

can certainly be no accumulation of capital whereby new enterprises may grow and standards of living increase.

The question is, how is it that wages are so often kept so low? Why do peasants abandon the countryside and



flock to the towns and cities to swell the ranks of the unemployed? Lady Jackson almost tells us in several places, but not quite. She seems to suggest that the main cause of this despair of earning a living on the land is the peasant's lack of know-how. But this simply will not do. Give men the freedom of the land and they will wring a living from it, and a healthy and hearty one too. And it has little to do with the poverty of the soil either. In the South American countries, where poverty is well known, more than eighty per cent of the land is owned by less than ten per cent of the people, and most of these ten per cent are rich. On what do they grow rich? On the dust of the desert? Well then, are these countries overcrowded? They are not. The people number less than forty to the square mile, whereas in Europe, where most people are far better off, there are ten times as many. One may venture the suggestion that not so many people have heard that before. Yet these facts can easily be verified in any reference library.

Lady Jackson mentions speculative booms but does not specify what is most often speculated in—land. Nor does she go on to remind us that every depression is preceded by a speculative land boom. Perhaps by now we have heard the word “land” so often that we really begin to consider the advisability of classing it as a “four-letter word.”

Here and there, Lady Jackson hints at “reforms in land ownership,” of “un-redeemed economics” with land owning families “staying rich and getting richer,” but what practical remedy does she suggest besides a world tax of one per cent of G.N.P. Is this good enough for Christians, she asks. No, it certainly is not, nor for anyone of any other faith or none. Charity, whether international or private, is admirable, but it is not enough. The removal of injustice is of primary urgency. Charity assuages the suffering caused by injustice. Today one third of the world is quite capable of giving of its bounty to the other two thirds of its hungry millions, and no doubt could continue to do so indefinitely. That would be perhaps the greatest act of charity the world has ever known. But meanwhile the greatest injustice would continue—indeed it would be perpetuated—of the private and exclusive ownership of most of the surface of the earth by the privileged few, who demand by legal right all that those who labour upon it produce—all but enough to maintain existence and continue labour.

The remedy, the most urgent reform, lies in a tax upon the land owner based on the value of the land he holds. Not dispossession, not confiscation and re-distribution of the land, not increasing taxes upon his house and other possessions, nor a tax upon his capital, but a payment to the community in proportion to the privilege he holds, a return to his fellow men of the value they have created. How can a Christian, or anyone else for that matter, disapprove of that? Nowhere do we find that God ever said: “This land I give unto this man, but not to that; unto this man give I the right to live on rent, but upon that man be the duty to surrender to another most of that which he produces with his own labour.” Yet to hear many politicians expounding on the subject of land tenure, even today, one might almost think the above to be found in the Bible.

So who among those in political power will at last see the light of reason and justice and insist upon the collection of the economic rent of land and so return to the people the full fruits of their toil? Who shall be the first delegate to the United Nations to call boldly for the sweeping away of this age-old iniquity of land monopoly and most of humanity's miseries with it?

## Bold Views On a Touchy Subject

A. J. CARTER



IT IS NO WONDER that that hoary British institution, the Royal Commission, is still so popular with governments. The government frames the terms of reference and appoints the members. If this does not bring about the desired recommendations a minority report can always be preferred to that of the majority, and, if necessary, the entire report can be set aside and forgotten, with or without an announcement that the relevant ministry is urgently considering the matter. If the government agrees with the commission it can make use of its support to help carry public opinion with it. If the government cannot make up its mind about an issue it can refer it to a royal commission and forget about it for a year or two. It is a very helpful device indeed, and in the frequency of its use one cannot help being reminded of those gentlemen of all political parties whose idea of policy on a particular issue is to create a new ministry or board to deal with it.

The subject of trade unions is a political matter if ever there was one, and a subject, moreover, on which passions tend to be quickly aroused, particularly in view of the Labour Party's (obsolete?) connexion with the trade unions. In April, 1965 the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations was appointed, under the chairmanship of Lord Donovan, and the govern-

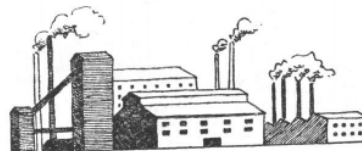
ment was able to relax for over three years until the publication of the report\* in June this year.

