

The Common Cause

Professor G. A. Borgese, of the University of Chicago, in his new book, "Common Cause" (Duell, Sloane and Pearce, \$3), says that the common man in 1942 had not begun to fight because he had not found the Common Cause. Dr. Borgese dwells on the contribution of Henry George, the American economist, pointing out that "Henry George embraced in his redeeming eye the American earth, as the common property of all the people."

He quotes from a speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury: "There are four requisites for life which are provided by nature, even apart from man's labor: air, light, land, and water. I suppose if it were possible to establish property claim upon air somebody would have done it by now. So, too, of light. But it has not been found possible to do this."

"Unhappily, it has been found possible in the case of both land and water, and we have tended to respect claims made by owners of land, and water flowing through or beneath it, in a way which subordinates the general interest to the private interest of those owners."

"The present treatment of land and the buildings placed on it strikes me as perfectly topsy-turvy. If a landlord neglects his prop-

erty and it falls into a bad condition, which is an injury to society, the rates upon property are reduced, while if he improves the property, and so does a service to society, his rates are increased. But if the rates were levied on the land itself, not on the buildings placed on it, there would always be an inducement to make the property as good as possible in order that the best return might be received from it."

Dr. Borgese sees behind the Archbishop the ideas of Henry George and goes on to say: "Henry George, whom Tolstoy loved was one of that company walking in the 'ancient racial bias.' His moral impact was paired with the pragmatic genies that dictated to him the plainest and most peaceable device to make of the whole earth — national, universal — the Commons of the Common Man. The device, however, was not only too radical in substance it was also too exquisitely simple in form for captivating the coarse politician's mind. It was no heap of legislative pulp bound in red tape."