single Taxers of New South Wales did their duty at the close of the nineteenth century.’<sup>25</sup> Farrell certainly had a way with words.

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