

practically untouched the unearned increases in land values that are the inevitable result of developmental works and other activities carried out largely at the expense of the general taxpayers of the community.

The general rates in irrigation districts — now levied on unimproved capital values — are a step in the right direction in that they are levied on what is essentially unearned increment and do not bear at all upon the improvements effected as a result of the farmers' efforts on the land. For 1957/58 these rates on unimproved capital values are expected to amount to 25 per cent. of the total revenues from irrigation districts...

The Commission is a regional planning authority to the extent that it is responsible for town water supplies, for farm water supplies, for irrigation, for flood protection, drainage and stream improvement, and in co-operation with other authorities for mapping, soil conservation and catchment preservation.

Much has been achieved. Over very large areas the menace of drought has been removed, and the overall effect of the Commission's undertakings on the economy of the State has been very great indeed in enabling continuity of production in spite of the vagaries of climate.

Some 664,000 residents in 298 country towns can enjoy the convenience and safety of reticulated water supplies, and works to supply additional towns are in course of construction. Twenty-one thousand farms on which reside some 63,000 people over an area of 11,500,000 acres have been made habitable by the provision of assured supplies of drinking water for the people and their stock which number at least 2,300,000 sheep and 40,000 cattle. Irrigation channels have been constructed throughout an area of 2,150,000 acres in which have been developed 16,000 farms where last year 855,000 acres of land received ample supplies of water for pastures, for vineyards, for orchards, and other forms of intensive culture...

Irrigation has resulted in the development of thriving country cities and towns where, in most cases, not even villages would exist without irrigation. A former Chairman of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission described the Commission's task in irrigation expansion as being "*to scatter plenty o'er a smiling land*" and that is just what it does...

In water conservation, upon which expansion of our population is absolutely dependent, we cannot stand still. *Vast natural resources do not of themselves make a country great and prosperous — that comes only from the vision, ability and courage of its people — and the greatest and most needed of these attributes is courage.*

EDUCATION IN A FREE SOCIETY

To the Editor of Land & Liberty.

Sir,—Mr. A. J. Carter's article on Education in a Free Society reminds us that economic justice and mental freedom are as inherently linked together as man's body and mind. And the distinguished educationalist, Massimo

Salvadori* has recently shown that education as practised today tends to foster servitude and not liberty of thought.

But Mr. Carter's trust in positive State action is not convincing. A hundred years ago John Stuart Mill pointed out that "a general State education is a contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another . . . it establishes a despotism over the mind leading by natural tendency to one over the body." Surely subsequent events have amply confirmed Mill's view. The Germany which surrendered itself to Hitler was the most state-educated nation in Europe. In England State-planned education preceded Economic Planning.

The careers of most of the outstanding characters and intellects of the world suggest they owed little or nothing to orthodox education, of which State education is the extreme expression. Perhaps the most successful educational experiment in modern times has been the Danish Folk High School movement. This was independent, unorthodox, controversial—and inexpensive. It emphasised the "useless" humanities above technical instruction, it provoked students to reject authority and think for themselves—the true purpose of education. But, since these schools have accepted State subsidies their spirit and influence have sadly declined.

The family, as the natural unit, has the first responsibility in deciding the child's schooling. The community, in self defence, has the right to prevent the family from deliberately producing ignorant, dangerous or useless citizens. If authority laid on *parents* the responsibility for educating normal children up to a prescribed standard in the rudiments higher education could safely be left to all the ingenuity and variety of competitive intelligence. And this variety of competition would evoke controversy, the sure indication of independent and vigorous thought. At present parents do not exercise thought about their children's education because the State thinks for them and, through the tax collector, robs them of the means of paying. If the responsibility and the money were both restored to the natural sources an intelligent interest would grow automatically.

Mr. Carter admits the right of parents to contract out of State education. This, if granted, would widen the variety of teaching and by arousing controversy do something to check the tyranny of examinations. Examinations (purely technical subjects apart) tend to instruct pupils what to think rather than develop the spirit of independent enquiry, and the majority of teachers, wishing to earn their salaries with the least exertion, do not encourage pupils to ask awkward questions. Such teachers naturally seek shelter behind the rules and regulations laid down by State Inspectors. Private education should be entirely free; competition would eliminate schools which failed to develop intelligence.

Yours faithfully,
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