

The Fifth Freedom

* APPARENTLY THIS MAN Kaiser—Henry J. “Ship-in-Ten-Days” Kaiser, the newspapers are beginning to call him—is not one of those complacent souls who is satisfied with things as they are.

Engineers used to have certain ways of building bridges and dams. Along comes Kaiser—no engineer—and shows how to build them bigger, better and quicker. Result: Boulder Dam, Grand Coulee, Shasta, San Francisco Bridge and other eye-filling wonders. Not long ago a ship in sixty days was tops in naval construction. Kaiser said he'd do it in ten—and did!

The famous Four Freedoms have seemed adequate for most people. But up pops the disconcerting Mr. Kaiser and demands a fifth—Freedom to Produce—which shoots the other four pretty well full of holes. For freedom to produce would put an end to widespread unemployment and its twin evil, mass poverty, and thus assure “freedom from want.” And it would just about guarantee “freedom of speech” and “freedom of religion,” for history shows that these three naturally go together.

Our political, personal, civil and religious freedoms spring largely from the primary freedom to produce and exchange. The modern social order that superseded feudalism grew out of the revolts against restrictions to production and trade by baron, manor court and guild. Wherever fascism or communism has reared its ugly head to seize control of production, there personal and civil liberties have died. When Mr. Kaiser proposes “freedom to produce,” he proposes the freedom from which all other real freedoms are derived.

It would seem that Mr. Kaiser is not only a builder, he is a thinker and an economist. If he will go one step further and demonstrate that he recognizes that the chief denial of freedom to produce inheres in the iniquitous institution of absolute private ownership in land, and that the condition is but worse confounded by artificially constructed obstacles to trade, the unpredictable gentleman is likely to get our vote for any public office he may choose to run for—and that is not said by way of idle jape and jest. What is more probable, however, is that Mr. Kaiser, like a distinguished gentleman of an earlier era, will not “choose to run.”

—C. O. STEELE