

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

HARRY L. HOPKINS is Administrator of the FERA, one of the many alphabetical permutations of the Washington administration, meaning in this case that he is head of the Relief Work. He tells us that we have on the relief rolls 7,000,000 children under sixteen. He says in the *New York Times* of recent date:

The conviction is that relief as now extended to the unemployed does not exercise sufficient curative effect and is generally unsound and undesirable as a permanent activity. There is no insurmountable reason why we should continue to give it. There is nothing inherent in the direct relationship of people to the necessities of existence—land, air and water—which should prevent their having a good life. There is enough air to go around. There are five oceans from which to recruit rain and replenish our rivers. There is land and to spare.

IS there "land and to spare?" Not for them there isn't. There is land for the Astors and all the landowners, great and small. But try to get it, ye 7,000,000 children, either now or later when ye come to manhood, ye and your fathers. No, Mr. Hopkins, there is no land for them because it is monopolized by less than five per cent of the people. Perhaps sensing that what he says is just not so, he adds: "I feel that we need to know more about this business of unemployment and its hazards." Yes, Mr. Hopkins, you do.

THEN he says: "I think that under the circumstances we can be absolved of conceit if we say we are practical diagnosticians of the trouble." The remedy he suggests is a programme of unemployment insurance. But this leaves the problem just as it is. Fire insurance does not abolish fires any more than unemployment insurance abolishes unemployment. To provide for unemployment would mean increased taxation and increased taxation means more unemployment. Oh, you practical diagnostician!

MR. HOPKINS says again: "I believe the time has come to decentralize as much of industry as possible, and I do not say this as a follower of Gandhi or of Longfellow." (Two noted economists!) But even in Arcadia the process of industry follows the same lines as in New York City and Washington. If there is idle

land there is idle labor and idle capital. And if Mr. Hopkins thinks there is "land and to spare" let him go out and try to use it without permission of the owner and at the owner's price. He will find he is not half the diagnostician he thinks himself.

HE is half conscious that what he and his associates are doing is not a real remedy, for he says: "It is inevitable that until we become physically a better race than we are, there will be many to sieve through all the safety devices." So that's the trouble, is it? From ten to fifteen millions are out of employment because they are not physically fit! Were they physically fit when about 7,000,000 or 11,000,000 more people were at work, and wherefore this sudden decline in physical fitness? Ah, then, a thought! Is the present depression due perhaps to physical unfitness? And you a diagnostician! Come, Harry, think it over.

WE are a great admirer of L. D. Beckwith's *Forum* and *No Taxes*. There are few writers in the movement who have a keener grasp of economic principles and a greater persuasiveness in teaching them. But we wish he were not so naive in his propensity to set everybody else right. Even when we agree with him, which is most all the time, we are compelled to wish that he would adopt a different tone. In his characterization of Georgist papers he speaks of LAND AND FREEDOM as "cautious and non-committal on the interest question." He knows very well, for we have so stated, that while we believe that Henry George's treatment of the interest question leaves something to be desired, we accept his teaching that wages and interest fall together, that interest is economically and morally justified, and can be defended as a form of deferred wages. We have repeatedly said so, though in common understanding much of what is regarded as interest is really rent. We do not think it necessary to say this in every issue.

PERHAPS owing to a lack of background in his knowledge of the history of the movement he makes a more serious misstatement. Speaking of Oscar Geiger he says: "Geiger, according to the *New York Times*, was regarded by Henry George as the economist of the movement, and yet Geiger was one of the Committee of Forty-Eight that founded the Farmer Labor Party." The Committee



of Forty-Eight did not found the Farmer Labor Party. As for ourselves, we went to Chicago as a body prepared to make our own platform and we took part in the proceedings of the convention by invitation, in the hope of swinging the members of the convention to our side. In another column will be found the history of what occurred from the pen of one who participated in that adventure, Frank Chodorov. It would do Mr. Beckwith a lot of good to freshen his knowledge of what actually occurred.

