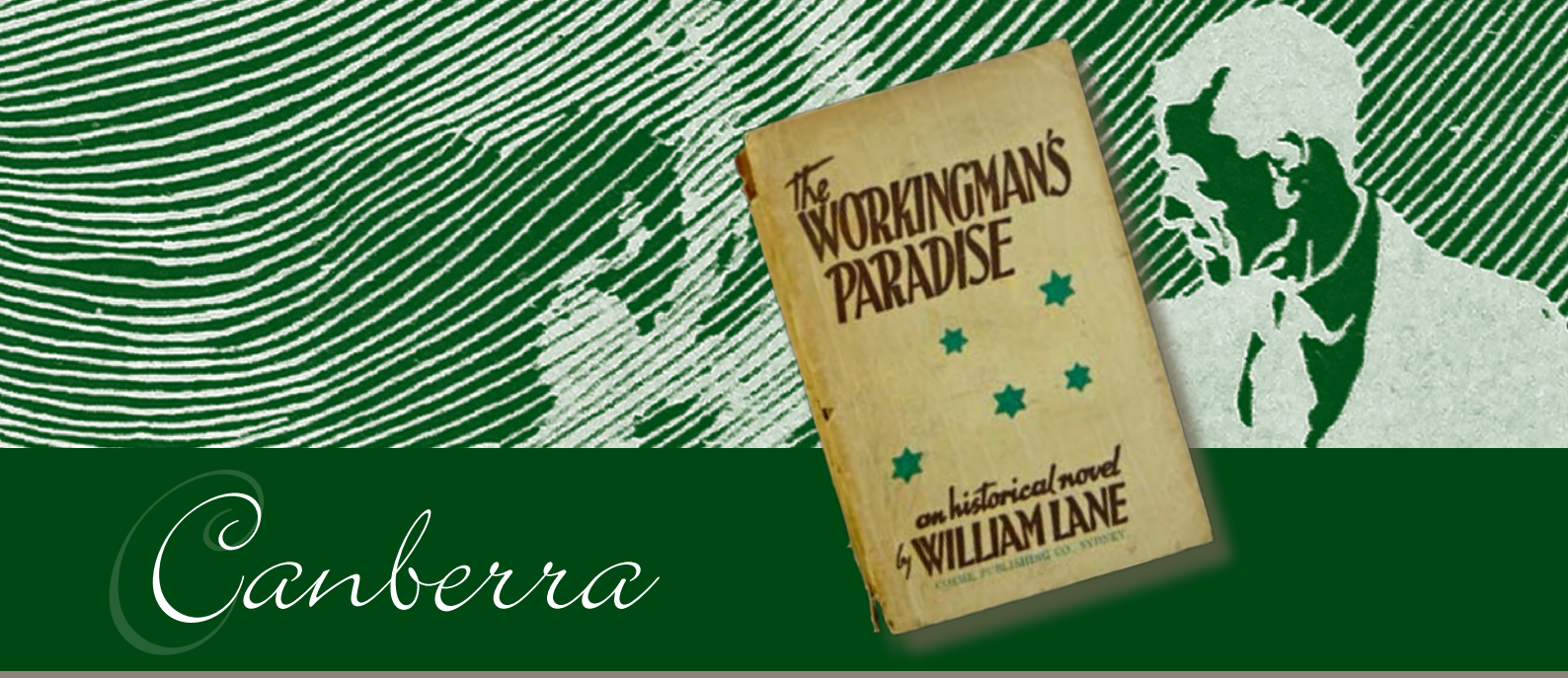

Canberra

Those Other Americans

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Cover image: Bookshelf of those works, published over one hundred years ago, which confirm Canberra as a city built on ideas—some of the most socially progressive ideas of an era rich with radical political and cultural commentary.

Canberra

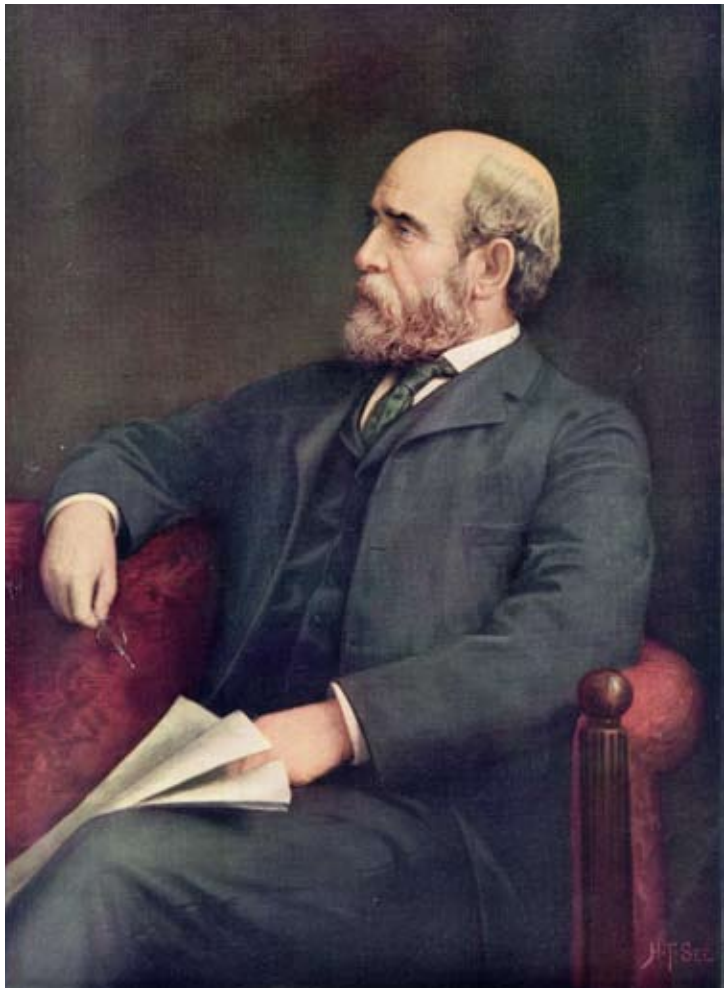
Those Other Americans

David Headon

'Every man has a Utopia in his head. Give me some idea of yours'.

Maximilian, in Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar's Column*, 1890

A publication of the Chief Minister's Department, ACT Government – to commemorate the Centenary of Canberra, 1913–2013



Henry George (1839-97)

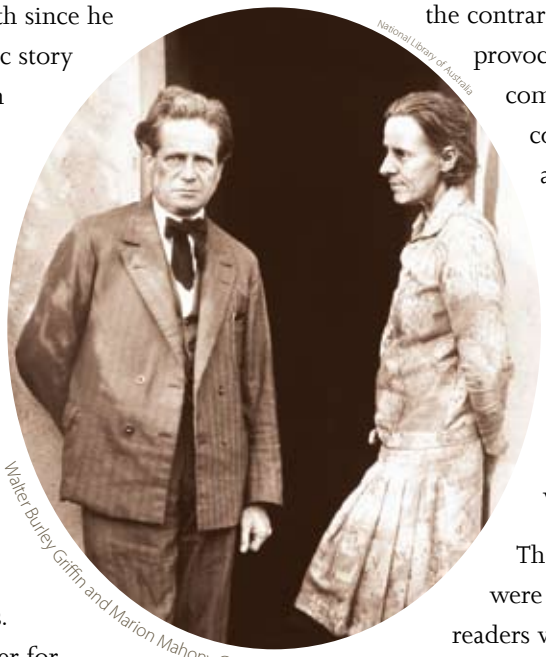
> *'To those who, seeing vice and misery that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, feel the possibility of a higher social state and would strive for its attainment'.*
>
> Dedication by author, Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, 1879

> *'Social reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting; by complaints and denunciation; by the formation of parties, or the making of revolutions; but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas. Until there be correct thought, there cannot be right action; and when there is correct thought, right action* will *follow'.*
>
> Henry George, *Social Problems*, 1883

The Big Picture

When Chicagoans Walt and Marion Griffin arrived in Sydney, Australia, in May 1914, they had done their homework. Both had a keen interest in the country they had taken many days to reach, though neither would have thought in the last months before the outbreak of the Great War that such arduous, work-related travel would be the forerunner to a passionate, long-term commitment. The intoxicating Australian landscape soon held them captive.

Walter Burley Griffin, as he would be commonly referred to in Australia, had been reading about what he called the 'great modern commonwealth'[1] in the south since he was a teenager. The romantic story has it that he vowed from an early age to enter only one international competition, when the newly amalgamated Australian colonies proclaimed their determination to have a state-of-the-art national capital. Wish became reality in 1911 in a controversial competition that attracted 137 entries from some of the world's most accomplished planners. On 25 May 1912 the Minister for Home Affairs, American-born King O'Malley, announced the winner: 'Mr Walter Burley Griffin, architect and landscape artist, 1,200 Steinway-hall, Chicago, Illinois'.[2]



Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin

In the two years following the competition, the charismatic if rather shy Griffin went out of his way to discuss why he felt that he and Australia were a good match. Within weeks of the announcement, he gave an interview to the *New York Times* in which he made clear his lofty ambition for a country he had so long admired. For the young democracy in the southern hemisphere, he famously declared, he had planned 'a city not like any other city in the world… an ideal city – a city that meets my ideal of the city of the future'.[3] While Griffin could not be sure that Australia's 'governmental authorities' had the necessary confidence to actually build his visionary metropolis, he was certain that his social, cultural and political views, expressed in his architecture and town-planning principles, had found a receptive home.

Hitherto the relatively unknown quiet achiever, as the winner of a prestigious competition Griffin began to explore in the public realm the strategies of the purposeful propagandist. In doing so – in a succession of journal articles, interviews and letters – he showed his new employers that he was no Yankee architect-cum-planner who just got lucky. Quite the contrary. A succession of provocative statements in the competition's aftermath confirm an 'architect and landscape artist' as thoughtful and creative in print on the Australian story (and its relevance to his work) as he was inspired in numerous elements of the winning design.

The Griffins, we know, were both avid and eclectic readers who had begun a relationship with a country of readers at a time when the Western world was intent on interrogating the pervasive impact of the Industrial Revolution on nations, cities and families.[4] Vast personal fortunes had been made in the nineteenth century as a result of industrialism, with its aggressive new technologies, but at enormous individual cost in many communities. In the aftermath of the American Civil War (1861-5), for example, the rapid expansion of the transport industry, particularly rail, produced a financial boon for the few, while in the process creating a new, numerous, downtrodden class. Factories, mines, shipyards and railway lines required workers, the overwhelming majority of whom were underpaid, under-valued and above all, under-represented.

