Europe. The pleasure of finding Mr. Cole in agreement with the *Freeman* is unexpected and all the more genuine for that. And he can even explain why it took him so long to spell out the prescription: his country, Mr. Cole says, "is facing a dilemma which every politician is bound to find disagreeable because no way out is possible without telling the electorate what it does not want to know."

As the new year opens we deem it important for our readers to note that 28 states have already ratified the proposal to limit the individual's income tax to 25 per cent of his income. Only four more state legislature majority votes are needed to bring the number to the required two-thirds which would change the present income tax law. Since some of the state legislatures are voting on the ratification proposition this month, the income tax law *could* be altered almost before the Eisenhower Administration comes into power. That would really mean a new era in government, in taxation, in Federal spending—and in the opportunities for individual investment in productive enterprise. We have our fingers crossed, but we are hoping.

According to a recent British survey, high inheritance taxes are killing off small, family-owned businesses but have little effect on big corporations whose shares are owned by the general public. In other words, socialism and Statism are isms that help the big grow bigger. Hilaire Belloc told us this years ago when he predicted that trends in Britain, far from working to the advantage of the small or middle condition of man, were pushing things toward the evil consummation of the Servile State. Now that the Certified Public Accountants of 1953 have finally caught up with Mr. Belloc, you might think there would be a movement in the Western world toward lowering inheritance taxes. But there is no such movement, the reason being that it is always safe to soak the dead, even when the living pay for it twice over by the loss of small businesses and the concomitant growth of big monopolies.

General Ridgway is to be commended for his public protest against the NATO Foreign Ministers' decision to cut Europe's defense appropriations in two. And the time may soon come for the forthright U. S. General to resign from his exalted job in Europe. For one of the two parties seems caught in a fatal misjudgment—either Ridgway or the Foreign Ministers. If, as the General maintains, these new cutbacks violate NATO's minimum defense precautions, then the Ministers (egged on, we are sorry to note, by Churchill) are simply playing Russian roulette. If, however, they are right in contending that the Soviet threat is no longer real enough to justify a cumbersome European economy of preparedness, then America has surely no business to choke Europe (and herself) with superfluous military aid. In either case, the incoming Administration and Congress had better lose no time in reviewing the NATO impasse. If the Soviet menace is indeed no longer relevant, this country ought to be told, too. If Churchill and his Continental colleagues are wrong, cynically wrong, *they* ought to be told—and in unmistakable terms.

There is plenty of unmined coal in Britain and in Continental Europe. Moreover, the British and the Dutch between them own more than 45 per cent of the oil-producing capacity of the world outside of the Continental United States. Yet Britain and Continental Europe keep paying out good hard-earned (or easy-borrowed) dollars for American fuel. It makes no sense, as any housekeeper of super-moronic intelligence should be able to tell the exalted statesmen of the European world. One of the first things the Eisenhower Administration must do is to force the Europeans to use a little common sense about the utilization of their own fuel resources in order to make themselves independent of American taxpayers' dollar aid.

The "World Peace Congress" in Vienna (see the editorial "The Shooting Peace" in this issue) has not perceptibly enhanced the progress of mankind, but it has noticeably improved the balance sheets of several capitalist transport companies. British air lines alone booked more than $20,000 worth of passages from South America—and of course only a tiny fraction of the 1500 "delegates" came from there. Travel and living expenses of the entire cast have been conservatively estimated at a million dollars; the total expenditure of the shindig near two million. The tunes played left no doubt who was so generously paying the piper.

The munificent impresarios also made sure that no guest jarred the event by quoting what Comrade Wilhelm Pieck, the President of the East German satellite republic, had said only a short while ago: "There are just wars which must be supported by the proletariat." He specified the Red attack on Korea as "a just war of liberation." Naturally, the Dean of Canterbury and Pastor Niemoeller were much too appreciative of all the hospitality to take this as the text for their sermons in Vienna.

Deplorably rare are the opportunities to spread good news about official France—and when finally such an opportunity arrives, our metropolitan press falls down on the job. The American public, for instance, is not aware that General Juin, Marshal of France and prospective Commander-in-Chief of the European Army, has expressed his belief in "a strong Germany next to a strong France." Speaking to the German people through the *Rheinische Merkur*, the Marshal argued: "A strong Germany next to a weak France is an unacceptable proposition. A weak Germany next to a strong France would be an invitation to the Russians to advance to the Rhine and the Scheldt. If America helps us to become strong, we can welcome the strengthening of Germany." This makes eminently good sense and, coming from the first soldier of France, should encourage all American friends of a revitalized Europe. Yet its anti-German emotionalism prevented New York's passionately pro-European press from comprehending the cheerful news.