The report does not disturb the government's lethargy too much. It was no doubt eagerly awaited by proponents of trade union reform, but to many of them it will be a big disappointment. It comes out against legal enforcement of collective agreements, the dearest wish of the Conservative Party. It pays lip service to the importance of worker participation in management but does not give it the full consideration that this importance warrants. It rejects the possibility of prohibiting the closed shop, although the right of association should include not only the freedom to join associations, but the freedom not to join them. It does not even advocate voting by secret ballot on major issues such as whether or not to call a strike. One impression given by the report is that of caution and scepticism, as if certain of its members were prepared to throw cold water over any idea suggested.

The Commission did, however, make one central recommendation with considerable force, and this recommendation is so important that any timidity elsewhere can very nearly be forgiven. Contrasting the formal system of industrial relations—the keystone of which is the industry-wide collective agreement—with the informal system created by local decisions of managers and shop stewards, the Commission concludes that the conflict can be resolved only by founding industrial relations on company and factory agreements. This trend is already under way in industry, but the Commission feels that it should be speeded up. The significance of the Commission's recommendation lies not only in its championship of local bargaining as such—many managers and others also support it—but in the fact that it sees local bargaining as the formal basis of industrial relations, to which any industry-wide framework would have to be subordinate. This is a major change of emphasis and a step towards the curbing of the power of national trade unions and employers' associations, which are essentially monopolistic organisations.

The advantages of going over to factory or company bargaining are many, not all of which are yet recognised by the pundits. The Donovan Commission rightly regards the decentralisation of collective bargaining as fundamental to the improved use of manpower and as fundamental also to solving the problem of "unofficial" strikes (95 per cent of all stoppages are "unofficial"), but in addition to the gains in productivity and higher standards of living resulting from genuine productivity agreements, and the benefit of closer participation by employees in decisions that affect them, the effect on competition should be very pronounced. Through productivity agreements, go-ahead firms will not only be able to increase efficiency and undercut their competitors, but will also tend to attract labour away from the less dynamic firms which cannot afford the same high wage rates. There will also be a restraining influence on price increases, since wage increases confined to one company cannot be recovered in higher

prices as they can when they apply throughout an industry. Finally, one would expect the variation of wage levels with the supply of labour available in different areas to reduce regional unemployment. (For a discussion of this



point readers are referred to the May, 1964 issue of *LAND & LIBERTY*, "The Proper Remedies," pages 78 and 81.")

Whatever one's reservations about other parts of the report, Lord Donovan and his colleagues are to be congratulated on putting the need for reform of collective bargaining at the centre of their thinking and for expressing it with boldness and even with enthusiasm.

No doubt many of the detailed suggestions made by the Commission are also useful, although for action on these, as on its principal recommendation, we have to await the outcome of further consultations and "study by all concerned" before the Government announces its proposals.

As a postscript, the following is a quotation from the section of the report dealing with incomes policy: "If the decisions companies and trades unions take accord with incomes policy, then incomes policy will work."

Did the distinguished members of the Commission overlook the tautology, or did they assent to it as a subtle indication of what they really think about the relevance of incomes policy?

#### SHORT ADDRESSES

*The short addresses listed below were read at the International Conference at Caswell Bay, September 8-14, 1968. They are duplicated in booklet form and are available at 9d. each or 5s. a set including postage while stocks last.*

**House Purchase on the Margin**  
JULIA BASTIAN

**New Homes for a New Society**  
F. R. GIGGS

**Nothing New Under the Sun**  
W. THOMPSON

**Justice and Jurisprudence**  
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**Town Planning and Land-Value Taxes**  
GUSTAV BOHNSACK

**Patents—a Right to Property**  
N. BILITCH

**Farm Policies for Land Owners in the U.S.A.**  
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**Human Rights—Then and Now**  
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\*Cmdn 3623, HMSO, £1