

The Parting of the Economic Ways

ON another page we print extracts from a recent address by Nicholas Murray Butler. Coming from the source it does it is the most significant speech of a decade. If we are not mistaken it heralds a breaking up of the old political alignments. We may go even further than this and declare it as our opinion that it sounds the death knell of the Democratic party.

That party in the last presidential campaign broke loose from its ancient moorings and abandoned nearly all of its old traditions. It became as strongly protectionist as the Republican party. It did so by refusing to make an issue of the tariff and practically conceding all that was claimed for it by the party of protection. In this it was true to its ancient stupidity, which is the only tradition to which the party adheres.

It was President Grant, not a particularly keen observer, who said that the "Republicans could always depend upon the Democrats to do the wrong thing," which meant the right thing for the opposition. And at a time when tariffs are dying a natural death, here and in Europe, when the whole superstition is crumbling, the Democratic party allowed itself to be side-tracked by a spurious religious issue, and the economic problem was completely lost sight of. That the party would have been defeated whatever course it had adopted is probably true, but there is another election three years hence. It is impossible, however, for the Democratic party to look so far ahead.

Now comes a voice out of the Republican party, with a message to the nation and the world. It is not a complete message, but it points the way. It is a call to liberty—a clarion call. In general terms it is an economic credo which implies more than it conveys. It is a free trade message. It matters not if this is qualified by caution and is not for immediate fulfillment. We are nevertheless urged to proceed in the consciousness that it should become a realization in a time to which we shall not be strangers.

If we accept the gospel of liberty which the distinguished president of Columbia advances we are unmistakably on the path along which Henry George directed our steps. Even if not explicit he cannot escape his own implications. It is sufficient to point out that to those who accept President Butler's admonitions there is but one conclusion.

If the world is to be made economically free there must be free trade between the nations. But the larger ideal of liberty at which the distinguished educator and party leader more than hints carries the principle of free trade to its logical conclusion and involves the destruction of every form of privilege. The monopoly of natural resources is unthinkable tested by the philosophy which animates this noble address. He has approached with

no timid steps, and as no other man occupying so distinguished a position has done in this generation, the great question to which the answer is contained, if unconsciously, in the philosophy of this great address.

We ask now, will President Butler take the step inevitably following on what he so well expresses? For there is no intermediate position on the road to freedom—he who starts out on that road must travel to the end.

Henry George

THE followers of Henry George remain as numerous and enthusiastic as ever. Yesterday they gathered in their hundreds at Edinburgh, coming from twenty-three nations and several continents to testify to their undiminished faith in the taxation of land values and in Free Trade. Henry George has been dead more than thirty years, and exactly fifty years have passed since the publication of "Progress and Poverty" in England. While subtler economists and more elegant stylists have been forgotten, Henry George's influence, powerful immediately, seems rather to spread than to decline. Nor is that difficult to explain. For though Henry George was a man of one idea, it was a good idea, and it was founded on a truth he had observed for himself and which everyone else could observe when it was pointed out. Of course there was no novelty in declaring that the land naturally belonged to the people, and that part at least of the rent which it afforded should be paid into the common exchequer. Nor was Henry George alone in arguing that all other taxes should be gradually abolished in favor of a single land tax. But his thesis was put forward at a time when the truth contained in his doctrine was singularly evident, and the process by which men grow rich at the public expense through their good fortune in owning conveniently situated land has become increasingly apparent as industrial development has spread. His doctrine was accepted by many Liberals, and became part of Socialist thought, and much of his argument has become incorporated in the text-books of orthodoxy. He was a man who found a truth, and if he and his followers have tended too much to put forward his remedy as a universal panacea, the remedy possessed real value, and was not a quack nostrum.

—Editorial, *Manchester (Eng.) Guardian*.

THERE are brains enough, there is wealth enough in New York to build the City Beautiful. It cannot be done under a taxation system which permits landlords to pile up the profits of congestion or a government which leaves housing and other vital issues of great masses of the people to the tender mercies of profiteers tempered by fair words for election purposes only.

—NORMAN THOMAS.