CHAPTER XV

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

The triumph of industrial consolidation was a big factor in the nationalization of the country. Depending as each aggregation must in extending its markets, on offering more and more people something they wanted and are willing to pay for each worked systematically to extend its organization into new territory. The peopling of the great west had added a great scattered population in which to pioneer. Between 1880 and 1900 the eleven states and territories of what the Census called the Western Division had increased by nearly two and a half million of men and women; ~~Kan~~ Texas in the Southern Central Division by a million and a half; the two Dakotas in the North Central Division by nearly six hundred thousand; Nebraska and Kansas in the same Division each by a half million. The center of population in the ten years since we found it twenty miles east of Columbus, Indiana (1) had moved fourteen miles west and nearly three miles south.

The new settlers were potential customers and from the headquarters of the great consolidations were laid the plans for reaching them. Representatives of the telephone, ~~brought~~ the great electric equipment companies, the makers of farm machinery, the sugar trust, the oil trust, the whiskey trust

1) World Almanac, 1935. Page 261

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penetrated far away places tying them into the national set up, not only as customers but as part of their machinery since almost invariably they left behind a local employer to knit the community into the great fabric they were spreading from coast to coast.

In this immense undertaking of nationalizing the products they controlled it was more obvious in 1898 than in 1878 that Mr. Carnegie's "man" was more important to great undertakings than capital, still clearer that submitting to the leadership of strong men was the price the country was paying for rapid development as well as for more abundant comforts and cheaper luxuries.

In no national undertaking was this more openly demonstrated than in the railroads. In spite of the set backs which reckless speculation and over-building had forced on the railroads in '83 and '84 and again from '93 to '96 they had grown in mileage and had solidified the territorial divisions well defined by 1880. There were now eight recognized railroad states or groups, each as a rule bearing the name of its leading financial or operative head. Thus there was the Morgan group, some twenty thousand miles of East and Southeast lines; the Harriman group, twenty thousand miles connecting Chicago and New Orleans; with San Francisco and Chicago and including such stalwart properties as the Illinois Central, the Union Pacific, the Southern Pacific; there was the Gould group of sixteen thousand miles covering the Southwest;

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the Hill group made up of the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific. All of these railroad estates were tapped or invaded by independents, some of them of strength and importance. The Santa Fé competed with both the Harriman and Gould groups. Out of Chicago ran roads which Harriman and Hill and Gould must respect.

The control of these giant systems did not rest on so simple and direct a method as ownership of mileage. Ownership of mileage was combined with leases, stock ownership in outside hands and particularly with strong personalities on Boards of Directors. A powerful financier or speculator on a Board - a Gould, a Morgan, a Harriman, a Rockefeller, might carry more weight than a control of a big block of stock by a weak individual or group of individuals.

The interlocking of consolidations in different fields, their support of one another's interests, their fighting of one another's political as well as economic battles was causing grave uneasiness in 1878. By 1898 it was accepted as an inevitable result of combination. The telegraph lived off the railway and the railway could not operate without the telegraph. The size and wealth of certain monopolistically inclined industries made servants of them both and all of these undertakings were equally dependent on those who controlled large sums of money, whether they were bankers looking for investments which

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promised large returns or individuals who like Jay Gould or the Standard Oil Group had from their special activities greater profits than were needed for operation and expansion. This money went where its investment promised to strengthen, extend, perpetuate the enterprise they controlled.

There was no denying it was the direction which these interested groups of bankers, railway men, industrialists, had given the country that had in twenty years so swiftly nationalized its resources, forced them to yield enormous wealth. It was enormous as we have seen; the country in 1880 counted its total wealth at close to $50,000,000,000. It now counted it at $126,700,000,000. Taking off its liabilities the net worth was $40,600,000,000 in 1880; $98,800,000,000 in 1900. (1)

The chief complaint against the system was that its leaders had taken too big a share of this wealth for themselves. The country was prone to forget what it had got. It complained of the cost of telegraphing but failed to see that while at the start of the period there were but 8,000 offices in the country there were now over 22,000. That meant that hundreds of thousands more men and women had the advantage of quick communication. Moreover, the communication was cheaper; 38.9 cents per message was the average toll in 1898; 30.1 in 1898, dearer than it might have been no doubt, dearer for the one who sent a rare telegram than for him who used the wire constantly

1) Doane, Robert R. "Measurement of American Wealth" Page 11

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but it was an advance.

