

A Word With You

EACH epoch in human history is given a name, sometimes according to the materials used—like the Stone Age and the Bronze Age; and sometimes according to the mental climate—like the ages of Faith and of Reason.

What, then, to call our present age? We can't call it the Age of Gold, because we're off the gold standard. Not unreasonably, we could call it the Age of Unreason—but that might not be fair, as we haven't completely abolished Reason. And it isn't quite the Age of Hypocrisy, which would be more characteristic of Victorian times. The Age of Anxiety? That was true of the first half of this century, but we're over that, too.

The Age of Phoniness—that's it! Somehow that has a ring of authenticity about it (if such a thing is possible). We're all riding the crest of a wave of phoniness. Instead of metal, wood, rubber, cotton and wool, we've learned to live with plastic substitutes. The food we eat has been denatured beyond recognition. We have Instant this and Instant that, and there is a pill for everything. The new houses we build are marvels of phoniness.

Paper prosperity keeps us happy, and the government guarantees us everything by taxing it all away from us. The price of worthless land keeps climbing, the inflationary spiral goes its merry way, and everybody is seeking a way to live off everybody else.

People's main concern is with the

'image' they project. This is not hypocrisy, because we're all very frank to one another about wanting to create the right image, regardless of what we're really like. That doesn't mean we're opposed to genuine qualities—it's just that that's incidental, the real problem being one of the right image. This trend has reached our taxing authorities. We no longer have a "collector" but a "director" of internal revenue—and it's the Internal Revenue Service, mind you!

Our cultural institutions are promoting a phony renaissance of the arts. If you notice it's phony, they will tell you brightly, "But that expresses the times, doesn't it?" Go to the church of your choice, they keep harping—it doesn't matter at all what you believe, or whether or not you believe it, just be nice and sociable and go to church.

One advantage of the term "Age of Phoniness" is that it is suggestive of another appropriate meaning — for "phony" comes from the word meaning "sound"—not in the sense of "valid," of course, but in the sense of "noise." And this is a noisy age! Besides all the jets and machines, everybody is sounding off, and the yakety-yak is sped around the world with marvelous technology. Hi-fi stereo imitates full orchestras in each household, and little children carry transistor radios.

Wonder what the next Age will be like, when they grow up?

—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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