

are you going to have a political organisation under those conditions? But even before you get to the defeat, you have to start the organisation. I suggest that Dr. Busey try a few meetings in his own town with a view to organising a Single Tax, or Freedom Party. Assuming we get past the first obstacle that not enough people are interested (where does he think there are enough?), I would ask him to observe what happens when he tries to make the single tax palatable to the non-single tax members, and make palatable to single taxers his programme on foreign affairs, civil rights, labour problems, etc., which he thinks must be included.

If Dr. Busey would rather be spared such a contretemps (as I would), I have an alternative programme to suggest. I think that Dr. Busey is just the man to undertake an objective study of the world-wide single tax movement, past and present. He is a professor of political and social science as well as a Georgeist and he could thereby make a distinctive and valuable contribution. The study of our movement as a movement has been undeservedly neglected, not only by scholars generally but by ourselves. There are and have been many experiences, activities, political as well as educational, literature, organisations, individual efforts, and different manifestations in different countries (including, notably, the Justice Party of Denmark). We need to learn more about the conditions under which advances have been made, or setbacks suffered. The last factual survey was done in 1917, and that only for one country—*The Single Tax Movement in the United States* by Dr. Arthur Nichols Young. An up-to-date work. not

only by a scholar but by a Georgeist interested in the movement, could serve as a valuable guide.

At the 1955 International Conference in St. Andrews I broached the subject of the nature of the Georgeist movement. I concluded (with misgivings and based on an inadequate survey) that our movement was more successful with its educational work than with its organisational work; that its function seemed to be to expound the basic Georgeist philosophy to the world, to pass it on to society; and I have speculated that it will be non-Georgeist or semi-Georgeist organisers and leaders who will be the practitioners. This interpretation is not entirely to my own liking, and I am willing that it be refuted, but such a refutation should be based on some knowledgeable discernment.

I want to add that single taxers, or Georgeists, are not inactive politically, even though they may not be organised. Several in the U.S.A. have started on political careers, others have exercised visible influence on legislation. There is a groundswell of effort in many different fields, far more effective, I am sure, than could be obtained through an organised structure. If Dr. Busey says, Look at the Communists, my answer is, We are not Communists, we have to find our own way. That is why I appeal to him to give a more thorough study to the Georgeist movement—to help us find our way forward.

[We hope to publish next month a critique of Dr. Busey's proposals by Dr. Glenn E. Hoover, emeritus professor of Economics at Mills College, Oakland, California.]

RIGHTS

By W. HARTLEY BOLTON, of Dorset

IT IS a commonplace for human beings everywhere to claim their "rights," but the innumerable interpretations of "rights" are responsible for most of the deplorable conditions of our chaotic social state and there is no word in the language of mankind so misleading.

To classify these interpretations is difficult but, broadly, they fall into three categories, namely:

- (a) supernatural;
- (b) natural; and
- (c) scientific.

From the supernatural point of view, gods have endowed man with life and the means of continuing existence. Countless generations of men have existed on the assumption that they had god-given rights to life and have considered the taking of life as murder and the appropriation of someone else's property as crime. Perhaps the highest development of this theological belief in "rights" is the "Divine Right of Kings."

Natural rights have evolved from the supernatural. No longer do the gods bestow rights; it is beneficent Mother Nature who provides the basis of man's existence. The argument is: It is natural for human beings to propagate their species and, therefore, natural that they should be

fed, clothed and sheltered and "Nature" is the great providence. Here we have the "Rights of Man."

The scientific outlook attempts to regulate man's claims in accordance with scientific law. It is here that man's moral actions are related to economic laws and a new meaning given to the term "rights."

There is, of course, in practice, no clear line of demarcation separating these divisions and overlapping anomalies are obvious. This is due, first, to the fact that man's conceptions of "rights" evolve through three stages: theological, metaphysical and scientific, and, second, to the fact that some minds are more advanced than others. Indeed, the question of "rights" is treated by most people theologically or metaphysically and only a very few men have reached scientific explanations. "Thou shalt not steal" implies that the possessors of property have theological rights to it irrespective of how it was obtained. The Declaration of the Rights of Man adopted by the French National Assembly in August 1789, the English Bill of Rights, the American Declaration of Independence and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's "Vindication of the Rights of Women," although still linked with the god-idea, are chiefly metaphysical.