One enormous advantage ignored for most part was the training in efficient organization and operation which the big combinations were giving the country. There was need enought of it. Under the old individualistic method of doing business each man followed his own rule of thunb, as each operator in the shop. But as undertakings consolidated, enlarged, systematized practices were forced upon them. Under competition they must devise economies; a premium was more and more put on the man who could do good work. It was coming to be conceded that advancing a man for other reasons than his ability endangered an organization. That is the great trusts like the great industries were becoming schools in efficiency under the awakening influence of the young science of management.

Order, economy, stability were becoming the ideals of operative heads. An undertaking was analyized as never before and each function given proper attention. Where once a single bookkeeper ran the office and kept the books now there was an organized force running upward from office boy to head clerk. Business correspondence which grew as the business grew in spite of the increased use of telegraph and telephone was by 1898 largely done by the typewriter. It took a long process of education to convince and reconcile the public to the machine. It was regarded like the first telephone as a plaything. A typewritten letter was regarded a a slight, but when in 1890 over three and a half million dollars worth of typewriters were sold; ten years later there were about twice as many and

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the number of people engaged in making them had risen from 1631 to 4340. (1)

After the typewriter had come the adding machine invented in 1886 first made practical in 1891. In 1892 the first addressograph appeared; the filing case, the card catalogue, the tabulating machine, followed rapidly. Business was coming to have its machinery as did the farmer, the manufacturer and every year saw its improvement. (2)

This introduction into near and far places of these new devices for communication and for convenience was giving new occupations to women as well as men. They took care of central for the telephones, ran the typewriter, cared for the files. That is, each new industry was finding a place for women. Moreover, as industry was steadily taking the trades of women out of the home, industrializing them; naturally and necessarily the women followed. They spun, wove, stitched, canned, washed and ironed, made butter and cheese in factories instead of in kitchens, wash rooms, milk houses. And men were with them in these occupations to a degree they had never been in the household, making the machines, keeping them running, performing the more intricate processes. It was less an invasion of an industry

1) Abstract of Twelfth Census. Page 320

2) Leffingwell, W. H. The first half Century of Office Management Addresses before the National Office Management Asso. (1930)

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than a change of method and place in carrying on the industry. (1)

The temptation to condemn industry as a whole because a few powerful men became inordinately rich from their ability to organize, operate, secure privileges, and draw the money they needed for expansion from the public not only prevented a proper weighing of what the public was receiving but it

1) Report of Industrial Commission. Vol. XIX. Pages 923-932 For further evidence regarding the changed position of women see Schlesinger, A. M. The Rise of the City (A History of American Life, X) Chapter V

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prevented cool and ~~improved~~ effective dealing with the roots of the evils, encouraged the popular and futile practice of fixing attention on the scape goat rather than on the nature of his practices and the best way to block them in the future.

In the twenty years under examination two major attempts to correct basic ways had been made - the interstate commerce bill dealing with railroad practices and the Anti-trust law making a restraint of interstate or international trade a punishable crime. Neither had proved prompt or effective remedies. Both were in process of interpretation by the courts. ~~Something of what had been done towards curbing trusts we saw in Chapter X.~~ It was not encouraging to hasty-minded reformers. But it was enough to show that what was before the country was a long period of fact-finding, of weighing relations and values.

