

A Word With You

THOUGHTFUL observers of the current scene are much disturbed over the behavior of today's American—his "alienation" from the political scene, his pursuit of the dollar as the only important thing, and his indifference to civilization's big questions.

If you can stop a hustling American long enough to put to him one of the big questions, you'll find that he really does care—but he'll "think about it tomorrow"—then off he goes chasing the dollar, and tomorrow never comes. Seems like irresponsible behavior for a civilized man, and it's worth analysis.

First of all, it is not true that we have "too much prosperity," as is often claimed. With all the hustling, the elusive goal always remains just out of reach, and if you want to know why, study Fundamental Economics.

Even so, it can still be argued that people could and should take time out to attend to political and social problems—as they have in times both worse and better than the present. Why this gap in today's "way of life"?

To answer this, we might enlist the aid of psychology as well as economics.

Psychologists tell us that irrationalities and aberrations in human behavior are due to repressing the memory of some painful event—which, though forgotten, still compulsively dominates behavior.

Perhaps this thesis could be applied to societies as well as to individuals? For instance, we could say that it was

the traumatic experience of post-Civil War days that makes today's Southerner irrational on race relations. Perhaps today's Briton has chased out of his mind the bitter days when his world Empire went haywire, and now so ham-strings himself with regulations that he can scarcely cross the channel. Today's German has obliterated from memory the years of the Hitler scourge—and now he drowns himself in feverish activity, wondrous but aimless.

What, then, has Homo Americanus "forgotten"? I think the answer is—the Great Depression. We keep reminding ourselves of the gay 1920's—but our memory stops with the 1929 crash. We "black out" after that.

What we have forgotten still dominates us. We pursue the dollar with the never-satisfied apprehension that "It" might happen again if we let up one second. We have caused our government to stifle us with security and regulations, and we grumble but do nothing because we are afraid of "It."

A close look at *what really happened* is too much—it arouses too much pain and guilt—and so we blot it out, but still it pulls us along in the never-peased hunt for economic security.

When Homo Americanus is able to face the fundamentals of economics, he will be on his way toward the genuine Good Life, not today's counterfeit.

—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 value to land, therefore the income from land values (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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