

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

THERE has long been a suspicion among a large portion of the public that there is little essential difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. It is doubtful if the Roosevelt policies have materially altered the relationship, at least to the point of providing any marked contrast. From many of the eminent figures in the Republican party have come condemnation more or less qualified. The N R A and the A A A have been adversely criticized, but we miss any very clear distinction between the policies of the two parties on matters of principle. Any clear cut division seems still to be lacking.

OF course the absence of a substitute policy, or a principle, that would answer uneasy inquiry and supplant the prevailing policy of the Washington administration, is the explanation of the futility of the opposition and the assurance of Republican defeat in 1936. The Republicans can only hope to win by a forthright presentation of a substitute philosophy of government for the prevailing one. It is not enough to hack at the edges of the strange edifice while conceding the validity of its foundations and the theories of its architects. Something more than that is required of the adversary.

DISRAELI'S famous aphorism that "It is the function of an opposition to oppose," is not all the story. No purely negative criticism is sufficient to win victory in a far-flung election. Here is the strength of the Roosevelt policies, namely the weakness of the opposition. It may safely be depended upon to win the election for him in 1936. It may be said that the differences that divide the parties are those of degree rather than kind. For against the "planned economy" of the administration the Republicans offer no alternative save to let things drift.

THE Democratic party has embarked on a strange and unexplored sea. But if it does not know its destination its sails are set and it appears to be going somewhere. There is a great fanfare on deck and even some cheering in the hold. They may be drifting on the rocks. But the opposition, on the other hand, has no destination of its own and knows not the whereabouts of the lighthouse.

LET us abandon this crude metaphor for the moment. The Republican party is bankrupt; the Democratic party is not bankrupt so long as it can circulate its spurious coins and get people to take them. And people will take them. Do not make any mistake about that, and do not imagine that the basest kind of political coins will not be preferred to none at all. If the Democratic coins are counterfeit, as we believe they are, they will pass current for quite a while, long enough at least to fool an ill-informed electorate.

LET us imagine the New Deal edifice as utterly demolished. Not one stone remains upon another—the space is cleared for the erection of a new edifice. The Republican architects will not tell us what they propose to build on the site. It is not enough to call Roosevelt socialistic, or to point with alarm at his spending programme. That is alarming enough in all truth but it is at least a programme, if an insane one, and people are not afraid of names. Half of the people cannot tell you what socialism is, not even the Socialists themselves.

NOR are the people afraid of insanity. A large portion of the people are insane upon matters of which they know nothing, and these include economics and government. When and if twelve million people sign petitions for the Townsend Plan (so runs the estimate, true or false) the milder insanity of the Roosevelt party will not lack millions of adherents. And if there should be temporary return of prosperity Roosevelt will get the credit for it and will be triumphantly elected. There will be enough people insane or uniformed to accomplish that.

THE issue on which the two parties may be expected to divide in 1936 is the new system by which it is proposed to supplant the American system of constitutional government which has had the sanction of the American people for one hundred and fifty years. That might seem sufficient to create a real division of American sentiment. But it seems to connote a strange partnership. Jeffersonian democracy and Republican protectionism do not readily mix, and as yet the Republican party shows no disposition to attack the Rooseveltian policies on fundamental differences—in other words, it



does not confront the administration with any policy that assures coalescence.

THE hopelessness of any rational "line up" is evidenced in the confusion which prevails in the Republican opposition. Mr. Frank Knox, proprietor of the *Chicago Daily News*, who is spoken of as a possible candidate against the administration, is an economically ill-informed gentleman who would supplant the AAA with prohibitive tariffs and export bounties! And with these discarded weapons—discarded by every well equipped student of economics—it is proposed to advance against the well-drilled forces of the administration armed, politically at least, with every advantage of position and securely entrenched in power. It looks like a hopeless struggle.

AND there is something else to be considered. Hungry men are not to be attracted by policies which, good or bad, do not touch them directly. Roosevelt has nearly all the promises, and a little turn in prosperity will do the trick for them. He said over the radio the other day: "We have turned the corner. This is not mere chance nor the ending of a cycle. We planned it." (We quote now from memory.) Already he is claiming it. If it even temporarily succeeds, Mr. Knox's plan for prohibitive tariffs and export bounties have small chance of attracting the voter. The cry will then be to let well enough alone.

THERE is as much economic ignorance in one party as in the other. You cannot fight ignorance with ignorance; you can only fight ignorance with knowledge. There is little to choose between Hoover and Roosevelt and less between Knox and Roosevelt. If this is to be the division the election of Roosevelt is assured. His bag of promises is still not exhausted and in the prevailing state of ignorance a slight turn in prosperity, though with the inevitable depression awaiting at the end, the cry of "We planned it" will be enough.

THE way to meet restrictions is not with further restriction. The appeal is to liberty. And the signs of reassurance as to the coming of liberty, though not visible in the political horizon, are gratifyingly plentiful among intellectuals everywhere. In the flood of books now taxing the time of those who read at all, Henry George is coming into his own. The times are ours. Slowly but surely we are breaking through. One of the keenest observers of the modern trend is Leslie Eichel, columnist for several hundred papers, who said recently: "As the New Deal staggers on, unsuccessful in its attempts to re-employ men, and as critics assault it with nothing to offer in its stead, the Henry George group of economists slowly push forward."

THERE is something vividly impressive in this march of a great idea, something that not only stirs a confidence in its early triumph, but a faith that is profound and deeper still. That is a faith in the orderly processes of the natural law in society. The cry of "God will it" heard in the old Anti Poverty days may be heard again. God has not forgotten his children. And if this movement set in motion by Henry George is now in its second stage it is none the less divinely ordered and in harmony with the law of justice which is the law of God. It will not be sensed by every one, even by many who accept the philosophy, but to others it will be clear that we are preparing the way for a civilization greater and more glorious than any of which we dream.

DO we claim too much for what appears to some as a mere change in taxation? If it were only that it would in truth be that we claim too much. But it is not that—not that alone surely. It was Goethe who said that the highest cannot be spoken in words. Truth is revealed in vision and to the eyes of the spirit. Imagine a world where there is no poverty, no wars, no national jealousies, only a world made free and intensively emulative. We may then be on the threshold of solution to other problems which we have little time to consider, too harassed to pause, too far removed from the experiences of the soul which are in the nature of divine intimations known but to the strangely gifted. The human race is not only the heir of all the ages, but is the inheritor of the future whose revelations, as the wise Goethe has told us, cannot be spoken in words, but are reserved only for a race made materially and spiritually free.

TO descend a moment but proceeding along what after all is the same line of thought, do we ever stop to think that the new world made possible by the far reaching change for which we contend will render obsolete much of the world's twisted morals, the eccentricities of many religious faiths, and also a great deal of the world's literature, some of its poetry, and great tomes of its philosophies?

SOME of the followers of Henry George will feel a keen sense of disappointment that our distinguished leader has failed of election to the Hall of Fame. This disappointment we cannot share. It took some time for Edgar Allan Poe, the most distinctive of American poets to crash the gates of the Hall of Fame, perhaps because he was fond of whiskey and needed very little to render him either inspired or helpless. We are reminded of Abraham Lincoln's answer to complaints that General Grant drank heavily. He said, as our readers will recall that he would like to know the brand of whiskey Grant favored that he might recommend it to others of his