The scientific approach to the question of "rights" discards theological and metaphysical explanations as mere figments of immature minds. Babies are not born with god-given documents entitling them to life and liberty, nor is Mother Nature necessarily kind. Human beings are animals and, like all other members of the animal kingdom, have to fight hard against the external forces or go under. The scientific approach also posits that, if man is to preserve his existence from self-annihilation, he must discard the assumption that "might is right" and live in moral conditions of peaceful equity. It follows, therefore, that conditions must be such that each individual feels he is getting an equal opportunity to draw from the resources of the earth and that no other individual has any advantage over him in this respect. So all men must agree to this principle. Only then can it be said that political law is moral and scientific. To achieve such an equitable state of affairs cannot be done by making an equal division of the natural resources amongst the total number of the earth's inhabitants as the various parts of the natural resources offer varying opportunities, but an equitable division, or what amounts to the same thing, can be made by evaluating the natural resources and dividing the value.

We must, therefore, accept this conclusion: Equity presupposes three conditions:

(1) The recognition that no human being produced the natural resources and no individual has any inherent right to them.

(2) That, unless the law of the jungle is to reign supreme, all human beings should agree to the principle of equal access to the natural resources.

(3) That what is produced from the natural resources should be legally recognised as the property of the producer. Where the community is the producer, as in the case of land values, a communal "right" is established. Where the individual is the producer, the individual's "right" is established.

These conditions would be fulfilled by the application of the taxation of land values, the corresponding abolition of other taxes, which at present penalise producers, and the removal of all barriers to free trade.

It should be emphasised, however, that the question of rights is not peculiar to any one individual or nation. Science is abstract and general and can relate all economic and moral phenomena wherever mankind exists. It should be clear, then, that the more the true conception of "rights" is understood, and the more man conforms his actions to this conception, the greater will be the aggregate of happiness.

FRANK DUPUIS reviews PROFESSOR ROPKE'S

Welfare, Freedom and Inflation

INCREASED interest in the Liberal Party and speculation about its attitude to the Welfare State, now that that concept has come in for more criticism, add interest to *Welfare, Freedom and Inflation*,* by Wilhelm Röpke, "one of the leading Liberal economists of our times." In an introduction to the book Graham Hutton recalls how since 1945 the Western governments, especially in Great Britain and France, have used inflation as a method of stimulating trade and at the same time of providing the means to buy support through Welfare State policies. Now the evils of inflation can no longer be ignored the politicians find themselves the slaves of their own expedient. Mr. Hutton compares this with the wiser policy of the government of post-war Germany, to whom Professor Röpke is an adviser, and therefore especially recommends his analysis.

Professor Röpke describes how fear of insecurity led the peoples to accept the slogan "freedom from want" and by looking to the State to dispense this mis-called freedom now find themselves in a prison maintained by "taking from almost everybody so as to give to almost everybody," the weakest coming off worst in the process and all power gravitating towards the organisers of the machine. The State becomes a mere "income pumping system" and within the dull, grey society which it controls all public spirit, brotherliness and generosity are smothered by resentment in the higher and envy in the lower income

* *Pall Mall Press, London, S.W.1. Paper, 3s. 6d.*

groups. And the effort to provide materials for the miracle-pump leads inevitably to inflation.

In this section the author says many things that will both shock and enlighten those Liberals who panic at words like self-reliance or names like Cobden, associated with the principle. Unfortunately Professor Röpke's striking picture lacks an essential feature of the background: the earlier and infinitely more effective pump which, since land became monopolised, has been silently transferring publicly-created land value into the pockets of owners of valuable land. The Welfare pump is, after all, only a blind but instinctive reaction to a machine constantly making the rich richer. It is difficult to believe that leading economists are really so unaware of this as they appear to be; that they have never noticed the enormous sums obtained for central sites and considered the implications. If only both Welfare pump and tax juggernaut could be scrapped in favour of the simple and natural course of collecting public rent for public purposes! Life might be so easy, varied and interesting! But Professor Röpke keeps to the modern convention of restricting economic investigation to financial adjustment. On this view the land question is outside his province; no juggling with currency or credit can shake land monopoly.

When he comes to consider the essence of inflation Professor Röpke introduces the metaphorical language customary in economics *à la mode* and which make it so