The Bishops of French Equatorial Africa have reported to the Paris government a wrinkle of the Welfare State which had heretofore escaped critical appreciation. French social security allowances are being extended to African government workers who are polygamists—and, say the Bishops, some are able to draw allowances for as many as thirty children. This, the Bishops submit, may be too much both for public finances and for public morality. For a moment we thought we had better suppress this bit of intelligence lest we put some ideas in New Deal heads, but we recalled our professional ethics in time.

The New York *Times*, through its Washington correspondent James Reston, fell for the latest Moscow high level peace conference hoax—and then caught itself by expressing editorial skepticism about the uses of a talk with Stalin. We live and learn.

Man, the Unpredictable

The economic prophets are still predicting a recession along toward the end of 1953 or early in 1954 if a Korean truce brings a halt to outsize spending for the military. And this time (contrary to their behavior in 1945) the business economists are joining in with government and academic theoreticians in the rush to welter in gloom.

Far be it from us to quarrel with such an impressive prophetic consensus. But with all humility we wish to call to our readers' attention some figures that might lead to a counter prediction. We refer to the statistics bearing on the contemporary distribution of income in the United States. The truth is that individual American incomes are not only larger than they were a generation ago; they are also much more evenly distributed over the broad ranges of the population. Back in 1929 virtually 80 per cent of American families received incomes giving them 1951 purchasing values of $4000 or less a year. Twenty per cent of the families ranged from the $4-5000 category (in 1951 money values) up to the millionaire brackets. Today 35 per cent of the families are in the $4-5000-and-up brackets. What this means is that effective demand for many things that used to be considered luxuries is apt to be just as steady as the old-time demand for bread and shirts. And a population that is continuously ready to put most of its income into a wide variety of goods and services is hardly one to cause a sudden deep depression.

There is, of course, the theory that a cessation or a cut-back in military spending must inevitably produce a capital goods depression. But after a military spree there is a hunger for things requiring a different type of capital goods investment than that called forth by the production of ships and guns and big bombers. How do our more gloomy economists know what their fellow citizens will want when they are allowed to keep and spend the money they are now delivering to Uncle Sam for military purposes?

The fact of the matter would seem to be that no man knoweth his own creative desires even three weeks hence, let alone one year hence. And where no individual is in a position to know the full nature of his own future choices, the economic prognosticators must work at least partly in the dark. Economics is not a trustworthy predictive science because it deals with a beast that is unique in nature in being a whimful self-starter. Indeed, the human animal is so whimful that his future choices can not even be charted in the form of reasonably accurate statistical aggregates. For example, could any economist in 1900 have predicted the rush to buy motor cars during the next half-century? Can any economist in 1953 predict the future of the electronics industry? We ask this not as Pollyanna might ask it, but in the spirit of editors who glory in the fact that man is not bound to any wheel, whether economic, political or whatever. The point about man is that he is free. Even free to confound the prophets.

The Shooting Peace

There have been complaints lately that the term "cold war" is no longer adequate to describe the eerie international situation: the noun is too strong but the adjective patently too feeble.

Always glad to accommodate purists, we propose to rename the mess "shooting peace"—a term that seems to offer a twofold advantage. One, it accounts for the weekly casualty lists. Two, it identifies the nature of the insolent Communist propaganda which has reached a high point of frenzy with the recent World Peace Congress in Vienna.

That this concerted promotion of "shooting peace" is based on a contempt for human intelligence which would have appalled a Phineas T. Barnum has, unfortunately, but little effect on its chances. Barnum grossly underrated the pace at which suckers are born; and above all, he did not pay enough attention to the congenital stupidity of the intelligentsia which the promoters of the "shooting peace" (considerably more realistic conmen than those tyros who used to sell the Brooklyn Bridge to mere illiterates) recruit ever more successfully.

We refuse to participate in the short-sighted smugness of the reputable international press which made the World Peace Congress in Vienna