

# A Word With You

**B**LACK Tuesday — that night last November when the lights went out — was evidently a rehearsal for the 12-day transit strike which crippled New York. What was the transit strike a rehearsal for — the decline and fall of the American Empire?

As a matter of fact, Henry George warned that the dangers threatening modern civilization would come from within, rather than from without; that the things that happened to us would arise more from what we did to ourselves than from what others did to us. George also pointed out that society grows more interdependent as it progresses; that a mishap or breakdown at any point affects us all.

We saw these lessons dramatically brought to life during those two crises. The worst of it, I think, was our feeling of helplessness as individuals. It might have been better, during the blackout, to light a candle than to curse the darkness — but was there no alternative between the modern gigantic power system and the primitive candle? Maybe we needed the exercise when the buses and subways stopped — but the lark (and the leather) wore thin after a day or two.

Nor did our sense of frustration have only to do with the technology of the situation. That was bad enough, as our lives are geared to it and without it we become more helpless than

primitive people. The mass helplessness in the face of the issues and negotiations during the strike were far worse. Most people did not know what it was all about, and no great effort was made to enlighten them. The widespread feeling — in not only this but in most public matters — is that power-wielders and politicians without conscience make dirty decisions behind closed doors and foist them upon the sheep-like public. In the words of e. e. cummings, "you pays your money and you doesn't take your choice."

Maybe it isn't all that sinister. Quite likely, if negotiations were televised (as they should have been), we would have seen very ordinary people grappling in an ordinary way with the complicated consequences of a patchwork of palliatives superimposed upon massive mistakes.

However good or bad the wheeler-dealers are, it is still the case that the people at large feel little identification with the public policy decision-making process. Battered and benumbed, we just try to make a go of things — but with each new crisis, something dies.

Yes, that last one was a little taste of Decline and Fall. This was supposed to have been the century of the common man. It's become common, all right, but somewhere along the line, man was dropped off.

—Robert Clancy

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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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