

Heath - No Baldwin nor Powell

Patrick Cosgrave — *The Spectator*. July 13

FEW objective observers would deny that Mr. Heath himself made a substantial contribution to the Tory defeat last time because of the nature of the impact of his character on the campaign. Tories now veer between a desire for a Powell and a desire for a Baldwin as leader — either a man who will spell out the cruel choices before his countrymen, but manage at the same time to inspire them to sacrifice by his rhetoric, or a man of emollient character who can smuggle radicalism into his policies under a bland disguise. Not even his best friends could pretend that Mr. Heath could do either.

It is extremely doubtful if, for all his occasional appearance of penitence or suggestion of revision, Mr. Heath has even begun to understand what went wrong with his plans for a quiet revolution last time. The simple overall statement to make about his period of government is that the inflation which he inherited from Mr. Wilson got very much worse between 1970 and 1974 and he did little about it.

The worse inflation becomes, the harder it is to gain the assent of a democratic electorate for a policy designed to halt the decay — the people having become daily more disillusioned by their leaders, and daily more cynical about their policies, and daily more bemused by various new combinations of the mixture as before, they are unwilling to continue giving their votes with a full heart to leaders who have already failed them.

Mr. Heath was never a noted nationalist, his European policy alone would probably deny to him forever that distinguished appellation. More urgently, it seems clear that he has not, and will not, rethink the policies on which he was defeated and it seems likewise clear that he simply has not got the personal power to kindle the national enthusiasm which becomes steadily more indispensable. For these reasons the verdict on Mr. Heath must now be the same as that of the electorate earlier this year: he asked the right question, but has produced no evidence that he is the man to answer it.

Rating Reversion Polls

Progress, Melbourne, June

RATEPAYERS who have once experienced site-value rating (and the un-taxing of their homes and other improvements linked with it) are unwilling to revert to the old practice of penalising improvements. This is shown in the results of reversion polls taken to re-test their wishes after the three years'

trial period that must elapse after initial adoption of the system. With only one exception, such reversion polls taken in Victoria have re-affirmed the satisfaction of the ratepayers with site-value rating, almost invariably by larger vote margins than at original polls.

Considering that there are now sixty-two Victorian councils which have adopted site value as their local rate basis, the fact that it has only been challenged to a reversion poll in fourteen of them since 1920, speaks for itself in regard to its public acceptance. Particularly when it is remembered that to have such a poll it is only necessary to present a demand for one signed by 10 per cent of the ratepayers.

Even where there have been reversion polls the demand for them has mostly come from majority votes in the Councils (which have also power to initiate them) and not from the ratepayers as such. Yet although relatively few have come to actual polls there have been many attempts to initiate reversion action.

Other councils are also considering action to whittle down the principle. They have not dared to raise the straight out proposal for full reversion to local taxes on improvements, but are considering proposals to levy "shandy" rates. These are half (or some other proportion) on the value of the land and the rest on the value of land-plus-improvements. Councils considering such proposals at present are Kew City and Knox City.

The "shandy" rate proposal involves return to local taxation of improvements which would be a negation of the ratepayers' two previous decisions for un-taxed improvements.

The Importance of Definition

The Individualist, February

"THE MAN in a nationalised industry gains freedom from the fear of unemployment." The constant use by socialists of this and similar arguments shows that they recognise the attraction that the idea of freedom has for the average elector, and they strive to show that the loss of freedom involved in the abolition of free competition is balanced by a gain of other freedom. The confusion springs from the failure of all the national languages to distinguish between "freedom" and "absence of." The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines freedom as "the absence of bondage to another person." Therefore it is wrong to speak of freedom from want, fear, disease, unemployment, etc., because none of these evils ordinarily springs from bondage to another person. The proper term to use in such cases is "absence of want, fear, etc."