

# LAND & LIBERTY

JANUARY & FEBRUARY, 1977



## The Public Domain

one which is abhorrent to those who value individual liberty.

Around the political centre are those who feel that taxation and public expenditure are already too high—that the State is appropriating too much of the resources of the country at the expense of both economic performance and individual liberties. Such people have a general idea that the function and powers of the State should be diminished, but where, how and by

how much, they rarely specify.

On the right, there are many of the opinion that the activities of the State should be restricted to the basic and essential functions of government so as to provide for a substantial reduction in taxation and public expenditure, with a consequent restoration of individual liberties and economic incentives.

But this latter group have placed themselves in a dilemma,

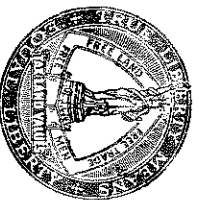
**I**N the heat and acrimony of the row concerning public expenditure and taxation, no one has yet given a concrete answer to the question of how large the public sector should be.

On the left of the political spectrum there are those who advocate constantly increasing public expenditure *and* taxation. They have a definite goal—that *all* economic resources should be concentrated in the public sector. It is

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## Contents

The Public Domain	1	Editorial
Marx on Land as the Key to Revolution	4	Fred Harrison
A Lesson in Urban Destruction	7	Land Marks
More Food, More Hunger	8	Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins
The Air is Dark . . . .	10	Foy Douglas
The Arrogance of Man	11	A. J. Carter
Shifting Views on the Community Land Act	12	
The World in Conference	13	Robert Clancy
Over My Dead Body!	14	Robert Miller
Medicine for Britain	15	
Letters to the Editor	16	

for they must acknowledge that even if government activity were confined to its most basic functions (whatever they might be), the remaining taxation would still have some effect upon incentives and freedom.

Those who have studied the principles enunciated by Henry George enter this discussion with distinct advantages. The first of these is that they are acquainted with a method of raising revenue which does not tax man's productive effort, namely the taxation of the economic rent of land. Economic rent, the return to the passive factor of production, results not from individual actions but from land's superior natural fertility or its situation relative to areas of community activity. It can therefore justly be taken as public revenue.

Secondly, it is the *only* form of revenue that can rightly be regarded as public, so that it provides in justice a natural limit to the size of the public sector.

How can the above principle be related to present conditions where the wood cannot be seen for the trees? One can only reiterate that first, inflation which obscures the whole economic picture, must be ended. With the existing level of taxation and the pervasive stagnation of the economy, the public budget must be brought into balance by means of reductions in government spending. This will ultimately give us a stable currency—no more, no less.

Having restored the *status quo* and rejected the Keynesian "remedy" for economic sickness, our guiding principle must be utilised in the reformulation of public finance policy. We have tried the alternatives. There is just no other way to go.

## ILL OMENS FOR LAND ACT

RATEPAYERS' confidence in local authorities' ability to make profits from land deals under the Community Land Act will not be heightened by a recent report in the *Guardian*. According to the report, the Greater London Council purchased a 5.4-acre site in Hackney for £1,032,000 in 1974. When the development scheme for the site was abandoned, it was sold in two lots at a loss of £325,000.

This means that ratepayers and

taxpayers will now have to pay £33,000 a year interest forever on a loan which brought neither benefit nor capital asset.

\* \* \*

**LANDOWNERS** may not all be rich, and some developers do come a cropper from time to time, but it is hard to imagine anyone making a loss out of the steady business of owning agricultural land. Anyone but a government department, that is, for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, as reported by the Comptroller and Auditor General, managed to make a loss of more than £1½ million last year on the ownership of 400,000 acres of let land.

Management costs alone totalled £990,000, while rents received amounted to only £383,000—less than £1 per acre.

Leaving aside the very low rents, one can hardly imagine a private landowner incurring management costs of almost £1 million for an estate even of 400,000 acres. Some hopes for the financial success of the Community Land Act!

## PERFORMANCE AND PROMISES OF THE EEC

**SOME** idea of the tangled web of bureaucracy that follows from policies which go against economic laws is given by the EEC's proposals to deal with the growing butter and milk mountains generated by the Common Agricultural Policy.

The details given below are from a recent issue of *European Community* which is published on behalf of the Commission of the European Communities.

◆ "The cost to Community taxpayers of dealing with these surpluses is rising. For 1976 the dairy sector is expected to cost 1,900 million units of account, or more than 35 per cent of the total agricultural budget.

◆ "Quite apart from the high level of support prices which provide producers with a guaranteed outlet the position is worsened by the payment of national investment aids, increase in herd size, shrinking of outlets because of changing consumer attitudes and a cutback in the use of skimmed

milk powder for animal feed on farms. Demand is also affected by duty free or low duty imports of oils and fats and vegetable proteins which are in direct competition with dairy products.

◆ "The Commission proposed that farmers who agree not to market milk should be compensated according to their level of production.

◆ "The Commission proposed imposition of a levy on milk producers which would cut producer returns and establish a closer link between the production and marketing of milk. The rate of levy which the milk producer would have to pay would take account of the price of vegetable protein prevailing at the time. If this imported feeding-stuff were cheap, the levy could be fixed at a higher level than if the feedingstuff were dear. This would act as a deterrent on milk producers against using more high protein feeding-stuffs when prices of such products as soya bean were depressed.

◆ "Money raised from the levy would be used to expand markets both inside and outside the Community, for instance by increasing the subsidy for skimmed milk used for animal feed, promoting sales, market research and establishing long-term export contracts. The milk products consultative committee would be consulted on how the money was to be spent.

◆ "The Commission proposed a balancing levy on the processors of home-grown vegetable oils. The proceeds would be used to help developing countries, which provide a large proportion of the vegetable oils concerned.

◆ "The Commission proposes various measures to help increase consumption of milk products. These include existing measures such as subsidised sales to some categories of consumer and to the food industry and a further increase in subsidies on skimmed milk used for animal feed, especially for pork production. The Commission also invited the Council of Ministers to take a quick decision providing for exclusive use of milk products in certain foodstuffs—including ice cream."

This complicated and very costly process—artificially high prices,

storing of surpluses, payments not to produce, levies upon those who do produce, the use of the proceeds to artificially expand markets, penalising competing products, not to mention blatant destruction of surplus production, etc.—is quite unnecessary. None of it need ever have arisen had supply and demand been allowed to equate naturally through the price mechanism—to the enormous benefit of taxpayers and consumers alike. But then, as the Anti Dear Food Campaign argues, the C.A.P. is a deliberate dear food policy for the benefit of European landowners.

\* \* \*

**SAYS** *The Daily Telegraph*, December 1, "We entered Europe—remember?—with so much to contribute. Leadership, stable democratic institutions, unrivalled experience, even wealth: these were among the gifts we proudly promised. And now see what we actually supply—not leadership, except of the awkward squad, not stability but shameless threats of riot, revolution, collapse, totalitarianism and betrayal should our insatiable demands for money not be promptly met. The crafty foreigners—remember?—were going to fleece us. See with what surly truculence we now fleece them! Mr. Callaghan in Brussels said that the British people had already made great sacrifices: there was a limit. Indeed they have—grievous sacrifices of honour, dignity and pride."

True enough, but it is not only what we promised to contribute to the EEC that is important, it is what we were promised we were to receive—remember?

For those who knew the score and warned against entry to the EEC, we have got all we asked for and more, most notably, dear food.

