

A Word With You

FREE trade has attained a certain amount of respectability in today's world. It has become a virtue — like honesty, chastity, forgiveness — which nobody argues against but which is honored more in the breach than the observance.

For the past several years, nations have gotten together to see how trade barriers may be lowered. But the barriers just won't go away. The recent Kennedy Round, after years of battling and much ado, finally resulted in agreements to cut tariffs. But now trade barriers other than tariffs are assuming new importance.

Instead of tariffs, they are now applying "border taxes." New regulations are designed to make it harder, not easier, to buy foreign goods. Travelling Americans are now permitted less purchases abroad than they were before "free trade" was extolled.

Even the members of the European Common Market remain curiously sticky about allowing goods in from other member countries. After ten years, progress toward eliminating trade barriers among themselves has been extremely slow, to say nothing of the barriers against outside trade.

And in our own United States — supposedly one great free trade area — interstate commerce is being hampered by a confusing and increasing array of taxes, regulations and restrictions.

Obviously, although free trade is publicly declared to be a Good Thing, not many people are convinced. They undoubtedly feel that, just as with honesty, if you practice it you will somehow be left in the lurch.

The groups concerned with protecting their special interests do not work through newspaper publicity, as does the Kennedy Round. They go quietly to the right legislator or government bureau and see to it that their privileged position is fortified.

Other groups are a bit less sophisticated about it. I was handed a circular on the street — "Protect Our Fur Industry." This was being distributed not by manufacturers but by various labor unions. It would appear that the same fallacies, the same fears about jobs and wages, exist today as when Henry George wrote *Protection or Free Trade*.

George thought that if free trade could be attained, this would make it easier to bring to light the land question. Ironically, the troubles engendered by the land question are today blocking the road to free trade. As long as people are fearful of their livelihood, they are going to be against anything that smacks of competition. We might just as well tell them right away about the land question — then they will be ready for the glories of free trade.

—Robert Clancy

No. 30, No. 7

August, 1967

The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York, N. Y. 10021, 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 the 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 \$1 a year; single copies 10c. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

The Henry George News does not assume responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles