

This "Pixilated" Civilization

By Frank Chodorov

Students of lost civilizations are fairly well agreed that a condition of moral degeneracy characterized the declining years of these civilizations. The environmentalists assert that this decline in moral stamina resulted in each case from a gross maladjustment in the distribution of wealth; the debauchery of the idle rich and the debasement of the hopelessly poor both breaking down the moral fiber of the nation to such an extent that resistance to invading tribes proved futile.

Georgists point to the concentration of land holding, and the consequent enslavement of the landless, where sufficient historical data is available, as the cause for this maladjustment. Noting the same tendencies in our times—that is, the increase in the number of people who cannot provide the necessities of life for themselves, and the increase in the power and wealth of the few who own the earth—the followers of Henry George predict a similar fate for our civilization.

There are socio-economic observers who concur in this prediction, but base their prognostications on other reasoning. Some say we live "too fast." Others point to the food we eat, still others to the way we pray or don't pray. And so on.

Suppose in the year 3,000—and assuming, which is a far-fetched assumption, that there are no Georgists then—some scientists, delving into the records of our civilization, (which shall have been "lost" by that time), should fall upon the reports of Dr. I. S. Falk and Dr. N. D. M. Hirsch on the mental health of our nation. These reports were delivered last month before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, holding its sessions at Richmond, Virginia.

The reports would reveal to these scientists that on any average day (in 1939) nearly 3,000,000 Americans (one of every forty-three men, women and children) were temporarily or permanently disabled by mental

disorders. The scientists would further learn that approximately 14,500,000 of us were mentally and emotionally defective or diseased.

Further statistics: We spent more than three-fourths of a billion dollars just for maintenance of these individuals; the total unemployment cost was three billion dollars a year. The mental deviates were responsible for half our crime. They accounted for a large proportion of our prostitution, with its consequent 3,000,000 cases of venereal diseases annually. To them were traced from 25,000 to 50,000 cases of suicide a year. They were responsible for our excessive alcoholism and drug addiction.

Perhaps these research workers in the thirtieth century will find a copy of the report of Dr. Carney, of Columbia University, and Dr. James Page, of the University of Rochester, in which they would read: "Some variety of mental disease is present among 1.5 per cent of the adult population today. Sooner or later mental disease will incapacitate, for a time, 10 per cent of the population."

Maybe the report of Dr. Benjamin Malzberg, of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene, might stimulate their thoughts along economic lines. That is, if their understanding of our word "depression" is as keen as it was in 1939. For Dr. Malzberg blamed the depression for an increase in dementia praecox cases; in 1929 the number of these patients admitted to institutions was 3.5 per cent of the total admission, while in 1934, after five years of depression, the number increased to 11 per cent.

Or, they might find food for economic thought in the statement of Dr. John W. Thompson, of Harvard

University, that both mental and physical work appear to be wearing down the nerves of those who work too hard.

The finding and study of these reports in 3000 A.D. would probably be hailed as a great discovery. And if they also ran across any record of the moving picture "Mr. Deeds Goes To Town," in which the marvellous semantic "pixilated" is so pointedly used, they will arrive at a most profound conclusion. Namely, that this civilization disappeared because it was pixilated.

Perhaps their deduction will be correct. But, if in the year 3,000 our system of land tenure prevails, and those who support the places of learning then, as now, are interested in the status quo, there will be no effort made to ascertain the cause of our pixilation. Present day scientists (unless they have economic convictions which they deem advisable to hold private) do not go beyond the facts for the cause. Why should we expect their successors to do so?

