

WAGE SLAVERY*

Headquarters Republican County Committee,
Fifth Avenue Hotel.

New York, Oct. 22, 1886.

DENIS DONOHUE, JR., Esq., *President Newspaper Men's
Henry George Campaign Club.*

Sir: I have received the communication addressed to me by your body on Oct. 21, and am much struck by the reckless misstatements and crude and vicious theories which it contains. The mass of the American people are most emphatically not in the deplorable

* *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1886. This letter was in response to the following, dated New York, Oct. 21, 1886:

HON. THEODORE ROOSEVELT:

The Newspaper Men's Henry George Campaign Club, assembled in mass-meeting on the steps of the Sub-Treasury in Wall Street, has decided to address to you and to Mr. Hewitt the following communication:

GENTLEMEN: The parties by whom you were nominated call upon the citizens of New York to support you with their votes. We beg leave to inform you that the statesmen and patriots of to-day have proved by their acts and by the deplorable condition in which the masses of the American people now find themselves that they had not the knowledge of the means by which such condition might be improved. Besides, gentlemen, you belong to the employing and landlord class, whose interests are best served when wages are low and when rents are high. Neither of you would hesitate, if you were in a position to do so, to make every inhabitant of this great city your wage-worker or your tenant; and, if you had succeeded in doing so, you would not feel any conscientious scruples to reduce wages to the lowest possible figure and to raise your rent to the largest amount your wage slaves could afford to pay. We are wage-workers and tenants ourselves. Our interests are high wages and low rents. It is therefore but natural that we should vote for a man who proposes to use his best endeavors to bring about legislation by which wage slavery and land monopoly shall be abolished, and rent be paid only to the people at large, and not more than is needed to administer the different branches of Government. We favor the abolition of plutocratic preponderance, based upon spoliation, by means of interest and rent for the use of life's necessities. We believe that the fruit of the toil of the masses should no longer be confiscated by a few individuals forming a capitalistic proprietary class. It is for these reasons, gentlemen, that we cannot vote for either of you, and that we advise all of our fellow citizens who are wage-workers, and compelled to pay rent to individuals belonging to the class which you represent, to vote for the candidate of the organized workmen, Henry George, for Mayor of the City of New York. Respectfully yours,

DENIS DONOHUE, JR.,

President of the Newspaper Men's Henry George Campaign Club.

condition of which you speak, and the "statesmen and patriots of to-day" are no more responsible for some people being poorer than others than they are for some people being shorter, or more near-sighted, or physically weaker than others. If you had any conception of the true American spirit you would know we do not have "classes" at all on this side of the water. For example, you say I belong to the "landlord class," whereas, in reality, I own no land at all except that on which I myself live. Your statement that I wish rents to be high and wages low is a deliberate untruth. Your next statement that I would like to have all the inhabitants of this city my tenants and wage-workers is a ridiculous untruth. Your third statement as to what I would do in that contingency is as preposterous as it is absurd. I have worked both with hands and with head, probably quite as hard as any member of your body. The only place where I employ many "wage-workers" is on my ranch in the West, and there almost every one of the men has some interest in the profits, either because he is partly paid by a share out of them or else because he has invested a portion of his surplus earnings in the business with me.

Some of the evils of which you complain are real and can be to a certain degree remedied, but not by the remedies you propose; others are imaginary, and others, though real, can only be gotten over through that capacity for steady, individual self-help which is the glory of every true American, and can no more be done away with by legislation than you could do away with the bruises which you receive when you tumble down, by passing an act to repeal the laws of gravitation.

Very truly yours,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.