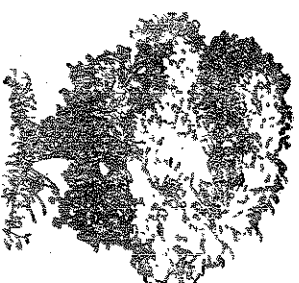
## SUBSCRIPTIONS TO LAND & LIBERTY

Due to increasing costs, it has been necessary to raise the sterling annual subscription to £3 post paid, commencing January 1, 1977. The USA and Canada subscriptions remain at \$5.

# Marx on Land as the Key to Revolution

FRED HARRISON

"The revolutionaries who have inherited Marx's more popular slogans are still blinkered in the belief that an attack on capital, rather than land, is the major priority."



HALF the world lives on an ideological diet of the Marxism popularised by malcontents who preach revolution. The central theme of their message is that industrial workers must overthrow their capitalist oppressors and turn to dialectical materialism, Master Marx's wisdom which promised an historical evolution into a higher social organisation: communism.

To be fair to the revolutionaries, the economic systems under which they—we—labour, *are* founded on injustice and their interpretation of Marx, based on his early, well-known writings, is not an unfaithful rendition of their guru's thoughts. The fact is, however, that after mature reflection on contemporary English industrial society, Marx ended up by rethinking the key elements in his model for change. For an insight into his perceptions we have to turn to his correspondence, which when fully documented will enable us to re-evaluate Marx in a dramatically different light.

Essentially, Marx came to appreciate the following points:

(1) Private property in land, not capital, was the foundation stone on which evil aspects of nineteenth century society rested;

(2) Overthrow of the landed aristocracy, not the capitalists, was the essential precondition of the liberation of the masses;

(3) The trigger for this change had to be pulled in Ireland, a peasant agrarian society, and not among the proletarian masses of the English factories;

(4) The solidarity of the workers, and the formation of their unique class-consciousness, was being inhibited not so much by capital as by the system of land ownership.

If all this is true, the whole edifice of the popular Marx collapses in favour of new insights and syntheses of the facts of history.

By the late 1860s Marx began to reflect on the importance of the land question in his letters to friends and fellow conspirators. "I have . . . been convinced from the first that the social revolution must begin *seriously* from the bottom, that is, from land ownership," he wrote in 1868. Certainly, in the communist manifesto, Marx had listed the nationalisation of land as a priority. But the almost total weight of his important writings was used to justify the belief that communism would come from the proletariat rising up against the capitalists who increasingly exploited them. For Marx, the burden of his-

torical change was from the beginning—and for a long time—on town, not country; on proletarian, not peasant (he viewed the latter with extreme distaste and condescension); on factory, not farm. His conversion to the importance of change in land ownership as a *causally important* factor was a later development.

In 1869 Marx wrote in a letter sent from London (all emphases are Marx's own): "*The prime condition of emancipation here—the overthrow of the English landed aristocracy—remains impossible because its position here cannot be stormed so long as it maintains its strongly entrenched outposts in Ireland.*"

In 1870 he revealed: "After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the workers' movement all over the world) *cannot* be delivered in England but *only in Ireland.*"

Why was Ireland so important to the workers of the world? "Ireland is the bulwark of the *English landed aristocracy.* The exploitation of that country is not only one of the main sources of this aristocracy's material welfare; it is its greatest *moral* strength. It, in fact, represents the *Domination of England over Ireland.* Ireland is therefore the great means by which the English aristocracy maintains its *domination in England itself.*"

But Ireland provided the ruling classes in England with more than moral strength, according to Marx. Working class action in England—leading the world revolution towards the final goal: dictatorship of the proletariat—was "crippled" by strife with Irish immigrant labourers. And so, firmly, he concluded: "The English working class will *never accomplish anything* until it has got rid of Ireland." Marx was now (1869) convinced that his previous view, that specifically industrial conditions in a capitalist society would lead to the ascendancy of the English workers and *thus* result in the political emancipation of Ireland, was incorrect. "Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite."

It was vital to get rid of the Irish connection for a variety of reasons, thought Marx. The bourgeoisie was aligning itself with the aristocracy in the common exploitation of Irish land—which was a source of cheap food and wool and, through eviction of indigenous farmers, provided new and "secure" outlets for capital investment. Then there was the flow of rental incomes to absentee landowners, which gave

them financial strength while simultaneously sapping the strength and freedom of the Irish peasants. The latter, then, were compelled to migrate to English urban centres, seeking work and, in flooding the labour markets, depressing wages and the material and moral strength of English workers. Finally, the presence of Irish labourers in English manufacturing centres split the workers into two hostile camps when, in Marx's view, they ought to have been united against the common enemy, the employer.

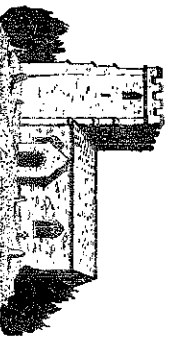
And so Marx had no doubt what had to be done, if the forces of history were to be nudged along with a little help from his friends.

"England, being the metropolis of capital, the power which has hitherto ruled the world market, is for the present [1870] the most important country for the workers' revolution, and moreover the *only* country in which the material conditions for this revolution have developed up to a certain degree of maturity. Therefore to hasten the social revolution in England is the most important object of the International Workingmen's Association. The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent."

The urbanized proletariat, then, was apparently inhibited from acting out what was preordained by Marx's philosophy *until* the Irish peasants had taken up their sickles in anger! Hitherto, his hopes for revolution had been loaded on to the shoulders of the English proletariat. But now: "... the national emancipation of Ireland is... the first condition of their own social emancipation."

Why did he think the Irish peasants could do what the English proletariat could not achieve on their own—emancipation of the world's workers? And what was to be the chain of events leading to the final happy outcome?

The landed aristocracy, said Marx, was using religion to split the Irish tenant farmers into two camps: Catholics and Protestants. Divided, they were ruled. If the "Irish Church"—Protestantism—were undermined, this would result in the simultaneous loss of the economic base of the church: its lands. Unshackling the people from religious constraints, would unite them in a common cause. "You see," he told one friend, the *English Established Church of Ireland*—or what they call here the *Irish Church*—is the religious bulwark of *English landlordism* in Ireland, and at the same time the outpost of the Established Church in England itself. (I am speaking here of the Established Church as a *landowner*.) The over-



throw of the Established Church in Ireland will mean its downfall in England and the two will be followed by the doom of landlordism—first in Ireland and then

in England."

Marx thought that the wedge of worker emancipation could be more easily driven in on Irish soil. As an independent state, its own legislator and ruler, Ireland could effect the "abolition of the landed aristocracy (to a large extent the *same persons* as the English landlords)," an achievement more easily realised there "because in Ireland it is not merely a simple economic question but at the same time a *national* question, since the landlords there are not, like those in England, the traditional dignitaries and representatives of the nation, but its mortally hated oppressors."

"If," wrote Marx, "the English army and police were to withdraw from Ireland tomorrow, you would at once have an agrarian revolution there. But the overthrow of the English aristocracy in Ireland involves as a necessary consequence its overthrow in England. And this would fulfil the preliminary condition for the proletarian revolution in England. The destruction of the English landed aristocracy in Ireland is an infinitely easier operation than in England itself, because in Ireland the *land question* has hitherto been the *exclusive form* of the social question, because it is a question of existence, of *life and death*, for the immense majority of the Irish people, and because it is at the same time inseparable from the *national* question."

