

FLUORIDATION AND THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

Letter from the Medical Adviser* to the House of Commons All Party Committee on Freedom of Information and Privacy. Dr. Hamlyn is currently campaigning to get a Freedom of Information Act on to the Statute Book.

Mr. Clavell Blount has brought to the attention of the public over and over again the statement: "If the Department of Health and Social Security revealed the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about placing fluoride in our water supply there would be no fluoridation issue."

The truth is concealed by the Official Secrets Acts. For what reason, one can only guess.

It is interesting to look back at the origin of official secrecy. People suppose that secrecy is used by government to protect the state from foreign enemies. In 1878 the Marquess of Salisbury, the British Foreign Secretary, made a dubious deal with the Russians. A junior temporary clerk in the Foreign Office, Charles Marvin, who knew Russian and was given the task of copying the relevant memorandum, was so outraged at what was being contrived that he reported the matter to the press. In the House of Lords Salisbury denied the authenticity of Marvin's revelation. Earl Grey expressed his relief. "It appeared too monstrous to be believed that Her Majesty's Government could have made such a stipulation as was alleged." (Hansard, June 3rd, 1879, col. 1061.)

Subsequently events proved the authenticity of Marvin's press release. Salisbury did not rest until he had reformed the law to prevent any such future indiscretions on the part of civil servants. And so was official secrecy born. Not to protect the state but to protect its Ministers from discovery. What would we discover about fluoridation if we had a Freedom of Information and Privacy Act to replace the official secrets acts? It will be interesting to find out. Fluoridation is only one of many contentious issues which would quickly resolve with a more open form of government. If people were able to know what really goes on in Whitehall there would be a tremendous renewal of interest in government by the people.

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It is even possible that many bad conditions might improve.

Note: Mr. Blount is Chairman of the National Anti-Fluoridation Campaign, 36 Station Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey.

A Dangerous Precedent

THE Royal College of Physicians' Report on Fluoridation in January has aroused considerable controversy. It was the subject of debate on the radio (London Broadcasting Company, January 6), of letters to the editor in the National Press, of a press notice by the National Anti-Fluoridation Campaign and of an article in the *Evening Argus*, Brighton, January 8. Not everyone is content to leave this matter to the "experts", particularly when there are so many questions left unanswered.

The *Evening Argus* raises the doubts and apprehensions of many when it says, in an editorial, "A disturbing point in the report by the Royal College of Physicians favouring the doctoring of drinking water with fluoride is that there is 'no evidence' that the process has any harmful effects." If the report had said there was no conclusive evidence, says the *Argus* it could be read with greater confidence. There certainly is evidence of the harmful effects where fluoridation has taken place, if only circumstantial, which the Royal College has been unable to explain.

The editorial goes on: "The totally unacceptable argument in the report is that because people



accept water purification processes—the addition of chlorine, for example—there is no reason why they should not accept the addition of fluoride. This argument is so hollow, and so misleading, that it would have been better left out. Its conclusion smacks of a desperate desire to push the case for fluoride at all costs.

"The purification of water by chemical means is a clear process of destroying harmful substances. The addition of fluoride is not. It is—and the doctors do not attempt to deny it—compulsory medication of the public at the decision of people in authority. That does not make it harmful in itself. It does make it a serious question of public policy. It takes away people's choice, people's freedom not to be compulsorily medicated."

Give way on this principle, says the *Argus*, and what comes next? A precedent has been established for almost any kind of medication to be added to drinking water—all in the "public interest."

Harmfulness apart, fluoridation of public water supplies is a blatant infringement of the liberty of the individual to choose his own medication and to take it in any available form he wishes, in toothpaste or tablets—if he believes it to be to his benefit.

Letters to the Editor

ALMOST WATER-TIGHT

SIR, — Richard Body's pamphlet entitled *No Way to Feed a Nation* is as welcome as a deep breath of fresh air. It exposes some of the political thinking which lies behind our agricultural policies for what it is; well intentioned it may be sometimes, but in

reality much is idle, unreasoned, sentimental, wasteful, injurious, dishonest, fraudulent, coercive, tyrannical, and in the final analysis, certain policies which declare crimes in innocent economic activities, are criminal themselves.

Mr. Body reminds us that the marginal farmer is a permanent member of every community and

that his problems are raised into political spheres only because politicians often do not listen to his real needs but to his clamours instead. Greater state aids may encourage him to venture higher into the Welsh hills or deeper into the Yorkshire moors, but they do not help his predicament by one jot. Greater state aids only serve to insulate Westminster by placing the marginal producer out of earshot.