In the 1880s and 1890s, in the United States and Australia (and many other countries worldwide) popular writers emerged who gave articulate voice to the worker's plight. The life experiences of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony, growing up in go-ahead Chicago in the 1880s, paralleled those of young Australian colonists growing up in burgeoning coastal cities during the same period. Also, the cheap and easy circulation of books across oceans and continents meant that, perhaps inevitably, the young Walt and Marion were reading a number of books in common with their Australian contemporaries. In his insightful cross-cultural study, *Radical Cousins – Nineteenth Century Australian and American Writers* (1976), Joseph Jones elaborates on the intriguing correspondences between two subtly connected New World nations:

> *Looking, or listening, more intensively the comparative reader [of nineteenth-century Australian and American writers] may… become aware of a tone… a resonance, a low-keyed thematic hum, which he would like to be able to record more precisely but is not quite sure about. This is intrinsically more important than sporadic 'documentary' evidences: its presence means that two separate literatures are close to each other's wavelength, so to speak – that two peoples must be thinking and responding along similar lines.*[5]

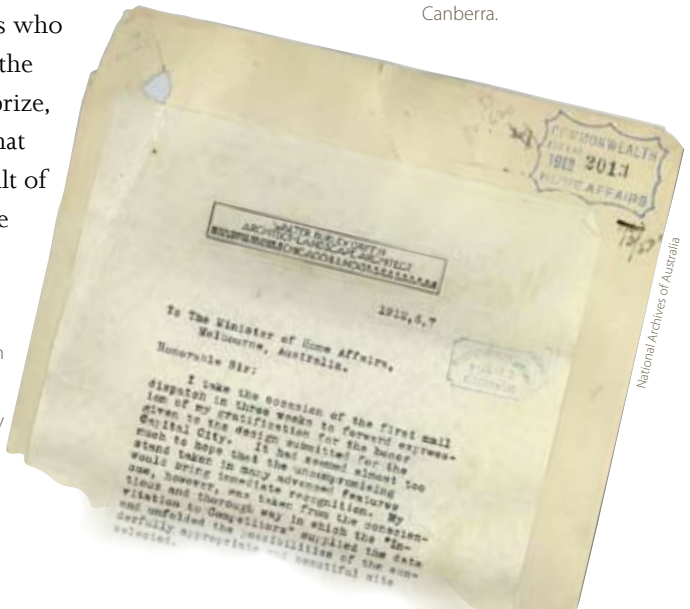
To fully understand the early Canberra story, and the absorbing narratives that surround the competition to design Australia's 'Federal Capital City', familiarity with the era's most influential works of social commentary is essential.

We alert to a cluster of now forgotten 'other Americans' with stories to tell. Their contributions, in books which had big print runs in both the United States and Australia, support the validity of Jones' observation.

National Library of Australia

Purposeful gathering in Melbourne, on 23 May 1912, of those men directly or indirectly involved in the judging of the international competition to design the Australian national capital. Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley, is in the foreground right, and two other men seated, Col David Miller (right) and Percy Owen (centre back) would in later years have controversial roles in the development of Canberra.

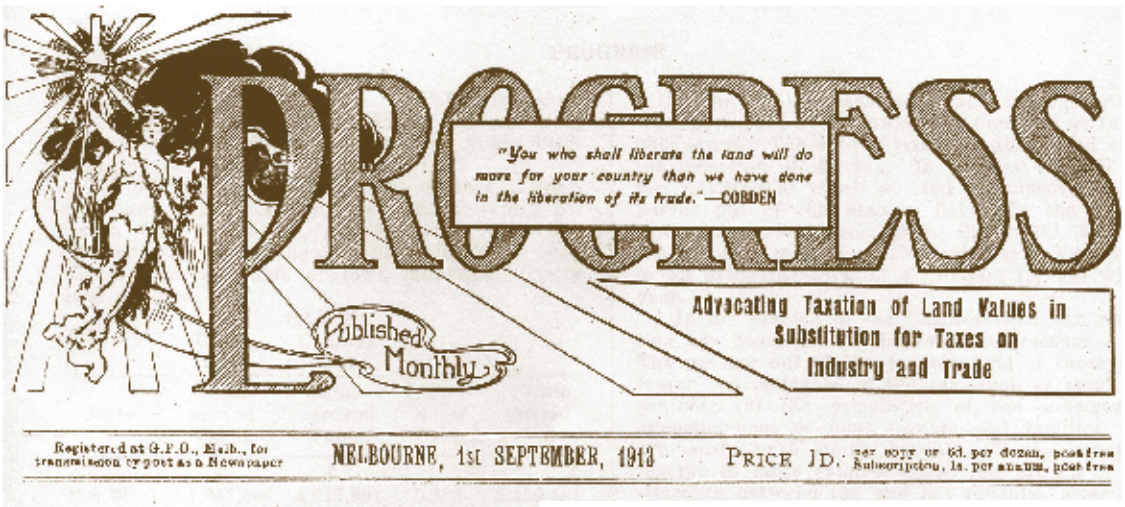
Through brief profiles of these books and their authors, this booklet will add a different dimension to Canberra's reputation as a city conceived in a climate of big, bold ideas – at a time when urban prophets abounded, radically new social models were paraded in newspapers on every street corner and utopian solutions seemed within reach. Walter Burley Griffin, as we will see, was in part shaped by those ideas; but so too were the Australians who awarded him the competition prize, and the city that grew as a result of their collective labours.



National Archives of Australia

Shortly after the national capital design competition announcement, Walter Burley Griffin commenced a lively correspondence with the Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley.

Barely a fortnight after Walter Burley Griffin set foot in Australia for the first time, the journal of the supporters of Henry George in Australia, *Progress*, ran a feature piece on the celebrity American. His 'Single-Tax' sentiments were highlighted.


PROGRESS

"You who shall liberate the land will do more for your country than we have done in the liberation of its trade."—COBDEN

Published Monthly

Advocating Taxation of Land Values in Substitution for Taxes on Industry and Trade

Registered at G.P.O., Melb., for transmission by post as a Newspaper

MELBOURNE, 1st SEPTEMBER, 1913

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Brasthorn Studio

Walter B. Griffin

SINGLE TAXER AND SOCIAL REFORMER.

Griffin's New Nationalism

As early as September 1912, in a crafted letter to Minister O'Malley, Walter Burley Griffin registered a personal interest in the vexed land question every bit as committed as those leading the public debate on the issue in Australia. The Australian Government's decision to make the land of the new Federal Capital Territory leasehold, not freehold, drew unabashed praise from the American well before he set foot on Australian shores: '… I cannot refrain from extending congratulations to your Government on the stand it has taken to maintain in perpetuity the rental value of the capital site [of Canberra]. Failure to do this everywhere is largely responsible for distortion and prevention of natural city growth, nowhere better exemplified than in our own capital, Washington, where speculative holdings perverted the development …'[6] As a whole category of literature galvanised, at the turn-of-the-century, around the individual's struggle again 'robber barons' determined to accumulate as much land (and wealth) for themselves as possible, Griffin steadily developed his own radical polemic opposed to 'private monopoly … exploitation…'[7] The city planner in him knew that land ownership was arguably the linchpin of the new 'science' (of town planning), and he refused to compromise on the issue, convinced that whoever owned the land in effect controlled a nation state's decision-making capacity.

'Real estate dealers' standards', with their emphasis on 'speculative self interest', were anathema to the 'public spirit' that Griffin felt a community must have to establish what he called, with typical flourish, 'the great democratic civic ideal'.[8] He firmly believed during his first years in Australia that the new nation had the potential to attain a high quality of life for all its citizens based on egalitarian legislation, genuine public spirit and organic, 'scientific' cities.[9]

Griffin's own thinking on the land question was heavily influenced by the American social reformer and radical economist, Henry George (1839-97), who outlined his doctrine of a 'Single Tax' on unimproved land in two classic works of the period, *Progress and Poverty* (1879) and *Social Problems* (1883).

George's impact on Australia at the time that he embarked on a three-month speaking tour of the eastern colonies in 1890 (coincidentally, the same year that a fourteen-year old Griffin read *Social Problems*, receiving a 'lasting impression'[10]) will shortly be discussed. But where Griffin is concerned, it is enough to say that when he came to Australia for a six-week first visit in August 1913 he had been reading his countryman Henry George for over twenty years; he was 'an active member of the Chicago Single Tax Club'; and he would in time deliver two of his most politically controversial speeches ever in Australia to Georgist audiences, both of them in Melbourne, in September 1915 and early 1924.

In September 1913, in one of his first Australian speeches, to the Free Trade and Land Values League, Griffin outlined his robust Georgist beliefs in defiance of the worldwide decline in interest, by then, in George's philosophy and social program:

> *The Single Tax movement … was really a religious movement, for it had its foundation in the highest and best in human nature – the desire to benefit democracy.*[11]

It was this last claim that really shaped Griffin's own political and ethical thinking. One reason why he was so excited to come to Australia was his belief in the policies of the first governments of the Australian Federation, particularly as these policies related to the new capital city project. As Griffin put it in a speech to the Minneapolis Builders' Exchange in late 1912, some months after winning the competition but well before he had experienced Australia for himself:

> *We can all be interested in the Australian Federal Capital City not so much for what it is now or will be necessarily, but because of what it stands for: as an opportunity, the best, I believe, so far afforded for an expression of the democratic civic ideal and of all that means in accessibility, freedom, wealth, comfort, conveniences, scale, and splendor.*[12]

In the same speech Griffin listed the reasons for his optimism concerning the new capital: Australia's race homogeneity, its insular geographical location, its record on human rights and the absence of 'dire poverty or political corruption'.

David Headon, private collection

Henry George House, and the office of 'Prosper Australia', the Australia-wide organisation today which continues to espouse Georgist philosophy and ideas — in Hardware Lane, Melbourne.

A year later, once in Australia, Griffin promoted his message in terms which cleverly combined the rhetoric of the American salesman with the homely chatter loved by his local audience:

> *Australia, of most democratic government and bold radical government, may well be expected to look upon her great future, and with it her new Federal Capital, with characteristic big vision.*[13]

He described everyday Australians as 'a nature and liberty loving, to say nothing of art aspiring, people'.[14] Joseph Jones' notion of two peoples on the same wavelength, responding along similar lines, looms large in this remark.

Like many of his Australian contemporaries, Griffin aspired to 'a new social order'. He believed this could only come about through the practical example of a trend-setting New World democracy that effected change in the Old World. Australia's practice of government administration of all public services and its 'governmental policy of public proprietorship of the lands of the Federal Territory' had it uniquely placed, Griffin maintained, to lead a 'world-around revival' through a 'new nationalism' based on shared values – eventually leading to a 'new internationalism'.[15]

While the grim reality of world war and the entrenched colonial behaviour of a number of local officials would in time undermine Griffin's essentially naïve faith in Australia, he continued to believe in the resilience of 'an unorganized,

incoherent, unvoiced Australian sentiment' that could not be extinguished.[16] What did he understand by this? On what was it based, and why did he write in 1934, three years before his untimely death in India, that such sentiment would eventually transform Canberra from a 'transitional vacillating experiment' to a 'great national capital'?[17] To answer these questions we need to explore a cross-section of those seminal books which helped to shape the social and political views of the Federation generation of Australians. For it was the application of these views that gained prominence as the new Australian nation acquired an international reputation as a 'social laboratory'[18] in the first decade of the twentieth century. In far-off Chicago, the Griffins were so enthused that they were prepared to uproot their thriving architectural practice and make a leap into the professional and cultural unknown on the other side of the world.

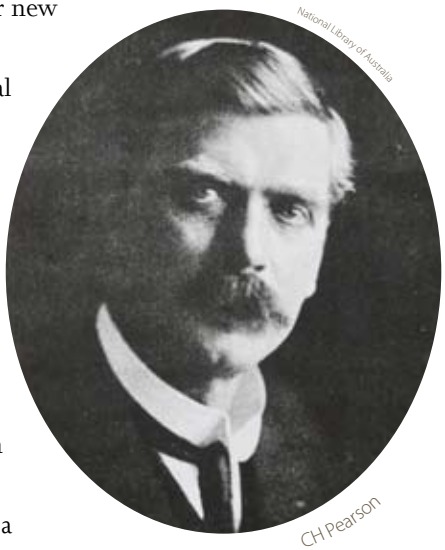
Australian Connections

With the arrival in Western Australia in 1868 of the last load ever of convicts, on the ship *Hougoumont*, Great Britain's eighty-year Transportation System experiment in the southern-most reaches of her Empire came to a close. For the majority of those years the Australian colonies were depicted in the English press as a 'sink of wickedness', a place where you sent your community's human refuse to disappear. [19]

In the same year that the *Hougoumont* delivered its controversial cargo, the first team of Australian cricketers to tour the 'Mother Country' embarked on a hectic playing schedule throughout a mild English summer. This extraordinary tour (by a team of highly talented Aboriginal cricketers), plus nearly two decades in the Australian colonies of rich gold discoveries, drew the acerbic comment from London's *Daily Telegraph* that 'Nothing of interest comes from Australia except gold nuggets and black cricketers'.[20]

While the intentional exaggeration of the comment was meant to be provocative, it was the case in Britain that, up to the 1860s, the Australian colonies struggled to rid themselves of the convict taint – the seemingly indelible mark of a community of the lawless and their unruly offspring. However, in the twenty-five year period from the later 1860s, a series of remarkable changes took place: the individual colonial economies expanded at a rapid rate as international investors (particularly British) poured in; essentially stable Westminster-style governments in the six colonies, with their own constitution, guided this progress and often contributed to it; literacy rates soared, as education opportunities increased across the social divide; all the colonies participated in a dazzling array of international trade and cultural expositions, some of which were hosted in the colonies themselves to great acclaim; the colonial standard of living rose substantially; and colonial athletes established a reputation for sporting excellence, especially the cricketers and rowers.