And so Marx the revolutionary, the man who despite his determinism clearly thought it necessary to intervene in the forces of history, came to the inevitable conclusion: the need for workers to actively solve the Irish question. "Hence it is the task of the International everywhere to put the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland. And it is the special task of the Central Council in London to awaken a consciousness in the English workers that *for them the national emancipation of Ireland* is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment but the *first condition of their own social emancipation*...."

Land rights, then, and not capital, were the fundamental element to which Marx drew the attention of his friends. We know from the manuscripts which were not published in his lifetime that he believed a transformation of rights to land would alter the relationship between labour and capital. In one essay, he wrote:

"The nationalisation of land will work a complete change in the relations between labour and capital...."<sup>(1)</sup>

This is consistent with his observations on the role of landed property in a capitalist society which he reported in the posthumously published Vol. III of *Das Kapital*.

Marx saw no complete identity of interests between the landed aristocracy and industrialists; he was aware that the latter had to fight to repeal the Corn Laws and institute the Reform Bill 1831. The fact

that many capital-owning employers used the system which they found—a labour pool rendered vulnerable by the system of private property in land—does not make the capitalist system *per se* evil. As Marx noted: "The *chevaliers d'industrie*, however, only succeeded in supplanting the *chevaliers* of the sword [the feudal lords] by making use of events of which they themselves were wholly innocent."<sup>(2)</sup>

The monopoly-power of capital was derivative—arising from the unique land tenure system in existence—and not intrinsic (witness the problems which the owners of capital faced in hiring labour in colonies where there was land for all, a fact which did not escape Marx's attention).

The evidence shows that Marx clearly perceived that the monopoly power and defects of nineteenth century society originated in the private ownership of land. Land, not capital, was the vital link in the chain of oppression.

Two final points. We must note that Marx was prescient about the Irish question. It *would* take the total freedom of Ireland from British domination to create the conditions for uniting the Protestant and Catholic working populations. The war for freedom which eventually broke out had partial success: the British influence, however, lingered on through Protestant landowning interests in Ulster. Today, Catholics plant bombs in Protestant homes; and Protestants fire bullets into the backs of Catholic women and children.

Secondly, we have to recognise that Marx's later reflections on land tenure did not alter his preferences for a centrally controlled collectivist state dominated by the proletariat. But despite his contempt for bourgeois land taxation reformists, who proposed a fiscal solution rather than violence and physical appropriation of land, it was the latter—not Marx's revolutionary proletariat—who finally broke the power of the landed aristocracy. A Liberal government, in 1910, took on the landlords who opposed the institution of a land tax—and won the constitutional battle. Unfortunately, the economic prospects for Britain were not much improved because the "land tax" in fact bore no relation to the one proposed by Henry George which inspired the radical wing of the Liberal movement. Ironically, it was a Socialist Chancellor who had a further try in 1931; his was a much better formulation, but again events intervened.

Today, while the landed aristocracy may not be our direct rulers, they—and the many who have since acquired ownership of land—still wield the power uniquely associated with monopoly control of land. But the revolutionaries who have inherited Marx's more popular slogans are still blinkered in the belief that an attack on capital, rather than land, is the major priority.<sup>(3)</sup>

- (1) The Nationalisation of the Land, in: *Marx and Engels, Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973, p.200.
- (2) *Capital*, Vol. 1, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974, p. 669.
- (3) Extracts from Marx's letters taken from correspondence in Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, 1971, and *On Colonialism*, 1974.

## From Our Catalogue

Orders for books and booklets will be acknowledged with a proforma invoice and despatched upon receipt of remittance.

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# A LESSON IN URBAN DESTRUCTION

*Apprentice Mischief Maker:* Tell me, master, how to destroy cities.

*Veteran Fiend:* I've been watching your sabotage and you're on the wrong track. Disasters unite people, helping them build strong communities. You need a policy of steady decay that people hardly recognize.

*Apprentice:* That sounds terribly difficult.

*Veteran:* It's so simple. Tactic Number One is to *treat people who build up the city as villains.*

*A:* What do you say to them?

*V:* It's a matter of deeds, not words. Hit them where it hurts—in the pocketbooks. The more they improve the city, the more you penalize them. Then you use Tactic Number Two: *reward those who run down the city.*

*A:* I'm afraid I don't understand.

*V:* It's easier to show you than to explain. Come. While we're walking, let me stress Tactic Number Three: *confuse people by spreading falsehoods about the urban system.*

*A:* Such as?

*V:* You've heard my saying: "Urban problems are too complex to understand."

*A:* That makes people think it's futile to seek causes or pursue solutions, right?

*V:* Right. Here's another: "Why try to help poor people—they're all lazy and just want to live off welfare."

*A:* I hear that a lot, but don't all the hard-working poor know better?

*V:* Sure, but we just encourage them to retaliate with other falsehoods: "Business is the enemy." "Firms should provide goods and services without expecting nasty profits."

*A:* Wonderful! Any more?

*V:* Dozens, but here's my favourite: "City dwellers are all natural enemies." It turns rich against poor, blacks against whites, business against labour, central city residents against suburban commuters, youth against age, white collar against blue collar. Without trust or unifying community interests, there's no basis for cooperation.

*A:* I'll have fun with that.

*V:* You will indeed. But here's an interesting neighbourhood for applying my tactics. See what's across the street?

*A:* That big new office building? That's bad, eh?

*V:* Absolutely. Somebody poured a lot of money into it. Think of all the jobs and supplies that went into building it. Even more people will be employed in furnishing and using it. And it spruced up this part of town immeasurably. To stop this sort of thing, we must saddle the owners with high penalties: the more valuable their buildings, the higher the property tax. And the high taxes persist year after year, so

long as they have the audacity to keep their buildings in good shape.

*A:* What about the decrepit store right next to it?

*V:* Yes, that's a delight, a genuine eyesore. Since last year the air conditioning went on the blink. The plumbing's in bad shape. Half the tenants moved out. Therefore we must treat the owner like a hero, offering him a handsome property tax reduction. We make it clear that, if the building continues to decay, taxes will come down even more in future years.

*A:* You're a genius. How about the empty lots down the street?

*V:* Good question. A city's prime asset is its land. If prize sites are kept out of use, production is lost, jobs are lost, housing is lost, and superb locations, praise the devil, are completely wasted. So, for owners of bare land we reserve the most favoured tax treatment of all—lower property taxes than any of their productive neighbours.

*A:* Thank you, master, now I understand your tactics.

*V:* Let's see if you do. Walk faster, around the corner. There's an attractive apartment building and a couple of well-maintained old homes. How do you react?

*A:* Well, the owners obviously spent plenty to upgrade this part of the city. This keeps people at work and provides many decent living quarters. Also, they are preserving some of the finest old architecture on the street. For all this, they should be made to pay extra-high property taxes.

*V:* Very good. What about the dilapidated tenement and rundown houses across the street?

*A:* They're a blight on the whole neighbourhood. Families forced to live there are demoralized by the ugliness. For this contribution to the deterioration of the city, the owners' property tax bills should be cut to the bone.

*V:* You're a fast learner. Any questions?

*A:* Yes. How can your rewards and penalties continue in the face of all the save-the-community campaigns? Daily editorials and researchers armed with computer printouts purport to show how to achieve urban improvement. Neighbourhood groups, activists, professors, businessmen, and politicians are all promising to revive the cities.

*V:* Words! So long as we work at Tactic Number Three—spreading confusion—these verbal barrages create a false impression of constructive activity. They make a lovely smokescreen while our destructive programme is carried forward.

