

A Word With You

"THE MOST beautiful and precious of human rights," wrote Rosini, "is that of doing nothing."

And yet the prospect of "doing nothing," especially in the years of retirement, scares more modern Americans than does the atom bomb.

People who spend most of their lives on the treadmill (and that's most of us), scraping, stinting, saving and chasing the buck, do so in pursuit of the vision of a more comfortable and secure life where they can get out of the rat-race and live a little.

Insupportable irony! When they finally get there, the "golden years" stretch out before them like a bleak desert. They either die of boredom or quickly seek "something to do" to keep from dying of boredom: a "hobby" or—a job!

This is certainly not as it ought to be. The age-old dream of mankind is to be relieved of the irksomeness of daily toil so that we may fulfill ourselves as human beings, to be delivered from compulsive activity so that our minds and souls may develop more freely.

Such is the vision of paradise nurtured by all creeds. The anticipation of the "messianic times" among the Jews envisaged every day to be like the Sabbath, with study and discourse on the higher things.

The greatest cultural achievements have come by permitting a chosen few to develop freely—usually at the expense of the many. How wonderful

that modern technology can make such attainment possible for all!

Why, then, should such a desideratum become so terrifying to us?

The answer, I think, is in an economic system which promises abundance and takes it away as fast as it is offered.

The goal of economic comfort and security is always within sight and yet always eludes us. We do not dare let up our pace on the treadmill. This, then, becomes the most important business of life, and our development as human beings becomes incidental, an afterthought, window dressing.

Hence, as the later years are reached, there is nothing in the social set-up or in the individual to prepare one for leisure, for development, for the higher things. Grooved into the nervous system is a lifetime habit of working and of regarding the "job" as the supreme fact of life. Eleventh hour artsy-crafty stuff, travel, etc., miss the point entirely. Too little and too late. It is essential that respect for the development of the whole human being be engendered in a whole lifetime.

Such a salubrious outlook can be fostered only when we shall have attained an economic system that permits of free and full economic opportunities so that our marvelous technology can really help lighten our toil and bring us closer to the Golden Age without fear of unemployment and idleness.

—Robert Clancy

Vol. 24, No. 9

August 1961

The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N.Y., supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

Publication committee: William S. O'Connor, Arnold A. Weinstein and Lancaster M. Greene, chairman. Editor: Alice Elizabeth Davis. Subscriptions \$2 a year; single copies 20¢. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y.