

Politicians — Kick Them But Keep Them

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I HAVE BEEN reading a number of extracts from speeches made by politicians in various parts of the country and I have been struck by their infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, and deep concern for the likes of you and me. It would be, of course, quite wrong to tar all politicians with the same brush; after all, some are not quite as bad as others. Sorry, I should have said as good as others.

Politicians who assure us of the wisdom and virtue of their own Party and of the wickedness and incompetence of the others, are guilty either of blatant cynicism or gross self-deception.

Perhaps an explanation of this lies in the pernicious habit of politicians to double-think on economic and social problems. They are fond of expounding a certain economic or moral principle and then finding excuses for not following the course that the principle indicates.

All parties of course believe in freedom. But we are told that to enjoy freedom we must make sacrifices so that the price to be paid for freedom is slavery.

All parties are agreed on the need for more housing; but when they have got everyone agreeing what a big social problem this is, they then proceed to pass legislation the effect of which is to reduce housing accommodation, — security of tenure, for instance, being extended to furnished dwellings. They commiserate with the home owner for the burden of his mortgage, and say it is a scandal, and then continue with their policies of debauching the currency and so forcing up interest rates which naturally react to currency depreciation.

They urge the need for dealing with inflation and point out the sufferings of people on fixed incomes, etc. and then vote for measures which will perpetuate this inflation.

When they find that their anti-inflationary policies do not work, they proceed to throw the blame on to wage earners for daring to ask for higher wages in order to keep pace with the government paper-chase.

Whenever some pettifogging and derisory "land reform" measures are introduced into Parliament, members of the Left stand up, wave copies of *Progress* & *Poverty* and sing the Land Song. As though the

legislation had any relation to either.

After introducing policies that cripple industries, they point with scorn, and cry "mismanagement". The answer of course is to nationalise these industries and show how they should be run. On the other hand when industries are making a good profit, they cry "unjust profits", and the remedy is the same — nationalisation.

In their arguments for Britain joining the EEC politicians from all sides sang the praises of free trade, yet accepted that we should restrict, limit or tax goods from countries outside the EEC.

The trouble, of course, is that some things the Conservatives say of Labour are absolutely true, and very often their reasoning is sound. So it is, but to a lesser degree perhaps, with the criticisms by Labour, of the Conservatives. But these are largely on peripheral matters for if there is anything that all three parties agree upon it is a mixed economy, and by that is meant 95 per cent government intervention mixed with five per cent free enterprise. If this is not what they advocate now, it is certainly what a mixed economy will eventually become, if the policies advocated by all three parties are followed through to their bitter end.

Every time a social problem arises, more legislation is pushed through Parliament. When this causes unexpected side-effects, then more legislation is passed through to counter the effects of the previous bad legislation. And if this in turn gives rise to more problems, then again adjustments must be made, more legislation, more controls. Thus the road to an almost total planned economy is made inevitable.

Since the approach to social and economic problems is to deal with effects rather than with causes, it is inevitable that the effects of bad policies must be dealt with rather than the bad policy be abolished. The voice of the people is not heard. Politicians' ears are open only to those with the loudest voices, the greatest power or the greatest block vote.

There is nothing new in what I have said, but I had to get it off my chest. Having done so I would not like it to be thought that I am condemning our parliamentary institutions and condemning politicians as being beyond reform. Maybe electors should be wiser in their choices whichever party they support, but one thing is certain — the more our parliamentary system is brought into disrepute, the nearer comes the day when it will be replaced by some form of dictatorship. It has been said that if you knock the crown off a monarch's head, there will always be someone standing by to pick it up and wear it. Cynicism is a two-edged sword; it can prod us into action or it can reduce us to despairing inertia. Let us have the right reaction to the way we are governed, or we shall have no choice at all.