*A:* Now that you explain it, I suddenly realize that your method of urban destruction describes the way the property tax is being carried out in almost every city in the country!

*V:* Shhh! Tactic Number Four is that we *never admit our successes* with this wrecking operation. You never know who might be listening. —W.R.

(From *Land Marks*, journal of the League for Urban Local Conservation, Washington D.C., USA.)

# More Food,

FRANCES MOORE LAPI

"Competition for lands suddenly made profit rising land values. Not atypically, land value green revolution areas of India, setting off s

Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins are Co-Directors of the Institute for Food and Development Policy (USA). With Cary Fowler, they are publishing a popularly written book on the potential for food self-reliance, *Food First!*. A main concern of the authors is that the visible tragedy of hunger should be used to reveal the utter failure of our current economic system to meet human needs.

**H**UNGER is continually defined for us as a problem of inadequate production. Therefore, if people are hungry, the reason must be that there is not enough food. For at least 30 years, the fundamental goal of the "war on hunger" has been to produce more food.

Thus, we are treated almost daily to the "news release" approach to hunger. We learn of one new breakthrough after another—protein from petroleum, harvests of kelp, extracts from alfalfa—all to expand the food supply. Even pleas to cut consumption in rich countries are narrowed down to "eating one less hamburger a week" in order to increase the food supply for the hungry.

For many, the production approach is working. Today, more food is, in fact, being produced. The green revolution now adds an estimated 20 million tons annually to the grain larders of Asia. In Mexico, wheat yields tripled in only two decades.

But wait. There are now more hungry people than ever before. Since there is also more food than ever before, we are left with only two possible conclusions:

◆ Either the production focus is correct, but soaring numbers of people simply overrun even these dramatic production gains;

◆ Or the diagnosis is incorrect—scarcity is not the cause of hunger, and production increases, no matter how great, can never solve the problem.

## *Enough to feed everyone*

The simple facts of world grain production make it clear that the over-population/scarcity diagnosis is actually incorrect. Present world grain production could more than adequately feed every person on earth. Even during the "scarcity" year, 1972 to 1973, there was nine per cent more grain per person than in an "ample" year like 1960. Inadequate production is clearly not the problem.

In fact, as ironic as it may sound, a narrow focus on increased production has actually compounded the problem of hunger. Because it goes against the popular wisdom, we found ourselves wanting to verify and re-verify this conclusion in our research at the Institute for Food and Development Policy.

What have we found? The production focus quickly becomes synonymous with "modernizing" agriculture—the drive to supply the "progressive"

farmer with imported technology: fertilizer, irrigation, pesticides and machinery. The green revolution seeds only reinforce this definition of development because their higher yields depend heavily on these inputs. Agricultural progress is thus transformed into a narrow technical problem instead of the sweeping social task of releasing vast, untapped human resources.

Governments, international lending agencies and foreign assistance programmes pushing for greater production "at all costs" willingly subsidize the heavy financial expense of this type of modernization.

## *Where the money is*

The result? This influx of public funds quickly turns farming into a place to make money—sometimes big money. To profit, however, one needs some combination of land, money, credit-worthiness and political influence. This alone eliminates most of the farmers throughout the world.

Ignoring substantial evidence from around the world that small, carefully farmed plots are more productive per acre than large estates and use fewer costly inputs, government production programmes invariably pass over small farmers (not to mention the landless). The common rationalization is that working with bigger production units is a faster road to increased production.

Competition for lands suddenly made profitable by this official production strategy has brought rising land values. Not atypically, land values have increased by 300 to 500 per cent in the green revolution areas of India, setting off spiralling land speculation and even "land grabs".

The lure of greater profits tempts large landlords to take back land they formerly rented out. Many use their now higher profits to buy out small neighbouring farmers. Throughout the under-developed world, the landless now comprise 30 to 60 per cent of the agrarian population. This does not even take into account the millions of landless refugees who are the human products of the production strategy. Finding no farm work, they join an equally hopeless search for work in urban slums.

## *The big farming business*

At the same time as the number of landless seeking work steadily grows, the number of jobs is shrinking. Mechanization enables the large landholder to cultivate more land himself without having to share

# More Hunger

"E and JOSEPH COLLINS

ble by official production strategy has brought  
have increased by 300 to 500 per cent in the  
drilling land speculation and even 'land grabs'."

the produce with sharecroppers or labourers. Despite mounting unemployment, governments encourage mechanization by subsidizing imported machinery and exempting mechanized farms from land reform.

Agricultural production based on purchased inputs—fertilizers, hybrid seeds, pesticides, machinery—inevitably means that money-based relationships come to replace rent and wages traditionally paid in farm produce. To pay a cash rent, however, the tenant must go into debt even before planting—and often at exorbitant interest rates. While rent in kind meant that a bad harvest was shared by both landlord and tenant, payment in cash means that the tenant must come up with the same rent no matter how poor the harvest is.

We are thus witnessing the radical transformation of the control of food resources—both in the industrialized and throughout the non-socialist underdeveloped world. Agriculture, once the livelihood for millions of self-provisioning farmers in the Third World, is being turned into a profit base for a new class of "farmers". Traditional landed élites, moneylenders, military officers, city-based speculators, foreign corporations and even African tribal chieftains are now becoming agricultural entrepreneurs.

In the course of this transformation, the hungry are being severed from the production process. At best, they become insecure wage labourers with seasonal jobs. To be cut out of the production process is to be cut out of consumption.

There is more food, but people are still hungry—in fact, more hungry. The process of creating more food has actually reduced people's ability to grow or to buy food. Where is the increased production? Did it mysteriously disappear? No.

◆ **Some of it goes to urban middle income groups.** The Governments of the US and Pakistan collaborated with the New Jersey-based Corn Products Corporation to improve yields of Pakistani maize—historically, the staple food of the rural poor. Hybrid seeds of other inputs did increase yields. The maize, however, now grown by a relatively few large farmers, is processed into corn sweetener for soft drinks for the urban middle and upper classes.

◆ **Some of it gets fed to livestock.** The corn yields that were the pride of the green revolution in the US have ended up in the stomachs of livestock. By

1973, two thirds of the green revolution rice in Colombia was going to feedlots and breweries.

◆ **Some of it gets exported.** Having based an agricultural strategy on imported inputs, countries become locked into production for export to earn foreign exchange to pay for those inputs. Despite the malnutrition of 80 per cent of its rural population, Mexico in the late 1960s began to export its green revolution wheat. Central America exports between one third and one half of its beef to the United States.

◆ **Some of it gets dumped.** Fruits and vegetables produced in Central America for export to the United States are frequently either shut out from an oversupplied market or fail to meet US "quality" standards—size, colour, smoothness. Since the local population—mostly landless—are too poor to buy anything, fully 65 per cent of production is fed to livestock (which, in turn, are exported) or literally dumped.

## A "global supermarket"

As food production is taken out of the hands of self-provisioning farmers and tied more and more into a world-wide marketing system, local food resources go less and less to feed local people. We see emerging a "global supermarket" in which the poorest in Central America or Africa must now compete for food with millions of Americans, Japanese and Europeans whose incomes are many times greater. Our "interdependent world" may be leading us to the same supermarket, but most have neither money to buy nor even welfare food stamps.

