

the war no-one who could afford to pay for accommodation was troubled by a housing problem; an effective demand for houses, in the form of adequate purchasing power, ensured adequate supplies for all who could pay. Mr. Bevan has admitted this fact, but could not have seen its significance.

THE RADICAL REMEDY Practical steps towards the abolition of involuntary poverty must include the cheapening of land and the exemption of buildings and other products of labour from penalising taxation. At present, houses built on dear land with dear materials are made still dearer by the adding of the local rates to the rents. Instead, public revenues should be obtained by the public appropriation of the values which attach to land through the presence and industry of populations. At every stage in the application of this system - taxation of land values - land would become cheaper because withholding and misusing land would be increasingly unprofitable. The un-rating of houses would accompany the rating of land-values, and that would stimulate building operations and lead to an early and abundant supply of new houses. But if that were all, the housing problem would still be unsolved, because while wages are regulated on a cost-of-living basis, they would fall if a general reduction of rents took place. But it is not all; land-values taxation would tend to raise wages because it would force more land into good use and increase the demand for labour. This, and the alternative of self-employment which easy access to land would make possible, would open to all willing workers by hand or brain new opportunities to gain prosperity and independence. In such conditions there would be no involuntary poverty and no lack of good housing accommodation.

GOOD ENOUGH TO BE TRUE Is this too good to be true? On the contrary, it is good enough to be made true by an intelligent and awakened electorate who refuse to be distracted from radical remedies by politicians who offer nothing better than new programmes containing all the defects of past failures.

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THE PORCUPINE

(WITH SOME TELLING POINTS)

No. 211.

July and August, 1948.

TOO-MANY and TOO-MUCH There are two conflicting theories which, periodically and alternately, are offered as explanations of the ills of modern society. One is the over-population or too-many theory, and it appears that this theory - described by the Manchester Guardian as "the periodic stirrings of Malthusian depression" - is about to enjoy a renewal of popularity. Sir J. B. Orr has warned us that "the rising tide of population and falling reservoir of land fertility is the greatest threat to our civilisation." During an earlier bout of this disorder Professor Sir A. Thomson told the British Social Hygiene Council that the world was becoming so full that it would become necessary to put up notices: Standing room only. Fortunately for our peace of mind the fears excited by modern Jeremiahs can be forgotten when other prophets occupy the stage. For example, Mr. Ness Edwards, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, assures us that the rate of increase of our population is not sufficient to meet our needs; he says we shall be half a million workers short in 1951. We are therefore in the happy position of being able to select the story we find most to our liking: famine on an over-crowded planet, or slow starvation because Nature has provided only one pair of hands to feed each mouth.

The too-much theory, which contradicts the too-many, is that one of the penalties of the machine age is suffering due to too much being too easily produced. This is usually described as over-production, and if superabundance cannot satisfy our needs, we can take steps to transform it into scarcity. One method adopted by modern governments is the giving of bonuses to producers of commodities for not producing commodities, and when that is too late, various ways of getting rid of unwanted things are employed, such as throwing tons of fish back into the sea, allowing fruit to rot on the ground, burning or otherwise destroying wheat and other products of the soil. The people who are responsible for this policy do not seem to be influenced by the fact

that there are millions of people in dire need of the so-called "over-produced" commodities, and it arouses only mild protests from the public.

SOMETHING LEFT OUT The Malthusian theory of over-population owes its occasional popularity to the fact that its author and adherents overlook one of the factors of wealth production - the land. Though small areas in many countries are overcrowded, the world's natural resources have never been fully used, and even in this well-populated country the soil is capable of yielding much bigger supplies of food and other good things. But adequate production is impossible when land can only be used on terms imposed by its owners. Malthus himself seemed to perceive this when he wrote: "A man who is born into a world already possessed ... has no claim or right to the smallest portion of food," etc. In the words "a world already possessed" is the key to the problem of involuntary poverty in the midst of potential plenty; they mean that the bounty of the Creator has been taken possession of by a few people who have acquired a legal right to exclude others from what was evidently provided for all.

