

those who gain income (cash or imputed) from land.

Yet a shift from income tax to land rent tax would have no effects within SLIM (unless income tax thresholds were raised). The pull away from employment exerted by personal wealth is still expressed by net financial wealth alone. The labour market equations have yet to catch up with the consumption function equations, in this respect.

Samuel Brittan regards this elusive effect as important: "...a property tax, preferably based on underlying land values... would also have the advantage of bringing in substantial sums of money which could be used either to cut income tax or to improve public services or a mixture of both." In other words, to increase work incentives and opportunities.

But models of the economy require numbers. If good numbers are available, they will crunch them. There is, therefore, hope in the mounting concern over the paucity of the numbers emanating from official sources. At last year's Royal Statistical Society conference, Sir Claus Moser had more than just the *Treasury Bulletin* to support his onslaught on them. He launched the society's own report, which details radical measures for restoring public confidence in the Government Statistical Service. These include institutional changes and the establishment of a new research unit.

Some reorganisation of the Central Statistical Office has already taken place. In May last year, the Chancellor raised its staff by 10%. If the CSO is indeed about to undergo a major overhaul, it could do no better than smarten up the way it takes land into account.

Amid plenty ... the tragedy of hunger

A CENTURY ago, an American social reformer wrote a book that he called *Progress and Poverty*, Henry George's analysis was immediately perceived as relevant then, and as a guide to social, economic and political policy, no-one has improved on his analysis.

No-one.

The book remains a testament to mankind's capacity for folly; and the singular most useful textbook on action for the 21st century.

Look at Brazil: she is the living embodiment of all that is wrong today, and a case study of how to transform society and man's relationship with Mother Earth.

But don't take my word for it: listen to the findings of a recent seminar sponsored by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

Brazil is a land of plenty. Yet a third of her children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition.

She produces three harvests a year, and exports sugar, soya beans, orange juice, cacao. Yet infant mortality figures show that 60% of deaths are associated with malnutrition.

There are three million - that is, three million - acres of unploughed arable land outside the Amazon region. Yet over 350,000 children die each year.

In Brazil today, politics - not the alleged niggardliness of nature - kills those children.

Progress. With poverty.

As a result of this FAO analysis, a Committee Against Hunger has been established to lobby for policy changes.

Money, not the shortage of food, is identified as the problem. And for money, read jobs. And for jobs, read "access to land".

Professor Flavio Valente of the Hunger Studies Unit at Santa Catarina University, explains: "Brazil could feed the entire population easily. The fact that it doesn't means there is a political decision not to."

Another analyst, Klaus Magno Germer, a former agriculture sec-

A Personal View
by IAN BARRON

retary for Parana, a food producing state, put his finger on the problem when he declared: "Land reform is important - not to produce more food, but to break the structure of power."

"Brazil's concentration of land ownership is deliberate - the rural exodus it provokes produces an excess of cheap labour in the cities, so that wages can be kept low."

Government policy - for which, read: "The dictates of landowners" - is directed at bolstering those already inside "the market". That excludes the 70 million people who have no influence over "the market".

So the dispossessed are reduced to penury, and the servility that goes with a client population that depends on state hand-outs.

This is the Welfare State writ large.

This tragic contradiction - of hunger amid plenty - is present in all countries of the world today.

We include the advanced as well as the "developing" countries.

So what can be done about it? The FAO consultant at the Brazil seminar said that people will have to sidestep the government - the power structure - and strengthen social movements. And trades unions will have to work for higher wages.

That means building a heightened sense of conflict into the social system. The power elites, of course, would love that: their control over the authoritarian structure gives them the whip hand.

Literally, as the victims of so many Latin American torture chambers will testify.

Not until a policy of consensus is devised - of healing social wounds, of compensating for the wrongs of history - will the warring factions be united in a social and economic system with no losers.

How? It's all spelt out in one book: *Progress and Poverty*.