Development pegged to sheer production increases is taking us backward, not forward. It is more than just a diversion from the real task of reconstructing society to enable the majority of people to control and participate in the food production process. It is entrenching a new class of local and international profiteers who are better positioned than ever to fight against the slightest change.

If producing more food is the wrong solution, what then is the right one? In order to answer that question, we first have to understand that there is no developing country in which the food resources could not feed the local people. More importantly, because the under-developed countries are portrayed to us as helpless and pitifully in need of our aid, we lose



sight of the simple truth that hungry people can and will feed themselves, if they are allowed to do so.

If people are not feeding themselves, you can be

sure powerful obstacles are in the way. These obstacles are not, however, the hunger myths—over-population, too little land, laziness, religious taboos, inhospitable climate, lack of technology, unequal terms of trade, and so forth. In our research, we found that the most fundamental constraint to food self-reliance is that the majority of the people are not themselves in control of the production process and, therefore, more and more frequently they are not even participants.

How do we remove the obstacles preventing people from taking control of the production process and feeding themselves? What we have learned is that the path we are suggesting—the path of people taking control of food—is the *only* guarantee of long-term productivity and food security. It is the land monopolizers—both the traditional landed élites and corporate agribusiness—that have proven themselves to be the most inefficient, unreliable and destructive

users of agricultural resources.

Many, who have come to see that the problem of hunger is not simply a problem of production, conclude that instead it is a problem of distribution—getting the food to the hungry instead of the well-fed. We are saying something else. The issue of distribution is only a reflection of the more basic problem of control and participation in the production process itself.

Once we grasp these fundamentals, we will then begin to see that the “poor, hungry masses” whom we are repeatedly being told to fear are in reality our allies. Consciously or not, we are all joined in a common struggle for control of the most basic human need—food. “More food”, or even redistribution programmes like food aid and food stamps, will continue to mean more hunger until we first come to grips with the problem of who controls and who takes part in the production process.

## The Air is Dark . . . .

ROY DOUGLAS

“WHEN did the Irish problem start and when will it end?”

Around 1920, one of the Irish leaders gave a sombre answer to those questions. “The Irish problem started when Strongbow came to Ireland. It will end when Cromwell gets out of Hell.” Between Strongbow and Cromwell fit the Elizabethan “plantations”.

The Anglo-Irish settlers had a sort of base in the “English Pale” round Dublin. Beyond that, the country was to a greater or less degree governed by Gaelic lords of one kind or another, who acknowledged that some kind of shadowy suzerainty was vested in the English Crown.

Why, we may ask, did anybody bother to interfere? The answer is quite important, not only for an understanding of British motives in Ireland, but for an understanding of the motives of many imperial powers in many places. Ireland had very few attractions for the English “Imperialists”. Most English folk, from the Queen down, would probably have preferred that the whole island should disappear beneath the waves. The trouble was that a hostile Ireland, or an Ireland in occupation of a foreign enemy, was a tremendous danger to England. For that

reason, Gaelic Ireland must be subdued.

The story of what followed is told by Nicholas Canny.\* His book is aimed at the scholar, rather than the layman. It is learned, erudite and fascinating.

Dr. Canny tells us a tale which strikes chords of memory. There is muddle at the start over political objectives. Assuming that the English wished to control Ireland, how should they set about it? Should they treat the Gaelic chieftains as enemies to be fought and



conquered, or as loyal if errant subjects whose allegiance should be reclaimed? Should Englishmen be settled in Ireland, or should Irishmen be turned into quiet and loyal subjects? Does religion fit into the story?

Now we see why the tale has a familiar ring. All the old story of conflicting motives which seems to beset every human situation is told in the sixteenth century Irish context. The colonists were sent out to colonise and settle; they wanted to make their pile and come home. The Anglo-Irish

were cast for the role of model countrymen for the rest of Ireland to emulate; yet they found themselves profoundly unhappy in that role, and finished by leaning towards the Gaels.

Dr. Canny's book is a powerful refutation of the romantic stories of later times. The English myth that Ireland was colonised in order to civilise the Irish for their own good is demonstrable nonsense. Francis Drake (*The Francis Drake?* We are not told) and a colleague gathered a gang of ruffians who put the six hundred inhabitants of Rathlin Island—men, women and children—to the sword. Yet the Gaelic chieftains do not emerge as heroes or even patriots; they obviously had a keen eye for the main chance, and would freely submit to Elizabeth when it suited their purpose.

As for those at the bottom of the heap—the peasants—their story is again the usual one. Whether the local magnates were Anglo-Irish or Gaelic or incomers mattered little to them. They were rack-rented to the limit, wherever was around. In a few places within the Pale, the peasants might accumulate a surplus in a good year; but for most peasants life was at the edge of subsistence.

Yes, it is a grim, unedifying, story. There are no heroes, not many real villains, just a lot of sufferers. To that extent, the pattern of twentieth century Ireland was already set.

\**The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established*, Harvester Press, £10.50.



# THE ARROGANCE OF MAN

*Four essays by A. J. Carter*  
4. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

*"The augmentation of the power of government has induced people to count on it for the cure of every ill."*

THE industrial revolution in England—the prototype for the rest of Europe and for North America and Japan—was vitiated by the land enclosures which deprived individuals of their livelihood and turned them into a stream of labour. To alleviate the misery and destitution that resulted, governments embarked on the redistribution of wealth through taxation and social welfare. Since then, expenditure by the public sector as a percentage of gross national product has grown steadily and in latter years alarmingly. This growth is due to the almost irresistible pressures on governments, especially post-war governments, from a clamorous electorate. The augmentation of the power of government has induced people to count on it for the cure of every ill, while the subjugation of parliament by party governments has precluded restraint of the executive by the legislature.

There is a more profound reason for the escalation of public spending and that is the absence of any positive curb on it. An individual has to contain his expenditure within his income, but governments estimate their expenditure and settle how to pay for it afterwards. In England there is a historical explanation for this: it was the monarch who decided what to spend and parliament which was summoned to procure the wherewithal. Public revenue was not confined to the income of society from the rent of land (which the parliament of landowners progressively remitted) but could be seized by any means that the populace would tolerate.

The effects of this have been far-reaching. First, taxes were raised and diversified, and the confiscation of wealth wherever wealth was to be tapped received moral justification in the "ability to pay" canon of taxation. Second, borrowing (instituted by William III for military campaigns overseas) was expanded. Loans were redeemed only by floating new loans, and the national debt soared until the interest became in itself a major component of public expenditure. Third, the currency was debased. When taxes and borrowing would not yield enough, inflation was resorted to and began to feed on itself. The outcome of rampant inflation is disorientation and ultimate anarchy.

The familiar approach of "every man for himself" derives mainly from the scramble for money that is the inevitable consequence of high taxation and protracted inflation. If social cohesion is to be sustained, inflation must be ended, but this is only the first stage in the reversal of the inveterate trend towards

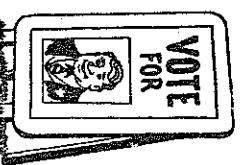
ever larger government.

The accretion of wealth and power to the central government is twofold. The chronic poverty of much of the population impels government to undertake many of the tasks that in a healthy society would be the prerogative of individuals. Simultaneously, because the central government partially finances local government and intervenes in its affairs, the central government becomes too clogged with detail to cope with its legitimate business while local government becomes moribund.