The accomplishments under the Interstate Commerce Bill were already less than encouraging. The rebate, the pool, had not been controlled effectively in any quarter. The commission in its report for 1898 declared that its investigation for that year showed that a large part of the rail transportation of the country was still on an illegal basis. (1)

Mr. A. J. Vanlandingham, Commissioner of the St. Louis Traffic Bureau of twenty-eight years in rail transportation told the Industrial Commission that there were fewer rates maintained in 1898 than at any time

1) Industrial Commission. Vol. IV. Page 194

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within his knowledge of the railroad business, (1) and all this was from no lack of faithful and intelligent work by the commission. Their reports on the cases which came before them are ~~in~~valuable documents, largely for a reason which William Z. Ripley points out:-

"The decisions of the Interstate Commerce Commission, usually provide debatable matter of an admirable sort. This is peculiarly true of cases or decisions with a dissenting minority opinion. Another advantage which many of these economic cases possess, over propositions in mathematics, logic, or even law, as material for attaining training the intelligence, is that they are always charged with human, and often with great public, interest; and that they incidentally involve an acquaintance with the underlying business conditions and trade relations of the country at large." (2)

Although the workings of both these measures were still inconclusive and unsatisfactory they gave sound operating ground and as their weaknesses became clear to the public it was certain there would be amendments by the Congress and decisions by the courts which would at least check this wide-spread defiance of business and commerce. (3)

1) Industrial Commission. Vol. IV Page 194

2) Ripley, W. Z. Railway Problems - Preface. This volume together with Vols. IV and Vol. XIX, Pages 259-485 of the Industrial Commission give an adequate picture of the working of the Industrial Commerce Commission up to 1898 as well as of the problems and practices of various industries.

3) Faulkner, H. U. The Quest for Social Justice (A History of American Life, XI) 110-124 for later developments.

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One of the chief causes of the panics and depressions of the period had been the wanton flooding of the country by railroads and industries with securities issued in the name of legitimate expansion but frequently for no other purpose than speculation. Apparently the public had learned little from the panic of 1883 and 1893 in which speculators in unsound stocks had ~~so largely~~ been so big a factor, not enough at least to demand that no security be issued without full information as to what was behind it and that no stock exchange list a stock not properly backed.

In Massachusettes anti-stocking watering laws were passed as the rush into reckless railroad expansion reached that state. They applied to all public service companies and forbade the companies to declare a stock or dividend or create any additional stock or issue certificates unless the par value was paid in cash to the treasurer. (1)

Mr. J. J. Hill was making a suggestion which if it had been followed would have checked if not prevented the recurring speculative orgies. A law requiring any company desiring to do business outside of the state in which it was incorporated to satisfy a federal commission that its capital stock was paid up in cash or in property taken at a fair valuation. (2)

(1) Hill, James J. Highways of Progress. Page 153

(2) Industrial Commission, Vol. XIX. Page 417-418

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The return of prosperity silenced whatever misgivings the public had about stock gambling. Before 1898 was at an end it was obvious that railroads and industries were preparing to issue securities to carry on proposed expansion and consolidation such as the country had never dreamed, and that far from attempting to control these issues a huge speculative public eagerly waited their appearance.

The election of 1896 left the organized farmer high and dry. It was settled that for the time being none of these remedies for his condition which he had sought through politics would be granted.

~~The populists evaporated.~~

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If disappointed in his political hopes the farmer was not neglecting his business. He was working as never before to keep it in touch with the mechanical ~~machinery~~ and scientific advances of the times which concerned him.

Labor-saving devices had multiplied until in 1900 he had seven hundred fifty million invested in implements and machinery.(1) It was necessary that he be alert for he had 25,000,000, about one third more mouths to feed than in 1878. To be sure he had more acres under cultivation, nearly a third more but on this land he was asked to raise not only food for America but for over-seas. ~~Upon~~ the amount he could expect ~~had~~ depended in a large measure ~~on~~ the country's prosperity.

However, manufacturing was over-taking him, threatening to outstrip him as an exporter. By the end of the period his produce made up 69.32 percent of the country's total export, a fall of nearly 13 percent in twenty years.

