Announcement

To Persons Interested in Agrarian, Distributist and Homestead Principles

On June 4-5, following a general correspondence in which persons in New York and Tennessee took the initiative, a private conference of Agrarians and Distributists was held in Nashville. There were present 27 persons from ten different States. The object of the meeting was to determine whether it would be a worthy public service to organize and publicize certain opinions upon which the members of the conference were agreed.

The conference adopted a tentative statement of economic and political principles. These appear on a later page.

The conference created the following Committees:

Committee for the Alliance of Agrarian and Distributist Groups. This Committee was charged with the extension of informal discussion groups, such as those which already exist in New York, Princeton, Nashville, Baton Rouge, Pittsburgh, and in some of the Jesuit educational centers; and also with soliciting closer relations with other organizations whose aims parallel those of the Agrarians and Distributists, such as, for example, the Co-operative groups.

Committee on Publications. This Committee was instructed to arrange as soon as possible for a periodical, looking eventually to a national weekly of an economic, political, and literary nature.

Committee on Convention. This Committee was to order and arrange a national convention if and when such a measure seemed desirable.

Agrarians and Distributists define themselves best in their extended writings, which have now appeared in considerable volume.

The thesis of Agrarians is that agriculture occupies a special position among the forms of livelihood in America. Farming can never succeed here as a pure money-making business, by reason of the excess of the land in terms of the market to be supplied; the excess amounts to an overcapitalization. But it is inevitable and right that vastly more Americans should take to the land than are needed there to supply society with the agricultural products. They go there in order to run a business which is free, and subject only to their own management. In order to sustain themselves in it they must define this business in terms of subsistence farming as well as money-farming. This is the old way of farming, which has to be recovered.

The Distributists are concerned with the economic freedom of all Americans, whether in farming or in the pure money-making businesses. They believe strictly in private property, meaning the kind of property over which the owner can really exercise independent management. This sort of property has been rapidly disappearing in America, and they would restore it so far as possible. Therefore they would support the small in-

dependent business unit against the giant corporation, within which ownership may be widely distributed without being accompanied by any power of control.

A partial bibliography may be suggested.

"I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition," by twelve Southerners. Harper's, 1930.

"Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence," by twenty-one authors. Houghton Mifflin, 1936.

"The Servile State," by Hilaire Belloc. Constable (London).

"The Outline of Sanity," by G. K. Chesterton. Methuen (London). "This Ugly Civilization," by Ralph Borsodi. Simon and Shuster,

1929.
"The Land of the Free," by Herbert Agar. Houghton Mifflin, 1935.
"Agrarianism," by Troy J. Cauley. University of North Carolina

Press, 1935.

Many articles have appeared from the authors of these works, and from others, during the last five years. They are to be found in the American Review, the Southern Review, the Virginia Quarterly Review, and other magazines.

It may now be announced that a monthly publication has been arranged, which will probably issue its first number in January, 1937. The Committee on Publications will have general supervision, but the

The Committee on Publications will have general supervision, but the Editorial Committee will be in immediate charge. The subscription price will be \$1.00 per year. The personnel of the two Committees is as follows:

Committee on Publications

Allen Tate
Robert Penn Warren
Cleanth Brooks
Manson Radford
Richmond Croom Beatty
Edd Winfield Parks
Andrew Lytle

Editorial Committee

Manson Radford, Managing Editor
Katherine Gauss Jackson, Sec.-Treas.
17 East 97th St., New York, N. Y.
Herbert Agar
Ralph Borsodi
Alfred S. Dashiell
Chard Powers Smith
Michael Williams

In sending out this announcement the Committee on Alliance wishes to interest both persons and groups in registering for what will be at most a very loose form of organization.

For the present the Committee will enroll as a member of the national organization any person who sends in his name for that purpose. It is understood that membership involves no commitment other than the expression of sympathy with the principles of the organization.

It is hoped that every person enrolling from a fresh territory will undertake to organize a local discussion group. The Committee will keep the record both of the local groups and of the individual members. It is also hoped that those registering for membership will support the organization by subscribing to the monthly, but this is not a condition of registration.

Statement of Agrarian and Distributist Principles Adopted on June 5, 1936

Liberty today is endangered. But liberty cannot be saved simply and alone by diminishing injustice, or by raising the standard of living. A free democratic society presupposes a moral and spiritual affirmation supported by appropriate social and economic institutions.

Philosophically, we would assert that the end of man is the complete development of his own individual and social nature, and that institutions political, economic, social, educational, and religious—are but means to this end. These institutions are good in the degree that they assist him in his free development, and evil in the degree that they hinder him.

In a tyranny—fascist, communist, or plutocratic—power is in the hands of a few men. In a just society power is distributed among the citizens. They must be free in the sense that they cannot easily be intimidated or exploited. They must also be conscious of the conditions essential for the preservation of their freedom and of the fact that as moral agents they are free to choose the basic institutions of their society.

The forms of human freedom depend in general on the freedom of men as economic agents. We hold that the condition for attaining this specific freedom is the wide distribution of responsible private ownership of land and other productive property. But we remark that this does not imply a mathematical equalitarianism.

We oppose the denial of economic freedom under such forms as the following:

- a. Finance capitalism, with its tendency to monopoly, the regimentation and restriction of the liberty of workers and consumers in the interests of the few managers and owners, and its tendency to the expropriation of the bulk of the population and the concentration of legal ownership in a small group and of effective ownership in a still smaller group.
- b. Communism, with its violent methods and the regimentation and expropriation of the entire population and its aim of a collective society.
- c. Fascism, with its violent methods and the regimentation of the entire population in the interests of a tyrannous, nationalistic state.

We believe the economic stability and cultural advance of the United States require decentralization of population as well as a decentralization of effective ownership in industry, agriculture and trade. We also believe that the sacrifice of agriculture for the development of manufactures must be ended and recognition given to the primacy of agriculture in establishing a secure and desirable culture.

We want an America with the benefits and advantages produced by scientific invention. We feel that this is not inconsistent with a return to the essentials of the American tradition. But we do not believe that the requirements of an efficient technology necessitate the inflated manufacturing and operating units at present prevailing. In fact, taking manufacturing and distributing costs together, we believe that the smaller local production unit is the more efficient.

We believe that in the long run our traditional American civil rights cannot be maintained under large-scale monopoly capitalism nor under the systems of state communism or fascism; we affirm our belief that these civil rights are so important that they must be preserved, and assert that

the social order for which we are working is the only one in which such

rights can be expected to endure.

Commercialization and industrialization of agriculture must be discouraged. Families desiring to work land and live upon it should be helped to own tracts sufficient to sustain them in security and comfort (or in some cases to supplement a cash income earned by other means), and those that desire should be instructed in home and farm economy.

We recognize certain classes of property, such as public utilities among others, in which monopolies may be either efficient or unavoidable, and in which the operation of the state in control or ownership will be necessary. In those classes of property, and probably to some extent in the general manufacturing process, there will exist a substantial group of employees of big industrial concerns. We affirm that these employees must be protected against the hazards of industry, but we insist that the greater the need for such protection the deeper the illness of our society. We call attention to the fact that these workers, both individually and as a group acting through their unions, will have a genuine bargaining power in a society in which many of them have an opportunity to become owners.

The above comments express the traditional culture of the United States, which culture has been recently and temporarily eclipsed by the pseudo-culture of finance capitalism. The psychological foundation is already firm throughout a majority of the population, and the necessary economic changes can therefore be made gradually under the existing democratic system, without the interposition of any dictatorship or violence. The methods to be pursued are: (a) educational, (b) economic, (c) political; these methods being all desirable and not mutually exclusive.

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