

had been sent by Lord Stanmore who had been placing the candidates. Dundee at that time was a two-membered constituency. The Conservatives were nominating one and the Liberals had to nominate the other—with mutual support. I had the President of the Dundee Liberal Association on the telephone, urging me to come as they knew me well from Liberal Conferences. But I told him that I was not prepared to accept tariffs on any account: I considered them evil and I was not prepared to palter with them. He pressed me, but I told him that I was not going into Parliament a tied man—if I went, I was going to be free. Another Liberal was secured, Dingle Foot, and he was elected. Then, when he was defeated some years later, he joined the Labour Party. That was the only time when I had a twinge of regret that I hadn't kept him out."

Ashley Mitchell married again in 1934 and subsequently stood at Halifax and Batley. And after he thought his election campaign days were over, he was "recalled" to fight Keighley in 1955. Although always beaten, he never lost a deposit, even when Liberals were losing them wholesale. He attributed this to the fact that he proclaimed his faith in free trade and the abolition of land monopoly.

The "fallen political warrior" never lost his interest or enthusiasm for the reforms he knew were right and up to his last days he was in regular contact with the London office of the United Committee.

The business affairs, politics and ideals that formed the mainstream of his life were serious matters to him, but when pressures were relaxed his almost impish humour came to the surface and bubbled over.

He had a tale for every occasion and he always delighted his audience, whether public or private, when the humourist in him took over.

This is how he will be remembered by many; but by everyone he will be remembered as one of those rare figures in public life—an honest politician who refused to compromise his principles.

The United Committee and International Union were represented at his funeral by V. H. Blundell.

He leaves a daughter, Rhoda Field, by his second wife.

VHB

LIBERAL POLICIES FOR LIBERALS

If only the Liberal leaders of today could realise that the liberty of the individual and real social justice are wholly compatible and indivisible, they would turn away from the semi-socialist policies of the state-planned economy to the really radical policies of Henry George, whose proposals go far deeper than the mere establishment of a new source of government revenue.

—Ashley Mitchell

Hunger or Scarcity

B.

"Fighting starvation in the Third World is a task of limited scope."

I well remember Cary Grant, as the tycoon about to give a United Nations lecture in the film "That Touch of Mink", asking Doris Day, a humble typist, for her views on the problem of the under-developed countries. "I think they ought to be developed", she replied hopefully. "You", replied Grant, "have put into one sentence the content of my whole sixty-minute talk."

Judging by the revelations in a new book*, the delightfully simplistic philosophy of Miss Day's typist summed up, not only the faith of Mr. Grant's tycoon but the whole guiding strategy of the United Nations, the World Bank and all those western nations offering food aid programmes to the Third World. "Countries needing development? Right," seems to be the line, "let's go get 'em developed."

But according to Susan George, "development" as applied by the West to the recipients of their patronage, has been a password for imposing a new kind of dependency; a policy for enriching the already rich world and for shaping other societies to meet their own commercial and political needs. And in the process the poor have stayed poor, the hungry have stayed hungry, and exploitation and misery have marched on in their ten-league boots.

Yet, as Mrs. George explains, it is wrong to think in terms of "hungry countries". There are no hungry countries. There are only, in every country, poor people who have neither the facilities to grow enough nor the means to buy enough food to live on. But whereas in the USA, for example, poverty so extreme as to mean hunger only touches a fraction of the people, in under-developed countries it is likely to involve half the population.

Who or what is responsible for the world deficiency of food? Is it the pressure of population or, as the popular cliché has it, too many mouths to feed? Certainly not, asserts Mrs. George, undeterred by the fact that world population is increasing by over 70 million (two per cent) a year and will double itself in thirty-two years if the trend continues. As she sees it, neither a high rate of food production nor a thinness of population can guarantee that hunger will be overcome. Famine exists in Bolivia with five inhabitants per square mile and in India with 172; but there is no famine in Holland where there are 326. In Bolivia there is 0.63 of a hectare of cul-

**How the Other Half Dies* by Susan George, Penguin Books, 1976, £1.

Scourge andal ?

W. B.

at a matter of stepping up food production nor
population."

tivable land for each inhabitant; in India there is 0.30. But in Holland there is only 0.06. China used to experience famine every year when it was a country of 500 million people. Today, with 800 million, there is no famine and everyone gets at least 2,300 calories a day.

Under Western influence and the spread of the Green Revolution (the American-led process of using advanced technology to increase agricultural productivity) food yields in many countries have rocketed, in some cases by as much as 50 per cent. Total production now frequently rises faster than population.

Yet the effect on the masses has been minimal. The wretched peasant, possibly a tenant displaced in the onrush of the Green Revolution, now looks on from outside the wire fence as tractors and other mechanical equipment spread the fertiliser and gather the produce. And for the comparative few employed inside the fence, the wages paid hardly exceed the traditional starvation level. So, not surprisingly, the bulk of the food produced goes to export. No more now than before does the native have the means to buy the product. So it finds its way to places where people do.

