

# A Word With You

By ROBERT CLANON

"To those who, seeing the vice and misery that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, feel the possibility of a higher social state and would strive for its attainment."

Thus did George dedicate his *Progress and Poverty*. In itself, this dedication is a clarion call.

Multitudes of good-souled people have so seen, so felt and so striven. Why haven't more of them heeded George's call, come forward to enlist, receive their "basic training," and serve? Is it because, when they are ready for a call, more strident trumpets are sounding? "Come with me," lures one, "I will lead you to an ideal society. You only need to overturn the present rotten system, help install ours, and then you will have position, security, everything."

You don't have to guess that this noisiest of trumpets is communism. It is only one of many. The cacophony of social gospels runs the gamut from the flute-tooting of the do-gooders to the drum-beating of the give-'em-helliers. And the voice of the siren is in most of them.

Wonder not, then, that the clear, steady call of the clarion is temporarily drowned out. Or that more of those in George's dedication are not heeding. The competition is terrific.

Of course, competition is healthy, but it's too bad the lines aren't more clearly drawn. The army of Ormuzd—of right, of freedom, of justice—could use more of those who would strive for a better society. And it's too bad that more of these good-souled folks don't fully trust the one weapon given to the recruits of Ormuzd—the weapon of reason, of principle. It's a good sturdy weapon and few are the enemies who care or dare to meet its level aim. But it's not so spectacular as the juggernaut of revolution or so falsely comforting as the fox-holes of social legislation.

When the juggernauts collapse and the fox-holes turn out to be mud-holes, reason and principle will remain. The people will remain (we hope). And we can do nothing else but have faith that the twin shall meet. Then may the dedication of *Progress and Poverty* be uttered with the question, "Are you ready at last?"

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## VIEWS OF THE NEWS

By SYDNEY MAYERS

Said Humorist James J. Montague, "Maybe all men were equal before the law, but since the law came there has been a lot of difference."

A new Cuban law requires landowners to lease tillable land unless it is being farmed personally or by tenants; refusal means increased taxes. Among other benefits, says the news report, "it is predicted that land values, which are excessively high, will decline."

With America's help and blessing, Italy and Yugoslavia are engaging in trade negotiations, with a view to exchanging each other's surplus goods. Who said never the East-West twain shall meet?

The United States Supreme Court has upheld an \$800,000 award to an Oklahoma landowning corporation, this being not the land's intrinsic value, but its appraisal as a public power site. Thus is private land tenure defended—but just who created that public value?

The United Nations has adopted four resolutions "aimed at promoting economic development in undeveloped countries." We will gladly submit a simple "resolution" making all the rest unnecessary.

A story in The New York Times about gold prospecting in New Guinea brought a rush of inquiries to that newspaper and to the Australian Information Bureau. Isn't it remarkable how instinctively men seek access to productive land to "satisfy their desires"?

The Motion Picture Association of America urges a reduction in trade barriers to permit the free flow of both American and foreign films throughout the world. Fine—but why stop with movies?

Following Britain's lead, eight other nations have abolished travel visas, with more expected to follow. This may be a small gesture, but see how quickly a beneficial reform can gain adherents.

Maintaining that "American shipping is being subsidized by unreasonably high ocean freight rates," Administrator Hoffman threatens to ship ERP cargoes by foreign vessels, unless American ships meet "competitive rates." There's a market on the ocean as well as on the land!

"Stern measures" to curb absenteeism in British coal mines include first warnings, then fines, then such action as the Coal Board "thinks proper, in the courts or in other ways." Hail, glorious socialism!

The chief Austrian delegate to the UNESCO complains that the standard musical "A" pitch, fixed by world accord in 1859, is no longer universally observed. Will the United Nations' work *never* be done?

The military command in Soviet Eastern Berlin has offered a "gift" of a half-pound of sugar to any Western Berliner who joins their food rolls. And that, they know, is better than a ton of propaganda.

Apparently viewing with envy the success enjoyed by publishers of tax manuals, the Federal government is now selling a 115-page booklet on "How to Prepare an Income Tax Return." How much it costs, we know not, but it sells to you lucky taxpayers for 25 cents a copy.

Postmaster General Donaldson cheerfully estimates a \$550,000,000 department deficit for 1949. The Post Office is the agency pointed to with pride as a model of governmental business efficiency.

Tax-free educational institutions are having a gay time engaging in large scale commercial ventures, such as: filling stations, walnut groves, cattle ranches and a spaghetti factory. Much concerned, the House Ways and Means Committee is busy devising ways and means.

The National Association of Travel Agents accuses oil, lumber, mineral and grazing interests of "determined and ruthless" efforts to throw the government (*sic*) out of the national parks. Hmmm!

Thank you, Mildred Berger, Robert Beeler, Hugues Fua-Lamessine, Harry Lundin and Lionel Wurtz, for your welcome contributions.

## Econo-quiz

By HENRY L. T. TIDEMAN

Question: When organized labor gets higher wages than they could get if unorganized doesn't the increase come out of the wages of others?

Answer: We must remember that of the three factors in production, land and labor are primary and that capital never pays wages. In terms of distribution, this leaves two funds into which wealth, when produced, falls: wages and rent.

Wages depend upon the margin of cultivation, being higher or lower as the margin is more or less productive. This law of wages, being reinforced by the passion of men to get for themselves as much as possible of the product of their toil, is relatively rigid.

The rent fund is in the nature of an adjustment. It is the take-up, which absorbs all the surplus wealth produced over that which the margin of cultivation enables laborers and capitalists to command. Land holders collect and retain the rent by common consent and legal force.

When the margin of cultivation is fairly stable, the rent fund grows or diminishes as production increases or decreases. In an area where rent exists, if groups of laborers, well organized, refuse in concert to work and successfully prevent others from working in their places, they operate as a monopoly. Winning the contest and getting wages greater than the margin of cultivation enables them to yield, the increased wages must be yielded from the rent fund. There is no other fund subject to adjustment. Rent is not reduced. It is redistributed.

The bargain having been settled, the value of some lands will decline and that of others will not rise so rapidly, until a new equilibrium has been established. Then organized laborers will enjoy incomes made up of wages plus rent.

The superficial observer will see only that these workers are more prosperous and get their incomes from payrolls. Such increased wages will become a subject of statistical tables of wages.

But regardless of our pleasure over the increased prosperity of the sharers in the "wage increase," in cold fact the increase is rent; it is not wages.

We can see this more clearly, if we will imagine an area where wages are held to artificially high levels; then if some force should reduce wages to a competitive level, would not rent and land values rise to take up the slack?