

A Word With You

THEY say that snuff is coming back. Now that medical research has given cigarette smoking a bad name, its distant relative, "a pinch of snuff," may be due for a revival.

If we took a look around, we might find other things worth bringing back. Not that "the good old days" were unqualifiedly better. I prefer my present hi-fi record-player to the old wind-up victrola. But it might be nice to have the home coffee-grinder back; there's still nothing like a fresh-ground cup of coffee. I think it's better to fly by jet plane than to jog along in a coach-and-four. But how about retiring the twist and bringing back the minuet? I have no nostalgia for the ignorance, cruelty and filth of medieval cities. But wouldn't it be refreshing if we could bring back the days when there was something human about human relations?

I am told there was a time when, if you met with an accident, a Good Samaritan was apt to come along and bind your wounds. That was before my time; I can remember back to the days when, if you suffered a like fate, kind friends would gather round your bleeding body and scream at you to sue the rascals for all they're worth. Even that had something human about it. Nowadays, when you have an accident, nothing can be done until all the angles are calculated — legal-wise, insurance-wise, tax-wise, Blue-Cross wise, government-benefits-wise — all very wise and very foolish.

A while ago, a student hurt his hand in our elevator. We notified our insurance company, who contacted their lawyer, who got in touch with the elevator service company, who told their insurance carrier, who turned it over to their lawyer — and I lost sight of the case as it wended its way through the System . . . except that, some time later, I met the student and asked how his hand was, naively meaning how was it healing. "Oh," says he, "my lawyer says it's getting along fine!"

It might also be good if we could go back to the time when the White Man was going around the world with his Burden — and undo some of the damage whose consequences we are still reaping, in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America.

Our missionaries went to the South Sea islands and saw people still living in the Garden of Eden, innocent of clothing and enjoying common property in land. Instead of being elated, these pious men were horrified — and they gave the natives clothing and took their land from them. O, could we but turn back the clock . . .

But now I'd better end, as I'm beginning to sound like one of Edward Lear's persons:

There was an old man at a station,
Who made a promiscuous oration,
But they said, "Take some snuff,
we have heard quite enough,
You afflicting old man at a station!"

—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, 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 community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

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