

LAND

AND LIBERTY

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APOLOGY

THE EDITOR apologises to readers for the very late arrival of *Land & Liberty*. Among other reasons, staff have been heavily engaged in work in Russia, which contributed to the disruption of the production schedule. We have tried to redeem ourselves: we hope you enjoy this bumper double issue.

Editor: Fred Harrison
Editorial Consultant: V.H. Blundell
Art Editor: Nick Dennys

Editorial Offices:
177 Vauxhall Bridge Road
London SW1V 1EU
Tele: 071 834 4266

121 East 30th Street
New York, N.Y. 10016
Tele: 212 889 8020

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EDITORIAL

CAPITALISM: THE ERA OF DESPAIR

WE HEAR it once again, this time from the voice of the financial and business world. In its Christmas message to the beneficiaries of capitalism, *The Financial Times* of London editorialised on December 24: "No known alternative stands ready for the choosing." Rot!

With the eclipse of the communist ideology, no-one disagrees that the market mechanism is superior to the diktat of bureaucrats whose commands were supposed to produce the best economic results. But the free market is not the capitalist economy. Market economics has a history that predates the Bible. Witness the continental caravan routes that took wares, by horse and camel to the far corners of the world, to be traded in the squares of town and village. Capitalism is a unique combination of institutions, just two centuries old. And this is what it brought us - according to *The Financial Times*:

- "Even the middle classes, who have benefited most from economic growth, are wrestling with unease. Those in jobs fear that they may lose what they have, while those outside note that however rich the super-rich may get, large-scale unemployment persists."

- "The 1980s created losers as well as winners, as can be seen on the pavements of cities across Europe and the US. In many cases the poor have become poorer, relatively in some countries, absolutely in others."

- "About two-thirds of the world's population have gained little or no substantial advantage from rapid economic growth. In the developed world, the lowest quartile of income earners has witnessed trickle-up rather than trickle-down."

The *FT* proposes the need for "new structures that provide accountability, transparency, choice and genuine care for those who cannot manage for themselves" - merging their strictures on the shortcomings of "welfare capitalism" (a contradiction in terms) with a patronising attitude guaranteed to foster dependency for "the poor". Christmas, declared the *FT*, was a time when "those who desire an economic success built upon something other than foundations of much misery and deprivation engage in the search for policies which are both hard-headed and ethical".

An alternative to capitalism is known, and is on offer, "ready for the choosing". It is the economic system built on a philosophy of property and public finance that would transform society, which would abolish exploitation and involuntary poverty. The philosophy is most neatly crystallised by Henry George in *Progress and Poverty* (1879), which remains the most eloquent critique of capitalism as well as communism. The principles articulated by George will have to be adopted if there is to be "accountability, transparency, choice and genuine care". Ask the Mexican revolutionaries (see page 6), for whom the slogan remains as valid today, 70 years later, as they were when they originally rallied the peasants around Zapata's cry: "Land and Liberty!"

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DOUBLE ISSUE