The aggregate result of these changes was a noticeable alteration in attitude in the colonies, within individuals and within the patchwork of communities across the continent. During the decade of the 1870s, defensiveness about the convict past changed irrevocably into a stance more self-assured: a certain larrikin confidence, even arrogance, was noted by a number of visiting writers and social commentators.[21] Some distinguished scholars migrated to Australia and stayed, becoming outspoken advocates of their new home's elevated social and cultural prospects. C.H. Pearson, a Kings College professor who headed to the colonies and eventually accepted a teaching position at the University of Melbourne, is a notable example. Pearson would in time regard Australians as uniquely selected by nature to guard 'the last part of the world in which the higher races can live and increase freely, for the higher civilization'.[22]

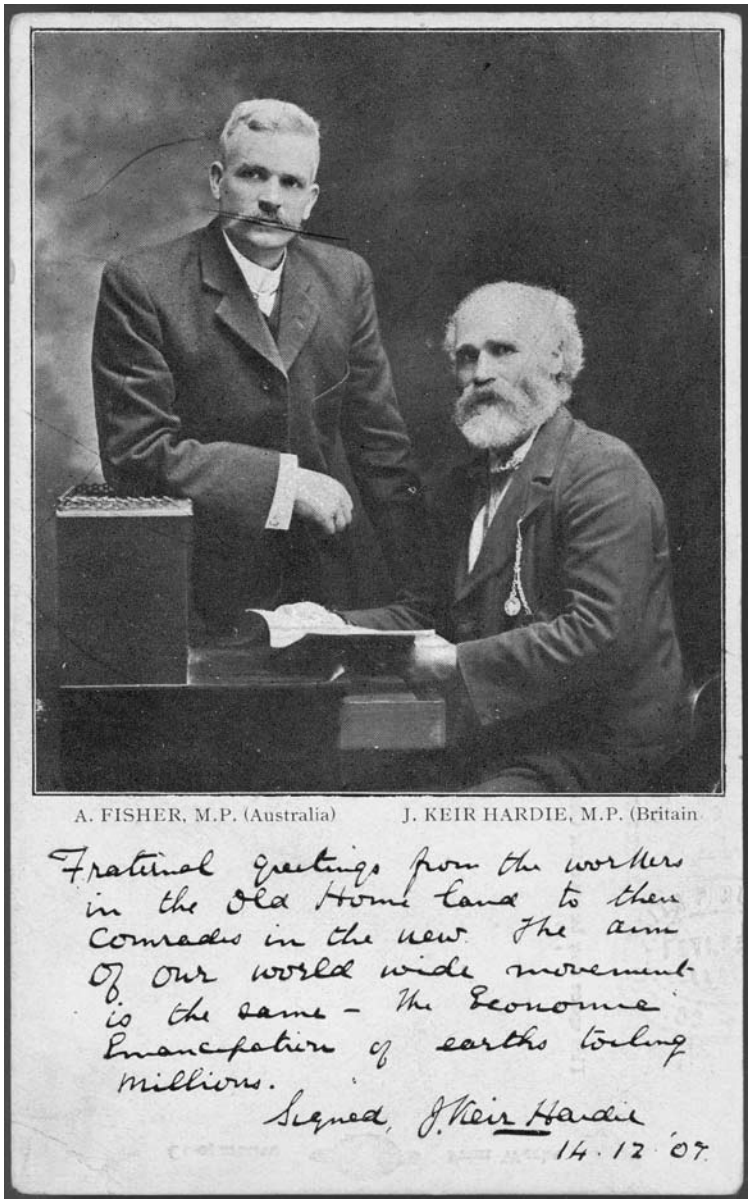


CH Pearson

He wasn't alone; such audacity was not the sole province of a coterie of educated middle-class intellectuals in the colonies. Amidst a prolonged economic boom, working-class newspaper journalists demanded a better deal for their readership. For so long the victims of technological change and economic expansion in an industrial age, workers began to demand their share in the spoils of society's progress. In Australia, between 1860 and 1890, trade unions grew sharply, both in number and in membership size: the coal miners formed their organisation in 1861, the sea-men and metal miners in the 1870s, and the shearers established the Amalgamated Shearers' Union in 1886. Within four years, the Shearers' Union had over twenty thousand members in the eastern colonies alone. Unskilled workers in the city and bush alike were determined to organise themselves to ensure better pay and conditions. By 1890, most skilled trades, and many unskilled professions as well, could count on the security of an eight-hour day.[23]

Removing shearers by force during the 'Great Strike', Hughenden, Queensland, 1891.

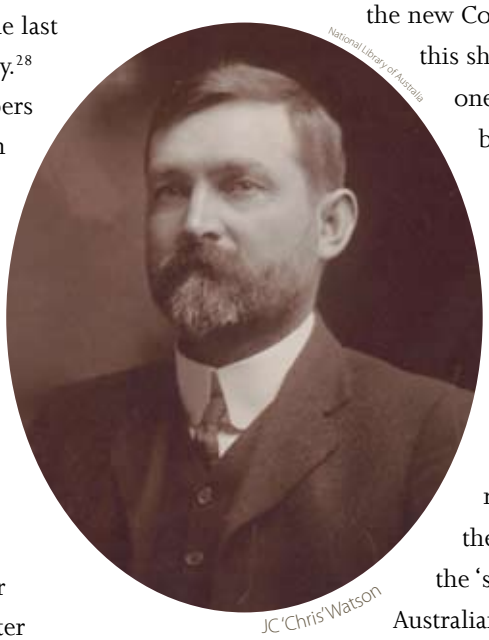
Yet the advantages of being a union member went beyond material and leisure-time gains. In Australia, as has been well-documented by a number of historians (most notably, Russel Ward[24]), there was something more to be attained, something well-articulated by the first Shearers' Union president when he stated that 'Unionism came to the Australian bush as a religion. It came bringing salvation from years of tyranny. It had in it that feeling of mateship…'[25] This feeling of solidarity, belonging and shared values spread right across the unions of town and country. While the workers were regularly exposed to a steady stream of what today would be called 'motivational speakers', it was what they read that inspired them. As the New Zealander William Pember Reeves put it in his multi-volume study of 'state experiments' in Australia and New Zealand: 'In 1889 everyone was reading collectivist tracts and listening to altruistic sermons'.[26] The Education Acts of the 1870s and the slow-burn effect of Mechanics'



Less than a year before he became Prime Minister for the first time, Andrew Fisher hosted the visit to Australia of renowned Scottish labour leader, J Keir Hardie, a founding member of the British Labour Party. Keir Hardie and Fisher had become good friends, on the same side of the barricade, many years earlier during the turmoil of the Scottish coalfield strikes in the early 1880s, when Fisher was still in his teens.

Institutes had secured basic literacy skills; the volatility and challenges of the 1880s and '90s allowed these skills to be applied with energy and dedication.[27]

A comprehensive overseas study of the 'Mass Reading Public' between 1880 and 1900 has suggested that Australia led the world in 'the democratisation of reading' in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[28] Certainly a number of the members of the emergent Labor Party, men destined to affect their country and future capital city sooner rather than later, benefited from this era of mass access to books and education. The first national Labor Government in Australia (and probably the world), that of Chris Watson in 1904, included miner Andrew Fisher, umbrella maker Billy Hughes, farm worker Gregor McGregor and engine-fitter Egerton Batchelor.[29]



JC 'Chris' Watson

So what were these men and their generation actually reading, and how did their choices impact on the progress of Australia's national capital in the formative years up to the laying of the 'foundation stones' on 12 March 1913? Historian Lloyd Churchward assists with an answer in an article he wrote over fifty years ago. It is still being quoted, and should be here:

> *At the time of the flowering of the Australian Labour Movement, in the 'eighties and 'nineties last century, three American writers, Henry George, [Edward] Bellamy, and [Laurence] Gronlund, were amongst the most influential of overseas writers. Indeed for a few years, between 1887 and 1894, the works of these three Americans were certainly more widely known and more influential amongst Australian workers than the writings of any English or Continental socialist. The basic reason for the success of the writings of these three men in Australia was that they were written for a popular and not for an academic audience.*[30]

Churchward's case for the prominence of these writers in particular in shaping opinions has been supported over the years by other scholars, including the first historian of the Labor Party, J. D. Fitzgerald, in his 1915 account.[31] George, Bellamy and Gronlund do help us to understand and interpret some of the prime motivations of the new Commonwealth, but to this shortlist we need to add one more name provided by Australia's most talented creative writer of the era, Henry Lawson.

Those conversant with Lawson's classic short story, 'A Day on a Selection', will recall the exchange in the last paragraphs when the 'shiftless ... careless Australian selector' engages in a comically fractured dinner table conversation with his neighbour, 'Corney George', nicknamed 'Henry George'. As the two farmers try and discuss George's *Progress and Poverty*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1880) and Ignatius Donnelly's dystopian novel *Caesar's Column* (1890), they are continually interrupted and disconcerted by 'the Missus, as she 'Shoo! Shoo!'s' the fowls.[32] Lawson expertly gathers together the dinner-table conversations of bush-dwellers of the time in a story at once humorous and unobtrusively representative. Henry George, Edward Bellamy (1850-98), Laurence Gronlund (1846-99) and another American, Ignatius Donnelly (1831-1901), need to take their place in the Canberra story as essential background sources. Familiarity with their most popular works and key arguments enables us to better understand the ideals and values – the social and cultural milieu – that directed the national capital debate in its formative years.