NOT WHAT IT SEEMS The unconsumed goods which seem to accumulate through over-production are - paradoxical though it appears - evidence of under-production. There are innumerable people desiring these things but unable to obtain them because they are prevented from producing other goods or services which they could offer in exchange for them. What appears to be too-much somewhere, is too-little elsewhere.

A PANACEA The idea of a universal remedy is usually ridiculed; it is easier to deny and scoff than to think. But as there is one underlying cause of the poverty which is attributed to both over-population and over-production, there is therefore one necessary first step which will lead to its removal. The underlying cause of poverty is the Land Monopoly, and the first step towards its complete destruction is Land Values Taxation. For a full and satisfying explanation of the cause and cure of poverty the reader is referred to "Progress & Poverty" by Henry George.

"Twenty men working together will, where nature is niggardly, produce more than twenty times the wealth that one man can produce where nature is most bountiful. The denser the population, the more minute becomes the subdivision of labour, the greater the economies of production and distribution, and, hence, the very reverse of the Malthusian doctrine is true." (Henry George)

HOUSES or HOUSING PROGRAMMES Speaking in Cambridge on April 24th, 1948 Mr. Bevan, Minister of Health, said the housing programme for next year would be much better than had been expected. In 1946 Mr. Bevan declared that every family in Great Britain would have a separate house before the next election - which seems to mean that the housing problem (so-called) would be solved by 1950. But in the two years that have since elapsed there has been so

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little progress towards that goal, and the fulfilment of the promise has become so impossible, that Mr. Bevan now tells us (as reported in the "Manchester Guardian") that we shall have next year, not more houses but a better housing programme. Even this flimsy hope is brushed aside by the "M/G" with the remark that while it is important to build more houses, there are other things requiring labour, such as coal and manufactured goods, that must come first. And so another tragic failure is added to the many promised solutions of the housing problem invented by men whose zeal for human welfare has only been equalled by their ignorance of economic laws, that is, of human nature.

POSITION IN LONDON In "London's Overgrowth" Dr. S. Vere Pearson says: "Nearly every government for the last sixty years has talked about slum clearance. Something has been done, but how much always remains! ... In 1921 when there were still 550 areas of slums (in London) requiring urgent demolition, only 38 per cent of families lived in single occupation of structural separate dwellings; and three years later Mr. Neville Chamberlain's committee stated that 1,000,000 persons would have to move to reduce the density where it was more than 200 persons per acre to 100 persons per 20 houses on each acre. Ten years later the housing conditions in the County of London had improved only 7 per cent."

Among the many housing programmes which in recent years have raised the hopes and blasted the expectations of the victims of the house famine are the following: the Addison Act of 1919; the Wheatley scheme of 1924 which proposed to build 2,500,000 in fifteen years and to spread a loss of £1,376,000,000 over the following forty years; the Greenwood promise in 1930 to abolish slums in five years, and a similar promise by Hilton Young in 1933. All these programmes were designed to achieve one object; the provision of cheap houses for poor people, and this explains their common failure. Bad housing is an effect, and effects are unavoidable while their causes operate.

BAD HOUSING IS A POVERTY PROBLEM Apart from the house shortage due to war's destructions and delays,

there is no separate problem of housing. Conditions which are commonly regarded as evidence of a housing problem reveal what is also revealed by under-fed and ill-clothed bodies - a lack of purchasing power which deprives many people of the bare necessities of life. To these sufferers there is a food problem, a clothing problem and a housing problem, and the hunger, rags and hovels are symptoms of the underlying problem of poverty. Nothing less than the abolition of involuntary poverty can end these troubles.

THINKING IS NOT EASY Private ownership of the source of production (land) is the root cause of poverty, and the present taxation system maintains it. Unfortunately, some reformers find it easier to blame private enterprise than to think. Before