

Libertarians At War

by OSCAR B. JOHANSEN

It is probably a sad truism that a man's progeny rarely ever measure up to his hopes. And looking at the libertarians of today one feels that Albert Jay Nock would have been disappointed with them, but probably not surprised. In a very real sense, those commonly known as libertarians or rightists may be considered as the intellectual heirs of Nock, for many of them freely acknowledge their indebtedness to him. But while they may have embraced his views in whole or in part, few apparently have adopted that imperturbable and dispassionate appraisal of men, and that unruffled disdain for organized reformist action, that so characterized the urbane man of letters.

The rightists have been split and are assailing each other with a vehemence reminiscent of the battles between the socialists and communists. Differences which had been smoldering for a long time finally erupted at a convention in 1969. Those generally called conservatives are now labeled the old right. They combine the economics of the Austrian school with a fierce anti-communism which appears willing to embark on a holy war to destroy communism even though such a war may result in the creation of the ubiquitous state here at home. Though undoubtedly aware of the danger they apparently believe the menace of communism is worse.

On the other hand, those referred to by conservatives as "atomistic individualists" are now known generally as the new right. They also embrace the economics of the Austrian school but appear to have imbibed more of Nock's loathing of the state. Because they look on the state as little better than a gangster organization, they feel the individual is morally justified in resisting such obvious incursions of individual rights as conscription. In essence, the old right appears to have a practical approach which takes into consideration present-day modes of thought and the possibility of attaining some goals. The new right takes a more idealistic though impractical position.

Georgists may wonder what this has to do with them. To return to Nock he was as thoroughgoing a Georgist as ever existed, but he was too skeptical to hope that people would ever have enough common sense to adopt George's ideas. Libertarians who read Nock conscientiously cannot help becoming acquainted with George and absorbing some of his views.

Since the libertarians are split into two factions, however, the Georgists might consider occupying the center. Georgism is libertarianism par excellence. It recognizes the supremacy and democracy of

the marketplace and the freedom of individuals to attain whatever goals they desire consistent with the rights of others.

If Georgists had some of the serenity and reasonableness of Nock they might be able to reconcile some of the differences among the libertarians. When rightists must engage in dialectics let them attack the leftists. Their socialistic welfare concepts have so long dominated intellectual thought that they far outnumber the rightists.

Libertarians differ largely in degree, since they all want more intellectual, economic and social freedom for the individual and less power for the state. Rome wasn't built in a day though it was built. Freedom of a higher order than ever existed before is possible, but it won't be attained in our lifetime by the present ferment.

Alex Duris of Hendersonville, North Carolina, has taken early retirement, and the increased leisure gives him more time to work with a newly formed group bent upon preserving certain local natural resources.

At a conference of soil conservationists the director of the State Department of Local Affairs, Irvin Aldridge, said, "Unless we begin now to control our own use of our land, we are headed for total disaster. Land use plans are the only hope we have of keeping North Carolina an attractive, prosperous state."

To protect the environment by wise planning he suggested a land bank as a possibility, but said a method more interesting to him would be one similar to that operating in Hawaii—a system of tax zoning which levies property taxes at different rates determined by land usage.

The following notice appeared in the German weekly, *Die Zeit* (Munich), with the caption, "A rise of 2036 percent."

The Lord Mayor of Munich gave this explanation concerning property and land law: "As to the misdirection of investment-capacity, we ought to remember that building costs increased in Munich since 1950 by a bit more than 200 percent, wages paid to construction workers by a bit more than 300 percent, and the cost of living index by approximately 100 percent—but land prices rose by 2036 percent."

This means that owing to the rise of land prices the Munich municipality has paid, since 1955, for land needed for public purposes, an additional sum of 875,000,000 DM out of tax revenues, or money collected from Munich's citizens.

Here is proof of George's theory. (1) In the long run, unless you bring land prices down by land value taxation and exemption of improvements, all surplus value accumulates in the hands of landowners (not necessarily in the hands of capitalists or the proletariat). (2) If you fail to tax land values, no government will find the money to buy much needed lands for public purposes or to pay adequate compensation for them. Then a government must either refrain from building roads, schools, hospitals, etc. or expropriate lands without compensation. (3) A wise guy will refrain from working and investing in his trade or manufacture, but he will buy some land and resell it after 20 years at a net profit of 2036 percent, unless land value taxation and exemption of improvements gives him a true inducement to work and to invest usefully. And this brings us to the "dawn of nothing," to the end of progress, and to general poverty the world over.

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