This threat to his supremacy did not alter the fact that in many ways his condition was improved. The prices of his products had advanced - money was easier than ever before. In ten years the per capita circulation had increased from $22.88 to $25.15. His banking facilities had been so improved that it was easier to get credit. He had used these advantages in lifting the load of mortgages which had so stocked the country when revealed by the census report of 1890. He had increased the variety of his products as well as their quality. His ~~mills~~ milk and fruit and grain were tested as never before; food factories were beginning to appear in his district, taking his products in bulk. The handling of milk, the making of butter and cheese, the canning of fruits,

1) Abstract of Twelfth Census. 1900 Page 217

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the packing of apples were being industralized; the free rural delivery was bringing his letters and newspapers to the door and the extension of the routes over the whole country was sure; the government was instructing him in ways to meet the changes the industralization of his business, as well as the strides making in agricultural science were forcing. This education came to him through the Federal and State Agricultural Departments, the Farmers Institutes and the sixty four agricultural and mechanical colleges. In these institutions dairying, soil culture, reforestration, pure food rotation of crops, the dealing with insects, pests, animal diseases, marketing stock, feeding, the care and use of farm machinery, care of orchards, small fruit and vegetable growing were taught. (1)

It was from the Institute that the farmer received the most practical help for here the abundant information which lectures and agents from state and federal agencies brought him was discussed in the light of his experiences and its usefulness admitted or rejected.

Unfortunately for him and for the country the most important matter in all this teaching went largely unheeded. It concerned the appalling exploitation of the soil of which the American farmer had long been guilty. He complained properly enough of the greed and wantonness of lumbermen who cut timber over wide stretches of the country leaving stumps and brush behind to feed forest fires which too often took with them the homes of settlers. The farmer realized what the stripping of the land of timber was doing to water sources but he refused

1) Schlesinger, A. M. The Rise of the City (A History of American Life) 215-216, 234, 236-237

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to admit that his own greed and wantonness in taking everything out of the land it had to give and then moving into new territory to repeat the process was equally wasteful and dangerous.

Every scientific investigation, and there were many of them, showed soil deterioration, reduced yield and an almost complete neglect of scientific methods of "keeping fields up," the danger of unchecked erosion, of stripping land of timber and grass. Even then the far-seeing realized that the farmer was preparing one of the greatest tragedies in land history the ravages of the wind which nothing but abundant and properly placed timber and grass can prevent.

The spirit of haste, the indifference to waste, affected him as it did every class. He must force a big yield. If his acres showed exhaustion he still took what he could from them and ploughed up new land; when this land in turn was exhausted he moved on. This was "progress" - "opening the country" - tempting him on were the persuasive land agents of the railroads, the irrigation and redemption companies. It was not only exhaustion of soil values which marked their path of hasty colonization it was a heart-breaking waste of human life.

In every productive activity men still justified or tolerated waste on the theory that it created demand - gave work. A story that went around in the '80's illustrates the thinking Terence Powderly, head of the Knights of Labor was said to break his ginger-ale bottles "to make work for glass blowers."

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"If this be true," said Richard Ely, "he should reflect that he could at least save the bottles and use the money received for them in the purchase of glassware." (1)

The election of 1896 had as disastrous effect on one of the two leading bodies of organized labor as it had on the organized farmers. ~~There~~ was the Knights of Labor so active in the Farmers' Alliances and in the Populist campaign. In 1886 the order had a membership of over 700,000; its rival the American Federation of Labor 138,000, but by 1893 the Knights had dropped to 74,635. (2) The election left them prostrate.

The American Federation of Labor on the ~~country~~ contrary stood at the end of our period at around 265,000 its revenues in 1897 around $19,000.00 (3) - a compact fighting body, its organization as solid as that of Mr. Carnegie's "close corporation," its weapon the strike victorious over the Knights method of arbitration. Here again it was the triumph of leadership ~~of~~ by a man who knew his mind, his objective and had consciously chosen his weapons.

