

## Human Nature

By Charles H. Haase

To me the most interesting item in the HENRY GEORGE NEWS for December, 1945, is that by F. T. Hodgkiss of Brighton, Australia, "Self-interest vs. Religious Conscience." His quotations from George are of profound significance—George's denouncing "intelligent self-interest," and proclaiming that his idea "could be carried by nothing less than the religious conscience." I take it that by "religious conscience" George referred to a universal characteristic.

I hope and believe that in time we will come to a realization that there is a "self-interest" and a "SELF-interest," the profound difference between them residing in motive. The first is responsible for the way we handle the earth; the second is responsible for the sincere, selfless worker in the Georgist movement. That a general benefit also benefits the individual is in the course of natural law and does not relate in kind the antipodal attitudes. More of the first, call it "intelligent self-interest," "enlightened self-interest," or any other euphemism, will not solve our problem any more than will more special privilege solve the difficulties caused by special privilege.

Familiarity with the records of human behavior discloses that man has a higher nature as well as a lower, or animal, nature. The discouraging experience is that most people speaking of "human nature" refer exclusively to the lower nature as though there were no other. Look at the records of individual acts during the terrible war just ended: frantic men in the hold of a burning ship, their only exit door being jammed. One heroic individual succeeds in bending back part of the door, and instead of forcing his way through he holds it open, permitting his fellows to squeeze through to safety while he roasts to death. Is that "animal nature"?

### Higher Nature

Take Cecil Brown's account of the sinking of two British

warships. Brown sat on the sloping side of one of the vessels awaiting a good opportunity to slide into the ocean. He observed a British naval officer working with the sailors in the water, assisting those in difficulty and finally taking off his life belt and placing it around a struggling unfortunate. When the destroyers had picked up the survivors, Brown went to look up the officer who had assisted the men, but he was not among the survivors. He had gone down. The "human nature" to which most people confine their consideration does not explain such conduct. It is that other nature that is the savior of humanity, and the hope of the Georgist. Its reality and characteristics furnish that rational basis hope to the Georgist or any other sincere worker for humanity.

As Georgists make much use of the idea of freedom, I would like to call attention to the idea of the 15th century philosopher, Pico della Mirandola, who thought that man's freedom consisted in the uninterrupted creativity he exercised upon himself. I would say that the most profound Georgists are those who have most exercised this freedom.

I humbly submit that the way we handle the earth, and the Georgists' ideas as to the way it should be done, are moral questions involving the idea of the brotherhood of humanity, and that the difficulties will not be resolved by a lesser motive or a lower approach.

Independence, Ky.