

A Word With You

WHEN I was a boy, I used to frequent those bedlams known as "Saturday matinee for kiddies" in the days of the silent films. Once during a thrilling screen fight between cowboys and outlaws, when the youthful audience was making more noise than usual, an urchin a shade younger than I asked me frantically, "which one is the good guy?" I helped to initiate him in the mysteries of when to cheer and when to boo.

That was a relatively easy matter, as there was a script to go by. But what of all the conflicts going on today in the real and not so silent world, with no script to guide us? Suppose the young gamin were to put the question to me now, what could I answer? Only that our cockeyed economy does make villains of us all.

New York's long-drawn-out newspaper strike was prompted largely by the threat of automation. Very well, the union was the "bad guy" in trying to hold up progress. But unemployment is increasing, and what would the fired printers do for jobs? So the publishers were the "bad guys." And so it went on, both sides unmindful that it was the restriction of opportunities caused by monopolization of land that made villains of both sides.

Who is the good guy and the bad guy in the Medicare debate? When you look at all the poor, aged, sick people, surely the villains are those who op-

pose medical care for the aged. And when you look at the wretched results of socialized medicine wherever it has been tried, surely the villains are sinister bureaucrats scheming to plan our lives for us. What about the economic conditions that make the aged poor?

In Latin America, when you meet the cultured aristocracy, surely it's easy to conclude that they are the good guys, and the lazy, drunken peasantry are the bad guys who are only getting what they deserve. The earth belongs to nice people like El Senor de la Hacienda. Ah, but then comes the revolution, and *now* who's getting what he deserves, and *now* who's the bad guy?

In the play "Rhinoceros" by Ionesco, every one turns into a rhinoceros except one man who refuses to do so. At every performance the audience vigorously applauds this decision of one man to hold out against the world—on stage, that is. But what of real life? How many would applaud a person who resisted the craziness of the times as a matter of principle? Such a person would be quickly branded as a bad guy.

Yes, it's much harder to distinguish the bad from the good in real life than on stage or screen! But there is a script to guide us, after all—and that is our own reasoning power confronting the facts of life.

—Robert Clancy

Vol. 26, No. 5

April, 1963

The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N.Y., supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

Publication committee: William S. O'Connor, Arnold A. Weinstein and Lancaster M. Greene, chairman. Editor: Alice Elizabeth Davis. Subscriptions \$2 a year; single copies 20c. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y.