Henry George: *Progress and Poverty* (1879)

Some early editions of Henry George's monumental work of social commentary, *Progress and Poverty* (1879),[33] provide striking physical evidence of the esteem with which he was held during his lifetime and beyond. They look like Bibles; for the extreme devotees among his mass following, George had a Christ-like aura. Indeed, for a short period at the peak of his popularity, some Britons acknowledged George as their saviour and the Single Tax movement as their church.[34]

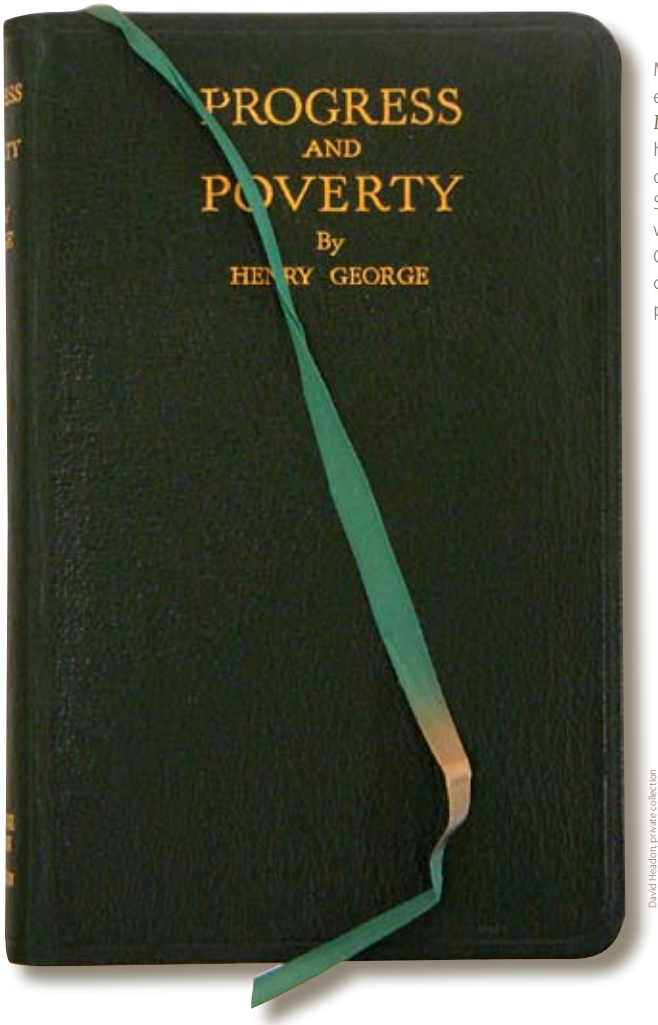
Henry George

Famed American philosopher John Dewey, when summarising George's profound intellectual contribution, stated bluntly that it 'would require less than the fingers of two hands to enumerate those who, from Plato down, rank with Henry George among the world's social philosophers'. Albert Einstein, too, was full of praise. He could not imagine anyone producing a 'more beautiful combination of intellectual keenness, artistic form, and fervent love of justice'. But it was countryman William Lloyd Garrison's assessment which caught the mood of a generation when he stated that George was 'one of the great reformers of the world. His conscience was active, his sympathies broad, his purposes indomitable, his courage unfailing, his devotion to principle absolute … [he had] the genius of language to move mankind'.[35]

Henry George's name is barely recognised today, much less the significance of his contribution, yet to his own generation he was a colossus. He had a huge readership in many countries, none more zealous in pursuit of the implications of his economic and moral arguments than his advocates in Australia. After the publication of *Progress and Poverty*, it did not take long for George to exert an effect in the southern colonies. Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* serialised the ground-breaking study in 1883, and by 1885, according to historian Robin Gollan, *Progress and Poverty* was 'widely read'.[36]

Contemporary writer, poet and George publicist John Farrell put it best when he stated that 'Out in the great bush where men have time to think, *Progress and Poverty* was read with understanding … until the sublime truth of it was impressed on many'.[37]

In economically buoyant Australia in the 1880s, reliance on the works of English writers decreased noticeably. Australians had closely followed the fluctuating fortunes of North and South during the American Civil War in the 1860s; in its aftermath curiosity about this New World neighbour increased, especially among the more educated who found that James Bryce's three-volume *The American Commonwealth* (1888) – 'Bryce's Bible' – provided them with a unique insight into the complexities of American

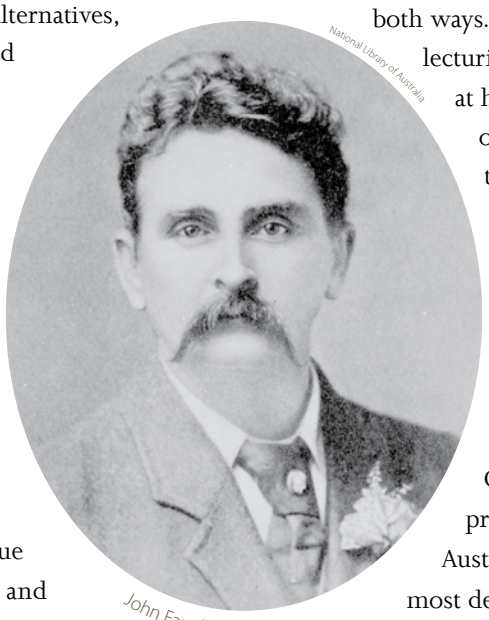


David Headon, private collection

Many of the early editions of *Progress and Poverty* had the appearance of a Bible. For Single-Taxers worldwide, Henry George was a contemporary prophet.

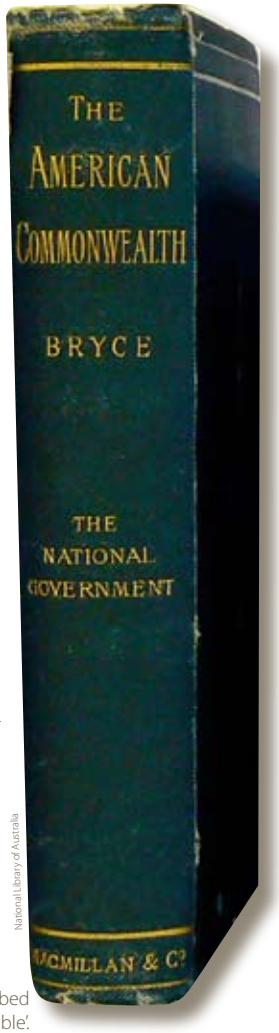
politics and culture.[38] Bryce's study gave English-speaking readers, including Australian readers, an alternative way of looking at society other than the necessarily curtailed Anglo view, which privileged the class-conscious values and mores of the British Empire. Australian colonists had begun to peruse cultural alternatives, and *Progress and Poverty* gained in popularity because of this realignment.

So when Henry George accepted the invitation of Australian Single Tax Leagues to visit a young, democratic country conversant with his masterwork, he accepted immediately. It was an excellent chance to spread further the moral message underlying his critique of capitalism's systemic greed and corruption.



John Farrell

George already knew a bit about Australia, having first visited aboard a trading vessel in the mid-1850s when he was only sixteen. Six years later he married a young woman of Australian background, Annie Corsina Fox. Thus, better equipped than most foreigners concerning Australian manners, he commenced an exhausting three-month speaking tour with his wife at the beginning of March 1890. In just ninety-eight days he delivered forty-nine lectures and seven Sunday sermons, and he visited no less than thirty-eight towns. At tour's end he expressed his personal satisfaction with the results, though he admitted to being perplexed by some cultural quirks of the locals, including the determination to celebrate the Queen's Birthday holiday, which fell on a Saturday that year, on the Monday, in order to preserve an additional leisure day to be dominated by football and horse races. The cultural divide cut both ways. Some reports of George's lecturing style expressed dismay at his American accent, one journalist wishing that, when addressing his 'English-speaking' audience, George could at least have communicated in a proper English accent.[39]



The book often descibed as 'Bryce's Bible'.

Idiosyncrasies aside, George was an imposing presence during his Australian sojourn. As the most detailed scholarly chronicler of the tour, Airlie Worrall, summarises: 'George's international reputation attracted large crowds all around the country, and his personal magnetism converted many of his listeners to the [Single-Tax] Cause'.[40] But what precisely was the 'Cause' to which she refers, how entrenched was it in Australia, and how is it relevant to the national capital story? It is time to discuss the principal aspects of George's social analysis, the substance of his message and his peerless communication skills. During his heyday, 1880-1895, readers of all educational backgrounds loved the accessibility of his prose. He was a serious writer they could not only identify with, but actually understand.

George's Single Tax argument, the economic backbone of 'the Cause', can be simply stated: as an economy grows the value of land rises with it, though not necessarily because of the efforts of individual land owners. Since idle land-owners still reap the economic benefit of this growth (and other people's toil), the state should impose one tax only, on them, a 'Single Tax' on the increase in the value of unimproved land. Implementation of the Single Tax, according to George, would ensure real social 'progress', abolish 'poverty', raise wages, remove corruption from government and private

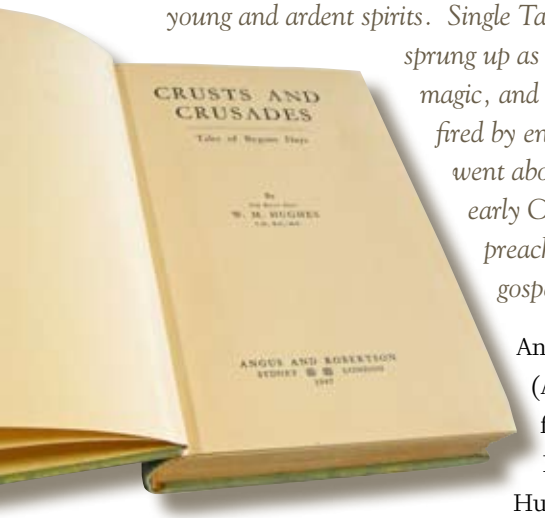
industry, and elevate the moral standards of the entire community.[41]

The promotion of Georgist analysis was impeccably timed in the 1880s to exploit a wave of land reform across the Western world – including in Australia, where in New South Wales alone (the Minister of Lands stated) fourteen people owned some fourteen million acres.[42] In *A New Australia – Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic* (1997), Bruce Scates observes that the glaring inequities in land ownership made George's argument seem 'particularly plausible to a declining middle class, inviting worker, capitalist and self-employed to unite in a common struggle for a [single] land tax'.[43]

WM 'Billy' Hughes

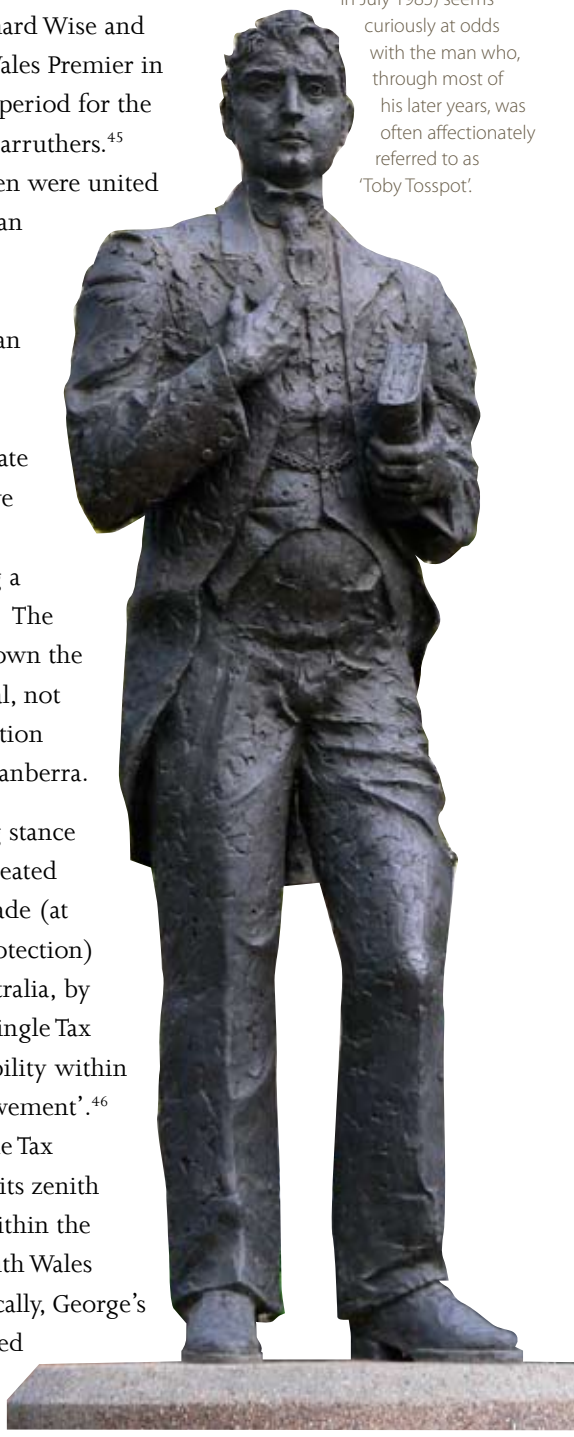
In Australia, a perusal of the politicians who at one time or another came out in support of Henry George, his Single Tax doctrine or the main tenets of his social philosophy reads like a virtual who's who of the Federation generation. On the labour side, many inaugural members of the political branch of the labour movement were Georgists for a time, or supported Georgist principles, as Billy Hughes recalled late in life in his colourful memoir, *Crusts and Crusades – Tales of Bygone Days* (1947):

