

OBJECTIVE ETHICS VS. EXPEDIENCY

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

In the first issue of the new Georgeist venture, *The American Journal of Economics & Sociology*, Dr. Geiger states the necessity for some kind of ethical evaluation in making decisions. "They involve valuation," he states, "i.e., choice between alternatives, preference among competing interests, saying yes here and no there. And this process of selection, a process that automatically establishes a system of values, is precisely the technique of ethical decision." This, I believe, is indicative of the conscious need for an objective system of evaluation evident among Georgeists.

All this by way of preface to some comments I would like to make on the stand taken by the editors of LAND AND FREEDOM on the war

question as evidenced in their editorials and their comments on the article by Mr. Sanford Benjamin.

I have no way of knowing whether the editors accept the validity of an objective criterion or subscribe to the basic principle that the end does not justify the means, without which any attempt at moral evaluation is worthless. But from the standpoint of one who does accept this I would like to state that the question of whether or not participation or non-participation in the present war will or will not favor the Georgeist cause must take secondary place behind the more pertinent question as to whether one can in conscience use modern methods of war to further any cause.

Georgeist teaching is permeated with moral judgments, so much so that one may consider Georgeism primarily as an ethical system. With this in view, to reject the moral issues involved in modern warfare on the assumption that they are not specifically Georgeist and are unrelated to economic teaching appears to be a very illogical viewpoint indeed.

If a question to be faced by Georgeists is this—should violence be the means to a realization of the revolution?—then also it is feasible that the larger question—shall modern warfare be a means to freedom?—be examined. So far the editors seem to content themselves with the usual arguments for defense—how we are to react at what is happening to us. But there is the positive consideration—what are we being asked to do to others? If we must become intolerant to kill intolerance, if we must spread hate propaganda to destroy hate, if we must use poison gas, or bomb open cities or have recourse to all the horrors of modern warfare (and how can we wage a war otherwise today?) then it is time to ask—are these things fitting in with an objective system of valuation or is such a system a luxury of peace to be discarded under the fury of a war psychosis?

I am not suggesting that a Georgeist *must* be a pacifist, but I am inclined to believe that a reexamination of the causes of war and a realization that we are being asked to preserve a system whose false idea of freedom has and will again lead to economic slavery and fascism should cause us to pause and reconsider not only these things but what is after all the basic question—can we in conscience make use of an immoral means even if the outcome were the full realization of the Georgeist cause?

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