

NEW BOOK BY AUSTRALIAN GEORGIST

"Consistent Liberalism. Policies for a Better Tomorrow." By George Hardy, 233 pp. Reform Publishing Co. \$10 (plus postage).

Dr. George Hardy has now produced his fifth major publication on the problems of contemporary society. Others have included "Monopoly and the Individual" and "Society in Conflict".

The author's basic position is that "consistent" liberalism is based on equal rights and responsibilities, whereas "historic" liberalism allows privileges.

In politics, consistent liberalism entails the equitable dismantling of both positive and negative discrimination and other privileges.

In economics, consistent liberalism brings about just income distribution, (a) by distributing an equal share of the benefits of Nature and the functions of society from "the public fund" (i.e. ground rents); (b) by eliminating privileges such as trade restrictions which confer unearned incomes on special groups; (c) by NOT indiscriminately stripping the "haves" to benefit the "have less".

The author explains a major tax reform: how income tax could be abolished for 50% of taxpayers (at the lower rung) by replacing the disincentive, punitive income tax with a 3% rental tax on site values

Dr. Hardy argues urgently that democracy is under threat as long as pressure groups can secure privileges for themselves — to the detriment, of course, of other citizens. This happens in its extreme form in totalitarian societies, but of course the trend is pronounced in well-meaning but misguided "welfare" societies, especially when pressure-group blackmail persists.

The author has some perceptive things to say about poverty. He explains how institutional poverty arises and can be eliminated, but points out that "relative" poverty is a matter for the willingness, choice and ability of each citizen, and that it is not the function of the State to act on the basis of the envy of those unwilling to contribute to the economic well-being of society.

He argues that Australia is not a lightly taxed country, and presents some informative statistics. He points out the crucial difference between capital gains and resource gains. He queries the justification for death duties. He deals with the scandal of our educational waste and the madness of our exploding health costs. He describes the counter-productive tug-of-war between the various pressure groups. An interesting alternative budget is presented in tabular form.

Dr. Hardy has academic qualifications in economics, politics and sociology. He is a prolific and skilled communicator. He has written another very important, timely book.

Dr. Hardy's approach is an admirable combination of justice and liberty. That is, he avoids the rugged individualism of those who profess a concern for freedom while overlooking rampant injustices. Yet his analysis of injustices is precise, avoiding the vague sentimentalism of those who interpret justice in terms of universal equality (as against equal rights and responsibilities).

In short, the book presents an ideal blend of individual rights and social obligations. It is warmly commended as required reading for all who are concerned with social issues in these unsettled times, and particularly for those seeking a constructive way out of current confusion. G.A.F.