In one respect Mr. Body endangers his commanding case. He defines the word "dumping" too loosely and this word is the "bath plug" of the entire matter.

Yours faithfully,

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SITE-VALUE RATING IN JOHANNESBURG

SIR, — As a regular reader of your admirable journal, I was most interested in Mr. McCulloch's excellent article on site-value rating in Johannesburg (Jan/Feb 76).

It appears to be most successful, and as the author states "the beneficial results are obvious . . . there are more new developments and more replacement of non-viable buildings than in any other city in the Western World . . ." Pretoria also "only started to develop after the change from the rating of improvements to site value rating seven years ago.

However I would respectfully like to ask whether the Johannesburg method reflects the optimum Henry George doctrine; and—to pose a hypothetical question—if you were asked to address a meeting of South African site-valuers in Johannesburg, what theoretical or practical matters (if any) would you draw to their attention once you had given proper and deserved praise to their unique and very considerable achievements.

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL D. K. TURNER

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Editor's note

While the local tax system in Johannesburg by no means reflects the optimum of Henry George's ideas, it does reflect the *principle*. Thus the value of the example that Johannesburg offers lies not only in what it achieves but what

an extension of the principle would do if applied on a national basis replacing other taxes.

There is little we can tell the site valuers of Johannesburg that they do not know first hand from their own experience—indeed there is more perhaps that they could tell us. On the other hand, there is much we might feel inclined to tell the *politicians* not only in South Africa but in other countries particularly that the answer to many of their economic problems lies under their feet.

HENRY GEORGE AND THE POPE

SIR, — Permit me to thank Mr. Michael Silagi for his kind reply to my letter, "Henry George and the Pope."

Even granting that Henry George and Cardinal Manning considered the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* to be aimed at Henry George, the internal and external evidence is completely against it. Henry George probably associated the condemnation of his books by the Holy Office—a decision later revoked—with the Pope himself. The McGlynn affair, understandable but unfortunate, was also put right by the Church.

Pope Leo XIII was concerned to condemn "*laissez-faire*" economics, and the political system of socialism which was a reaction to it.

Pope Pius XI in a later encyclical wrote, "First, let it be made quite clear beyond all doubt that neither Pope Leo XIII nor those theologians who have taught under the guidance and direction of the church have ever denied or called in question the *twofold aspect of ownership which is either individual or social, according as it regards individuals or concerns the common good.*"

Lastly the Pope authorised his own Delegate in 1892 on leaving Rome for America to investigate the case of the Georgeist priest, Dr. McGlynn, and the latter was vindicated with the words, "Dr. McGlynn has presented a brief statement of his opinions on moral economic matters, and it was judged not contrary to the doctrine constantly taught by the Church and as recently confirmed by the Holy Father, in his Encyclical

Rerum Novarum."

True, Leo did not explicitly advocate George's thesis—but this is not a Pope's job. His principle of the widest possible distribution of the ownership of productive property gave rise to the "Distributionism" practised by some Catholics to this day. Of these some firmly believe that it can never be fully achieved until solidly based on Georgeist ideas. But that is another story.

Yours faithfully,

MRS. MARIE MCCRONE

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Northants

GOLD AND THE MARKET

SIR, — I think the time has come for Mr. Henry Meulen and me to bring our correspondence to an end. Mr. Meulen cannot understand what I am saying: I cannot understand why he cannot understand.

The trouble seems to be that Mr. Meulen has not grasped the idea that the substance gold itself might once again be money in the same way as it used to be. A sovereign could not then have a price because it would itself be the money in which prices were expressed. Money does not have a price in money: it *is* money.

This difficulty on Mr. Meulen's part makes it impossible for him to write without contradicting himself. In Mr. Meulen's free market, for instance, a seller can refuse to sell. Quite right! All sellers could refuse to sell if they felt like it. What then would be the price ruling on the previous day at which a bank would redeem its notes? With no sellers there would be no price.

I hope some of these mysteries will be made clearer to Mr. Meulen when he reads my forthcoming book *What is happening to Britain's Economy?* which is to be published at £2.95 early in March. Copies of the first edition may be applied for by readers of LAND & LIBERTY and, incidentally, *The Individualist*, up to the end of March at the special pre-publication price of £2 signed or £1.75 unsigned.

Yours faithfully,

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