

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

UNHAPPY is the nation without a vision, the Scriptures tell us in somewhat different language. But also most unhappy is the individual who knows no cause worth fighting for. He may live a life that is not without its pleasures, but these do not penetrate to the depth of his being. They stir him only intermittently and are far from being a continuous experience.

HOW different is the happiness of the man who, embracing some great principle, enlists in the war for its establishment. First there is the intellectual joy in its discovery and recognition. Then follows the burning enthusiasm that animates the believer. Christianity supplied such a cause; the convert to its message experienced a delight almost ecstatic. All down through the ages other causes, other great movements, have given to individuals a happiness transcending all the emotional and intellectual experiences of those who live humdrum lives and pursue their small and superficial pleasures.

THERE is no intellectual experience comparable to tracking a great principle to its lair, so to speak. Discoverers and inventors are aware of this. Einstein is perhaps one of the happiest of men. But how much more intensified is this experience when the principle clearly seen is one that concerns the whole human race, its future happiness and contentment, even its actual continuance upon earth. The delight is then something more than intellectual; it is emotional, moral, spiritual. It raises the man who espouses it to heights which only sages and saints surmount.

PERHAPS they may not avoid a spirit of self-consciousness. A little contempt for the stupidity of mankind may creep in, a little impatience with its slow mental and moral processes. But they will learn humility from experience. They will need to humble themselves before the spirit of love and tenderness in recognition of their own limitations; men are not greatly different anywhere. God has made us very much alike in those qualities that link Hodge with Galileo, Socrates to the Man with the Hoe. Man and mind take generations in the making. What any individual may grow upward to or descend into is a miracle concealed in the slow processes of the ages and all the influences they comprehend.

IT is a great responsibility, therefore, that rests upon those we call Henry George men. They have been vouchsafed a vision and a truth the most important ever revealed to man in civilized society. Because of this they need to humble themselves before the great truth they have espoused. We think most of us feel this humility, though the temptation to exalt ourselves is strong. We should be content with our happiness and let that suffice. We are wiser for the moment than those who have not yet seen the truth, but we are no better equipped mentally. We are more fortunate, that is all.

THE suggestion of a federal tax of 1 per cent on land values offered by the committee from the Henry George Congress at Baltimore to President Hoover received considerable publicity. Many comments were favorable, and those that were not originated in the usual misconceptions of the proposal. The *New York Evening Post* said that approximately \$1,000,000,000 would thus be added to agriculture's tax burden, according to farm leaders.

THESE "farm leaders" are not named, and it would be interesting to know who they are. If they said anything of the kind they are unfitted to be farm leaders or leaders of any kind. For with the amount of revenue that would be raised by such a tax calculated at even \$1,600,000,000, one wonders what has become of the value of city lots, mines, timber lands and power sites. The statement is so preposterous that it is difficult to see how any farm leader could have said it or any reputable newspaper quote it as authentic.

YEARS ago there was a bill submitted in the New York Legislature providing for a permissive tax on land values for localities. A Senator from one of the agricultural counties of the State, one of those farm leaders whom the farmers may well pray to be delivered from, objected that the proponents of the bill wanted to throw all taxation on the farmer. An advocate of the measure countered with this: "Senator, this bill proposes to tax land according to its value. There is a lot in the city I come from, at the corner of Broad and Wall Streets, that I can spit across and it is worth more than your whole damned county."

ARE these "farm leaders" willing to leave hundreds of millions of city lands untaxed while farmers are crushed to the earth by grievous tax burdens, with the re-