**B**UT as the following seems to reflect upon the great teacher who has gone it may be well to quote it as an example of how little qualified Mr. Beckwith is to speak on the subject. He says: "Even Geiger was drawn aside by the false lure of politics." Nothing could be farther from the truth. The reason that impelled us was the desire to accentuate the truth Henry George stood for. We failed by the narrowest of margins to capture the great convention of the Committee of Forty-Eight and the Farmer Labor contingent, with neither of which elements we had anything in common, and neither of which Oscar Geiger had any hand in forming. Nothing remained for us but a straight-out, uncompromising declaration of independence. This could only be done through the organization of a separate party. The motive that inspired Oscar Geiger even at this time was *education*, and it seemed to us that the party method best conserved this purpose. We still believe that this was true at the time. What Mr. Beckwith says, with a certain self-satisfaction that is a little irritating, since it reflects upon the wisest leader of our movement since Henry George, is not likely to inspire respect for the judgment of our Stockton contemporary.

**W**ITH General Johnson predicting that many features of the Recovery Act are destined to be permanent, and Prof. Tugwell hinting at the purely emergency character of these measures, we continue to be perplexed, as we have been from the beginning. Prof. Tugwell assures us in his very latest pronouncement that these were "essentially temporary methods of adjustment which could be modified or abandoned as industry attuned itself to an economy of abundance."

**B**UT accepting the Tugwell theory of abundance sometimes called overproduction, as responsible for the condition in which we find ourselves, we are again a good deal puzzled as to why and how industry should become "attuned to it." In fact Prof. Tugwell has left us in the same maze that he himself is in. He states that "the American people have given no mandate for the abandonment of our traditional business system." Wherefore then the abandonment?

**O**F course Prof. Tugwell reiterates his coarse abuse of the critics of the "New Deal," whom he accuses of moral turpitude. "Tory obscurantism," "wicked," "indecent," "obscene," are a few of the phrases which occur in a recent speech of the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, all directed against those who for any reason fail to agree with him. We say now that no such preposterous statements have ever emanated from any administration. Washington has made us a laughing stock. It is difficult to see how Roosevelt can escape the responsibility for all this. We call upon him now to repudiate these utterances and to remove Prof. Tugwell from office. If a man in a responsible government position can so insult the American people it is time for the President to openly disavow him or share the responsibility. We are tired of seeing Franklin D. Roosevelt escaping behind the screen of his brain trust.

**H**E is directly responsible for all these absurdities and abominations, the withdrawal of land from use, the destruction of crops, the killing of little pigs, the processing tax, the oppressive regulations of the NRA—all the monstrous programme of interfering with or restricting production when the people are in need of food and the products of industry. Not Tugwell but the President! Not his underlings, but Franklin D.! And when the anger of the people breaks let us assign the responsibility where it belongs—not on the Moleys, Tugwells, Johnsons, Richbergs, but on Franklin D., the inviolate!

**O**F course the political economy of Prof. Tugwell in the address mentioned is the queerest thing imaginable. He says: "Under this rule they would let the farmer starve—they would let the drought ravage the prairies; they would tell the farmer it was just too bad that he was being destroyed." Who are "they" and under whose rule is this being done? We say now that nearly everything that is being done is abhorrent and monstrous. But we do not stop with telling only this to the farmer. We say the enemies of the farmer are land monopoly and taxation, the latter including the tariff which raises the price of everything the farmer must buy. If this administration really desired to do anything for the farmer they would advance upon these and kindred evils. But do we hear anything from Franklin D. Roosevelt on the subject of taxation or land monopoly? We do not. This is "Tory obscurantism" with a vengeance!

**W**E are often assured that the Administration know the remedy. If so it is very successful in concealing it. Will these self-styled New Dealers go down in history as the Double Dealers? If for purposes of their own they elect to conceal the true remedy then we cannot judge them as honestly mistaken but as Cagliostro's deliberately committed to a programme of deception.