

COMING CLOSE TO US

There are grave defects in the system. The owners of land and capital receive in general just about what their property or their services are worth to society. But this does not work out fairly in many respects. Land is essential to life and extremely limited. It automatically increases rapidly in value with growth of population. The payment for it is not for services but merely for ownership. We reach a stage where a very large share of the total income is going to people who produce nothing. They merely hang on to land and receive an unearned income from the toil of those who work.

PROF. NEIL CAROTHERS, in Sunday *Herald-Tribune*, March 3.

ORATION OF CHIEF SEATTLE

These paragraphs are the close of the remarkable valedictory oration delivered by the Indian, Chief Seattle, in 1854. He was speaking at the conference between Gov. Isaac I. Stevens and the Puget Sound Indians on the shores of Puget Sound where the city of Seattle now stands. The purpose of the conference was the ratifying of a treaty between the United States and Chief Seattle's tribe with reference to placing the tribe on restricted reservations. Like Black Hawk and other great Indian chieftains, Chief Seattle felt that the expropriation of the land was a wrong that would in time descend as a fatal evil upon his great white brother. This is the swan song of a race.—J. L. M.

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It matters little where we pass the remnant of our days. They will not be many. The Indians' night promises to be dark. Not a single star of hope hovers above his horizon. Sad-voiced winds moan in the distance. Grim fate seems to be on the Red Man's trail, and wherever he goes he will hear the approaching footsteps of his fell destroyer and prepare stolidly to meet his doom, as does the wounded doe that hears the approaching footsteps of the hunter.

A few more moons. A few more winters—and not one of the descendants of the mighty hosts that once moved over this broad land or lived in happy homes, protected by the great spirit, will remain to mourn over the graves of a people—once more powerful and hopeful than yours. But why should I mourn the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come for even the White Man whose God walked and talked with him as friend with friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We will see.

We will ponder your proposition and when we decide we will let you know. But should we accept it, I have and now make this condition that we will not be denied the privilege without molestation of visiting at any time the tombs of our ancestors, friends and children. Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished. Even the rocks which seem to be dumb and dead as they swelter in the sun along the silent shore, thrill with memories of stirring events connected with the lives of my people, and the very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than to yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors and our bare feet are conscious of its sympathetic touch.

And when the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe, and when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled them and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone.

Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.

DEFINITIONS OF LIBERTY

I AGREE heartily with that part of your editorial, "The Liberty League," which welcomes intelligent criticism of the New Deal. But to expect such criticism from the American Liberty League is, I fear, to expect figs to grow from thistles. I do not mean to pass judgment upon the motives of the league's sponsors, but I question their understanding of the meaning of liberty.

This skepticism arises from the fact that they all are essentially politically minded. The roots of liberty go deeper than politics; deeper than a mere political document like the Constitution of the United States, which the league purposes to defend and uphold. Mere political liberty, history should have taught us, is a mockery. Genuine liberty has its roots in ethics and economics.

The twofold purpose of the league is announced as the teaching of (1) the necessity of respect for the rights of persons and property, and (2) the duty of government to protect private enterprise. A highly laudable purpose! But, as you astutely remark, it "can mean much or little, depending upon how it is applied." Moreover, in order to teach the necessity of respect for rights of persons and property, teachers must first know something of the basis of those rights.

Such knowledge would save them from an almost universal confusion, exhibited by yourself when you warned against the difficulty of adjudicating conflicts between personal rights and property rights. There is, and can be, no conflict between rights of persons and of property; the conflict is between erroneous conceptions of those rights. Property rights grow out of personal rights—out of a man's right to himself, and to the fruits of his own labor, both manual and mental. Violation of either right is violation of the other.

There are two kinds of property and two kinds of property rights—social and private. It requires no unusual analytic powers to distinguish between the two. Certain values are obviously the product of individuals or private groups and, by their very nature, private property. Others, such as land values and most technological inventions, are the product of the whole complex of communal effort making for economic and social and cultural development, in which the individual contribution is indistinguishable; these values, by their very nature, are the property of society as a whole.

Failure to make this simple, but profound, distinction has prohibited genuine liberty and abridged even the specious liberty our political institutions permitted us. This failure produced a system of land-tenure and taxation which violates both social and private property rights; social rights, by permitting the private appropriation of socially created values; private rights, by use of the taxing power to confiscate private property for public purposes in lieu of the socially created values.

Our foolish and futile efforts to avoid the inevitable results of this denial of elementary rights have resulted in the progressive abridgment of liberty through passage of laws setting up all manner of governmental interference with legitimate private enterprise. One example of the futility of all these laws is the anti-trust legislation to prevent excessive concentration of wealth (they were further nullified by "protective tariffs" which also effectively fostered monopoly). To cite all the follies growing out of the failure to distinguish social and private property would take volumes; but another is the vicious struggle between the ignorant armies of capital and labor, and between right and left. The right has no respect for social property rights, nor the left for private property rights, nor either for liberty.

The conservatives who now are bewailing the abridgment of liberty under the New Deal are just as much to blame for it as Mr. Roosevelt and his befuddled reformers: the New Deal is just the continuation of an old process to which they until now consented. If the New Deal is full of anomalies and injustices and demagoguery; if it is taxing the

producer more murderously than any past administration in order to preserve monopoly and foster bureaucracy; if politics under it has degenerated into a meaningless maze of sound and fury—the cause is an ignorance of, and an indifference toward, rights and liberty shared equally by all shades of politically minded opinion, whether reactionary, conservative, New Deal, avowed Socialist or Communist.

KARL B. MICKEY in *Cleveland Press*.