On the whole the conditions of labor in the twenty years had greatly improved. It had entered the period with its right to organize and strike generally recognized by the law, ~~(3)~~ (4) ~~and~~ certain union leaders were feeling sure enough in 1880 of their status to advocate incorporation of unions.

1923

1) Ely, Richard T. The Labor Movement. Page 377

2) Wolman, Leo. Growth of American Trades Unions-1880-1932

(4) ~~3)~~ Perlman, Selig. History of Trades Unionism in the United States. Pages 150-160

3) Aldrich, Marion A. American Federation of Labor in the American Economic Association's Economic Studies, 1898, page 229.

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Paragraph #3 - second line read at the end of our period at around 265,000 its revenues in 1897 around $19,000.00 - (3) a compact fighting, etc,

Footnote #3 - Aldrich, Morton A. American Federation of Labor in the American Economic Association's Economic Studies, 1898 Page 229

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There were various reasons: It would protect the union against the embezzlement of its funds by officers, remove them from the possible operation of state conspiracy laws, give organization more stability and dignity, employers would be more inclined to recognize them. In addition to incorporation there was a movement to "legalize arbitration" by which was meant not compulsory arbitration but compulsory dealing with the unions with compulsory investigation by an impartial body.

The tumultuous events of the '80's with the constant hauling of labor into courts put an end to the demand for incorporation and forced new legislation and decisions

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When the Sherman Anti-trust Act was passed in 1890 there was an immediate attempt to apply it to labor organization, although the country at large undoubtedly regarded it as applying only ~~through~~ To conspiracies in restraint of trade formed by management. The courts were divided. Then in 1893 an injunction against striking drayman of New Orleans on the ground that they were interfering with the transfer of goods from one state to another was justified by the Supreme Court under the Sherman Law.

"I think," said the Judge, "the Congressional debates show that the statute had its origin in the evils of massed capital: but, when the Congress came to formulate the prohibition ..... the subject had so broadened in the minds of the legislators that the source of the evil was not regarded as material, and the evil in its entirety is dealt with. They made the interdiction include combinations of labor, as well as of capital." (1)

Other cases followed. All judges did not agree but by 1898 it seemed clear that the courts were inclined to the belief that the Sherman Law covered combinations of labor, ~~as indeed was finally decided ten years later.~~ the Danbury Hatters Case

Great strides had been made in laws protecting and improving the condition of labor. They touched a wide range of subjects:- sweat shops, bakeries, laundries, mines, railways, occupational devices, hours, unemployment, guarding of machinery, compensation for injuries, housing, free unemployment bureaus, wages, child labor, woman's labor. Everything as a matter of fact that concerned the workingman was by the end of the period under constant and increasingly intelligent inspection and regulation. (2)

1) U.S. vs The Working men's Amalgamated Council of New Orleans 54 Federal 994 (1893)
2) Labor legislation in the U.S. Bulletins of U.S. Dept. of Labor. Vol. 9 No 54 Pages 1421-1426 (1903)

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Labor's standing anxiety over the quantity and quality of immigration had been whetted by the Depression of 1893. It had found a responsive Congress, although the depression itself was the strongest check on numbers. Immigration fell from 560,319 in 1891 to 229,299 in 1898. The effort to secure federal legislation which would in all times select the type of men and women entering was kept up. In 1892 before the bill of 1891 had had sufficient time to demonstrate whether or not its efforts to ~~wipen~~ improve the quality of the admitted a new bill providing still further restriction was passed providing more rigid rules for all those concerned in the process - the consular agent abroad, the steamship company, the inspector on this side. The agitation kept up and in 1895 came the first of a series of bills favoring a literacy test. The one which went to President Cleveland in February of '97 was promptly vetoed. The House as promptly passed it over the veto but the Senate which had given it a majority of but three in contrast to the House majority of one hundred eighty one refused to reconsider.