There are five principal objectives to be attained if government is to conform to its intended purpose. The first is to eradicate the inequitable distribution of wealth the correction of which is the preponderant government activity. The second is to return to individuals the responsibilities that government has assumed for them. The third is to entrust the residual functions of government to the tiers of government closest to individuals. The fourth is to involve individuals in the proceedings of government at all levels. The fifth is to tie the public expenditure to the revenue from the rent of land and repudiate taxation, borrowing and inflation.

In addition, the balance between central and local government should be redressed. One way in which this could be done is for central government to draw its revenue from local government, through assignment of part of the communal income from the rent of land which local governments would collect. By this means, virtually autonomous local governments would hold the central government firmly in check. Sovereignty would rest predominantly in the local governments, and only matters common to those local governments would be delegated to the central government.

In most countries of the world the central government is established by a political party. In Britain, general elections and parliamentary behaviour are



dominated by political parties. The candidates they adopt are backed by funds and a body of supporters which other contenders cannot hope to match; broad-

casting time is allotted to the parties on the basis of their previous victories; the government is even considering subsidizing the political parties. Inside parliament, party nominees expound the party dogma and vote as the party whips tell them to. Parliament is thus emasculated. For those who would see a vigorous House of Commons, the two most welcome developments of recent years have been the infusion of nationalists—an admirable expression of democratic fervour—and the accession in March 1974 of a government which could not be sure of a parliamentary majority and was on occasion defeated.

Not only do party men get into parliament instead of independents but those party men are either Conservative or Labour. The Liberals captured nearly 20 per cent of the vote in the two elections of 1974 but won fewer than fifteen seats in each.

The test of an electoral system is its sensitivity to the wishes of the electors. The calibre of government that ensues is incidental, though a government enjoying the goodwill of the bulk of the electorate can govern more effectively than one dependent on the partisan allegiance of under half of it. If parliamentary government is to be respected, the elec-

toral procedure must be revised to furnish a wider range of candidates and more faithfully reproduce the preferences of the electors in the composition of the legislative chamber. Governments would be unable to take parliamentary approval for granted if the party grip were relaxed and individuals voted in accordance with their own opinions. These opinions would be swayed by informed debate, hopefully not devoid of oratory and invective but purged of polemical pettiness.

By his ingenuity and resolution man has accomplished much, but over the natural and urban environments of society, man has relinquished supremacy. The more he interferes in the environment the more evident his ineptitude becomes; and the more he strives to manifest his cleverness through collective institutions the more he is enslaved by them.

Mankind has lost the humility that accompanies greatness. He believes he is invincible. He will soon discover that he is wrong: through economic collapse, through social disintegration, and perhaps through the premature conclusion of the entire human adventure.

## Shifting Views on the Community Land Act

THE claim made by the Land Campaign Working Party<sup>1</sup> that the Community Land Act, "a betrayal of land nationalisation," operates in the interests of property developers rather than against them, is lent some weight by the recent statement of the British Property Federation,<sup>2</sup> which calls not for the repeal of the Act but its amendment "so as to make it workable." The presidents of both the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Town Planning Institute have also come out against the repeal of the Act.

The BPF's proposals, among other things, would strengthen local authorities' powers of compulsory purchase, while "carefully safeguarding individual rights."

However, if the individual happened to be a minority owner, his obligations would be overridden "in the public interest" (larger developer's interest?) if they were to hold up a comprehensive development.

The Federation wish to retain some form of betterment levy and to see that local authorities get a share to help them pay for expenditure on infrastructure—the pri-

mary contribution to new development (which of course lowers development costs and raises land values).

The BPF, however, do make the point that betterment levy should be relative to the increase in *land value* not the completed property value.

Not all of the proposals are without merit within the context of the Act, but the interests of property developers do not always coincide with the interests of the community, particularly when projected profits (legitimate) are accompanied by profits from pure land value.

That the Community Land Act and Development Land Tax could be amended so as to improve them in the interests of developers and the community does not make them right in principle. They should be repealed lock, stock and barrel. Indeed, while they exist in any form, it will be assumed that the "land question" has been dealt with and will put up yet another artificial barrier to the only true policy for land, namely the annual taxation of all land values and the exemption of improvements.

The alternative proposal by the Land Campaign Working Party is land nationalisation. In their publication, both developers and land-

owners are attacked. It is a difficult publication to review and gives the impression that it was put together by a committee, in some ways no bad thing in that so many aspects of land use are covered; but it lacks shape and consecutive argument. It is of course socialist and many of the statements lead up to the conclusion that all land should be nationalised will be unacceptable both to land-value taxers and of course developers and landowners.

However, the booklet is worth the modest price both for giving an insight into rebel left wing thinking on the land question and for its own interpretation of the recent land Acts. P.K.

1. Consists of representatives of tenants associations, community groups and projects who came together in 1973 to form the Campaign. Their publication is *Lie of the Land*, 33p from 31 Clerkenwell Close, London, E.C.1.
2. *Policy for Land*, £1 from BPF, 35 Catherine Place, London SW1E 6DY.

### WORLD ECONOMICS SUMMED UP

THE world recession, Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany told the Socialist Congress at Geneva, was due to "130 out of 140 nations printing money they have not earned."

# The World in Conference

ROBERT CLANCY



ONE cannot help but notice a striking development of modern times—and that is the proliferation of international meetings devoted to various problems that are felt to be world-wide. Many of these conferences are under the auspices of the United Nations and many are by other groupings.

Another fact to be noted is that the conferences deal with problems which have become grave and which modern civilisation has failed to solve: world hunger, housing, the use of the high seas, industrial pollution, the spread of nuclear armaments, the maldistribution of the world's wealth, the misuse of the world's resources.

It can no doubt be set down as encouraging that there is at least some recognition of these problems and a willingness to discuss them. But alas, a closer look reveals that very little is settled or solved at these meetings. Very few want to budge from the *status quo*. Those who fear world government can relax—we are very far from it. If anything, there has been an intensification of nationalism—which cannot wholly be viewed with satisfaction.

Another deterrent is that even if a UN conference comes to a conclusion, it has no force of application whatsoever. Any nation is free to ignore it. But even such a conclusion—hardly more than a statement—is hard to come by. Most conferences end with an agreement that the matter should be further discussed via another conference—and sometimes a permanent committee is set up to study it.

A UN World Food Conference in Rome in 1974 reached the remarkable conclusion that "the principal cause of malnutrition is poverty"—but could not get much further. A programme of information for an early-warning system, founded on national interests. "Poor" countries wanted aid from "rich" countries—hardly anything new. We have been that route before and have found that

supplies find their way into the black market and the pockets of the rich.

This raises an embarrassing point usually skirted at these conferences: that the representatives of the "poor" countries are usually members of the ruling class; that the "developing" countries are not always brave new little nations but are very old societies with very entrenched privileged elites; and that the "rich" countries are often newer societies that made their way by allowing a little more freedom and equality of opportunity.

The Habitat conference held this year in Vancouver—on the matter of shelter, one of man's basic needs which modern civilisation has not solved—came up with some handsome statements. We can applaud the conclusion that "the unearned income resulting from the rise in land values . . . must be subject to appropriate capture by public bodies (the community)", even though this was hedged in by ifs and buts, and surrounded by a call for public land planning, which needs to be approached guardedly. With all that, however, the only concrete result was the establishment of an audio-visual information centre.

One of the most ticklish subjects is the Law of the Sea, on which several UN conferences have been held, the most recent one in New York, September 1976.

