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The year 1976 is upon us. This Bicentennial year celebrates the birth of the United States of America, a new nation with an inspired Constitution.

It is 200 years since the Founding Fathers led the thirteen colonies in rebellion against an oppressive government. The oppressors were the King of England who appointed governors for the colonies, the rich land-owning dukes and lords, and the bankers of London who demanded that they be able to control the medium of exchange used by the colonists in trade.

The rebel leaders went into action. They were inspired to write and publish to the world the Declaration of Independence; then after the successful Revolution, the Constitution and Bill of Rights. They endeavored to put articles in the Constitution which would help the new nation to guard against the causes of oppression of the people. They also provided Article V, which would enable the people to add amendments as needed, in order to keep up with changing times in the land tenure system, the financial system, mechanization, more rapid means of transportation, communication, etc.

The Preamble to the Constitution states: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

What went wrong with the leadership in America during the past 200 years? Is it justice when the richest country in the world has hopeless poverty on the one hand and on the other hand many millionaires, even billionaires? Is it justice that we have increasing unemployment and also many idle rich? Is it justice that we have unhealthy slums on the one hand and mansions with servants and bodyguards on the other? Is it right that those who work with their muscle and brains to produce wealth for the nation are heavily taxed on their earned incomes and on the other hand the idle rich are taxed lightly on their unearned incomes?

Why did the leadership during the past 200 years go wrong? Most of us, the honest, industrious and law abiding, have been too busy earning a living, buying and paying for a home, bringing up a family, saving for our retirement years to have time to think much about the causes of unemployment, crime, corruption and war.

However, the corruption in both the Republican and Democratic parties, and the stupidity of brilliantly-educated economic advisers have allowed the evil power of the land speculators, the banking system, the big monopolies, some tax-exempt foundations and rich tax-exempt church organizations to become owners of most of the nation's land and natural resources, the tools of production, the systems of transportation, communication, education and sports facilities.

All of the above serve as instruments of profit, returning enormous unearned incomes to the ultrarich. This power dictates to our local, state and national governments which have tax laws with built-in loopholes and are oppressive. The people are divided, confused, group against group.

Abraham Lincoln, in a speech in Baltimore in 1864, described the two types of Homo

Sapiens that have been in every society of every civilization of history. He said: "The world has never had a good definition of the word 'liberty', and the American people just now are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word 'liberty' may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different but incompatible things, called by the same name - 'liberty' - and it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names - 'liberty' and 'tyranny.'"

In 1976 America is at the crossroads. Our nation will either take the low road to oblivion as all previous civilizations have done, or America will take the high road toward a better life for all its citizens, regardless of race, religion or political persuasion, and will set such a prosperous example that all other nations can follow in peace. That is the destiny of this nation as expressed in the Preamble to the Constitution.

There is evidence that public opinion is changing for the better. More and more people are beginning to perceive the true facts. The Watergate exposures enabled thinking Americans to question our system. Congressional investigations of the corruption of the CIA and the FBI offer more enlightenment. Benjamin Franklin said: "To get the bad customs of a country changed and new ones, though better, introduced, it is necessary first to remove the prejudices of the people, enlighten their ignorance and convince them that their interests will be promoted by the proposed changes; and this is not the work of a day."

What we need is knowledge of truth, honesty, integrity and love for our fellow man. We need a knowledge of the facts concerning the land tenure system which includes all natural resources, and a comprehensive knowledge of the financial system.

Some of the things we can insist that our representatives do promptly to accelerate recovery from several administrations of oppression and legal robbery of the people's rights are:

1. Revolutionize the tax system by repealing all tax laws and at the same time pass an amendment to the Constitution as follows: "Congress shall have the power to levy and collect a redemption, a tax on all land in the nation based upon the market value of the land whether used by the owner or not, by applying the necessary tax rate to 100 per cent of the assessed market value of land." That will put the land speculators out of business.

2. Repeal the 16th (income tax) Amendment to the Constitution and rewrite it with one word changed, viz., where the amendment now reads "all income", change it to read "all unearned income."

3. Repeal the Banking and Currency Act passed by the Congress in 1863, and the Federal Reserve Act of 1913. Both of these Acts are a violation of Article I, Section 8, Clause 5 of the Constitution. ("The Congress shall have the power to coin money, regulate the value thereof, etc.")

From the knowledge we gain from a study of recorded history it is an obvious fact that whenever men make laws or establish customs which are in conflict with, or in opposition to, or not in harmony with the unchangeable laws of nature, nations decay from within and take the low road into oblivion. America is at the crossroads.

America at the Crossroads is the title of a booklet on the same theme, by Gaston Haxo. Available for \$1.00 from the Henry George Institute.