

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

WE have often pondered over the sweetness of "the uses of adversity" especially if we were prosperous at the time. It had a soothing effect, its poetry was appealing and it carried the weight of authority. Yet it conveyed a subtle warning, suggesting unwelcome possibilities, such as aches and pains, a leaky roof, or a depleted bank balance. In our various ways we sought the most efficient means to meet such situations should they arise.

AS we near the end of the tenth year of the greatest depression ever known we still ponder. And as we examine the means employed to combat this depression we are appalled at their futility. The world is still without economic knowledge. In the science of political economy we are apparently little beyond the blood-letting stage, judging by the various panaceas offered. The money theory of prosperity, as always, is everywhere and the Longs and the Townsends are omnipresent. We have tried restriction of production in hitherto unthought of ways using up a good part of the alphabet. There seems to be a vague idea that increasing the volume of money will decrease unemployment, so we issue more of it. Business is at a standstill, yet the banks are asked to extend more credit even if any basis of credit has been destroyed. The amount of both money and credit available is enormous while tangible security for loans suffers a constant decrease in value.

TAXES continue to increase together with mounting fixed charges on public debt and the banks extend further credit to the government by the purchase of government bonds and short term notes. The proposal that steps be taken to increase production is "unthinkable." So production, the only thing that can pay debts, living expenses or anything else is taxed and otherwise discouraged and, as we approach the vanishing point of any credit basis, comes the latest panacea:—The Federal Government will lend where the banks refuse. In some obscure way, lending will stimulate prosperity while the public debt rises, as the government issues more bonds

to provide funds for the loans. All this is offered to cure the phenomena of idle men, idle capital and idle land. Prosperity for over nine years has been and still is, just around the corner and millions are still unemployed. "Sweet are the uses of adversity!"

YET the people seem to want all this, otherwise they would do something about it. True, they complain of "the terrible and increasing taxes" and "if things keep on, the government will own everything." This kind of complaint is widespread and increasing, the people are becoming more and more tax conscious and the time is most opportune to put forth a real constructive programme. While the full measure of "abolish all taxation save that on land *values*" may be more than a tax ridden people can digest at this time, it should appeal to them as never before. The nation is looking for a way out.

THE second day of September marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Henry George. He died in 1897, nearly forty-two years ago and since that date, we are told the movement has made no progress. This criticism comes not only from some of his adherents, but in comments from time to time in the outside press. We do not share this view, nor did the late editor and founder of this paper. On the contrary we feel that the cause has progressed, not despite times and conditions but because of them and that the whole economic situation favors it.

THIS brings us to consider the history of an earlier movement, the most fundamental of which we have any knowledge. In the first century of the Christian era, about 54 A. D., the early Christians were whispering their convictions in the catacombs of Rome. Over two centuries later, in the same city, under the reign of Diocletian, there occurred the last and greatest of the Christian massacres. The result was considered so complete that coins were struck off to commemorate "the annihilation of the Christians." This was in 303 A. D.

NINE years later the Emperor Constantine was converted to the Christian faith and in 330 A. D. his city, Constantinople was formally dedicated to Christianity. The motives of the Emperor or the number of Christians in either the first or the fourth centuries is not of consequence. The thing to bear in mind is, quoting the historian, "It was not until the year 325 A. D. that Christianity got under way."

IT is during the Christian era, which at its beginning proclaimed the sanctity of the individual and his right to himself, that the ideals of democracy have shown their greatest development. While the roots of democracy go farther down in point of time than the Christian era, it is because we have lived in this era that we are beneficiaries of the progress of these ideals. That is not to say that at any time the world has enjoyed a true democracy. That cannot be where economic law is not understood or where precedents or legislative enactments are violations of that law. Like Christianity, democracy has only been approached.

THE man of Nazareth must have been the product of his time. His teachings were universal truths and marked by their simplicity, and that which endures is not form or ceremony but the eternal principles which he gave to the world. This is equally true of the throng that came after him including "the Prophet of San Francisco." It is too early for the world to see Henry George in true perspective but he will yet prove to be the man of his time. His ideas seem to be silenced by what Tolstoy called "the noisy teachings of Socialism," or by the lazy misconceptions of those who mistakenly consider themselves secure. His eternal truths are finding their way into every part of the world and men who have never read Henry George or even heard his name have felt the influence of his ideas. Poverty, hunger and unemployment are coming under closer scrutiny as their tentacles reach upward and claim their victims. The younger generation takes nothing for granted and the scientific approach to all problems is supreme.

WE venture the thought that what appears to be lack of progress is but the effect of a relatively brief retrograde movement. The times have brought to the front the expected variety of panaceas and more will follow. It cannot be otherwise as our mounting debts and increasing taxation bear down on production. A distressed people, not incapable of thought, but unaccustomed to thinking will continue to follow the line of least resistance. The logic of events will end the retrogression and through it all lies the glimpse of the dawn.

A Request

DURING the editorship of Joseph Dana Miller, bills for renewal of subscriptions to LAND AND FREEDOM were mailed upon the expiration dates. In the past few months, however, there has been some delay in billing, and we have recently sent out notices covering overdue accounts. In order that we may properly adjust our records, we request that remittances be made as early as conveniently possible.

This is your paper and your cause, and we ask your cooperation to give the paper a wider circulation.

A Tribute to Human Liberty

SOME time ago, the National Institute of Social Sciences bestowed upon Hon. John W. Davis one of its gold medals "For Distinguished Service to Humanity." These remarks were a part of his speech of acceptance, and are considered an example of outstanding eloquence and earnestness:

"I think there should be in the heart of every true lawyer, certainly of every American lawyer, a burning passion for human liberty, for the right of all men, as Kipling so finely puts it, 'To live by no man's leave, underneath the law.' 'Liberty! It is a word to conjure with and not to vex the ear with empty boastings. Only in partial gleams has she yet shone among men, yet all progress hath she called forth.' I am quoting, as you realize the words of Henry George in his splendid apotheosis to Liberty, which is one of the noblest passages of English prose. Liberty has been the beacon light of every step in man's advance. Under Liberty alone can man prove himself worthy of the divine paternity he claims. And because there are always men who glory in mastery over their fellows, that liberty can only be retained and preserved by a ceaseless and eternal vigilance. To keep that untiring sentry-go is the first, the supreme duty of every lawyer.

"In the Nineteenth Century most of those dwelling in the civilized world treated liberty as a thing no less normal ordinary and inevitable than the very breath they drew. Even those who did not yet possess it felt it almost within their grasp. How different the picture today! Over how much of the earth's surface has the lamp of liberty gone out under totalitarian rule, and over how much more does its flame dance and flicker under the ghost-like breath of a planned economy! Who is to guard that flickering blaze? Who is to relight that extinguished fire? Some champion may arise to cut with his sword the bonds that are being fastened on men and nations. Some orator may stand forth to waken servile and dormant souls again with the call to freedom. But whenever and however the day of deliverance comes, I hope, I believe, nay, I am sure that lawyers will be in the forefront of the fight."