

A Word With You

LEO TOLSTOY for the first half of his life enjoyed a career as a great and successful writer, a broad-minded aristocrat who did good deeds, and a happy family man. This busy and useful life was interrupted by a spiritual crisis which caused Tolstoy to doubt the value of all he had done. He felt deeply that all his good deeds, all his works of genius, all his happiness, were not soundly based. It was not enough, not enough for the true purpose of human life—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Tolstoy's agony was paralleled by the agony of his homeland, Russia. For while Russia in the late nineteenth century was moving forward as a civilized nation, there was deep trouble within. Serfdom had been abolished, age-old cruelties were being moderated, industrialization was beginning, there was an intellectual ferment. But it was not enough, not enough! These ameliorations were taking place on top of a system which still permitted privileged classes to live off the rest of the people. The improvements were not enough to stave off a revolution which rocked the world, which Tolstoy foresaw, and which to this day poses the world's number one problem.

Tolstoy felt that nothing less than a profound, fundamental reorienting of his personal life would do. He also

realized that a similarly far-reaching reorientation was needed for his country. His probing led him to Henry George, whose ideas he accepted wholeheartedly. It was not enough for a do-good aristocrat to be kind to his peasants—the rights of all men to the land had to be asserted! Failing this, there could only be catastrophe.

Let us remember Tolstoy and Russia when we hear about all the improvements that are supposed to be taking place in our economic life. Technology keeps adding new inventions, there appears to be more leisure time, all sorts of great new projects are being hatched. Not enough, not enough! Meanwhile, automation is feared by workers more than the atom bomb, urban decay is spreading and the countryside is dying, and much of our economy is based upon preparations for a war that is impossible to imagine. Our progress and improvements are not soundly based.

There have been ameliorations before in history, on top of an unjust system. Conditions were improving in ancient Rome before her fall, also in France as well as Russia before their revolutions. In the U.S. the lot of the slave was improving before the Civil War. Let us heed the warning of Henry George: *Unless its foundations be laid in justice, the social structure cannot stand.*

—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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