

of the landlord, the tax-collector, and the moneylender. Agrarian reform, which the Communists have made the corner-stone of their programme, has long been the crying need." We should say, affect to make. The Communists display "great originality in adapting their principles to these special circumstances," as soon as they occupy an area redistributing the land so that "an equal share" goes to every man, woman and child. They claim that this is "no more than the implementation of the original 'land-to-the-tiller' programme of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, long embodied in paper legislation never carried out," owing to the decay of idealism and honesty in the Kuomintang "when it began to taste the sweets of power."

We are indebted to Mr. J. Rupert Mason, of San Francisco, for a reminder of Dr. Sun Yat Sen's policy as he expounded it to American reporters when he retired from office. "The teachings of your single taxer, Henry George, will be the basis of our programme of reform. The land tax, as the only means of supporting the government, is an infinitely just, reasonable, and equitably distributed tax, and on it we will found our new system."

#### THE AGRARIAN RED HERRING

The *Times* correspondent hardly seems to have understood the reform as advocated by the original Chinese idealists. It was not concerned only with "agrarian reform" any more than the slavery in the tin mines is "agrarian" slavery. The monopoly which keeps a producer (except on the landlord's terms) from the earth's agricultural opportunities is exactly the same as that which keeps a producer from the earth's mining, manufacturing or commercial opportunities. A peasant, miner, artisan or trader deprived of the land he requires for his business is equally destitute and the destitution of any one of these classes of producers will inexorably affect the standards of other classes, whether the country is mainly

agricultural, mining, manufacturing or commercial. The need of the State for revenue, where land value remains in private possession, will in the same way subject the producer to the exactions of the tax collector, and the moneylender will always remain powerful where real money is scarce or concentrated in few hands.

China's weakness is our weakness, China's danger is our danger. And our rulers, also, some of whom at one time saw the dangers of land monopoly, and the true remedy, have "tasted the sweets of power."

#### WHERE REVOLUTIONS START

It is significant that Karl Marx, who expected the revolution to break out first in the highly industrialised countries, has been refuted by events. Society has been overturned first where the land question has appeared more obvious and urgent. On the other hand, it is the small peasant proprietors who have offered the stoutest resistance to Communism. In Russia the Communist authorities were obliged to liquidate them with appalling cruelty; in Yugoslavia the Communist newspaper, *Borba*, admits that, despite measures of elimination, "they still have a very strong position in the countryside." In Poland and Hungary even the Communist rulers do not yet feel strong enough to embark on deliberate and wholesale expropriation. In Italy the peasants have come into conflict with the State in their efforts to occupy land belonging to large proprietors, including the State itself. Is it not obvious that a serious effort *now* in all Western democracies to deal with the land question would not only allay discontent but would raise up an impregnable barrier to the extension of Communism? If there is any selfishness in the current tendency in Press and radio to deprecate or ignore the land question this selfishness may well prove to be of that short-sighted kind which destroys itself.

## TRANSPORT AND OTHER MONOPOLIES

UNDER A "voluntary agreement" the State authority—the British Transport Commission—has taken over most of the transport concern known as Thomas Tilling, Ltd. The price is nearly £25,000,000 worth of stock, guaranteed by the British taxpayer and, in addition, at least one director of the original company has a seat on the board of the British Transport Commission. Sir Frederick Heaton, chairman of the company, is reported to have described this settlement as equitable. None could justly censure any business man in present circumstances for making the best terms he can with the Government or even "getting in first" when there might appear to be a chance of becoming an ally rather than a victim. But one may well question the ultimate justice of our arrangement by which the owner of a business, which under free conditions, could make a profit only by serving the public in competition with others, should be relieved of competition and risk at the expense of the taxpayer. If it is a real crime to own and operate private buses this should be stopped, and *without compensation*. If it is not a crime it should not be stopped. If the owners enjoy any kind of monopoly or privilege in this business that is no reason for the State to buy out the monopoly; the right course is to reform the laws which create it.

Messrs. Tilling, it is reported, retain ownership in other parts of their concern, including freehold and leasehold property, and insurance companies and investment trusts—the assets of which normally comprise freehold and leasehold property. In this also Messrs. Tilling show business acumen. Did not the Town and Country Plan-

ning Act look after their interests? By placing restrictions and penalties (the "Development Charge") upon the development of new land, an extra premium is given to land already developed; to "freehold and leasehold property," in fact. And this also at the expense of the general public.

The directors of Messrs. Tilling might have an interesting exchange of experiences with the owners of Christmas Island, who recently sold "their" land to the Australian and New Zealand Governments for £2,750,000. These owners, however, could hardly claim that they "made" the phosphate which the island contains, whereas Messrs. Tilling must, in fact, have built their buses and developed their organisation.

#### WHERE NATIONALISATION FAILED

"We shall soon see what the bureaucrats will do with the (Tilling) buses," remarks the *Manchester Guardian*, November 9th, but where a State-owned business operates under conditions of monopoly there is no standard by which its success can be finally judged. To raise the fares, or prices, or obtain some indirect subsidy, might easily conceal gross inefficiency. It is only where a State industry comes into competition with concerns it cannot control or tax that the results may be judged. This has occurred where governments acquired shipping lines. Mr. Baker White, M.P., in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, December 1st, cites a formidable list of shipping lines taken over by various governments, which, after operating at great loss, had eventually to be sold to private

concerns. The Australian Government, between 1916 and 1928, lost £10 millions, the Tasmanian Government £200,000, the United States £620 millions, Canada £16 millions, and France £43 millions, are some examples. It is no wonder that the present British Government has so far omitted the shipping industry from its programme of nationalisation. What a sorry admission this is of its lack of confidence in the policy by which it secured the votes of the electors and proposed to cure those evils which the previous Conservative Governments had shown themselves unable to remedy!