In 1898 the bill was re-introduced, both the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor supporting it. Action on it was checked in June 1898 when Congress created an Industrial Commission charged with the gigantic task of investigation what had been going on in the country in our period - Trusts, Agriculture, Labor, Railways, Capital. They were to find out what they had been

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doing from the lips of those who had led them, report, suggest laws. Among the subjects assigned them was immigration and there the case rested in 1898. (1)

The American Federation of Labor credited labor's gains to militancy. It had learned much in its twenty years practice of militant methods, theoretically at least:- not to go into a strike without preparation, to avoid sputtering outbreaks, to keep within the law, avoid violence, be prepared with money to see through what it undertook which meant beside a war-chest facts and ability to present them so that the public would understand. All this meant study, caution. Over 6,600,000 persons were out on strike for longer or shorter periods in these twenty years at a cost to industry of about a half billion dollars, two thirds of which was in wages.

On the whole labor had come out better than capital in these struggles, primarily because what they sought was so often just; organized labor came out better than unorganized. The proportion as the Labor Bureau figured it out stood fifty one percent of successes for labor, thirty six percent for the employer, the rest undetermined. (2)

Did it pay? That depended on whether the real grievances could have been settled by arbitration in a way satisfactorily to both sides. In a large percentage of cases undoubtedly this could have been done. The gain that developing a sound technique for

1) Report of the Dillingham United States Immigration Commission. Vol. 39. Pages 29-50 (1911 - See Report of Industrial Commission, Vol. XIX. Legislation, Pages 977, 1013

2) Industrial Commission, Vol. XIX. Pages 864-870

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threshing out mutual problems and adjusting them by peaceful methods would have been tremendous. It would have reduced the immense loss in good will and mutual respect which followed the militant method. But organized labor, like organized capital, was not interested first in peaceful industrial life, they were interested in achieving their immediate material endsand used those methods which promised the quickest results.

If labor and capital had changed but little in ambition and method in these twenty years the thinking of the public its attitude towards these dominating forces of the nation's economic life had changed. It was more outspoken in its criticism and analysis of what was going on and these criticisms were less emotional and incoherent. A continuous stream of official investigations by states and federal government, of private law suits, of reports from courts and commissions had furnished a body of data which made it possible to give documents in support of fears and suspicions and charges. The public was beginning to ask ~~if these had the~~ for a backing of proved facts. The most effective literary use of documentary evidence in the case against the trust up to 1898 was Henry D. Lloyd's "Wealth against Commonwealth" in which he asked "how our labor and the gifts of nature are being ordered by those whom our ideals and consent have made captains of industry over us." His answer was as he said, "quarried out of official records" - "a venture in realism."

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Although the election of 1896 was interpreted as a smashing victory for the doctrine of laissez faire there had never before been so widespread a conviction that if the great combinations were to be allowed to live they must accept regulation, work with and not in defiance of the government's attempts at regulation.

What the public was beginning to ~~really see~~ realize was that laissez faire had become a justification of the strong only - a philosophic privilege. It was not the American individualists interpretation of the doctrine. You were to be let do only as you did not interfere with the equal rights of others to do. When you limited the freedom of the other man you were going beyond the American philosophy. Therefore, the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Anti-trust Act must be enforced.

There was a growing conviction that ethical and humanitarian considerations did have a relation to economic laws, that the failure to observe them endangered the whole economic structure. This did not mean the advocates of share-the-wealth, the socialism so threatening in the early '90's to the scared individualist had gained. They were hardly stronger now than the advocates of the free coinage of silver. What had gained, however, was a belief that life could be made more tolerable for the mass of the country. On all sides experiments in education, technical training, co-operation, the shorter day, the higher wage, the model factory and the effective labor law was going on. Humanitarian

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views were penetrating the economic world, gaining ground more rapidly than ethics being simpler and more self-satisfying to apply. If Mr. Carnegie's "Man" was still in the saddle and ahead in the race Henry George was gaining on him every year, not his specific remedy, but his ~~agreement~~ argument that poverty is no legitimate child of progress.

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