> *Henry George, with his panacea for all economic and social ills – the single tax – captured the imagination of thousands of young and ardent spirits. Single Tax Leagues sprung up as if by magic, and converts, fired by enthusiasm, went about like the early Christians preaching their gospel.*[44]

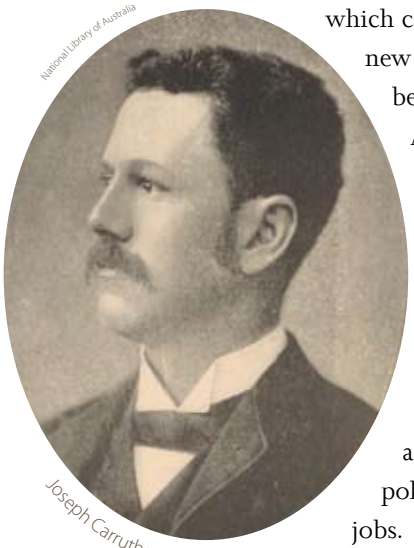


Andrew Fisher (Australia's fifth Prime Minister), Hughes himself (the seventh), Dr William Maloney and the outspoken King O'Malley invoked Georgist ideas at some stage; and on the non-Labor side, Single Tax sentiments were espoused by some of the period's most prominent politicians, including Edmund Barton (our first Prime Minister), Joseph Cook (the sixth), Samuel Griffith (first Chief Justice of the High Court), William McMillan, Edward Braddon, Henry Bournes Higgins, Patrick McMahon Glynn, Bernard Wise and the New South Wales Premier in office during a productive period for the Australian capital, Joseph Carruthers.[45] These highly influential men were united in their dismay at the human suffering caused by land speculation, so when the subject of the new Australian capital city came up in the first national parliaments there was always an articulate case made – by conservative and labour man alike – in favour of the capital having a system of leasehold tenure. The people of Australia would own the land in their nation's capital, not big business. Land speculation would be excluded from Canberra.

Henry George's unbending stance on the way land must be treated and his advocacy of free trade (at the expense of industry protection) together meant that in Australia, by the middle of the 1890s, Single Tax doctrine had 'lost all credibility within the mainstream labour movement'.[46] The popularity of the Single Tax concept, it seems, reached its zenith in Australia in 1891 and within the Labor Party at the New South Wales conference in 1892. Ironically, George's 1890 visit probably signalled the beginning of the slide despite the big crowds


Edmund Barton

Statue of Edmund Barton, Australia's first Prime Minister, located on King's Avenue, Canberra, near the Barton Offices. The patrician pose of the statue (unveiled by Prime Minister Bob Hawke in July 1985) seems curiously at odds with the man who, through most of his later years, was often affectionately referred to as 'Toby Tosspot'.


National Library of Australia
Joseph Carruthers

which came to see him and the new converts he gained, because his unpopular American free trade sympathies disenchanted many workers and liberals, the majority of whom wanted Australian industry cocooned by government, not exposed to the world's trade in a free market. Protection policies, they felt, protected jobs. As the 1890s progressed and the effects of severe economic depression worsened, jobs became the top priority. Georgist economics faded accordingly.

It would be wrong, however, to imply that George's influence in Australia diminished at that point, as the Single Tax tide receded. Although the sub-title of *Progress and Poverty* is doggedly prosaic – 'An inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions and of increase of want with increase of wealth … The Remedy' – the book gave its readers across the social spectrum much more than dry Malthusian theory and the laws of distribution, interest and rent. It had a stimulating moral message, or series of moral messages, best summarised by the appeal to the heart in the book's epigraph, dated 'San Francisco, March, 1879': 'To those who, seeing the vice and misery that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, feel the possibility of a higher social state and would strive for its attainment'. Such a challenge connected powerfully to the spirit of the new unionism in Australia at the time. It spoke to the workers, indeed to all those concerned about the gaping disparities between rich and poor, big land owner and slum-dwelling city labourer.

Australian readers of *Progress and Poverty* found much to consider as they contemplated a fairer community. George, they felt, was to the point when he observed that 'laborsaving inventions [were meant to] lighten the toil and improve the condition of the laborer'.[47] They hadn't. He was right to say that 'disappointment has followed disappointment … discovery upon discovery, and invention upon invention, have neither lessened the toil of those who most need respite, nor brought plenty to the poor'. They could empathise with his simple statement that the 'promised land flies before us like a mirage'. Above all, they knew in their hearts that Henry George got it exactly right in his main argument (hence the book's title) that, yes, 'progress' throughout the nineteenth century had undeniably occurred, and yet poverty had increased. This was, George wrote, 'the enigma of our times' and it had to be solved:

> *It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilisation and which not to answer is to be destroyed. So long as all the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury and make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want, progress is not real and cannot be permanent. The reaction must come.*

There were many in Australia determined to play a part in the anticipated reaction; they wanted to take a stand in their daily working lives. For some in the national parliament, such a commitment included attending to the quality of the legislation they enacted when in power. Some bills pertained to a brand new capital city.[48] Seat of Government legislation provided an ideal opportunity to express what Henry George referred to as 'the natural aspirations of the human heart'. George at one point in *Progress and Poverty* quotes the Stoic Emperor who said 'We are made for co-operation', and he even suggests that:


David Headon, private collection

King O'Malley in retirement in his modest Melbourne home, ca 1940s. To his left are his long-term friend and fellow federal Labor stalwart, the equally eccentric Dr William Maloney, and his wife, Amy O'Malley.

To extirpate poverty, to make wages what justice commands they should be, the full earnings of the laborer, we must therefore substitute for the individual ownership of land a common ownership.[49]

It was a radical proposition, but one that was often canvassed at the time and sometimes built into parliamentary decision-making. Land in the ACT today is still leasehold, a legacy of early Federation ideals and Henry George.

In the concluding chapters of *Progress and Poverty*, George shifts seamlessly into visionary consideration and speculation with a penultimate chapter entitled 'How Modern Civilisation May Decline', a last chapter called 'The Central Truth' and a Conclusion addressing 'The Problem of Individual Life'. The book is never a slow read. The social philosopher praised so highly by John Dewey prods, preaches and inspires, and it is likely that Walter Burley Griffin had in mind sentiments such as those in *Progress and Poverty*'s last sections when he adopted Georgist principles for himself. George's cogent response to the 'conditions of social progress' is one which effectively summarises Griffin's social stance, along with that of the Australian Government, in its most enlightened expression, that hired him:

> *The general tendency of modern development, since the time when we can first discern the gleams of civilisation in the darkness which followed the fall of the Western Empire, has been toward political and legal equality – to the abolition of slavery; to the abrogation of status; to the sweeping away of hereditary privileges; to the substitution of parliamentary for arbitrary government; to the right of private judgement in matters of religion; to the more equal security in person and property of high and low, weak and strong; to the greater freedom of movement and occupation, of speech and of the press. The history of modern civilisation is the history of advances in this direction – of the struggles and triumphs of personal, political, and religious freedom. And the general law is shown by the fact that just as this tendency has asserted itself civilisation has advanced, while just as it has been repressed or forced back civilisation has been checked.*[50]

In *Social Problems* (1883) – the companion volume that followed *Progress and Poverty* – poured over by Griffin at a young age, George ranges even more widely, especially in the book's conclusion when he challenges the individual citizen to 'advance on moral lines'.[51] This, for George, '*requires* a higher conscience, a keener sense of justice, a warmer brotherhood, a wider, loftier, truer public spirit'. Only if the 'standard of duty' triumphs over 'the standard of self-interest', community-wide, can 'the rights of man' be truly won.

In a concluding chapter, entitled 'What We Must Do', George clarifies one of the key elements of a moral message which, in the four years since the publication of *Progress and Poverty*, had undergone refinement (and in all likelihood provided direct inspiration to the Griffins):

> *I do not say that in the recognition of the equal and unalienable right of each human being to the natural elements from which life must be supported and wants satisfied, lies the solution of all social problems. I fully recognise the fact that even after we do this, much will remain to do. We might recognise the equal right to land, and yet tyranny and spoliation be continued. But whatever else we do, so long as we fail to recognise the equal right to the elements of nature, nothing will avail to remedy that unnatural inequality in the distribution of wealth which is fraught with so much evil and danger. Reform as we may, until we make this fundamental reform our material progress can but tend to differentiate our people into the monstrously rich and the frightfully poor.*[52]

National Library of Australia

Walter Burley Griffin read *Social Problems* when just fourteen and, as he put it, the book left a 'lasting impression'.

National Library of Australia

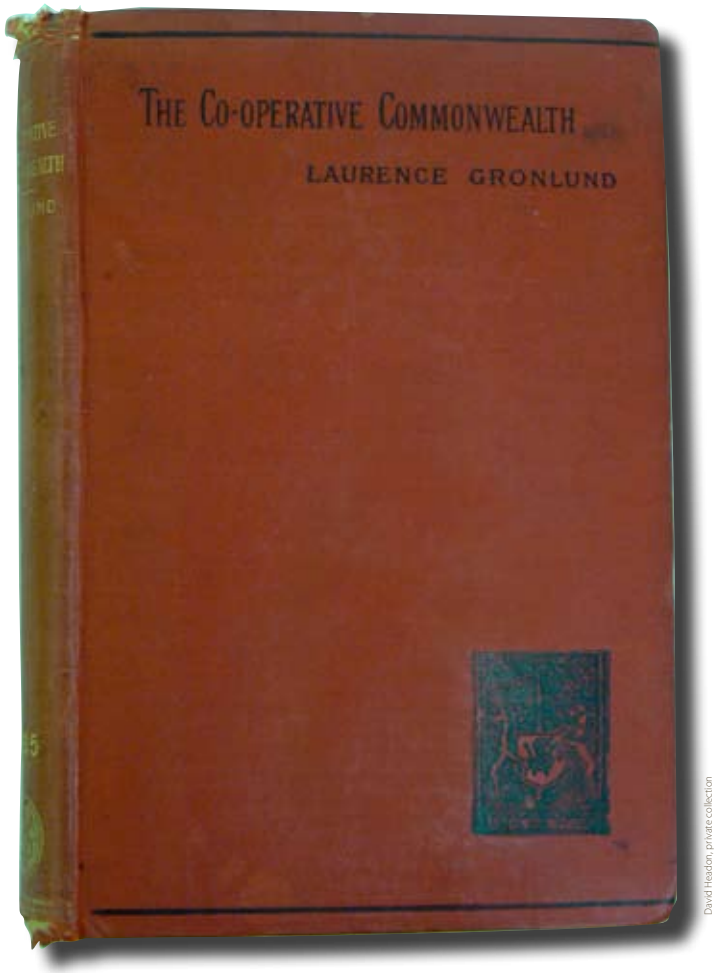
Delegates at the Australasian Federation Conference in Melbourne, 6-14 February 1890—who adopted a resolution in favour of early union of the colonies. The flowing white beard of Sir Henry Parkes (standing, centre) dominates.

