

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

THERE can be no question that all classes of workers in America are being forced to a lower standard of living. This condition has been caused in large measure by the NRA, accentuated by the increase in municipal, state and federal taxation, and aided perhaps in slight measure by a somewhat higher level of prices for certain commodities. Wages generally show no tendency to rise and business profits for the small man are the lowest in history.

THIS is the condition after nearly a twelve month of Rooseveltian experimentation. Yet the administration policy remains almost unchallenged. In the almost sublime and simple faith of the people Roosevelt is still the Messiah. He can do almost anything and will try everything. What he does and tries to do out of the kindness of his heart he does with a charming laugh where perhaps tears would be more becoming. That laugh is growing a little annoying to the more serious minded. But in the general attitude of the people there is a symptom of slave-mindedness which is not a pleasant thing to contemplate.

HERE is the earth with its abounding resources which if freed to labor would raise wages in excess of anything we have ever known, where everybody would have enough, and there would be no unemployed. Yet we are asked to applaud if a few thousand of the millions out of work get a dollar a day, or where some of those employed receive a ten per cent increase! This for the abundance that might be theirs! It is a pitiful thing when a whole people go slave-minded!

IT was fortunate for a lot of professors that the era of social planning dawned, thus providing a field for invention. Before that it was necessary for them to think, and occasionally in terms of fundamentals. This was difficult and required some hard thinking. It was so much easier to juggle with the blocks than to study the law of their arrangement. Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Henry George had discovered certain fundamental principles—the professors might have elaborated from these, but that would have been too difficult, so they

are rejected or quietly ignored, while they talk in their foolishness of the failure of laissez faire, as if it had ever been tried.

AFTER the tremors and delusions of the present hysteria have passed it will be found that the earth is still solid—that old established principles remain. Of course the weakening of these principles, the responsibility for the new school of economic tinkering, must rest largely with the out-and-out defenders of things as they are. Mr. Roosevelt's predecessors did nothing to remedy the inequality of wealth-distribution. Either they did not see it or did not want to see it. It was this group who prepared the way for the monstrous experimentation which we are witnessing at the hands of the Tugwell-Moley-Berle rule of thumb.

IS it any wonder that the people laud President Roosevelt as the Messiah? For the first time in our history the party in power in this country has shown an inclination to remedy the ills of our economic life, to do something for the "forgotten man." How he came to be forgotten is a pertinent question. Nothing is said of the cause of his submergence. But remedies have been sought, and though they are fantastic enough, and though some are of doubtful constitutionality and are a dangerous approach to sovietism, socialism, and a dictatorship, partaking in various degrees of all of these, we may nevertheless applaud the motive and hope that out of this disposition to remedy evil conditions, something at last may come.

PROF. Rexford G. Tugwell says in the *Political Science Quarterly* for November: "There is no pre-arranged field of government which is set apart from those who are governed." This is sufficiently opaque, but read in connection with what follows it seems to mean that no design of government can meet permanently the needs of the governed. This is a denial that there is anything like a law of relation between government and the governed. He says: "These are trite declarations of principles," but we submit that he is denying the validity of any principles. He says again that "only a socialized industry can market its goods continually because, until it is socialized, it cannot join in the protection of demand."

REFERRING to the contention that these administrative changes are unconstitutional Prof. Tugwell says, "I strongly suspect that, for the most part, those who criticize them as unconstitutional, dislike them either because of meagre understanding or because some protected privilege will be exposed and abolished." There is a familiar axiom in legal practice which is taken advantage of by less conscientious attorneys that when you have no case you may resort to abuse of the opposing counsel.

IN an editorial under the title "Who Owns the Land" in *America* for Jan. 13, 1934, criticising Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Rexford G. Tugwell's address at Philadelphia on Dec. 29, appear these words "The right to hold property (land), despite the abuses to which it has been subjected, is inherent in man's nature."

America being one of our foremost Catholic organs, would it be amiss to quote from the source of all Christian religion?

"In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth."—Gen. I:1.

"The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land."—Ps. XCV:5.

"For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."—1 Cor. X:26-28.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."—Ps. XXIV:1.

"Behold, the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is."—Deut. XI:14.

"The Heaven, even the Heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men."—Ps. CXV:16.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." "For all those things hath mine hand made."—Is. LXVI:12.

"The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."—Lev. XXV:23.

"Moreover the profit of the earth is for all."—Eccles. V:9.

TO which we may add the following from the greatest of the popes, Gregory the Great:

Those that make private property of the gift of God pretend in vain to be innocent. For in thus retaining the subsistence of the poor they are the murderers of those who die every day for want of it.

UNDER the N.R.A. and the Blue Eagle American industry is taxed as heavily as under Hoover, still pays as heavy tribute to predatory monopolies, is still barred by landowners from use of much valuable land and still pays for what land it may use by giving private individuals ground rent that belongs in lieu of taxes in the public treasury. What kind of "new deal" is this?

THE Brain Trust's next problem is how to tax liquor without giving bootleggers a chance to undersell legal dealers. The solution depends on discovery of the way to make two and two equal five. The Brain Trust holds that to be easy, declaring that eighteenth century mathematical principles have long become obsolete.

Dinner to Mr. McNair

A DINNER was given to Mayor-elect McNair on Dec. 21 at the Town Hall in this city. About 200 were present and it was an occasion to be remembered.

Walter Fairchild was toastmaster and from start to finish kept his audience in good humor with amusing sallies. Before Mr. McNair began his talk there were three minute speeches from a dozen or more of our local Single Tax friends, including Anna George de Mille, Hon. Charles O'Connor Hennessy, Oscar Geiger, Dr. William Jay Schieffelin, Hon. Edward Polak, Charles Johnson Post, Hon. Lawson Purdy, Bolton Hall, Miss Grace Isabel Colbron and others.

Mr. McNair told his hearers that he wanted to establish an advertising bureau to tell the nation about the tax advantages of Pittsburgh. "We have something to sell that no other city has," he said. He defended the Pittsburgh half-rate tax on improvements but was candid enough to admit that it had had no social effects. He spoke of the efforts he had in contemplation to extend the system and to take more and more land values.

He said in part: "I do not mean to say that Pittsburgh has escaped the depression, for she has not, but I believe she has suffered less from the depression than have many other cities. Her tax system, which assesses land values fifty per cent more than improvements, has softened for her the hardest blows of the depression."

The newly elected mayor of Pittsburgh created a decidedly favorable impression, and the dinner was one of the most pleasant held in recent years.

High Land Rents and Slum Clearance

IN speaking before the National Public Housing Conference at Washington, Jan. 27, the *New York Times* reports Mrs. Roosevelt as follows:

"Mrs. Roosevelt said limited-dividend housing corporations had failed as a means of slum eradication because they were unable to set the rents at a low enough figure.

She declared that it was necessary to make the public feel that slum owners were 'bad citizens'.

The economic thing that makes low-cost housing difficult is that most people have looked on their land, not as a source of regular income, but as an investment on which they would make a great deal of money, Mrs. Roosevelt said."

THERE was once a President of the United States who, in fighting a depression, courageously insisted on immediate removal of its cause in spite of the bitter opposition of land monopolists, trust magnates and all their ignorant dupes.—BARON MUNCHAUSEN.