

A Word with You

Robert Clancy

The old familiar camps of opposing political and economic partisanship have been curiously befogged and bestrown. "Conservatives" and "liberals"—you note I must put them in quotes—having hurled all their weapons at one another, have now taken to using the opposition's weapons and even donning the opposition's uniform. "We are the true liberals," say quondam conservatives. "We are the real conservatives," retort yesterday's liberals.

But—to use the terms momentarily without quotes, in the old-fashioned sense of twenty-five years ago—conservatism and liberalism both have been pushed to the wall. Some "new" kind of outlook has taken over and now dominates the scene. Government intervention, social security, economic planning are accepted by the "new conservative" as part of the order of things, and protests against them are made only by dinosaurs and cranks. The "new liberal" will rebuke a diatribe against capitalism and big business as obsolete nonsense belonging to the 'thirties.

Hard Core Remains

The hard core of old-fashioned conservatives and liberals still do battle with one another but perhaps with a bit of wistfulness, since they've both been left on the sidelines. Their controversy is not news anymore.

This change is not necessarily all to the bad. Semantics, anthropology, psychology and a few other modern-day subjects, have taught us not to use labels recklessly, not to compartmentalize too much.

The old-fashioned conservative and

liberal have tended to follow a line of thinking that falls into a stereotype. The conservative, for instance, complains about the income tax, but usually feels neutral or even hostile toward civil liberties, since that's the domain of the liberals. The liberal glows over civil liberties but scowls at anti-income tax talk. The conservative raises his voice when curtailment of economic freedom comes from labor unions but scarcely whispers when a special privilege is exercised by a business concern—and vice versa with the liberal. Yet all these matters involve freedom and threats to freedom.

Time for a Change

It's time for a change in the "isms." It's time to cut through the party lines, to think courageously and independently in order to ascertain what are the real conditions of a free society, all the way across the board.

This is not to say that the new "ism" which has today gained ascendancy (it has not yet been given a name but it is a curious blend of socialism and capitalism) is any improvement on the old liberalism or conservatism. But at least ideas and isms have been shaken up a bit. A few more jolts might possibly bring general thinking closer to Georgism.

The Henry George News is published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N. Y. Publication Committee: Lancaster M. Greene, Chairman; Otto K. Dorn, William S. O'Connor; Alice Elizabeth Davis, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, November 15, 1943; at the post office of New York, N. Y. under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions, \$2 a year; single copies, 20c.