It is not hard to see why Henry George exerted a signal effect on the thinking of the Griffins and Australia's Federation generation. Consider the testimony of Adelaide Georgist Harry Taylor when he was asked to say a few words at the Henry George Commemoration in 1909. Nearly two decades on from George's Australian visit, and with the movement, the Cause, tired and deflated, Taylor reflected on his own life, 'a life' [he felt by then] 'more or less wasted'. He longed for the adrenalin of days past:

> *… finding therein just one period when one's powers were stretched to the fullest – when the heart throbbed with generous impulse, when the ear was tuned to catch the plaint of the multitudinous misery of the world and the tongue quickened to speak and the pen to write on its behalf – remembering too, the thrill that came from the gathering tramp of the armies of the New Crusade … [and] the voice [of Henry George] … stirred their hearts and fired them with holy zeal …*

From the first Convention debates in Sydney and Melbourne in the early 1890s to the stirring speeches on the podium at the 'foundation stones' ceremony on Capital Hill in March 1913, influential politicians with a role to play in the Canberra story drew inspiration from the uplifting prose of Henry George.

Laurence Gronlund: *The Co-Operative Commonwealth* (1884)



David Headon, private collection

Progress and Poverty created such widespread interest that it was only a matter of time until George had his advocates, imitators and enemies. The first writer of influence to appear in print who consciously applied Georgist precepts to his work was the Danish-born American lawyer and committed socialist, Laurence Gronlund. Admitted to the bar in 1869, Gronlund established a practice in Chicago at a time when worker activism was intensifying. Frustrated by the law's inability to provide him with an effective public forum for his ideas, Gronlund regularly ventured into lecturing and publishing. He built up a solid following of socialist sympathisers within the American labour movement, but it was the publication of *The Co-operative Commonwealth: an Exposition of Modern Socialism* that provided him with a global audience.

In Australia, Gronlund's popularity rapidly grew amongst those conscious of the social inequality in the colonies, most of whom were well-grounded in Georgist arguments. Ernest Blackwell, writing in *Centennial Magazine* in 1890 on the effects of the maritime strike, observed that 'Gronlund … has recently been talking State co-operation to hard-headed thinkers at a rate that few would imagine. You cannot buy a copy of his book in Melbourne or Sydney today. The booksellers have sold "clean out", and Gronlund's Socialism is no Utopia'.[53] Nor was it. If Henry George's prose engages the reader's interest with a range of the creative writer's most effective devices, there were no such imaginative concessions from Gronlund. His book is a methodical treatise on socialism: doctrinaire, detailed and steeped in the sober language of a commissariat reading room.[54]

Gronlund acknowledges a Henry George presence (amongst others) in his work in the opening set of epigraphs and at certain points in the book, but there any creative resemblance between the two writers ceases.[55] Gronlund's 'Co-operative Commonwealth', his 'New Social Order', is an uncompromising 'Socialist order of things' with a tightly controlled structure and a clear recognition of socialism's place in the order of human development.[56] In his introduction to the British edition of his book, Gronlund writes that

> *… the coming Revolution is strictly an evolution… not a class-movement, but a growth of the whole body politic. I say there is a Reason in the Universe that has appointed for us the road which we must travel, which we therefore do not travel by choice, not voluntarily but spontaneously; and that Socialism is inevitably the next stage in our development.*[57]

The central element in this next evolutionary stage is State intervention.

One key chapter of the volume is entitled 'The Sphere of the State'. In it, Gronlund takes the opportunity to praise and utilise the term 'Commonwealth', for him 'a splendid

National Library of Australia

The world's first national labour government, which came to power under Prime Minister JC 'Chris' Watson (seated second from left) for several months in 1904. For the Melbourne *Truth*, Labor's emergence promised 'the fulfilment of prophecies, which only yesterday seemed Utopian dreams'.

English word prophetic of what is coming!' His new Commonwealth will not take as its touchstones the American Declaration of Independence's rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness – rather, the notions of '*Interdependence*', equality and freedom. The citizens of Gronlund's Commonwealth will be dedicated to co-operation, 'State-*help*' and 'State activity', the '*true rationale of Socialism*'.[58] In Chapter V, 'Expediency of the Co-operative Commonwealth', he tries to articulate the essence of the coming community in one succinct paragraph (with Georgist overtones):

> *For what is "the Co-operative Commonwealth?"*
>
> *Extend in your mind Division of Labour and all the other factors that increase the productivity of Labour; apply them to all human pursuits as far as can be; imagine manufactures, transportation, and commerce conducted on the grandest possible scale and in the most effective manner; then add to Division of Labour its complement: CONCERT; introduce adjustment everywhere where now there is anarchy; add that central regulative system which [Herbert] Spencer says distinguishes all highly-organised structures, and which supplies 'each organ with blood in proportion to the work it does,' and – behold the CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH!*[59]

While Gronlund is defiantly ideological in this passage, he is thankfully more accessible shortly after when seeking to convey the spirit rather than the substance of the new State:

> *The Co-operative Commonwealth – (mark!) the full-grown Society; the normal State – will be a social order that will endure as long as Society itself, for no higher evolution is thinkable, except Organised Humanity, and that is but Social-Co-operation extended to the whole human race. It will effect a complete regeneration of Society: in its economic, politic, and juridic relations; in the condition of women and in the education of youth (indeed its chief concern, its true starting-point); in morals, and, we may add, in religion and philosophy.*[60]

It's hardly entertaining prose but it states a case that had many adherents, in Australia and elsewhere, and it did promote the egalitarian appeal of the term 'Commonwealth'.

The whole of the book's last chapter, 'The Coming Revolution', is taken up with a summary of the argument in plainspeak. Gronlund is only marginally more successful. His concluding paragraphs rather awkwardly embrace utopian sentiment:

> *The Religion of the Future will make holiness consist in identifying ourselves with Humanity – the redeemed form of man – as the lover merges himself in the beloved. Individualism: the deception that we have been born into this world each for the sake of himself, or family, friend or kindred, Selfness, will be acknowledged to be the satanic element of our nature. Indeed, the vicious part of Christianity is this – that it nourishes a sneaking, private, personal hope on God's bounty; under Socialism, we shall feel ourselves social beings, incapable of any blessings which our fellows do not legitimately share.*[61]

For the reader today, Gronlund's attempt at book's end to give expression to the coming New Order is as ill-fated as the proposed utopian state of human consciousness entailed in the description itself.

William Lane

The *Co-operative Commonwealth* has not aged nearly as well as *Progress and Poverty*. However, it was an important book of its time in Australia for two reasons: first, it provided a sequential link between the economic argument of Henry George and the utopian novel of Edward Bellamy, who was himself influenced by George and Gronlund; and secondly, Gronlund's book was an integral part of the education of William Lane, an Australia-based believer in Bellamy's utopia destined to play a prominent role in pre-Federation Australian society and its politics. While Lane read Gronlund closely, he lived and breathed Bellamy.

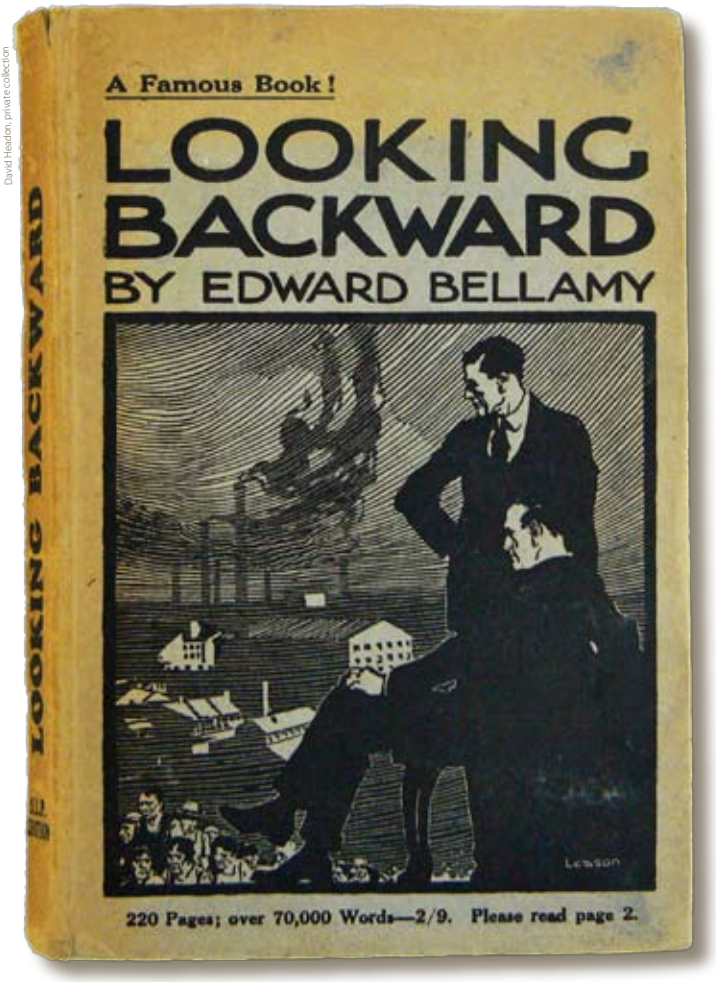
Edward Bellamy: *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1888)

Throughout 1888, Australian colonists participated in a number of Centenary activities and events to mark the arrival on Australian shores of Governor Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet of convict ships. The most enthusiastic celebrations took place in the 'Mother Colony', New South Wales, for obvious historic reasons, but many creative writers and newspaper journalists across Australia took the opportunity to reflect on one hundred years of settlement. Some commentators revelled in major achievements, especially those in recent decades not soured by the convict connection; others took advantage of the symbolic moment to be openly critical of what they regarded as a class-conscious contemporary society with far too many working poor. Henry Lawson, in the opening sentence of an April 1888 article in the *Republican*, entitled 'A Neglected History', was in no mood to make shallow triumphalist claims, though he does 'admit that the Centennial celebrations in Sydney were not wholly useless'.[62] He rues the fact that 'not one in every ten children attending Public Schools throughout the colonies is acquainted with a single historical fact about Australia'. While what Lawson called 'Australian Groveldom' (local devotion to 'the virtues of Royalty' and Empire) was one element of his colonial community's cultural personality, many Australians were far more engaged by what was before their eyes: visible evidence everywhere of social and economic inequality.

Mary Gilmore

Henry George, Laurence Gronlund and a select number of English Christian socialist writers had, for at least a decade, had their ideology and arguments, their many facts and figures, discussed with passion by Australian colonists around family tables, in pubs and meeting rooms. But it was a work of fiction published in the Centenary year that took hold of their imagination. Edward Bellamy's novel, *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, was easily the most successful work in a wave of utopian fiction that emerged in the Western world between 1880 and 1900. People desperately wanted to conceive of a better world, a more caring community, and they wanted to work towards it in the here and now.

Looking Backward came out in a variety of early editions, racing through many eager hands. One of fifty-odd utopian novels published in the United States in fifteen years from the mid-1880s, it was Bellamy's book that caught on – in America, Australia, Great Britain and



David Headon, private collection

'How many times have I felt at a loss to explain the working of a co-operative commonwealth. Now I have only to say, read Looking Backward'.

