

# A Word With You

AS we move from year to year, we wonder what else will be new. We always hope it will be better, but above all, "what's new?"

Mostly, the same pieces are merely changed around. We rarely anticipate—or want—a basic change. Some jackanapes always comes along to pipe a new tune, and we dance to it—and don't anybody whistle last year's tune.

Wait long enough and the out-of-date will become in style again. We are reminded of what Nietzsche called *die ewige Wiederkehr*—the eternal return.

There is one particular thing that keeps coming back. The most persistent recurring force in history is the power wielded by the landed proprietor. Historians love to dwell upon social changes, and the old order yielding to the new. They would do well to examine more closely the eternal return of the landlord.

We learn in history that in ancient Greece a new merchant class took the dominance away from the old landowners; and that in Rome a bureaucratic elite took power away from the landed classes. But let a little time elapse and lo! in the late Greco-Roman world patrician landlords with their great estates reign over all, while trade is languishing and government falling to pieces.

Then barbarian tribes break in and everything is disrupted—but when the

smoke clears, again the landed gentry are in the saddle!

Next we are taught that Renaissance town life gave rise to bankers and traders who ruled the roost. But somehow or other the outmoded land barons were managing to enclose the common lands and "add house to house, field to field"—and add to their power.

The industrial revolution gave rise to capitalists who put an end to the supremacy of landlords. But the old decrepit nobility somehow got into the twentieth century still reaping their rents, still making and breaking governments, still calling the tune.

Systems rise and fall, political big wheels come and go, something new gets started then gets discarded, a new elite based on this, that or the other has its day in the sun then fades, nations arise, flourish, go too far in one direction or another, then go smash . . . and when everything is levelled to the ground, why—the ground is left! He who has fenced it off has a head start over every one else and over every new thing that raises its head.

Look you . . . he has discarded his bowler and wears a Homburg . . . he has put away his Rolls-Royce and drives a Vespa . . . he has oil fields in his pocket . . . the old, old landed aristocrat in the latest style . . . *die ewige Wiederkehr!*

—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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