

Land and Freedom

Comment and Reflection

WHAT about plans for the post-war order? There is, of course, no certainty that land-value taxers, as such, will be invited to sit at the peace table—although it would not be surprising if the British and Australian members, high in the councils of their governments, are on hand. However, this is not to say that American Georgeists will have no voice in the conferences. The attention given lately to the principles enunciated in "Progress and Poverty" encourages us to believe that Henry George will exert a considerable influence on the deliberations. Witness the recent pronouncements of the Archbishop of Canterbury; the animated discussions following the publication of the British Uthwatt Report; the endorsement of land-value taxation by the National Resources Planning Board; and the introduction in Congress by Hon. Jerry Voorhis of a joint resolution proposing an amendment to give the federal government the power to tax land values. The coordination of these and similar groups can be depended upon to implement the Atlantic Charter when that important document comes up for practical consideration.

AS FAR as specific plans of Georgeists are concerned, we believe that their legislative research has produced workable codes of law, which can be put into almost instantaneous operation. However, there is more to be done than merely to consider the legal and fiscal aspects of social reform. While these are important, more important still is the building up of good will. With the opportunities offered through discussion engendered by World War II, does it not behoove all groups, including Georgeists, to win the respect of every man and woman whose sympathies are with justice and freedom? Unfortunately, in the past, it has been too frequent an occurrence for an irresponsible few to give other liberals a wrong impression of what the Georgeist rank and file stand for. The great body of the latter are intelligent and practical, but one of the biggest obstacles they have encountered has been the ill-advised conduct of some of their own brethren. This state of affairs once caused Joseph Dana Miller, founder of LAND AND FREEDOM, to humorously remark, "We're the only people against what we're for!" But joking aside, will not land-value taxers agree that no useful purpose is served if the only effect of a misguided statement is to bring ridicule and contempt upon all of them?

LET Georgeists be done with isolating themselves from other liberal groups. We fail to see how the talents of the former would be lost were they to mix, for instance, with the Cooperative League of the United

States, Friends of Democracy, Council for Democracy, Freedom House, Citizens Union, Citizens' Housing Councils, American Institute of Planners, and the social divisions of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish churches. To us, it was encouraging to note the representation of these latter bodies at a recent gathering in New York, at which Hon. Walter Nash, New Zealand's Minister to the United States, addressed 300 listeners on the merits of land value taxation. Georgeists, on occasion, might return the courtesy.

PATIENCE and time can be expected to work in our favor. Let Georgeists be rid of any notion that they are without blame in not having made better progress. A far better working principle would be to assume that ~~their mistakes may have been faulty.~~ The blame does not necessarily lie on the other fellow. Humanity, by and large, is a pretty decent lot. Even the real estate interests are not lost to sweet reasonableness. In California, not so long ago, the realtors were the spearhead which defeated Jackson Ralston's land reform measures, but they proved quite cooperative in pointing out the tactical defects of his campaign when Judge Ralston later questioned them. With relatively little effort, though beaten for the moment, he became thereby a wiser man. This was "smart" politics in the best sense of the word.

THE direction of Abraham Lincoln's thinking might also serve as an object lesson in the successful promotion of a social reform. It is now generally conceded that the Civil War was not originally begun in order to free the slaves. Much as Lincoln detested the institution of human bondage, and sincere as was his vow that he would one day do his utmost to destroy it, the Great Emancipator never would have been willing to join battle in 1861 for the sole purpose of eradicating slavery. To be sure, he had already given unstinted toil in shaping a public opinion that would, when the time should be ripe for such action, abolish the hated institution. But of far greater importance to him was the preservation of the Union. So war was declared, not to free the slaves, but to save the Nation—free and slave alike. Yet Lincoln was quick to see in the conflict an opportunity for fulfilling his vow and ridding us of the curse of chattel bondage. Perhaps Georgeists also can exploit the times in the interests of lasting peace and justice, if only they know how to strike. To align themselves with other liberals is an obvious preliminary step. Henry George once said, "With the current we may glide fast and far. Against it, it is hard pulling and slow progress."