John Daniel Fitzgerald, letter to William Lane, ca. 1891

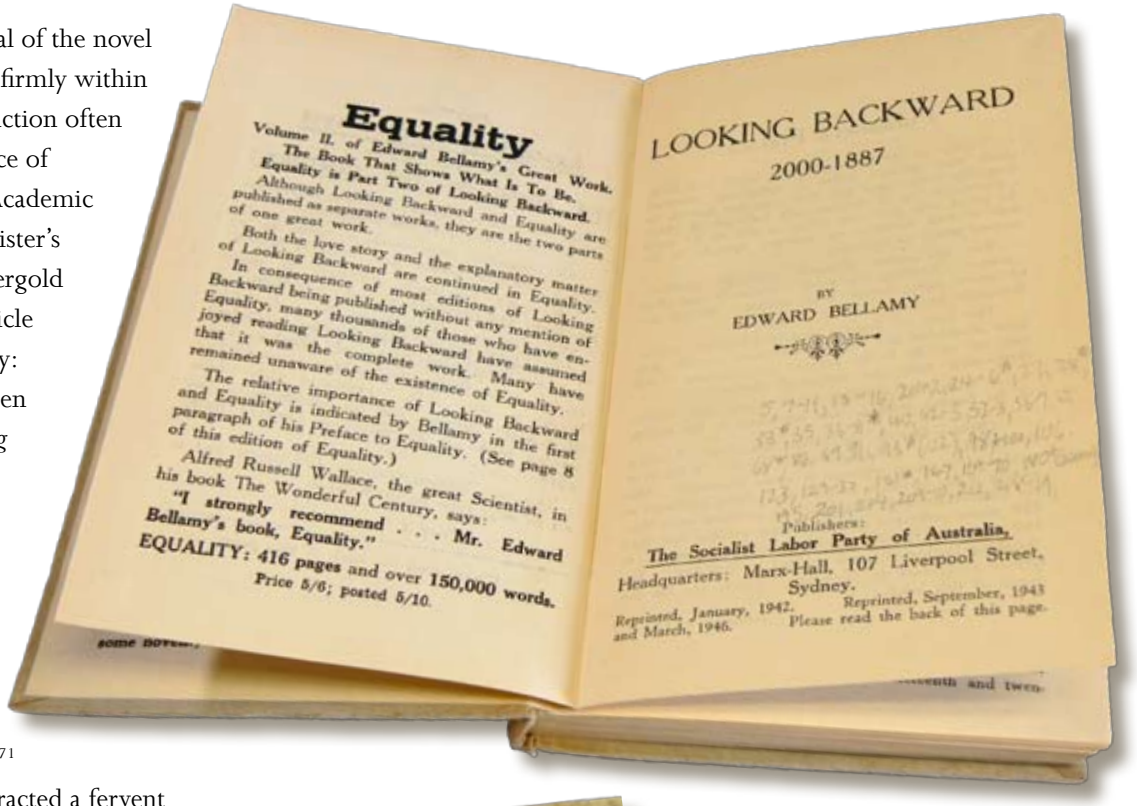
elsewhere. According to Manning Clarke in *A History of Australia*, 'astronomical' sales in Australia matched the 100,000 sold in Britain and 200,000 in the United States.[63] By the turn-of-the-century, in America, only Harriet Beecher Stowe's monumental slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) had outsold it. The effect of such circulation figures was immediately apparent. By December 1888 Boston's First Nationalist Club began promoting Bellamy's ideas and, in 1889, with the novel selling ten thousand copies a week, the publisher took steps to have it translated into a number of foreign languages.[64]

Erich Fromm comments that *Looking Backward* 'is one of the few books ever published that created almost immediately on its appearance a political mass movement'.[65] That movement had such global reach that celebrated American scholar and social commentator, Lewis Mumford, described *Looking Backward* in 1950 as 'perhaps the most influential book of the late nineteenth century, which expressed most deeply its hopes and aspirations …'[66]

Curiously, Henry George dismissed the Bellamy novel as nothing more than a 'castle in the air with clouds for its foundation', but Australian readers had an entirely different response.[67] They loved the story; they warmed to the evangelical mood; and they were highly motivated by the plan for social action embedded in the fictional plot. *Looking Backward* was first mentioned in the *Bulletin* in the aftermath of the 1889 dock strike and, shortly after, a review by well-known poet and novelist Frances Adams appeared along with a letter-to-the-editor. The letter writer predicted that the novel would 'count against industrial slavery as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" did against chattel slavery…'; Adams, while regarding the book as pitched at the 'socialist babe', predicted that it would eventually have an influence comparable to that of *Progress and Poverty*.[68]

Contemporary evidence suggests that Adams' prediction was realised sooner than he might have imagined. In the next year, on 1 March 1890, Brisbane's *Worker* newspaper – to become a dominant presence in Australia's labour movement – began serialising the novel. A few months later when commenting on the dock strike in *Centennial Magazine*, Ernest Blackwell compared the relative merits of Lawrence Gronlund and Bellamy. While he found Gronlund 'a more practical philosopher', he readily acknowledged that 'Bellamy has not appealed to the Australian reader in vain: tens of thousands of men and women in all walks of life have fallen under the fascination of his splendid dream'.[69] Australian writers such as playwright Louis Esson in time incorporated the Bellamy vision into their art; more importantly, politicians in the national parliament incorporated it into their thinking.[70] *Looking Backward* encouraged them all to look forward.

But where did the appeal of the novel lie? It did, after all, fall firmly within an embattled genre of fiction often dismissed as the province of impractical dreamers. Academic (and former Prime Minister's Chief-of-Staff) Peter Shergold gives us a clue in an article entitled 'Edward Bellamy: Utopian Economist' when he observes that *Looking Backward* worldwide 'was seized upon as a plan of progressive legislation, and resulted in the establishment of [clubs] and journals to translate Bellamy's 'blue-print' into action.[71]

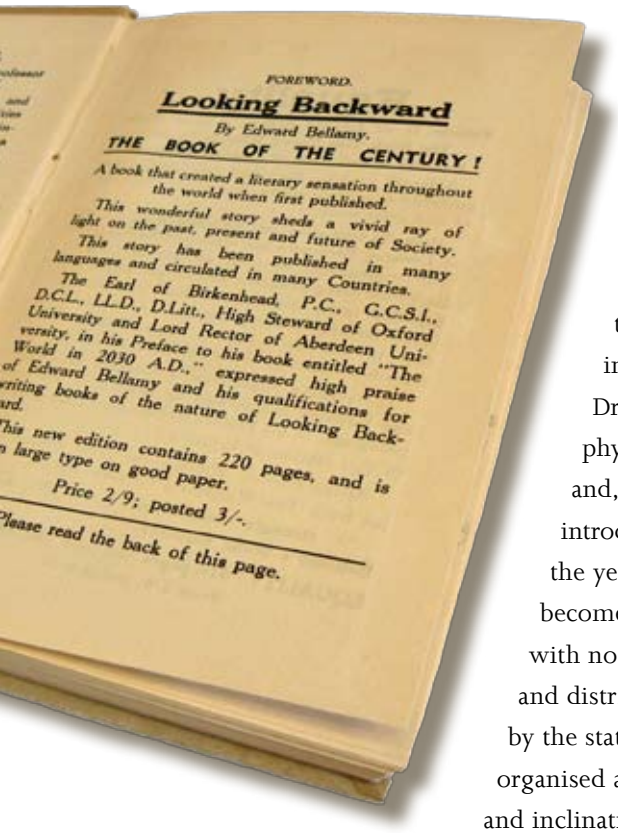


In Australia, Bellamy attracted a fervent disciple with drive and clout, the English-born journalist-cum-editor of the Brisbane *Worker*, William Lane, who dedicated himself to the dissemination of Bellamy's utopian blue-print. Karl Marx, Lane declared, was 'unreadable'; Bellamy, on the other hand, could be easily understood, even enjoyed. Henry George outlined with logic and clarity the reasons why sound action was immediately necessary; but for Lane it was Bellamy who gave his readers a workable program of social action.

David Headon, private collection

The high point of Lane's standing and influence in Australia was probably the years of the great maritime and shearers' strikes of 1890-2. In the aftermath of the collapse of the strikes, and bitter defeat for the workers, Lane produced his own utopian novel in 1892, *The Workingman's Paradise*, and shortly after, deeply disenchanted by worker conditions in Australia, he led the 'New Australia' utopian expedition to Paraguay in 1893. For a dramatic if fleeting period, Lane was possibly the most significant external factor in shaping the attitudes of Australian workers – and their representatives in the colonial, State and Federal Parliaments of the period.

So when the unassuming Andrew Fisher (Gympie goldminer in regional Queensland in the late 1880s and two decades later the Prime Minister of Australia for most of Canberra's foundation years) sat down with his mates to read issue on well-thumbed issue of Lane's *Worker*, with its regular instalments of *Looking Backward*, what might have moved them about the story? What might have made an impression, consciously or unconsciously? First, the plot: *Looking Backward* is the story of a young Bostonian, Julian West, who in 1887 is to be married to a lady of his own affluent class, Edith Bartlett. West suffers from insomnia and so he has a stone chamber-room built beneath his house's foundations where he can retreat to sleep in seclusion. On the odd occasion when the room fails in its purpose, he sends for his servant Sawyer to get a 'professional mesmeriser' to put him into a hypnotic sleep. On one of these occasions, the night of 30 May 1887, he wakes up one hundred and thirteen years later, in September 2000. Dr Leete, a retired physician, finds him and, step by step, West is introduced to Boston in the year 2000 – a city now become a socialist paradise with no poverty, production and distribution planned by the state and workers organised according to ability and inclination. All citizens are, as Bellamy tells us in the Preface to the sequel, *Equality* (1897), 'economic equals'. At book's end, West awakes, only to realise that his extraordinary experiences were 'fragments of a dream'. However, because of the clarity of the mystic journey, he now views the Boston of 1887 with 'new eyes', sharply aware of:


FOREWORD.

Looking Backward

By Edward Bellamy.

THE BOOK OF THE CENTURY!

A book that created a literary sensation throughout the world when first published.

This wonderful story sheds a vivid ray of light on the past, present and future of Society.

This story has been published in many languages and circulated in many Countries.

The Earl of Birkenhead, P.C., G.C.S.I., D.C.L., LL.D., D.Litt., High Steward of Oxford University and Lord Rector of Aberdeen University, in his Preface to his book entitled "The World in 2030 A.D.," expressed high praise of Edward Bellamy and his qualifications for writing books of the nature of Looking Backward.

This new edition contains 220 pages, and is in large type on good paper.

Price 2/9; posted 3/-.

Please read the back of this page.