Among the hot topics are the sovereignty limits of nations, fishing rights and the exploration of the seabed for minerals and oil. A few years ago Peru was thought to be extreme in wanting a 200-mile sovereignty limit but this is now being considered as a general rule. No agreement was reached as to how the oceans' mineral resources might be tapped. No doubt each nation and the influential groups within the nations have their own private thoughts on the matter—and very likely the "common good" has little part in these thoughts. Well, at least there was agreement that there should be another con-

ference on the subject.

Among the non-UN conferences is the "North-South dialogue" which has been going on in Paris. (The "North" refers to the developed countries and the "South" to the developing countries.) The chief issue is the bolstering of the South's economic situation by the North. After a year, very little has been settled. As might be expected, all countries are very guarded about "trade concessions." Financial aid to poor countries keeps coming up (or to the rich in the poor countries?).

One non-UN conference that reaches practical conclusions is the periodic meeting of OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries). Unfortunately, this is about a rise in oil prices to the rest of the world.

Thus we must sadly concur that "everybody's business is nobody's business" and that groups are still motivated by their own special interests. We must even be disillusioned about one of the supposed benefits of international meetings, that while nations are talking they are not fighting, since we have seen that they can be talking in one part of the world and fighting in another.

Still, the logic of world events has led the nations to talk to gether about crucial matters. We can only hope that the continuing pressure of these matters will impel the nations to take more constructive and equitable action than has been the case so far—and that we may discover that the common good must be reconciled with individual benefit.

## SITE VALUE

**IT'S not what your house is, it's where it is that matters when it comes to value.**

A converted coachhouse in Towshend Road, St. John's Wood, with one and a half bedrooms and three reception rooms, was recently sold for £95,000.

But for £80,000 you can buy a twenty-four bedroom mansion with four cottages in its twenty-five acres of land overlooking the Cairngorms in Inverness-shire.

—*Evening News*, Dec. 1, 1976

# Over My Dead Body!

ROBERT MILLER

THERE appears to be an open conspiracy among some of our politicians—of various political persuasions—to regard the rest of us, not as individual human beings with personal and private feelings, desires, hopes and aspirations, but as masses of statistically activated fodder existing merely for the purpose of furthering some sacred social ideology. The end product in the mind's eye of those who find themselves, by the grace of God and a questionably fickle electoral system, invested with the awful responsibilities of government, is not the happiness and fulfilment of our lives, but the unhindered working of a system. They will argue, without any moral justification, that for the ultimate good of all, the cherished principles of a few must surrender to its will.

This idea of the state exercising supreme control over those who comprise it is by no means new, but that is no excuse for ignoring the present drift merely because we do not as yet experience any noticeable effects, nor for taking no action to halt it.

In politics the end rarely, if ever, justifies the means. There should be no end. It should be the natural desire and purpose of each individual, with mutual respect for human rights, to secure his own end. It is not the business or purpose of the state to do it for him. If individuals are to be graded, controlled and disposed of like vegetables—and moreover if they allow themselves to be graded, controlled and disposed of—theirs is an immoral government; and what is far worse, they have lost, or are losing, that which distinguishes them from vegetables.

There was an example of this disregard of people as individuals in 1968 when a Minister pronounced that "large families will shortly be regarded as a form of social delinquency. . . . Procreation is not a purely private matter." The fact that he was later censured by his own party for over-reaching himself in his desire to dictate how we shall live our lives rendered his words no less offensive. Before uttering such remarks, people in positions of trust and responsibility for others should reconsider most carefully the premises upon which they are allegedly founded. Nobody cares to tell us how many is "large". What the pseudo-Malthusians are really concerned about, I suspect, is not large families at all, but people not being able to provide for their children, regardless of the number they have.

If a minority of parents sponge on their fellows by abusing the benefits of the welfare state, the rules should be tightened up to discourage such abuse. Let Ministers and others look closer into the possible causes of such poverty—for when so many, in addition to the spongers, still find it necessary to call

upon financial aid from the state while in reasonably sound health, poverty there certainly is, not only in pocket but in self-respect.

Another example of attempted legislation based upon an immoral premise was the late Sir Gerald Nabarro's Renal Transplantation Bill, Clause 2 of which read: "It shall be lawful to remove from the body of a human person, duly certified as dead, any kidney or kidneys required for medical purposes unless there is reason to believe that the deceased during his life had instructed otherwise."

There was a not so obvious but vitally important innuendo in the word "unless", for by this the Bill sought to establish once and for all the ownership by the state of the kidneys of every person as soon as dead. Mr. Kenneth Robinson, the then Minister of Health, in rejecting the Bill, expressed the concern of many people when he said: "Accident victims are usually in the prime of life and seldom have had occasion to make wills. We must prepare for cases where there might be objections and those objections are now known. Medical science should not go beyond this and thereby lose the sympathy of public opinion."

The large number of criticisms that could be levelled at this badly phrased Bill were in inverse proportion to its uncommon brevity (as though for some reason or other it had to be prepared in a great hurry). Consider the absurdity of "during his life". How can anyone instruct anyone else to do anything at all before or after his life? There was the lack of an acceptable definition of death: the vagueness of the term "medical purposes"; the obvious impossibility of tracing and obtaining a rational decision from a tragically bereaved next-of-kin within one hour of the death of the "donor", and so on.

But all these objections, although possessing moral force and validity, are of far less importance than the fact that there was an attempt to deny and over-rule the most vital principle of human liberty. A Member described it as the Nationalisation of the Dead Bill. If it had been allowed to become law, there could then be no logical argument against subsequent amendments to include the heart, liver, lungs, eyes, brain—even arms and legs. When phrased in this way the idea sounds revolting, and indeed it is. Just where would it stop? And let no one be deceived into thinking that the whole distasteful matter has been decently buried; there are still those who will try again to introduce a Bill on these lines if given half a chance.

To argue that none of these things really matters, especially after death and that objection on this fine point really has no more significance than an interest-

ing philosophical exercise, and that such a Bill does not seek to deny personal freedom since anyone may contract out of it, is tantamount to maintaining that it should be legally and morally right that all persons apprehended for alleged offences shall be presumed guilty unless they can show evidence to prove their innocence, simply because they thereby have the right to plead not guilty.

The next assault upon our personal liberty and rights will come in the shape of a Bill to enact the compulsory addition of fluoride to our water supplies. There has been much argument over the past few years for and against this measure which is put forward ostensibly for the purpose of reducing tooth decay in children. At the risk of labouring the obvious, I believe that children are the responsibility of their parents, and that this responsibility includes the dental welfare of their offspring. If it is believed that fluoride is useful in this cause (and there are still many professional people who know much more about the subject than I do, who do not so believe), it may be freely purchased in several forms including tooth paste. But whether or not the claims for its efficacy are justified, I am vigorously opposed to it for several reasons, mainly because I contend that since my body is my personal possession and I alone have the natural right to decide what shall or shall not be put into it, should the Bill succeed, this natural and sacred right will thereby be willfully and wickedly violated. Even if it were remotely possible to prove that those who do not want fluoride in their water will be the better for it, I still oppose it on the same principle. One might as well argue that because most of us suffer from time to time from constipation, Epsom salts should also be added to the

water.

Such is the state of life into which we have metamorphosed, that we are all children of the Welfare State, the great Father and Mother of our existence. We have to be told what to do and what not to do, and what to eat and drink and what not to eat and drink, and so on, because this or that behaviour results in some of us becoming an additional expense to the National Health Service. The more we allow ourselves to be nationalised, the more we must expect to toe the line and bow to those who, God save us, always think they know what is good for us.

