

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

“THE time is ripe for trying compulsory unemployment insurance as the only tested device for reducing the misery and poverty that follow these inevitable waves of industrial unemployment.” So says *The New Republic* in concluding an article on the subject. We say now, and we have believed for a long time, that such papers as *The New Republic*, despite a formidable list of contributors, are a distinct detriment to the cause of real economic progress. It is impossible to believe that some among those who comprise its editorial staff—Bruce Bliven, for example—is not perfectly well aware that it is not compulsory unemployment insurance but Justice that provides a remedy for present conditions, and that when they speak of the “inevitable” waves of unemployment they know that these are not inevitable at all. Or do they?

HOW much longer can papers like *The New Republic* conceal from their readers a poverty of thought in multitudinous seas of words? It is supposed to be a very radical paper because it says a kind word for Soviet Russia now and then and disapproves of imperialistic policies in Haiti and Nicaragua. So far so good. But what about the economic situation? We believe one or more of the editors of *The New Republic* know. Are they lockjawed by the management as one of them was for so long by the “capitalistic” newspaper for which he wrote. In a word are the editors of that paper free men and is the paper itself free? Knowing that every metropolitan newspaper is the organ of some economic or financial group, we are impelled to ask just who it is that *The New Republic* represents?

THE resources of the English vocabulary are a convenient refuge from the more obvious explanations. We have spoken of this before and we continue to be impressed by the expedients that language supplies to the resourceful who would dodge the plainer but inconvenient implications. Andre Maurois, in the *New York Times*, is the latest to supply us with a fine example which we commend to our friends of *The New Republic*. He says: “Financial and industrial crises are, above all, psychological phenomena and collective neuroses.” Repeat that to the man who is looking for a job!

PLEASE do not laugh. This is modern thinking. There are tons of it. It is to be found in hundreds of magazine articles and is bound up in books. It has earned for many a reputation for profundity. It will be looked at curiously by coming generations, much as we regard the strange speculations of the old theologians, which are much more enlightening, for in these latter, despite their general sterility, glimpses of spiritual truth are discernable.

WHAT is the matter? What is it that keeps these writers from seeing the truth. Or do they see it? The earth is a closed reservoir. The stream of tribute that goes to a privileged class is wrung from labor in blood and tears. The poverty and destitution are due primarily to the denial of access to the earth. And, last of all, why should they fail to see the efficacy of that remedy that would open the great natural storehouse, lift the burden from the shoulders of the poor, and turn the stream of economic rent into the public treasury?

IT would be very interesting to note the different explanations of the present depression. Such a collection would furnish a curious but not a very enlightening array of reasons, weird, distorted, fantastic. Some are merely inadequate, like the following: “The fundamental cause of the trouble is the lack of new enterprise due to an unsatisfactory market for capital investment.” Thus John Maynard Keynes in the *Forum* for January. Mr. Keynes is an international authority on business and finance. He talks of what he calls “consumption goods” and “capital goods,” the first being those which satisfy human wants and desires, such as food and clothing. “Capital goods” are those which are used to promote the production of other goods, such as raw materials, industrial machinery, factory buildings and the like. His suggestion is that production and consumption be speeded up by the great central banks of the creditor nations joining together in a concerted attempt to restore confidence to what he calls “the international long-term market.”

The slump is due, according to Mr. Keynes, to higher rates to lenders than it is possible for new enterprises to support. Borrowers as well as lenders have been at fault, according to Mr. Keynes, for they have encouraged lenders to expect much higher rates as they took part in

stock exchange booms, or sought to make good their losses from falling prices.

A LITTLE vague, perhaps—very much so as an explanation, for it seems not to have occurred to him that the only money that banks can lend is money derived from production, that the failure of a revival of industry does not lie with the banks but must be traced to the sources of production. He makes no reference to tariffs. This might lead him directly to the trail where the land question lies only partly concealed. But the trouble with Mr. Keynes and like minded observers is that they are concerned with *symptoms* and not with *causes*. And they move these symptoms like figures on a chess board, placing now one and now another in a position of supposed advantage. They never really play the game out because of the missing chess men, but it is a great game while it lasts. And they talk of banking and capital—which banks of course do not supply—without reference to the missing chess men, Land, Economic Rent and Taxes.

The Secret Is Out

IN another column we have expressed our distrust of *The New Republic* and our belief that it serves but poorly the cause of progressivism. This complaint was based chiefly on what that paper has refrained from saying, sins of omission in its varied preachments, not definite pronouncements upon which we could comment.

In our mild but long continued bewilderment as to what this periodical stood for, if it stood for anything at all, we earnestly hoped for some statement of policy that might go a little ways toward reassuring its readers that it had some sort of programme that might be useful in these "times of hesitation" and general muddlement.

At last we have it from one of the editors, Edmund Wilson, in an article in issue of Jan. 14, entitled "An Appeal to Progressives." Let us hope that there are few progressives like those to whom this appeal is addressed. This article is featured on the cover with a running head, "Should American radicals take communism from the communists and come out unreservedly for the collective ownership of the means of production?" To such a pass come those who have no anchor but drift with the drifting tide.

We are told that the liberalism which *The New Republic* has stood for in the past was derived primarily from Herbert Croly's book, "The Promise of American Life," written more than twenty years ago. Croly offered in this book "an original interpretation of American history which in its field set a new standard of realism." So says Mr. Wilson. That is no doubt important. We suppose that we need some realism now and then.

That we may understand just what we are to expect from this new declaration of policy a few quo-

tations from this remarkable article may be given.

"The time may come, Croly tells us, when the fulfillment of a justifiable democratic purpose may demand the limitation of certain rights to which the Constitution affords such absolute guarantees." This is quoted approvingly, as is the following:

"What was needed was a frank confession that genuine democracy meant not unlimited freedom but a sensible and systematic curtailment of the right of everybody in the interests of all."

And Mr. Wilson says further on: "A genuine opposition, must, it seems to me, openly confess that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are due to be supplanted by some new manifesto and some new bill of rights."

We would remark that "A systematic curtailment of the rights of everybody in the interests of all," has been the plea and defence of every despotism since Nero. But it comes curiously from the mouth of a "progressive." The idea that democracy demands the curtailment of any right is a wholly new doctrine. Of course, to rush pell mell into the arms of communism demands that human rights along with property rights must go into the discard.

Mr. Wilson is in a panic and the article is a wail. He sees the present system crumbling. He thinks the alternative is communism. He is mistaken—it is freedom. Salvation lies in the very thing he denies—the establishment of human rights, the contempt for which the French Assembly told us was responsible for most of the ills of mankind.

Maybe we shall embrace communism. But Mr. Wilson has given us some excellent reason why we should not. He tells us this in a great many words and promises to return to the subject in a future number. For the time being we leave him beside the Wailing Wall.

Henry George and The Gladstones

"MARY GLADSTONE, Her Diaries and Letters," is a fascinating book. We could perhaps have been spared the somewhat irritating evaluations of her editor, Lucy Masterman. Hereafter we shall contend that all volumes of Letters and Diaries appear unedited (except as emendated) and printed without comment.

This book is intensely interesting. It introduces us again to nearly all the great Victorians, and Mary Gladstone's remarks are shrewd, interpretative and revealing. We can pardon the wholly unquestioning admiration for her great father and her contempt for "Dizzy," sentiments quite natural in a devoted daughter, whose sympathies not less than her intellectual qualities are wholly admirable.

But it is what she says of Henry George that is of in-