

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

THE sufficient answer to the architects of economic planning is that natural law has already provided for it. That is to say, in the natural forces governing production and distribution we discover the great natural law of cooperation and competition. Such economic planning as may be legitimately undertaken must take into account these natural forces. It will then be found how little is needed in the way of governmental laws of direction, control or regimentation.

EX-PRESIDENT HOOVER has said: "Government may promote cooperation, but to liberty cooperation is a concept of consent among free men, not a compulsion of regulated men." He is thinking here only of government regimentation and not the kind of regulation—if we may give it that name—imposed by our economic system. Neither Mr. Hoover nor Mr. Roosevelt propose to change that. Mr. Hoover talks of liberty but the kind of liberty he talks about is the regimentation of the wages of the worker by the unemployed man clamoring for work at the factory gates or elsewhere where the opportunities for work seem to beckon.

HOOVER'S thought is purely superficial. He views the depression as a "transitory paralysis." If this is his view it is to be feared that he has gone no further in his analysis than the administration he is criticizing. We have had a number of these "transitory paralytic" attacks—only they are of continuous recurrence. The spasms of an epileptic patient are transitory, but epilepsy is a disease. So there must be some reason for it, some cause of the disease, and Mr. Hoover has made no attempt to discover it. The Roosevelt administration has adopted no remedies for the disease, but Mr. Hoover has suggested no remedy at all. Madame Roland is reported to have said on her way to the guillotine, "Oh, Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!" So with that liberty in whose name are concealed apologies for tyranny. In the case of Mr. Hoover it is a verbal device to hide realities—perhaps not consciously.

It is pointed out that during the depression 30,000,000 children were attending school and 23,000,000 auto-

mobiles were driving around the country. We do not doubt, that at the time when "great estates were ruining Italy," as Tacitus has told us, the imperial Caesars were able to point to similar signs of "prosperity" in a dying civilization. This is one of the curious tricks the imagination plays us when a purpose is to be served, or shall we say, when privilege is seeking a defense. Under the deceptive cry of "liberty" the Republican party may yet be able to rally a successful opposition to the Roosevelt administration on a purely negative programme. But the victory will be an empty one.

IN these days when natural law in economics and government is set aside it is refreshing to scan a book which a correspondent, George White of Long Branch, N. J., has sent us. It is entitled, "The Science of Government Founded on Natural Law," and was written nearly a hundred years ago, in 1841. The author is Clinton Roosevelt, undoubtedly an ancestor of the president. We quote the opening paragraph which is noteworthy: "I toil and toil and others reap the fruits. Who will show me real good? To whatsoever point I turn my sorrowing regards, naught but misery and the prospect of still greater misery do I witness. Whichsoever party gains the victory, we still bear the burdens of society. In Great Britain also, the land from which our statesmen with an apparent consciousness of mental weakness, copy all their precedents and principles of law and government, it is self-evident, that with the increase of the means of happiness, the great body of producers have the less and less, and if like causes still effect like consequences, so must it be in time with us when our public lands shall all be occupied. Yea, even now, those who produce the most by genius and industry secure the least, while those who seek not to perform that which is truly useful to society, accumulate the most of all the fruits of toil and ingenuity." There is a little after this in the work of Clinton Roosevelt that is fundamental, but the kindly vision that inspires much of what follows, though quaintly and imperfectly expressed, makes significant reading at this time.

WE have received much interesting correspondence from E. W. Nicolaus, of New Zealand, editor of the *Commonweal* and one of the leaders of the Commonwealth Land Party of that country, with Father J. A. Higgins,