Enough ink has already been spilt to expound and reiterate human rights, and enough blood has been shed to defend them. These are the things in life worth more than life itself. In life and in death, man has a right to himself, so that his body shall be disposed of without mutilation. The onus is upon him to waive this right and to express his wish to donate his body or any part of it for medical purposes if he so chooses. And while he lives his body is his own, to feed as he alone shall decide. The state has absolutely no claim of right to any part of any human being, alive or dead. Let that be clearly understood by all, especially those in authority. There is no "if" or "but" or "unless" about it.

Medical science must be allowed to progress in the conquering of disease and the relief of suffering, and human lives must be saved whenever possible, but not at the cost of human dignity. Vital principles of liberty are at stake as never before. If we ignore this, we endanger the very *raison d'être* of life itself. We have fought hard and long for the freedoms we still have left, but if we are not very careful, even they will dissolve in apathy, and vanish for ever.

## Medicine for Britain

**S**TIFF medicine containing purgatives is prescribed for Britain's economic ills by the Sound Money League and Taxpayers' Association in a Manifesto issued shortly before the close of 1976.

The purgatives, apart from the vitamins that the mixture contains, include stripping government of the power to control the money supply and the denationalisation of telephones, gas, electricity, airlines, docks industries, and other loss-making enterprises.

The Government must set out to balance its budget within the next three years—and do it without increasing taxation. Indeed, states this well-written and well-reasoned paper, to achieve the necessary goals, taxation must be *reduced*, starting with the lowering of the top marginal rate of income tax from 98 per cent to 60 per cent

and limiting the overall maximum rate of income tax to 55 per cent of an individual's income. Sharp reductions are also proposed for Capital Gains Tax, Capital Transfer Tax, Development Land Tax (because of its adverse effects on housing) and other taxes.

The Association says that the main objectives of its *Programme for Britain\** are the minimum objectives that must be achieved before the economy can produce enough to increase our standard of living and substantially reduce involuntary unemployment.

There are no concessions to "middle-of-the-road" thinking in this paper and rightly so. Economic appeasement never works and only makes easier the "final solution" of Marxism.

The paper sadly lacks the extension of its logic into the fields

of free trade and the taxation of land values, parts of the economic jigsaw—and basic parts—that make up the picture of Britain as she might be. Maybe that will come later, but meanwhile these proposals will help to clear the path.

H.V.

\*Six pages foolscap, 25p post free, from LAND & LIBERTY.

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### ASHLEY MITCHELL

As we go to press we are sad to report the death, on January 12, of Ashley Mitchell, President of the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade and member of the Executive Committee of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values. He was ninety-one. To his daughter and her family we offer our sincere condolences.

A tribute to Ashley Mitchell will be published in our next issue.

## Letters to the Editor

### HOUSE PRICES

SIR, — It has been reported that the Secretary of State for the Environment and a Tory front bencher have been at odds about releasing building society funds to purchasers of older type property.

In the twentieth century, factors in the increase in prices, premiums and rents of landed property include: 1. Abolition of tithe. 2. Agricultural de-rating. 3. Industrial de-rating. 4. The rate support grant. 5. Rate rebates. 6. Rent rebates. 7. Abolition of Schedule A tax on owner-occupied residential property. 8. Rent control, and 9. "Pegging" building society mortgage interest below the economic figure.

In the case of a small freehold Edwardian terraced house in a North London suburb, a price of £13,000 has just been paid and the purchaser has taken up a mortgage of £9,000, so he has bought with a "deposit" of £4,000.

The rateable value is £254, and the rate in the £ is 157.81p, reduced to 55.5p by subsidy out of taxation. The balance of 102.31p in the £ represents about £260, and, capitalised, that is about £3,250, so if the whole general rate were being charged, the purchase price would be reduced to £9,750, and money now going into the pocket of the mortgagee would instead be paid into the rating fund for the public benefit.

The Labour Government brought in the rate support grant out of taxation by means of the Local Government Act 1948, and the Conservative Government abolished Schedule A tax in the early 1960s.

Both these measures were an appeal to the greed and stupidity of the electorate in order to buy votes, and they sent the price of homes shooting upwards, with the result that building societies now have stupendous sums of money locked up in homes which could be much more widely deployed.

In the furnished bed-sitting rooms in Hackney where young couples pay £10 to £12 a week including the landlord's (subsidised) rates and income tax for their accommodation, "the pill" reigns supreme and babies who should

be born are not being born, because these couples can't scrape an enormously-inflated deposit together.

The Conservative Party promises that if elected, it will push up the price of homes still further by extinguishing the domestic rate and will suck their blood by a local income tax.

What one hoped would be recognised as a ray of hope for them has come in the Government's promise to reduce the rate support grant by 15 per cent in the coming financial year, but, because the Government proposed it, of course the Leader of the Opposition has denounced what really is the only measure so far proposed which will effectively reduce the upward pressure upon house prices.

Abolition of the rate support grant would allow £3,000 million a year to be taken off income tax, thus increasing the threshold of taxation and releasing many people from payment of it altogether.

T. A. ENDE  
London N4

### FREE TRADE

SIR, — All this talk about controlling imports as a cure for unemployment is nonsense. First, imported goods can only be paid for with goods made in our country or traded with other countries.

Secondly, British money does not circulate in Japan, neither does the Yen in our shops. Therefore, the more Japanese goods we import the harder we have to work to manufacture the goods for export to pay for them. Furthermore, the cheaper the imported goods the greater the purchasing power of the consumer to spend on other goods. Thus, increasing employment, not the reverse.

But these protectionist falsehoods are ancient history. Seventy years ago, in 1906, Joseph Chamberlain, the then Tory Prime Minister, fought an election on tariff reform as the solution to foreign competitive imports. The answering battery of their opponents, the Liberal Party, "Tariff reform means work for all—work for all in the workhouse"—gave the Liberals the greatest electoral victory of all time.

Of course, free trade on its own

cannot solve unemployment and poverty. The facts are that slumps in the production and exchange of wealth are primarily caused by the excessive speculation in the economic rent of land.

A proposal to collect this value in land by means of taxation was in the programme of the Liberal Party during the 1906 election, and it is interesting to reflect that Winston Churchill at the time made many forceful speeches in support.

The Liberal Party is lost in the wilderness of modern economic sophistry and until they return to their traditional policy of free trade and land value taxation as the real alternative to state and private monopoly protectionism, they are never likely to gain the support of the people or bring about a solution to the present economic crisis.

STEPHEN MARTIN

Fordingbridge,

Hants.

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### SITE-VALUE RATING IN REVERSE

BRECKLAND District Council—the local authority responsible for the central area of Norfolk—have embarked on an aggressive and unusual campaign to attract more industry from the U.K. and Europe into the area.

To stimulate industrial growth in the area, the council decided to commission an audiovisual presentation about Breckland for showing to small groups of businessmen and industrialists in the U.K. and in Europe.

The fifteen-minute presentation, made for Breckland District Council by communications consultants sets out to "sell" Breckland as an ideal area in which to live and work.

Fact sheets, printed so that they can be easily and economically updated in the light of changing information, deal with Breckland as a place to expand in. Five main Breckland towns are geared to receive further industry—Thetford, East Dereham, Swaffham, Attleborough and Watton—where nearly 300 acres of land designated for industrial use are available.

If the plan is a success, land values will increase in the area and particularly the 300 acres awaiting development, all by courtesy of the ratepayers who are financing the project.