

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

THERE is one thing that philosophers of our social life, reformers and teachers, must learn, and that is that fundamentals do not change. Whether these be the laws that concern themselves with the natural sciences, or the laws of political economy, none are subject to change or revision. If well-intentioned reformers understood this, reforms would be fewer in number. Certainly they would be of a less bewildering variety.

ECONOMIC and social life is of profound simplicity, despite its apparent complexity to the superficial. The business of making a living may be reduced to the simplest factors. There is nothing obscure in the laws that govern its operation. It is only when we attempt to regulate the processes in accordance with preconceived theory that the simple machinery breaks down, or fails to work. The process of making a living is so obvious that we don't have to theorize about it.

INTERRUPTED only temporarily by wars or convulsions of nature man through countless centuries has fed and clothed himself, or as we say in homely phrase has "earned his keep". And always in the same way, by the application of labor to land. If in the Marxian outlook the process appeared to be complicated by subsidiary factors this will be revealed on examination as an obvious confusion. There are only two factors in the production of wealth, land and labor. There is every reason to believe that Marx saw this, but too late to re-write *Das Kapital*.

THERE is one merit in the Georgeist philosophy that cannot be sufficiently emphasized. That is the minimization of the functions of the state that would follow its application. In fact state functions would tend to disappear. In their place would rise cooperative units, represented, it may be, by the cities and towns. There would grow up a gradual decentralization that would realize the ideals of democratic teaching. A healthy rivalry would animate the activities of these local units, and functions we are accustomed to regard as the business of the state would become localized in smaller communities and in the rapidly growing cooperative units.

WOODROW WILSON pointed out years ago that the history of human freedom is the history of the limitation of governmental powers. Today the trend is the reverse of this in all countries. The very things for which men have fought through the centuries—the limitation of the powers and privileges of their rulers—are now being denied to them and newly created powers a thousand times multiplied handed to those in the seats of power. The masses of men are apparently willing and even anxious that the process be hastened and made permanent. Not only is this true of fascist countries but by different routes and in somewhat different forms even in the so-called democracies.

IS the mentality of the entire human race changing that they should voluntarily abdicate in favor of governments which deny them the most fundamental of human rights? Is there some deep and underlying reason for it? Is freedom no longer a word to conjure with? By what subtle alchemy has the old love of liberty been exercised? Specifically, what has become of those Germans who led the revolution of 1848? Where are the Mazzinis and Garibaldis of Italy?

THERE is only one entirely satisfactory explanation of the growth of fascism. Workers are denied security. The so-called democracies have failed them. They have contented themselves with glittering phrases in praise of liberty but have denied them the real substance. Mankind has not realized that political liberty without economic liberty is just no liberty at all. Political issues for a hundred and fifty years have been a child's game no more important than football. In the mad hysteria of the mob over their favorite teams, calling themselves Republican or Democratic, the predatory elements of society have pocketed the plunder. The game was invented for their amusement to divert them from more serious things.

IN the meantime the poverty of the masses deepened. It is necessary to keep in mind that poverty is a relative term. There is enough of absolute poverty to justify the ignoring of relative terms. Insufficient nutriment and advanced malnutrition are with us perhaps to a degree never before realized in modern society. Under the

circumstances one need not wonder at the growth of fascism. A poverty-stricken people are the prey of any crackpot scheme promising security. To some degree fascism holds out this faint prospect. Anything is preferable to a democracy that has failed. This democracy is no proof against the imperative cry of hunger.

SO civilization turns back. Liberty will not be satisfied with any half service. That America should escape from this retrogression it is quite hopeless to expect. That the full backwash of these forces has not yet overtaken us is due to the fact that ours is a more deeply rooted tradition. We still have our memories. If it is unlikely that we could muster a Valley Forge or an embattled Lexington we can yet refer to them in our school books. That is something at least.

THERE can be no such thing as a political democracy where economic inequality prevails. The ballot means nothing where there is even a large minority dependent or impoverished. They are easy prey to the specious appeals of demagogues and dictators. "The destruction of the poor is their poverty," says the Scriptures. The saying embodies a profound philosophy. A house divided against itself cannot stand. There is no room in a true democracy for monopoly or privilege. These have yet to be destroyed.

Was The Campaign Of '86 a Mistake?

IT is a good thing to have an historic background of the Single Tax movement in the contemplation of certain great events that ushered it in.

There has grown up among recent adherents to our movement an impression that the campaign of 1886 was a mistake, that Henry George might better have devoted himself to the writing of other great books to add to those he had already written. This impression is rather widespread, but chiefly among those who have come late to the ranks. To this impression Albert J. Nock, in his admirable article on Henry George, has lent the weight of his name.

We think the impression is wholly wrong. Mr. George made no mistake in entering the campaign of '86. He had what his later-day critics seem to lack—a keen sense of the dramatic. The whole world learned in this campaign who Henry George was. Not that many had any very intelligent comprehension of what he stood for—his philosophy remained in the background, only dimly perceived. But many did learn it and a number of great names were emblazoned in the early chapters which begin the annals of our movement.

Think of it! Had it not been for this campaign we

might never have heard of Father McGlynn, William Lloyd Garrison, John S. Crosby, Ernest H. Crosby, and many other great names. It disclosed Henry George as perhaps the most moving orator of his time. It had tremendous influence abroad and really started the movement of which the Henry George School is the final link in a continuous chain. We heard him cry out at a great meeting in that clarion voice of his: "We are firing a cannon tonight whose echo will be heard round the world," and again we call attention to his sense of the dramatic. The campaign of 1886 was the cannon whose echo was heard round the world. In the time to come that clarion cry will be quoted.

The campaign of '86 added to the weight and fame of his books that were now to be carried everywhere. It illuminated his message. Regardless of its political effect—all that aside, for no political effect was sought—the stage for the opening of the great drama was begun. The curtain had risen.

The campaign of 1886 was no mistake. It is meaningless to assert in criticism that the time given to this campaign might better have been devoted to the writing of another book. Even at that time his writings were nearly complete. Mr. George was wiser than his later-day critics.

We have purposely refrained from any allusion to the campaign of 1897, for Mr. George was in no condition to undertake it. Yet even here it would be rash to question his judgment. The occasion and manner of his death, which he deliberately chose—still alive to the sense of the dramatic—was no hastily conceived sacrifice. The world in the days to come will regard it as a second Gethsemane, the effect of which was worth the sacrifice.

Organization

A SOMEWHAT unfortunate outcome of several attempts to form Single Tax organizations has prejudiced a few of our friends against organization per se. Yet how a movement such as ours can function at all without organization of some kind must perplex those who think they are opposed to organization. Yet the conviction that we must have some kind of organization still persists, as was evidenced by the almost unanimous vote at Toronto endorsing the Tax Relief Organization.

Every movement has its machinery for cooperation and mutual interchange of views. Also for information for the public at large. It may be said that we are not anarchists, and the work that must be accomplished is dependent largely upon what can be done working together. It is for this reason that we are strongly in favor of some kind of organization with headquarters in some central city and branches in every town and city.

We have spoken of the somewhat unfortunate outcome of attempts at organization. We recognize the dangers that must be guarded against. But there is another