

Another Chance

By ROBERT CLANCY

AS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER takes his office as President of the United States, there is a feeling that a cycle has run its full course.

In the shifting sands of party politics it is not easy to draw the line sharply and keep it that way. One might say, however, that roughly—very roughly—for the past couple of decades the Democratic party has stood for the welfare state, with private enterprise modified accordingly; while the Republican party has spoken up for private enterprise with less state welfare—and perhaps more private welfare. Of course, we still had a lot of private enterprise for the past twenty Democratic years; and we'll surely have a lot of state welfare in the Republican years to come—and who knows what the two parties will be like at the next election?

But, as things stand, pundits evaluate "the will of the people" something like this: "We've tried the welfare state via the New Deal and the Fair Deal. We're not ready to scrap it, but we're not satisfied with it. We don't like the ever-increasing taxes it brings. We don't like the inflationary spiral that we suspect has something to do with government manipulation. We don't like Korea. We don't like the corruption, the waste, the bungling, the mess. We think a more untrammelled economy deserves a second look—maybe private enterprise has something we overlooked. Let's give it another chance."

The Shuffle and the Re-Deal

This slight and tentative shift to the right also carries with it an undercurrent: "If things get bad, the jig is up. We'll go back with a smack to state control, and won't let go."

The world of private enterprise (generally with Republican sympathies) is now bracing itself for new responsibilities, as though realizing that it is "on trial and being watched. "People-be-damned" tycoons and hoggishness are being derided by the business community as caustically as any muck-raker ever did.

At a recent N. A. M. conference this spirit was quite evident. "Business must *show* the American people." Even lower trade barriers were proposed. And the Detroit Chamber of Commerce has come out flat-footed for free trade. Others will surely follow suit. Something new has been added in industrial circles—and in the Republican party!

Thus a shift seems to be taking place on the right, if not toward the left, toward the "vital center."

Meanwhile an interesting phenomenon is taking place left of center. Not long ago it was smart to be a "fellow traveller," if not an out-right Communist. It's not smart any more. Of course, there are lots of folks who get on and off bandwagons, left or right, according to the way the wind blows. But there are also a lot of sincere people who took a close look at communism during the troubled thirties, to see if it offered any answer to the economic nightmare going on. It took some time, but most of these sincere people finally became convinced

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that communism was even more of a nightmare; a cynical, power-politics, hate-ridden maelstrom.

Thus, from the extreme left, there is also going on, in America, a shift to the right, or toward the center. There are also a lot of milder leftists who have moved to the center and even to the right.

Nor is this happening in America alone. Didn't Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand also chuck out Labor governments and put in the Conservatives? Although, there too, the Conservatives are not so far to the right as they used to be.

Generally and loosely speaking, then, while the extreme right and left have lost prestige, the people are trying to find a way forward, and in looking, they are re-exploring a path toward the right they had lost faith in a few years ago.

Troublesome Semantics

I have been using the term "left" and "right"—but as a Georgist I am uncomfortably aware of their inadequacy. These terms are usually used to indicate how much or how little one wants left in private hands or socialized—on a purely quantitative basis. The Georgist philosophy calls for a unique and qualitative distinction: The earth should be recognized as the common heritage of all mankind, and the entire rent of land be taken for social purposes. This is more "left" than even Soviet Russia, which concedes to a certain amount of private collection of rent. Wealth earned by an individual should remain his property, entirely undisturbed and untaxed. This is more "right" than the most arch-Conservative you can think of, who is quite willing to tax somebody's earned income for the minimum of government that he wants.

With such an outlook, it is extremely difficult to find among the choices currently available something completely compatible. What-

ever one chooses, it is a fractional choice. But then, that's life, isn't it? Over the years, Georgists have taken to one side or another, as it seemed closer to the goal.

In Henry George's day, and for some time after among his followers, the Democratic party seemed to have more appeal. The Republican party seemed to be the immovable party of reaction, whereas the Democrats seemed more flexible and interested in reform. George supported a Democratic candidate for president. Congressmen like Robert Baker and Henry George, Jr., were Democrats. Tom L. Johnson

was a Democratic mayor of Cleveland, and William McNair a Democratic mayor of Pittsburgh. Louis F. Post, and quasi-Georgists like Newton D. Baker, were in President Wilson's cabinet.

Then came the Single Tax party—and after that—no clear-cut political alignment among Georgists. The New Deal surely cost the Democrats the loss of much Georgist affiliation, for whatever that may be worth.

A Non-Partisan Philosophy

Today, Georgists may be Democrats or Republicans or Independents—for the Georgist movement (in America) is non-political and primarily educational. It is interesting to note that in recent years the Republican party has at-