

Land and Freedom

FORMERLY THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

VOL. XXXVIII

JULY—AUGUST, 1938

No. 4

Comment and Reflection

THERE is one thing that is likely to puzzle the average observer. He must have noticed that when the face of Roosevelt is shown on the screen there is little or no applause. He knows at the same time that if the election were held tomorrow Mr. Roosevelt would repeat his victory of 1936. Why the lack of enthusiasm manifested for him in previous years.

NO one has pointed out the reason. As a matter of fact, Roosevelt is no longer popular in the degree he once was. The glamour of his personality has faded. It is true that most of those who voted for him would vote for him again. They are having things given to them, either in the shape of work or relief. They regard these as no longer favors from the administration; they now look upon them as their right.

THUS the masses are hastening to the condition when the administration and the President are matters of indifference to them. The Messianic conception is no longer with them; it is a matter of course now. To be handed down what they need through taxation and the creation of public debts has come to be regarded as institutional and is no longer personal. No thanks are due to the President who is doing what every other president will have to do as long as God indulges humanity and allows us the luxury of visitations called depressions or panics, for that is the way his creatures punish themselves. There being more people in the world than the world can supply with food and sustenance, we must camp on our neighbor's doorstep and demand that he share with us his surplusage. Such is apparently the popular diagnosis and solution.

ROOSEVELT has taught them that fallacy and the people have greedily swallowed it. There is no gratitude in their hearts for him, for it is all part of the *status quo*, a system divinely ordained as a matter of necessity. And thus it is explained why silence falls on cinema and screen when his face is shown instead of the applause that once rent the roof. The slave concept is accepted and we are indebted not to him but to all men who must now contribute to our upkeep in accordance with their ability to pay." Roosevelt has told them so.

IN a recent "fireside chat" Roosevelt has laid special stress on this ability to pay theory of taxation. Some of those closest to him have intimated that there is plenty of money lying around—plenty of money yet to be taken. Of course there is, there is a lot of wealth yet to be absorbed. But why are we afraid of Browder and the Communists? Their programme is comparatively mild when set side by side with the menacing whispers that there is plenty of money to be had and that taxes should be levied in accordance with "ability to pay." We doubt if Mr. Browder would recommend anything quite so drastic.

THIS is the popular concept that is being hastened along, growing ever more and more threatening. Sales taxes, occupancy taxes, taxes of all sorts, all levied in accordance with "ability to pay." Government, which is for the protection of property, not yet knowing what is public and what is private property, shouting aloud that everybody should pay what he is able to pay, which incidentally leaves no room for any true concept of property. This is the theory of property held by the Turpins and the Dillingers of all ages. It is now industriously taught by those highest in authority. It is seeping down to the masses. We have need to fear the communists in power, not the handful of half-baked theorists who wear the party label.

WHAT will happen to the gentleman in the White House, or his successor of the same mind when the "money" gives out? The masses will not regard the head of the government with indifference. They will turn against him with a hatred hard to conceive. They will then hold him directly responsible and will not even do him the justice to accord him a measure of sincerity. For the society he envisages cannot stand. It must fall of its own weight.

THE Bible has somewhere bewailed the fate of a people without a vision. We hear much of national ideals but little attempt is made to accurately define them. In many countries where religion is a philosophy rather than a mere ritual, as in India, it acts as a national *motif* and influences national character. Despite its limitations, it is useful in preventing a descent to complete national degeneration. In so far as it has upheld