

Careless Criticism Leads to Misalliance with Old Evils

By W. WYLIE YOUNG

IT IS only on rare occasions that I find myself in decisive disagreement with my Georgist friends on matters both economic and political.

As we are all aware there is in America and Western civilization generally a strong wave of reaction against everything that smacks of leftism in political philosophy. This was inevitable. In recent months this reaction has manifested itself in Senatorial investigations in an effort to rid the government of Communists.

As these investigations have been carried on there has been an obvious trend toward repressive measures. People who have been Socialists only, and entirely out of sympathy with the extreme views and methods of the Communists, have been publicly embarrassed and accused of being Communists. Governmental departments have been subjected to a reign of terror and the necessity of having to be free from suspicion of any kind has brought about the dismissal or retirement from office of many who are fundamentally loyal to our country but who happen to think our economic ills can be dealt with only by an application of the leftist philosophy.

What disturbs me about slamming the social idealists, mislead though they may be, is that the critics line themselves up with those who would probably reject any reform idea, good or bad.

To my mind there is a great difference between a Communist and an American leftist. To lump them together and aim epithets at the latter as though they deserved as much condemnation as the former is wilful misrepresentation. Agreed, their policies all lead in the same general direction and if pursued with unrestrained conviction might throw the American economy for a total loss. There is, however, a difference in the degree of enthusiasm with which such groups pursue their point. Right now the entire left wing of American opinion is marking time. Most of them sense that all is not well with the working out of their philosophy. They have stopped to reconsider and have been prevailed upon to let the opposition have a try at the problem. It is a milder and less dangerous philosophy than that of out and out Communism.

Despite the fact that some of these committed leftists are "hard shell" and hard to win over to what we regard as a sane viewpoint, nevertheless they may be the only people interested enough in the problem to support reform measures.

When we toss invectives in their direction we are giving them the impression that we are on the side of the status-quo enthusiasts. Seldom do we put our case before them and say, "of course the world is out of joint but you can never put it back by appealing to the government and inviting all the evils of bureaucracy and its step child corruption."

We know there is only one way to keep freedom alive. Why don't we bear down on that point instead of throwing ridicule at the poor dupes on the Communist left? To my mind the real dupes of our present age are those who have gone through a depression, seen the world torn by two terrible wars and now threatened with another which could easily be its last, and still insist that there is nothing wrong with the conventional way of doing things.