

"things generally said." His profound distrust of all enthusiasm for general propositions could not blind him to obvious anomalies in practice or deter him from further research. He is the first conservative to our knowledge who has at the same time expounded the advantages of land value taxation and exposed the specious fallacies embodied in the Town and Country Planning Act.

Although Dr. Martin-Leake says, "the arguments for and against free trade are too complex" to be given in his book, it is evident he rejects free trade and considers the Liberal arguments in its favour were strongly influenced by the industrialists' special interest in securing cheap labour, involving "exploitation" of the working classes. His use of such terms as "schemes of social reconstruction," "inflationary pressure," "the inflationary spiral," etc., is certainly no departure from the realm of "things generally said," and leads him to accept fallacies generally held, such as the assumption that wages are drawn from capital, imports cause unemployment, and economic law changes with the passage of time.

The tendency to seek ulterior motives in every association and every movement for radical reform obscures his appreciation of the essential difference between selfishness and legitimate self-interest. He fails to see that two exchangers in bargaining with each other, under a free system, reach voluntary agreement not only in their own best interest but also in that of society in general.

The merchants and industrialists who supported Richard Cobden were inspired, no doubt, by self-interest, but anyone who reads the literature of those times cannot

help being impressed by the abundant evidence of the higher feeling which prevailed in public life, and as far as concerns the middle and skilled artisan classes at least, in private life than in our own times.

In "its power of adaptation" Dr. Martin-Leake sees in the Conservative Party the agency for implementing the required co-partnership policy, although he admits that its power of adaptation, as far as land monopoly is concerned, has not so far been very evident. It is interesting to note that another Conservative whose book we review in this issue considers the same agency most suitable for a return to Free Trade. It is true that the great Act of 1846 was carried by the Conservative Government of Sir Robert Peel; but, as he himself confessed, this was only made possible by the "untiring energy" and "pure and disinterested motives" of Richard Cobden.

The Free Trade movement was perhaps the most striking evidence in history of a movement which rejected group selfishness. It demonstrated that an enthusiasm for justice can be as potent an element in human character as selfishness. The concentration of capital which emanates from land monopoly was the first, and has always remained the most powerful factor in the formation of selfish groups; but the bewildering speed with which selfish groups of all kinds have multiplied since the return to "the State Socialism known as Protection" is a factor Dr. Martin-Leake does not seem to have taken into his calculations and, we think, would modify them considerably.

F. D. P.

ITALY'S APPROACH TO THE LAND PROBLEM

BRITISH newspapers of April 18 had much to say about the proposed "land reform" which Signor de Gaspari's Government had made an Easter present to Italy. It begins with the words: "One million, two hundred hectares of Italian land are to be made available to the landless."

April 16 was the first anniversary of the great Christian Democratic electoral victory and to mark the occasion the party addressed the Italian people in a manifesto which said among other things:—

"The promises of freedom in the Atlantic Charter have unfortunately been wiped out in Central and Eastern Europe, where one free government after the other has been violently overturned. To avoid this tragic destiny the democratic nations have joined in defence.

"The Italian Constitution has proclaimed principles of social justice which this Government, victoriously born on April 16, last, will carry out in spite of the natural poverty of the Italian soil and the big war destruction."

We have no evidence to doubt the good intentions of the Italian Government. Other Governments have long ago set the same example, and no régime can be blamed unduly for any concessions to the desires of those on whom it must depend for power. In the general interest, however, it might be useful to investigate more closely the effects of this measure.

All landlords who possess more than 300 acres of arable land, or more than 750 acres of mountainous or forest land, are to be obliged to sell or lease to the estimated million of landless peasants some part of their holdings, so that these are reduced to the stipulated acreage. The period allowed for this to be completed is not yet fixed. When it expires the State is to buy the surplus land, not, however, "for keeps," but in order to lease it to the new

occupiers on the instalment system, so that at the end of 20 years it becomes their own property.

This method reveals something of the problems which will arise. What happens if a proprietor owns, for example, some 200 acres of arable and 400 acres of other land? Is the composite holding above or below the permitted amount? If above, in what proportions is the surplus to be divided? Will that surplus necessarily constitute an economic holding? Must a proprietor give up his best or his average land? If average, can this be exactly computed? And can it always be decided what is and what is not arable? If all the million new proprietors are to be treated alike, does this not involve an extremely difficult assessment, during a period of necessarily uncertain and fluctuating values, of the value of all agricultural land, some of which might be ripe for other development? What about new buildings and machinery for the new proprietors? Who is or is not a peasant? Are there no owners of both urban and agricultural land? And, finally, are there no landless in the towns?

One is driven to the conclusion that this "reform" could only be carried out, without endless delay, by arbitrary and ruthless administrators, whose decisions must be final and cannot be equitable. This, on examination, proves to be the outcome of a measure which so many well-meaning people might assume to be so simple.

Criticism, however, is useful only so far as it points to a satisfactory alternative.

If the Italian Government, in conformity with social justice, were to declare that all Italian land, urban as well as rural, was the rightful property of all Italians, collectively, it might easily start by a valuation of land, apart