"UNEARNED INCREMENT"

AS the new dealers deal and the nation wrestles with economic problems of unprecedented magnitude, there arises occasionally one of those who still cherish the idea of "the single tax" or are otherwise disciples of the late Henry George.

Every so often an example is cited where the "unearned increment" of a piece of property reaches a staggering sum, and someone, a Georgist or a potential one, arises to protest.

And, indeed, the "unearned increment" argument has never been convincingly refuted. Today in our colleges and universities professors in economic class rooms discuss the ideas of Henry George with their students and the injustice of a land owner or his heirs profiting enormously as a result of population pressure and other factors is pointed out.

Typical of such discussions is an article contained in the current issue of *Unity* by James G. Blauvelt, from which the following is taken:

There was a vacant block of land in New York owned by a subsidiary of the N. Y. Central Railroad which leased it to the Waldorf-Astoria hotel at an annual rent, to begin with, of \$300,000, increased to \$600,000 in 1932, and increased \$50,000 every five years until 1956, when the yearly rent would be \$800,000, when a new lease is to be made. Who made that value? Not the railroad, though it contributed, as did all other activities of everybody else, fire and police protection, great waterworks, sewers, streets, parks, bridges, tunnels, airports, streets and highways, hospitals, schools, colleges, churches, art, literature, commerce, the greatest stores in the world, great newspapers and the presence of millions of people providing activities of every kind.

Why should the railroads have what millions of people have made? The rental of that land should go to the public treasury. The land belongs to the people and so does the income of it.

The Astors bought the property where the Empire State building now stands, for a few thousand dollars. They sold it to Al Smith and his associates for \$15,000,000, and William Waldorf Astor trotted off to England with his half, seven and one-half millions, on the interest of which he and his children, to the end of their time, can ride on the backs of the people. Such a system is a curse. It so distributes wealth that it is a public menace. No graft ever disclosed in public life compares with this enormous gift to the Astors of a value all of the people had created and morally owned.

The recovery administration is so busy with codes and crops that never a minute has been spared to look at a picture which a good many Americans believe is eminently unfair. Henry George's "Single Tax" as a remedy no longer has much liberal support, but perhaps before the present phase in our economic life is passed, a page or two may be taken from the Georgist philosophy and modernized to fit the new deal.

The Progressive, ROBT. M. LAFOLLETTE, Editor.

FROM THE HILLS

Offhand a liberal would regard this slum clearance programme as a noble bit of constructive work on the part of the government, yet when you analyze it out a bit there are fundamental objections.

Generally speaking, anything that raises the standard of living, that provides a better family environment, I am for it, but if along with such improvement goes renewed slavery to the god of greed, then my enthusiasm begins to stutter and backfire.

If the government confiscates these slum sites and erects model tenements, that's fine, but if the government pays an exorbitant price

for these sites and then makes a pleasant place where before there was a plague spot, the government has raised immensely the value of the adjoining private property and the rents on the private tenements will be jerked up.

I am most enthusiastic for these co-operative farm communities where unemployed and their families can begin to create their own living and also a surplus to be traded for necessities that they do not produce.

But I see where Uncle Sam bought the farms of 22 farmers to start one colony and I know that Uncle Sam has thousands of farms that he has taken over on federal loans and that he is offering for sale at private bid. Why not put the farmless farmer on the farmerless farm; indeed why not keep the farmer on his farm, instead of throwing him out and trying to get another poor fish to undertake the load of interest and mortgage payments and taxes and the rest?

If western cities would quit trying to sell these thousands of lots that have been taken over on street assessment debts and would enable jobless gardeners to use these lots, the bread lines would shorten before these "relief" bureaus. Handing our salt pork, beans, flour really doesn't get either civilization or the jobless anything but a temporary belly relief. Nobody need go hungry in this country if idle men and idle land can get acquainted.—HILL BILLY, columnist in *Seattle Star*.

SOUTH AMERICANS ARE FOOLISH, TOO

Economic blindness seems to follow the same channels the world over. Down in Brazil more than 63,000,000 pounds of coffee are being destroyed with the idea that growers of this highly valuable article of food will receive a better price for their products. Ridiculous and senseless of course, but no more so than the action of the federal government in forcing the destruction of thousands of acres of cotton in Mississippi and other southern states on the absurd theory that the way to attain riches is by destroying wealth.

One wonders if in Brazil the policy of destruction is carried to the extremes it is in America? Do the Brazilians levy a tax on themselves to pay themselves for destroying their own cotton? And do they pass laws, in their wild desire to rid themselves of their wealth, designed to fine the little producer who keeps his wealth at home and reward the great foreign owner of the land who ships his wealth abroad? If not, the Brazilians can come to America and learn a few wrinkles in the destruction of wealth by government decree. The officials of both federal and state agricultural departments are experts in the destruction of wealth and will gladly give our distressed neighbors to the south a few pointers on how best to destroy those things they have gone to great pains and expense to produce.

It never occurs to our dumb officials, the same as it never occurs to the dumb officials of Brazil, that to attempt to raise the price of agricultural products by their destruction, even though such a procedure accomplished new money without borrowing a thin dime from anybody, since the government made nearly three billion dollars in clear profit on the revaluation of gold.

The writer is not a veteran of the World War nor the Spanish American War, but I am fighting in defense of the principles involved and for the sake of downtrodden suffering humanity. I dare to call an axe an axe, and a spade a spade. "Big Business" is running America lock, stock and barrel, and unless the plain people take the bull by the horns and start to doing a few rounds for their own beloved America, we are just entering into the real depression ahead of us, instead of being behind us.

False optimism is more dangerous than an angry army. Let America give the men who saved America the just debt due them and do it quickly. An ungrateful Nation never did and never will prosper—it is defeated already.—*The Jeffersonian Democrat*, Jackson, Miss.

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