

A Word With You

"WHAT'S the difference," someone asked at a meeting, "between liberty and freedom?"

Doesn't the fellow realize, I thought, that they're both the same? The speaker concurred.

But since then I've wondered whether there may not be a nuance of difference between the two words, even though they are used interchangeably.

Liberty, *libertas*, comes from the Latin; freedom, *Freiheit*, from the Teutonic. Interestingly, both originated in the names of gods of growth—the Latin *Liber* and the Teutonic *Frei*. *Liber*, however, is associated more closely with vineyards and crops, while *Frei* presides over woods and mountainsides. Thus the nuance is suggested—one deals more with cultivation and the other with nature.

Liberty is from the city-states of the Mediterranean; freedom is from the woods (*frith*) and wild country of the North. Liberty is from the settled, gregarious, rational Latins; freedom is from the roving, restless, imaginative Teutons. Liberty is logical, objective, social. Freedom is mystical, subjective, individual.

Liber, free, is the same word as *liber*, book, and is close to *libra*, balance. The association suggests a reasoned-out affair. *Frei* is the same word as the Teutonic word indicating family, and the word "friend" is also derived therefrom—sentimental connotations.

Liberty is of the city, freedom is of the country. The goddess of Liberty stands at the entrance to a great city. But—"From every mountainside let freedom ring."

In the words of Henry George: "Liberty! it is a word to conjure with." "Freedom is the natural state of man." Liberty is proclaimed by men who meet together and draw up a document. Freedom is a cherished cause to be fought for and won.

We speak of freedom from some form of restraint; whereas, one is at liberty to do something.

Thus we may say that freedom represents the intuitive feeling, the natural yearning of man to be free; whereas liberty is the developed idea as men associate with one another. The desire of individuals for freedom is the prompting force; and liberty is the outcome, the code thought out so that men may be together and still be free (e.g., civil liberties)....

And while on the subject of language I want to register a protest against such over-used words as "image," which are bandied about so much they become meaningless.

It's a sign of the time, I suppose, that so many are preoccupied with so superficial a thing as images. What is needed is a new iconoclast to smash these "idols of the forum" so we may get back to realities.

"When words lose their meaning," said Confucius, "the people will lose their liberties." —Robert Clancy

Vol. 24, No. 1

December 1960

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.