

## The Challenge of our Times

THE chorus of condemnation at the British Government's economic policies swelled to a flood just before the Parliamentary recess. It came from many quarters and was not just the voice of the official Opposition. Political commentators, who, a few months earlier, could not think of enough adulative adjectives to describe Mr. Wilson, are now sadly disillusioned. Government supporters are disheartened and a number are in open revolt. The public are bewildered at the Labour Government's answer to "thirteen wasted years" of Tory rule.

In echoing the condemnation of the economic madhouse that the present Government has created, we can find little consolation in the stream of purely destructive criticism that has descended on its head.

Some political observers and economists, however, have become bold and have even begun to question the whole concept of the state-controlled economy. The few who have always opposed it are finding that their voices are no longer lost in the wilderness.

When the present Government's policies are finally completely discredited—as they will be—the real battle will begin.

The forces under attack will be those, who, clinging to office, will continue their frantic search for new palliatives and gimmicks dressed up to look like the results of revolutionary thinking.

The official Opposition will persist in their claim that the Tories can do the same wrong things far better.

Advocates of free enterprise will argue for a floating exchange rate, for the lifting of tariff barriers, the relegation to the dustbin of the "national plan" and incomes policy, and for more logical and lower taxation.

There are promising signs that the arguments

of this last group are gaining strength and that ideas that have been regarded as heresies may after all make economic sense.

But the proponents of free enterprise not only have their hands full; they have them tied. What solutions can they offer for the deeply-rooted and seemingly intractable social problems of our age?

To retrace one's steps from the wrong road only brings one back to the crossroads, and to settle there will not satisfy those who are only too keenly aware of the injustices in society, of the inequitable distribution of wealth and of the state-sponsored and state-instigated network of privileges bestowed upon pressure groups and sectional interests.

What can free enterprise offer the misguided and disillusioned supporters of socialism? By their reasoning, enterprise has been too free, and the road to socialism was but only begun. They want no retracing of steps, for the millenium lies at the end of the road—notwithstanding the pitfalls on the way.

They are wrong. But the free enterprisers are only half right, and if they wish to be listened to by all sections of the community, and not only by those with a vested interest in free enterprise, they must advocate *real* social justice.

This is the challenge they must face—or lose all.