

Aren't We All?

* At a New Year's Day ceremony in City Hall Mayor F. H. LaGuardia proposed the Lord's Prayer and the Golden Rule as "formulas" for solving world problems after the war. Addressing an audience of city officials, judges, army and navy officers and high dignitaries of the church, the Mayor said:

"We ask the Lord to give us our daily bread. We don't say 'Give me my daily bread.' And the Lord has responded. He has provided sufficient bread for all of us in the entire world, but we haven't carried out that generous response. We have been unable, through selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed, to take those blessings, take the bread and see to it that all the hungry people of the world should enjoy it. That is one of the problems that we at home must be thinking about while our men in the four corners of the world are fighting to make it possible to put it into action."

To ascribe our troubles to "selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed," as the Mayor does, is a common practice. Industry lays its production difficulties to the "selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed" of labor. Labor makes the same charge—in reverse. The Democrats attribute the plight of the country to the "selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed" of the Republicans. The Republicans say it is all due to the "selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed" of the Democrats.

One is tempted to say they are both right, but that would be inexact. Whatever be the sins of omission and commission chargeable to the two dominant political parties—and heaven knows their name is legion—it is economic illiteracy, ignorance of fundamental economic law, that in the great majority of cases is to blame. For what, after all, are selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed but normal, human traits, without which men would make precious little progress in this world? It might be objected, of course, that man has made precious little progress *with* them, seeing the sorry mess in which he has succeeded in involving himself, but that would be only a part-truth.

Selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed are terms of opprobrium which we apply to others. The same qualities in ourselves we speak of as

"enlightened self-interest," "laudable singleness of purpose," "thrift, legitimate acquisitiveness, exemplifying the worthy ambition to get ahead."

A great American economist and philosopher, Henry George, saw to the bottom of the thing when he wrote, more than sixty years ago, that men are impelled by a supreme law of the human mind to seek the satisfaction of their desires with the least exertion. In doing so they inevitably exhibit those traits of character we have been discussing. Let us recognize that those traits are neither noble nor ignoble; neither exalted nor base. They are simply human characteristics, the common attribute of all mankind.

The Mayor speaks but the simple truth when he says, "And the Lord has responded. He has provided sufficient bread for all of us in the entire world. . ." But might not the Mayor well ask himself why, if there is enough for all, should our men be fighting in the four corners of the world; why should men of all nations be at each others' throats with savagery ruthless beyond description; why are unoffending men, women and children by the millions being uprooted and cast into slavery, or left to the more merciful fate of starvation? Is it to effect a more even distribution of the bounties the Lord has provided? The war has been going on for three and one-half years. It may last several years longer. Are all the hungry people of the world, as the Mayor puts it, getting their bread? Is there any hope that they will get it during the years the war may yet run? Is there any assurance that they will be faring very much better a generation after peace has been declared?

Hunger is rampant in most of the countries of the world and an imminent threat in the others, not through any dereliction of the Lord's nor, as the Mayor would have us believe, because of the selfishness, narrow-mindedness and greed of men, but because so few men realize that Freedom is the greatest thing in the world, and even fewer know just what Freedom means. Until men the world over learn that Freedom means the complete abolition of every kind of barrier to production and to trade, there will be millions of hungry people in the world.

—C. O. STEELE

Write on this.

George distinguished selfishness & fundamental laws.