

The Uneasy Path to Truth

By RALPH D. SCOTT

THOSE men who have, by the processes of pure thought, shown mankind a better and happier way to live, have performed a much more difficult task than have their brother scientists. Scientific thinkers in all branches have tools with which to work—mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc. But Socrates, Epicurus, Thomas Paine and Henry George, to name but a few, created new thought molds by the process of pure ratiocination.

Henry George followed the course of his own thought in all his inquiry and said, "I have no theory to support, no conclusions to prove." The others expressed themselves similarly. They had nothing but standard equipment—a cerebrum and a cerebellum. Although Socrates, Epicurus, Paine and George devoted their lives to the uplift and purification of man's mind, all were badly treated by their fellows.

Socrates committed enforced suicide, saying, "I know but one thing, that is, I know nothing." Epicurus, too, was basely maligned. His books were burned at the University of Padua, and by clever casuistry there now exists a wholly false meaning of the word "Epicurean."

To me that man is not evil whose teaching proclaims that "happiness is the highest good . . . virtue alone can produce happiness."

Thomas Paine, of whom Edison said, "He was the equal of Washington in making American liberty possible," was referred to as an atheist and a "Godless lover of evil."

And Henry George? What of the treatment he has received in most quarters? He read the future correctly when he prophesied the truth he had tried to make clear would not find easy acceptance. Newspapers controlled by Hearst, General Otis and the Chandlers (who owned thousands of acres of land in California and many thousands more in Mexico) denounced him as a "dangerous, wild eyed Socialist agitator who would undermine the very foundations of our glorious Republic."

The present confused and illogical approach to economic problems does not point to happiness. Greedy men who have achieved their goals fear the truth. The average man (mentally lazy) ignores the truth. We have been exposed to it and if the inoculation *takes*, we should strive for the further dissemination of that truth.

[Student talk given at the San Francisco commencement on December 18.]