

# Civic Agencies of Freedom

By Helen Bernstein

Men of good will all over the world have been shocked by the harsh impact of totalitarianism, and catastrophic consequences to democratic society. Many renowned figures in the international world have been taking stock of anti-social aims of various divisions of mankind. Hundreds of thousands have banded together into aggressive units to further the interests, present and post-war, of the United Nations. These groups have set up research departments, and the result of these findings has created a re-articulation of the elementary precepts of democracy. An attempt is also made to apply these precepts to the concrete exigencies of the day. It has also resulted in the organizational union of militant democrats, who, regardless of their differences of viewpoint on many subjects, have joined forces to meet the challenge from the depths.

These new organizations, as well as the older groups which continue to fight their good fight against social and economic evils, are functioning as the conscience of present-day America. *Their programs and activities should be familiar to all Georgeists.*

The Council for Democracy, 11 W. 42nd Street, New York, is devoted broadly to the aims of a swift military victory, preservation of democracy internally; its extension to international relations; and an intelligent solution of post-war economic problems. The Council commands particular respect for the efficiency and reasonableness with which it approaches practical problems. The Council combats the propaganda of the Axis, and its native champions, by intelligent exploitation of press and radio resources, and its pamphlets on this subject are vigorous, well-written and authoritative.

It has compiled considerable information dealing with domestic problems such as man-power, labor-management relations, the integration of Negroes into industry, and alien reclassification. These facts and figures have been gathered at meetings with representatives of labor, industry and government, and have been used to influence national policies and legislation with some success. At the same time, the Council has attempted to

encourage such meetings as a basis for frank discussion between differing groups in the interest of greater mutual understanding and compromise.

As regards post-war problems, the Council is in the process of making careful inquiry into means by which the continuation of private enterprise can be assured, while also providing for the absorption of war workers and soldiers into peaceful economic activity. The results of such research, now conducted by a committee of men prominent in business and labor groups, should arouse national interest.

Freedom House, 32 East 51st Street, New York, seeks to awaken America to a sense of responsibility as well as a sense of indignation, by constantly exposing in press and radio the relentless barrage of propaganda with which the Axis implements its military machine. Typical of the technique of Freedom House is the clever radio program, "Our Secret Weapon," conducted by Rex Stout, which is devoted to the dissection of official Axis statements. This organization might be regarded as fairly representative of liberal-intellectual American opinion.

Friends of Democracy, 103 Park Avenue, New York, has done yeoman's work in the campaign against domestic and anti-democratic propaganda since the early thirties. It has helped to turn the prison key on many notorious domestic Fascists and unregistered Axis agents, and has pointed the finger at others still at liberty. Its lively publicity has, moreover, caused deserved embarrassment and considerable retrenchment by some respectable public figures, who have quietly attempted for many years to corrupt American public opinion, and have continued heretofore unmolested. This organization's work is somewhat colored by ideological opinion to the left.

The Cooperative League of the United States, 167 West 12th Street, New York, sponsors a vast program of education by pamphlets, books, motion pictures and radio on the techniques of organizing cooperative enterprises. Its member retailers and wholesalers have shown greatest growth in small communities in the West, because Scan-

dinavian emigres have brought resources of leadership to our farming areas. Geared for a vast program of post-war rehabilitation in countries over-run by our enemies, the Cooperative League has won wide recognition for its social service along "The Middle Way."

The Citizens' Housing Council, 470 4th Avenue, New York, is a non-partisan organization active for over five years in the cause of improved housing standards for New York City through city planning. Through its wide research in the fields of taxation, zoning, city planning, and land tenure, it has aroused constructive social legislation. The Council has frequently been in a position to aid public and private organizations dealing with housing and city planning. At the present time, the Council is studying the special problems affecting New York City during wartime, such as civilian protection, rent-control, wartime housing and community facilities for meeting the rise in juvenile delinquency. At the same time, it is anticipating post-war problems and forming policies with a view to post-war rehousing and city planning. The Citizens' Housing Council was one of the joint sponsors of the civic meeting held in February, when Hon. Walter Nash, Minister from New Zealand, spoke on land value taxation.

The Federal Council of Churches, 297 4th Avenue, New York, summarizes its social position in the following paragraph:

"It is the church's business to keep alive in the hearts of men a sense of the reality of God, to point out the moral and religious principles which must control all of human life, both individual and social, and to insist that every institution, every economic and political system, and every human relationship be tested, measured and judged by the standards of Christ."

The Council's social action department participates both locally through its representative churches, and nationally, with groups engaged as follows: consumer cooperation, slum clearance, interracial groups, labor unions.