

## Commentator Has Change of Heart

*When JAY FRANKLIN, nationally-known columnist, recently expressed a radical change in his views concerning certain aspects of the social and economic structure of our society, we deemed it, in view of his extensive following, a matter of such significance that we were moved to write—*

Dear Mr. Franklin:

I have just been shown, and have read with delight, your column in the *Newark Evening News* of February 10, in which you express your change of heart with respect to the profit system and describe the circumstances of the "revelation on the road to Damascus."

Your sentiments in the matter are so akin to those of the believers in the philosophy of Henry George that I am sure they would be glad of an opportunity to read the column. I make bold, therefore, to ask if we might reprint it—giving full credit, of course—in an early issue of *THE FREEMAN*. If you are one of those unfortunates who do not know *THE FREEMAN*—their number, alas, runs to millions—I might say that it is a monthly critical journal of social and economic affairs sponsored by the Henry George School of Social Science in New York. I'll mail you a copy of the March issue when I get to the office tomorrow. I was so enthused about your piece that I couldn't wait to get this letter off—it is being typed here at home in Forest Hills this Sunday afternoon.

Unfortunately, *THE FREEMAN*, like most periodicals with a mission, has no money to pay contributors. Your only compensation, in the event that you can see your way to allowing us to use the article, would be our heartfelt thanks, and—I hope—the satisfaction that comes from doing a favor to a journal that is trying to preserve and broaden our democracy in these parlous times.

Sincerely yours,  
C. O. STEELE, Editor

*Whereupon Mr. Franklin graciously replied—*

Dear Mr. Steele:

Your letter of the 21st has been forwarded to me and I hasten to give you my permission to reproduce the column you speak of in an early issue of *THE FREEMAN*. Naturally, I have long been aware of *THE FREEMAN* but have not seen it for a long time. I was interested in your observation of the parallel between my conclusions and those of Henry George. It has been so long since I read "Progress and Poverty" that I can only suppose that my views offer a good example of the way ideas are handed on.

Will you be kind enough to send me a copy of the issue in which my column is reprinted?

Yours sincerely,  
JAY FRANKLIN

*With the result that here, for FREEMAN readers, is Mr. Franklin's article in full.*

★ IT MAY SURPRISE some readers of my column

and shock others to read that I am at last convinced that free enterprise for private profit is essential to human liberty. During the past 10 years I have been so articulate in denouncing the abuses of property rights in derogation of human freedom that I have been accused of Communism, Fascism and inborn hostility to business.

My revelation on the road to Damascus came February 4, when I called Western Union, as usual, to send a birthday telegram to my youngest daughter, who is away at school. This seemed to me to be a harmless, natural, human thing to do. However, Western Union politely informed me that they were not permitted to accept private anniversary telegrams on account of the congestion of wires due to the burden of war business.

With this ruling of the Federal Communications Commission I have no quarrel. I am entirely willing to forego my right to send birthday telegrams for the duration, and I hope that it will help defeat the Axis. The government can't make me sore that way.

But the more I thought about the government's ruling in this matter, the more I realized that the only real protection of my right to send family telegrams and other things which express my personal freedom was the fact that Western Union and other privately owned business groups stood to make a profit out of my individual desires.

Suppose, for example, after the war we were to adopt a Fascist or Communist or totalitarian system of government, with government ownership of communications and basic industries. Suppose that such a government decided that every man, dollar and ounce of material that could be spared must go into a great national rehousing program and that, therefore, the inmates—I will not call them citizens—of the United States must not be allowed to send certain kinds of telegrams, make certain kinds of telephone calls or go on certain kinds of journeys ("pleasure driving" is a foretaste).

Such a government could not be in the least bit interested in the profit account of the telegraph or railway companies and could highhandedly and perhaps mistakenly refuse to let me do the things which seem to me to be normal, natural and harmless expressions of my rights as a human being. And I would have no redress under these circumstances, except to agitate or to vote—both of which might simply get me into a bad personal jam.

For when the government steps in, it is a monopoly. With the government writing the rules—which means some little guy in a bureau, whom nobody knows, nobody elected and nobody can remove—it does me no good to go from Western Union to Postal Telegraph or R. C. A.

That is why the Manufacturers' Association and the U. S. Chamber of Commerce—my old targets in the days of yore—can be assured that when the shooting stops, they will find me fighting the battle for private

enterprise and private profit without reference to my past performances in criticism of unregenerate capitalism and the purblind exaltation of property rights over human rights. I know now, what I never fully realized before, that while the government regulation is necessary to control traffic—whether on the highways, the stock exchange or the labor market—government ownership, when divorced from considerations of private profit, is death to human freedom and the right of the individual to develop his own life without reference to the views of the bureaucrats.