> *The frenzied folly of the competitive industrial system, the inhuman contrasts of luxury and woe – pride and abjectness – the boundless squalor, wretchedness, and madness of the whole scheme of things which met his eye at every turn, outraged his reason and made his heart sick. He felt like a sane man shut up by accident in a madhouse.*

Julian West has been awakened to 'the possibilities of a juster, nobler, wiser social system', Bellamy's detailed description of which occupies most of the book.[72]

Like most contemporary readers of *Looking Backward*, the young Andrew Fisher in Gympie must have been seized by the novel's memorable extended metaphor at the beginning. Society in 1887 is likened to 'a prodigious coach which the masses of humanity were harnessed to and dragged toilsomely along …' The rich ride in the coach's top seats, 'very breezy and comfortable', and while they do encourage the 'toilers at the rope', the spectacle only 'enhanced the passengers' sense of the value of their seats upon the coach …' The narrator notes 'a singular hallucination which those on the top of the coach shared, that they were not exactly like their brothers and sisters who pulled at the rope, but of finer clay, in some way belonging to a higher order of beings who might justly expect to be drawn'. Such sentiment must have steeled Fisher and his mates to work for a more just society. *Looking Backward* supplied them with plenty of motivation.[73]

They would have endorsed much of what they read: Dr Leete's summary of 1880s America, one hundred years earlier, with the corrupt practices of 'syndicates, pools, trusts, or whatever their name' and 'the widespread industrial and social troubles … and the underlying dissatisfaction of all classes with the inequalities of society …'; the same good doctor's boast about his own liberated community's respect for 'the right of every man to the completest education the nation can give him …' and his firm belief in 'the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of men'; and the singling out of English author Charles Dickens, not for his 'literary genius' so much as that 'his great heart beat for the

poor, because he made the cause of the victims of society his own, and devoted his pen to exposing its cruelties and shams'. [74]

Looking Backward contains a number of combative social themes but for Fisher and the Federation generation, soon to be confronted with the task of establishing a capital city, one motif stands out as particularly relevant: Bellamy's depiction of the city of the future, the ideal city. Julian West's 1887 Boston is no City Beautiful. Rather, it and the cities of the period are described by Dr Leete as 'rather shabby affairs. If you had the taste to make them splendid … the general poverty resulting from your [West's 1887] industrial system would not have given you the means'.[75] However, Boston in the millennium year 2000 has undergone a 'complete metamorphosis' and become 'a glorious new Boston with its domes and pinnacles, its gardens and fountains, and its universal reign of comfort'. Building interiors impress the protagonist Julian West as magnificent, and he is overwhelmed by the quality of the new egalitarian society's commitment to liberated city planning:

> *At my feet lay a great city. Miles of broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings, for the most part not in continuous blocks but set in larger or smaller enclosures, stretched in every direction. Every quarter contained large open squares filled with trees among which statues glistened and fountains flashed in the late afternoon sun. Public buildings of a colossal size and an architectural grandeur unparalleled in my day raised their stately piles on every side. Surely I had never seen this city, nor one comparable to it, before.*[76]

Five years before Daniel Burnham and his team manufactured a dazzling image of the City Beautiful at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, one which created a lasting impression on Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony. Edward Bellamy produced his own lasting images of cities that might be – cities where the elegant expressions of architectural beauty matched the community's ideological, moral and spiritual commitment.

Looking Backward appealed to an Australian colonial society that had finally transcended what most regarded as its dark convict past. Nationhood beckoned, and with it the prospect of a reinvented present and future. Models were studied, for the new nation and the new nation's capital city, and Bellamy supplied one of the essential texts.

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

The Basin and Court of Honour, a central element of Daniel Burnham's spectacular White City at the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. The event stimulated the 'science' of town planning.

Ignatius Donnelly: *Caesar's Column* (1889)

When Ignatius Donnelly's novel, *Caesar's Column*, was published at the end of the 1880s, the mainstream conservative American press did its best to ignore a story which painted such a chilling portrait of contemporary American society.[77] Bellamy's book, despite its socialist themes, at least envisaged a peaceful and palatable future world. Donnelly's unsettling tome was something else again. How could anyone countenance a book which portrayed the capitalist system in such a dark and sinister way? They couldn't. Yet the inherent power of the novel did find its audience, as the labour and rural press responded to a work which dramatically counter-balanced Bellamy's tranquil utopia. The predatory, Mad Max world depicted in *Caesar's Column* in the 1980s, into the future, contrasted Dr Leete's community in the year 2000. Donnelly's biographer, Martin Ridge, expresses the comparison in stark if partisan terms:

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> *Unlike the bland and tepid Looking Backward by Edward Bellamy, where the American future was roseate, where all problems facing the nineteenth century had been amicably solved, Donnelly's work depicted in a biting pyrographic style a degraded society devoid of reform's influence, with the rich in complete control, the laboring classes reduced to a horrible quasi-barbaric poverty, ending in a revolution more bloody and violent than any that had preceded it.*[78]

Ignatius Donnelly, the son of an Irish immigrant father who died young and a gritty, second generation American mother of five, excelled in his schoolwork. Despite a love of literature, he was admitted to the bar in 1852 and, three years later, entered politics. Elected first as a Republican congressman (1863-68), and then as a state senator (1874-78), Donnelly earned a reputation as a forceful advocate for the rights of women and African-Americans post-Civil War. But it was his strident opposition to the excesses of big business that gave him a national profile, a preoccupation so strong that he eventually renounced the Republicans to become a leading figure in the new People's or Populist Party. 'Washington destroys a man's Republicanism', Donnelly once declared, 'the waste, extravagance, idleness and corruption is shocking and the great men of the nation dwindle into pygmies as you draw near to them'.[79]

For Donnelly, the traditional two-party political system camouflaged a much larger, more disturbing social dichotomy: the real 'two parties in this state today – the people and their plunderers. The only issue is: Shall the people keep the fruits of their own industry or shall the thieves carry them away?'[80] When Donnelly came to write the Populist Party's official preamble, the plight of the people undermined by the wealth of the few dominated the formal statements of policy.[81]

Donnelly died on the first day of the Australian Federation, 1 January 1901. For the last ten years of his life he was a recognised author throughout the Australian colonies, not for his political writings but because of the popularity of this one novel. The dissemination of *Caesar's Column* worldwide coincided almost exactly with a period in Australia of violent industrial unrest in the early 1890s. As historian Stephen Holt notes:

> *Against this gloomy background Donnelly loomed large as a prophet of doom in the eyes of many an Australian battler, both in the bush and in the cities.*[82]

Henry Lawson's farmers in 'A Day on a Selection' are busting to chat about the book, despite the host of chooks, and their passion was shared. A number of working-class newspapers ran reviews and articles on *Caesar's Column* and the *Bulletin* also took an interest. Holt points to the novel's influence on Labor Party policy at the national level in the years when Andrew Fisher was Prime Minister, including an effect on the decision to establish the Commonwealth Bank of Australia.[83]

Ignatius Donnelly

Caesar's Column begins with an introductory *cri de coeur* from Donnelly that must have left its readers, in Australia and elsewhere, in no doubt about the authorial intent in the pages to follow:

> *It is conceded that life is a dark and wretched failure for the great mass of mankind. The many are plundered to enrich the few. Vast combinations depress the price of labour and increase the cost of necessaries of existence. The rich, as a rule, despise the poor; and the poor are coming to hate the rich. The face of labor grows sullen; the old tender Christian love is gone; standing armies are formed on one side, and great communistic organisations on the other; society divides itself into two hostile camps; no white flags pass from the one to the other. They wait only for the drum-beat and the trumpet to summon them to armed conflict.*[84]

To Australian workers, devastated by the outcomes of the maritime and shearers' strikes, it must have seemed as if Donnelly was aware of the grim details of their conflict and had sympathy for their plight. In the same introduction he also has words of warning for faceless authority:

> *The masses grow more intelligent as they grow more wretched; and more capable of cooperation as they become more desperate. The labor organisations of to-day would have been impossible fifty years ago.*[85]

– and words to inspire his readership:

> *I plead for higher and nobler thoughts in the souls of men; for wider love and ampler charity in their hearts; for a renewal of the bond of brotherhood between the classes; for a reign of justice on earth that shall obliterate the cruel hates and passions which now divide the world.*

The consequences of Western society not reacting with vision and understanding to the prevailing social and economic inequities are then spelled out in the plot of the novel that follows: the masses, ruled by cruel and 'unbridled plutocracy' and doomed to live in the nether regions of the 'Under-World', rise up and take a climactic revenge in a bloody holocaust of killing. The protagonist, Gabriel Welstein, survives as one member of a 'remnant of mankind' in Uganda to attempt to revive civilisation on earth. As critic Joseph Jones puts it with his usual economy: the story of *Caesar's Column* 'is a kind of *1984* of 1989…'[86]

Henry Lawson

Those Other Americans

When the delegates attending the historic 1891 National Australasian Convention met in Sydney to discuss a possible Australian Federation, a supremely talented sub-committee of the larger group produced a draft constitution. The contents of the document were vigorously debated over the five weeks of the Convention, particularly as these applied to the rights, powers and privileges of the colonies if they were to become States in a Commonwealth.

Discussion of a new Commonwealth's capital city was surprisingly lively. So much so that Edmund Barton successfully moved a motion to curtail the debate lest it undermine the more pressing objectives. The Sydney experience would prove a harbinger of what was to occur in the two decades to follow as cities and towns, politicians and constituents, businessmen and bush dwellers, wives and suffragists, all had their say on where the city should be located, what it should look like, and what values should shape it.

The discussions, inside colonial and national parliaments and outside, were both animated and (very often) sophisticated. They gathered together an extraordinary range of sources as the generation of Federation founders went in search of a special city. Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin made an unrivalled contribution to the national capital narrative, not only in their competition-winning design of the 'ideal city' but also through the breadth of reading they brought to the task. Their passion to embrace new ways of thinking was matched by many of their Australian counterparts. Particular books and authors shaped more imaginative, more ethical considerations. Canberra is a city built on ideas, none more important to the background of the parliamentary debates and kitchen-table arguments in Federation Australia than those contained in the works of Henry George, Laurence Gronlund, Edward Bellamy and Ignatius Donnelly. That they were all Americans, like the Griffins, invites speculation and possible reassessment. Those other Americans deserve a prominent place in the Canberra story.

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Delegates at the National Australasian Convention in Sydney, 2 March-9 April 1891—a committee of which produced a draft constitution with a provision for a national capital (the 'burning question'). Discussion of the capital ranged widely. While agreement again proved impossible, the prospective new city entrenched itself in the imagination of a number of Australia's most experienced politicians and most progressive design and planning professionals.

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During the 1897–8 National Australasian Convention, this distinguished committee produced a draft constitution based on, but more democratic than the 1891 version. Australians then voted on the new constitution. From left: John Downer, Edmund Barton and Richard O'Connor.

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Two of the national capital story's key players, Sir John Forrest and Sir William Lyne, inspect Western Australia's Mundaring Weir in the early years of the new century. Forrest and Lyne typified the resolve of the early federal politicians to see with their own eyes as many capital site options as possible. Neither man got the capital he wanted, but each added a distinctive flavour to the debates and decisions which constitute one of the most absorbing chapters in Australian cultural history.

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- *Maps and Maker*s (pp.3,6,9,10,11,12-13,15,18,22,25,27 and 28);
- *Crystal Palace to Golden Trowels* (pp.1,3,5,6,9,10,11,12,14,17,22,26,27 and 28);
- *Those Other Americans* (pp.3,5,6,9,10,11,13,14,15,16,17,19,20,25,26,27 and 28); and
- *Think of it! Dream of it!* (pp.1,3,4,4-5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18-19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29 and 32-3).

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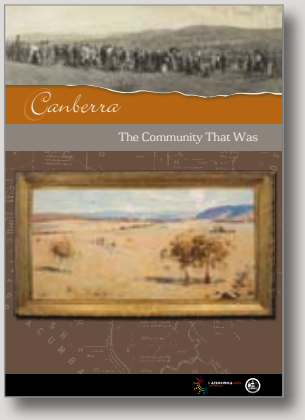

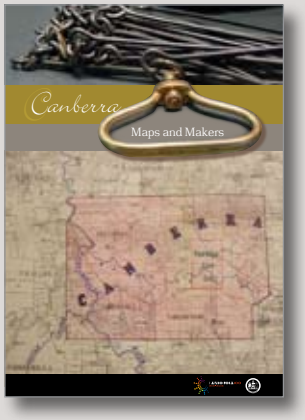

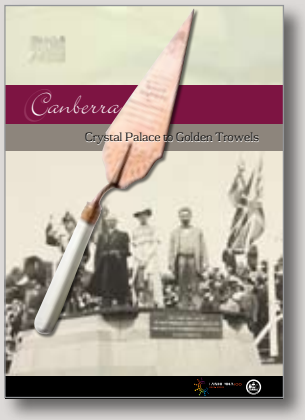

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