

plain. On 28 February, 18 million electors in this country voted for the pro-European Conservative and Liberal Parties and only 11 million voters gave their support to the anti-European Labour Party.

For the present Prime Minister to promise a referendum is merely a way to capture the popular vote and for the Foreign Secretary to have behaved in the unstatesman-like way which he recently has is to further diminish Great Britain's standing in the eyes of the rest of

the world.

It is about time we realised that Europe is a 'great adventure' - not only is there no alternative in the longer term but to withdraw would be to go back on our word and slump further into the back seat of international affairs.

To stay in gives us the opportunity to lead from the driving seat.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN HEDDIE

Kent County Councillor

The Realities of Politics

ROY DOUGLAS

THERE is an ancient myth that politics operates rather like this. Various politicians make speeches in which they explain and defend the policies of their own Party and attack the policies of the Other Lot. Possibly these politicians spend a few off moments in opening fêtes and/or kissing babies. The electors listen attentively to what the politicians say, and follow carefully the other public activities of these worthy men. In the fullness of time, there is an election. The voters weigh what they have seen and heard, and decide in the light either of the Public Good or their own self-interest (or some mixture of the two) to whom they should give their votes.

Alas, politics isn't like this at all. Most voters probably came to the same reason as they came to support their favourite football team: because most of their friends were doing the same. Having once decided which Party to support for this excellent reason, they then continue to support that particular Party for an even better reason — "because I always have done". Voters, no doubt, sometimes get hot under the collar about things that happen in politics but it is doubtful whether many of them really expect much good or harm to come from Our Lot or The Other Lot winning an election — any more than they really expect much good or harm to come from one team or another

winning a football match.

However, if we want to make the world a better place than it is; if we wish to exert an effect upon governments; we must face the world as it is, not the world as we would like it to be. To see the political world as it is, Professor Jean Blondel's book* provides a good vantage-point of observation. The author really does deal with the things that matter in political behaviour and organisation. What sort of people support the various political parties? How common are middle-class socialists and working-class Tories? Are supporters of a particular Party more or less evenly distributed, or are they lumped more in some places than in others? How do the voters see their own Party, and the other Parties? Are the people who go into active political work a more



or less random cross-section of social and ideological components of the Party to which they belong, or are they in some way exceptional among the supporters of that Party? Who pays for whose politics? Who influences whom, and how does he do it? What is the

* *Voters, Parties and Leaders*, Pelican, 50p

function of the civil service in all this? Do Parties really matter at all?

These, and many other similar questions, are discussed at considerable length by Professor Blondel. His book started life in 1963 as a hard-cover publication for the erudite. It has now been revised and brought up to date, as a Pelican paperback. That is always a sign of literary success; often — as here — it is a sign of real scholarship. To read and assimilate this excellent and very readable book may be a good way of saving oneself twenty years of slog and heartburn in politics.

QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT

Rent Rebates in Scotland

Mr. Sillars (Ayrshire S. La) asked the Secretary of State for Scotland at what level of income a family composed of a man, wife and two children will qualify for a nil rent in each of the four cities in Scotland.

Mr. William Ross: Qualification depends on the levels of standard rent operating. On the basis of the average weekly standard rent in each city at 28th November 1973, the highest levels of income qualifying for nil rent would be: Aberdeen, £22.61; Dundee, £22.37; Edinburgh, 21.66; Glasgow, £22.70.

Rents in Scotland

Mr. Bruce-Gardyne (Angus S. C) asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the ratio of average council house rents to average family incomes in Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Millan: The most recent estimate available is for 1972, when the figure was about 5 per cent.

Mr. MacArthur (Perth and E. Perthshire) asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authority tenants in Scotland are now paying a nil rent.

Mr. Millan: At 28th November 1973 — the latest date for which information is available — there were about 42,000 tenants whose total rent was met by rebate.