So the problem of the under-developed countries comes into focus. Fighting starvation in the Third World is not a matter of stepping up food production nor of limiting population. If it had been, the various aid programmes to achieve the former and the birth control activities of some governments to bring about the latter would by now have been well on the way to solving it. The real problem, as it has remained since civilisation began, has been to eliminate poverty; to enable the hungry to exert some demand on the food being produced. For amid all the fine talk of world statesmen one fact rings out loud and clear: it is only the poor who go hungry.

But what is the remedy? What measure might give to the poor the means to live rather than merely the hope to survive? Mrs. George has no doubt that it is "thoroughgoing land reform"—the regrouping and distribution of resources to the bottom half of the population. At present too much of the Third World's natural resources are concentrated in the hands of the few. In South America 17 per cent of landowners control 90 per cent of the land. In Asia 20 per cent of landowners control 60 per cent

of the arable land. In Africa 75 per cent of the people have access to a mere four per cent of the land. Just so long as this situation remains untouched, asserts Mrs. George, "Third World coun-



tries can go on increasing their production until hell freezes and hunger will remain, for the production will go to those who already have plenty."

But experience so far of moves to bring about land reform in the Third World have not been encouraging. In Indonesia, the movement started by Sukarno to limit landholdings and to transfer land to the peasants has been stopped by his successors, the reforms being branded as communism. In India, land reform exists—but only on paper; not surprising when it is realised that the landowning classes also furnish the politicians. Of the 220 Congress Party members of parliament, ninety-six own landholdings larger than the laid-down limit. In Pakistan, where the Green Revolution has pushed up land prices by 500 per cent, landlords now compete for land from which the impoverished peasants have been evicted.

"The possession of land and hence of political and economic power", pronounces Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, "is concentrated in the hands of a small minority." "Land reform," he has also warned, "is not exclusively about land. It is about the uses and abuses of power and the social structure through which it is exercised." But the World Bank now appears to dodge the issue. After all, the problem of land ownership is political, and the World Bank is supposed to confine itself to technical matters

The record is bleak, and it would indeed be an optimist who expected early progress in the direction that this book advocates. The first essential is clearly that the world should rid itself of the reflex that flashes to the red flag whenever the very words "land reform" are uttered. A moment's reflection will show that land reform cannot be equated with communism or revolution; yet history shows that landowners consistently refuse even the smallest concession to the landless until revolution brings the whole system of society crashing down on their heads.

But while her analysis of the problem of hunger and poverty in the underdeveloped world is penetrating, sure-footed and sound, Mrs. George's proposals for action betray some lack of sureness of the way out of the morass. If land reform is the basic essential, without which schemes of increased food production are so much waste of time, is it really of value to condemn the profits of the multinational agribusiness corporations and to vilify such

bodies for paying only the level of wages that local economic conditions demand? If it is the *system* of land tenure that needs reform, does it help to place the blame for the gap between rich and poor nations on the "selfishness of the rich"? Can it conceivably relieve the conditions of the unfortunate have-nots of the Third World for Europeans to insist on paying more for their bananas or to fight "the scandalous use of fertilisers on golf courses"? Hacking away at individual tentacles of the octopus may relieve pent-up feelings and give the impression of progress, but only a successful attack on the head will be fully effective; and that would kill off all the tentacles.

Perhaps the anaemia in Mrs. George's proposals for action arise from the obvious shortcomings of systems of land reform that merely take land from one lot of landowners and divide it up between another lot, even though ownership becomes more widely spread. She clearly sees the need for co-operation between these smaller landowners in the interests of efficiency. But she probably also sees that the remedy cannot be universal; it cannot touch every member of the population and, in consequence, it cannot solve the problem of those still left without land who stand as spectators to the whole process. The transaction may make the comfortable class larger but for those on the outside the world remains as bleak as ever.

And even if a fair distribution of land could be made between the whole population—a solution virtually impossible to conceive—how would it also be fair to the millions not yet born who, in due time, will take their places in the doubled world population expected in the early 2000s?

Perhaps the great tragedy of this book, amid all its admirable features and despite the piercing excellence of its analysis, is that Susan George has apparently never heard of her great namesake of the last century who not only came to the same diagnosis of the causes of degrading poverty amid dynamic technological progress but who prescribed a cure—a system of land reform—so universal in its effects that it could endure for all time; a measure designed to bring social justice to the landless of tomorrow

equally with those of today.

Susan George's book lights a flame that deserves to spread wherever the squalid cloud of hunger darkens the doors of humanity. How much brighter it would have blazed had her final chapters drawn upon Henry George's *Progress & Poverty* is a matter on which we can only speculate.

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