

A Word With You

H. G. WELLS wrote a story about a man who went to a remote country where all the people were blind. He got along very well with them except at such times as he would try to explain to them the world of sight; then they would become disturbed at this queer madness of his. His talk of restoring their own sight upset them still more. So painful did the situation become, that the man eventually realized that he had only two choices—either to leave the country, or to blind himself and live there happily.

Wells ends his story at that point, in lady-or-tiger fashion, but the moral is obvious. How can a person who sees a truth get along with people who cannot see it?

But Wells overlooked an important factor. The mere restoring of sight to people is not enough. Seeing is a complex process that involves habits, thoughts, associations and *vision*.

Recent advances in surgery have succeeded in imparting sight to people who have been blind all their lives. These people are at first not at all impressed by what they "see." The patches of light and shade and blobs of color are meaningless to them. They tend to ignore them and go about their accustomed ways of living by their other senses. They reject the looks of things as unimportant, and it takes years of retraining to get them used to living with the world of vision.

(There is an authentic touch in the story of Jesus healing the blind man, who thereupon saw people and described them as "trees walking.")

So it is in the world of ideas. Epoch-making inventions and discoveries, decisions and events that mark turning-points in history, are seldom if ever recognized at the time. The first steamboat, the first horseless carriage, the first telephone, are regarded as novelties, jokes, to be noted momentarily before passing on to other diversions. It takes a good deal more development before these great innovations are adopted.

"If only," we sometimes think when we have a great idea, "if only we could get it in all the Sunday papers and TV networks, the world would be transformed." No such thing. People would, without any trouble, turn to Little Orphan Annie or Ed Sullivan. True, you might catch somebody who is ripe for your idea, but you might just as well meet such a person in a bus.

Then there is "selective vision"—seeing only what one wants to see, like certain African tribesmen who regard strangers as a menace, and so they simply do not see strangers who visit them.

"Seeing," of course, is very important. But for a truth to make headway, it requires continual application, association and accommodation—and above all, the *will* to see.

—Robert Clancy

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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.

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