The Problem Solved?

by PAUL S. NIX, JR.

WANT to get rid of poverty? Easy. All you have to do is get the government to guarantee everyone an adequate income. So says a report submitted to President Johnson by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution, a 32-member self-appointed group of "economists," college professors, lawyers, bankers, labor leaders, scientists and authors.

Two parts of the triple revolution are supplementary to the third—one is the "weaponry revolution," which threatens to wipe out the "strong support for the economy" that has been provided by military and space budgets. You don't see how devoting land, labor and capital to the production of bombs and rockets has helped people who need food, clothing and shelter? Well, the importance is not in what they've been making, but in the fact that they have had "jobs."

The second, or "human rights revolution," concerns Negroes who are demanding jobs as well as freedom. The third holds the key to the solution—provided we take the advice of the committee.

The problem is that people who don't have jobs have no income. What about the incomes of landowners? Well, it must be a drop in the bucket, because the committee said, "the income-through-jobs link is the only major mechanism . . . for granting the right to consume." You don't think pocketing the rent of land is a "minor mechanism?" Well, okay, then maybe landowning is a "job."

Anyway, to get back to the people who have neither jobs nor income, the implication is that the reason they don't have jobs is that they don't have access to economic resources. Now *that* makes sense, doesn't it? Oh, you want to know why they don't have access to land? Well, according to the committee, it certainly isn't because any land is being withheld from use, or even from its *best* use.

The Ad Hoc boys say that "economic resources have been distributed on the basis of contributions to production." Of course they don't say who does the distributing, nor how the distributors came by their franchises, nor what they get for performing this indispensable role, but that can't be very important. Any system that allots resources to the best producers must be a pretty good system.

Actually that's where the trouble starts, since men compete with machines for the use of these resources. Who makes the machines? Perhaps they are made by other machines. Because if men made machines the competition for economic resources, between men and machines, would really be competition between one group of men and another group of men. But that would spoil the whole argument, and we haven't even got to the point yet.

Now, these new-types machines are capable of "potentially unlimited output" with "little cooperation from human beings." That's right, people don't "run" machines anymore, they "cooperate" with them. You think "unlimited output" sounds like perpetual motion? Well, that's our third or "cybernation revolution." It's the "combination of the electronic computer with the automated, self-regulating machine."

So these cybernated machines produce so much wealth that the competition between men and machines is getting all lop-sided. Since "economic resources are distributed on the basis of contributions to production," the machines must now be getting most of the land! But the people that the machines displaced have no income, so there's not much demand for all that "potentially unlimited output." It's quite clear, then, as the committee says, that the continuance of the income-through-jobs link acts as the main brake on the productive system.

So what should we do? Should we give everyone an equal chance to produce something else that he might exchange for all these potentially cybernated products? No, there's no need to go to all that trouble. It's not really the lack of jobs that shackles the system—it's the link between jobs and income. So the thing to do is to break the link. The way to do it is for "society" to provide, through government, "every individual and every family with an adequate income as a matter of right."

Certainly everyone has a right to an adequate income! Yes, even if he doesn't work! But you don't think that taking wealth away from the people who produced it will encourage them to produce faster because it didn't work that way in the Plymouth colony or Soviet Russia? Well, you simply missed the point; it's not *people* who produce wealth anymore, it's *machines!*

THE HENRY GEORGE CONFERENCE IS *IN AUGUST*

Now let's not have any more dear readers writing to say they thought the conference was in July. Please note — it will be in the City of New York from August 30th to September 5th, at the Henry Hudson Hotel, 353 West 57th Street (New York 10019). If you are a subscriber to this trusty HGN you should have received by now a full report on prices and other necessary information.

However, we'll make it easy for you. Rooms are $9 for single occupants; $7 and $7.50 for doubles; and $6 and $5 for 3 and 4 persons respectively. Air conditioned? Why certainly! If you haven't made a reservation yet please write *today,* direct to the hotel. Think for a moment of how lucky you'll be to have hotel accommodations in New York this summer at this low price.

Although you are coming to a joint conference of the International Union and the Henry George School, the sessions will be in English or will be interpreted. The talks and reports will be of vast interest to every true Georgist, but please don't imagine you'll be denied the lighter moments. The World's Fair is within easy access, and 57th Street is in the heart of New York's fashionable shopping and restaurant area (inexpensive eating places are handy too). It's hard to see how anyone could stay away from a conference like this.

Supplementing the program information in the June HGN, there is news from Raymond Crotty, a gentleman farmer from Kilkenny, Ireland, who is currently teaching in the University of Wales. He's coming. Dr. Hengtse Tu, director of the Henry George School in Formosa, now pleasantly sojourning in Paris, will be present to tell of his work, and there will be a jolly delegation from Austria.

John Nagy, well remembered from West Coast school conferences, president of the California Homeowners Association, will be here. And everyone who is watching the Erie Pennsylvania contest with bated breath will be glad to know that Wylie Young and perhaps one or two of "the boys" are coming, and those Erie Jay Cee's make LVT sound fresh and new.