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Freedom

A WORD TO CONJURE WITH

Henry George was a social philosopher. If that philosophy could be summed up in one word, that word would be Freedom.

Other thinkers have developed the theme of individual liberty. To some this goal seemed attainable only through the complete destruction of organized government; to others the achievement of this ideal was possible only through the re-conditioning of human minds by a laborious, tyrannical and indefinite period of paternalism. Between these two extremes of anarchism and communism there developed innumerable systems of thought or of political action, each labelled with a sonorous name, blending so imperceptibly into one another that dividing lines became very tenuous. Liberalism, syndico-anarchism, left and right wing socialism, anarcho-communism, social democracy, libertarianism—and so on ad infinitum—and with as many shades of interpretation of "principles" as there are individuals who adhere to these names.

The confusion of these reform

movements, all aiming toward the one goal of individual happiness, results from their starting with organized society as the instrument for freeing the "citizen" from the shackles of organized society. George, however, discovered in the individual himself the force that explained the urge for freedom—that man seeks to satisfy his desires with the least effort. His straight-line mind saw that the frustration of this primal urge lay in an economic phenomenon: the inability of man to satisfy his desires because of the maldistribution of wealth. Therefore, he reasoned, in the science of political economy must be found the solution of the problem. And, in the search for this solution he applied himself to an investigation of the science as it was then (and is now, in the main) taught by the accredited scholars, found the errors in their thinking which made the science so barren of results, developed a synthesis which has defied refutation.

Having found in an examination of economic law the cause for con-

tinuing poverty, this practical American was impelled to recommend a simple yet efficient method for correcting the maladjustment in the distribution of wealth.

But freedom from want is not the goal of human existence. Such a limitation would place man and wild beast on the same plane. The insatiable desires of man drive him to higher and still higher satisfactions, all of which are attainable only in organized society, simply because it is in greater specialization of effort and in free exchanges that greater results are possible. Asceticism is escape, not freedom.

In civilization, therefore, man must satisfy his desires. But, in what kind of civilization does he thrive, economically and spiritually? Where the results of his efforts can be exchanged freely with those of other workers, without hindrance from monopoly, without exactions from the State, without interference from officialdom. Cooperation with his fellow-man in the striving for mutual satisfactions is necessary, but only voluntary economic cooperation can achieve the desired result. Any political attempt to direct cooperation must be circumscribed by the mentality of the director, and since omniscience is not a human quality, it is obvious that direction must limit the scope of man's satisfactions. For that very reason duress is a necessary corollary of direction. And duress is not freedom.

This necessarily brief outline of Georgist philosophy is offered as an indication of the editorial policy of **The Freeman**. The interpretation of current events in the light of this philosophy, thus demonstrating its pragmatic realism, will be the aim of every article, every issue. With personalities and with party politics we have no concern. Doctrinal discussions will find no place in this publication. But we shall not hesitate to attack every wrong economic policy, every political measure, every social trend which tends, even under the guise of humanitarianism, to further enslave men. **The Freeman** is for Freedom.

—F. C.