Those trade unionists who believed that nationalisation of the industries in which they were engaged would bring them greater prosperity and freedom, or even power, must have received many shocks from the language and demeanour of the official directors whom, no doubt, they expected to find much more amenable than private owners engaged in competitive business. When a rise of fares or rates or prices might adversely affect the chances of an election no group of politicians is likely to show much consideration to those in its power. And if free elections are to be suppressed even less consideration will be shown.

### THE RESORT TO STRIKES

This dilemma confronts those London bus strikers who were recently confronted by an ultimatum from the Chairman of the London Transport Executive. In addition to a direct threat of dismissal "whatever the consequences," the Executive upbraided them for "breach of agreement" and acting "in defiance of their accredited trade unions." One wonders if any trade union can be entirely free if it has first to be "accredited" by some official or semi-official body. Moreover, previous examples have shown that bus workers are by no means free to join whatever kind of union they wish, or not to join any union. And can any agreement be called free as far as the rank and file are concerned if it is signed only by leaders who are assumed to have dictatorial powers over their followers? Every person has a right to join freely with others for the purpose of bargaining in a free market, whether for the exchange of goods, for the labour which produces the goods, or for direct services. If, after agreeing to such a bargain, he withdraws, he is justly to be condemned for bad faith. But if he is forced to join such an association, forced to "agree" to all previous commitments it may have made, and forced to abide by any decision its leaders may make afterwards, it is hypocrisy to talk about honour or dishonour, however convenient for the Transport Executive, and however it may accord with the feelings of the public, naturally indignant at the prospect of inconvenience or higher fares.

### OVERGROWN UNIONS

The public have every right to complain that they should be put to inconvenience, hardship or expense by large-scale stoppages of services or the supply of widely-used commodities, but they would be well-advised to remember that further coercion is no remedy and that as reliance on coercion becomes ever more habitual towards strikers, so it will be extended even more into other classes and spheres of activity. Clergyman who denounce the wicked selfishness of his strikers may eventually discover they themselves are unable to strike when some ruthless dictator appoints one of his henchmen to the See of Canterbury. Moreover, it is not difficult to guess to what quarter the abused strikers might turn their eyes when they feel ostracised by all-powerful sections of our democratic community, including the V.I.Ps. of the

trade unions. The appearance of so many names of trade union leaders in the Honours List is extremely unlikely to afford the rank and file much consolation.

It cannot be denied that the mammoth trade union has exceeded the legitimate purpose for which trade unions were originally constituted, that its purpose is now aggressive as well as defensive, and that the operation of such a huge structure requires some measure of dictatorial power in the hands of a few leaders. But it is useless to attempt to control or reverse this overgrown power by applying coercion at the top, or assuming that the phenomena has arisen from any inherent wickedness in either the leaders or their followers. The same symptoms of aggression without and coercion within can be observed on the other side of industry among price rings, combines and some of the trade associations. The blackleg has his counterpart in the pirate bus, the cut-price store and the barrow boy, and the public has shown little or no sympathy with any of these, although their operations, if allowed to expand, would tend to provide the alternative goods and services which would make any large-scale hold-up of goods, services or prices almost impossible. The remedy for overgrown unions, either of capital or labour, is the same: it is to open up a vastly increased opportunity for the application of labour and for the accumulation and investment of capital. Until we sweep away the tariffs, subsidies and other kinds of State protection, behind which the combines are organised, until we relieve the provident classes of producers from the crushing taxation which helps to prevent all but the rich from becoming capitalists, and until we liberate the community from the land monopoly, which exerts a strangle-hold on labourers and capitalists alike and, even without tariffs, tends inexorably to concentrate economic power—until the public are prepared to deal with these factors of the situation, they must expect recurring strikes and the consequences which further coercion will eventually entail.

F. D. P.

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An aeroplane with full passenger load sailed from Northolt, on December 30th. Destination was Le Bourget, Paris, but because of bad weather it could not land there. The pilot made for Abbeville and when the passengers disembarked they had to remount the plane and return to London. The reason was that there is no Customs house at Abbeville; no stand-and-deliver officials to bid the passengers welcome and give them the pass to enter France. An amusing incident for Free Traders to enter in their diaries.

At the January meeting of the Colchester Town Council (*Eastern County Telegraph*, January 7th), there was considerable discussion on the increased burden of rates, and much disquiet at the deficit in the general rate fund. Pleas for economies and a contraction policy were rebutted by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Wornsop, who said year by year there had been complaints about the rates going up and repeatedly he had declared that the question of high rates had to be met by an entirely new theory—not by deciding to close the Museum and such like. There was a far better policy than that; it was the policy of the taxation of land values. The present basis was quite wrong. The basis should be altered; the way was to distribute the burden more fairly amongst the general community, and not say "Cut this and cut that." Alderman H. G. Thompson (Liberal) spoke warmly in approval of the Deputy Mayor's point of view.

**Land-Value Reform.** By J. Dundas White, LL.D. Basic principles of a just land tenure, with the author's legislative proposals for their practical application. Land & Liberty Press, Ltd. Price 2s. By post, 2s. 3d.