

GENEVA Growing inequality

THE United Nations' goal - health for everyone by 2000 - will not be achieved. The failure has nothing to do with the shortcomings of medical science, the World Health Organisation now concedes. WHO has decided that inequality of incomes is the cause of the inexorable rise in medical problems, and has therefore decided to refocus its efforts on the poverty issue.

According to the World Bank, 1.1 billion people - 30% of the people in developing countries - live on about \$1 a day. The fight against poverty is being lost: the reduction was greater in the 1970s than in the 1980s.

This problem is not peculiar to the Third World, however. In Britain, the gap between the highest and lowest paid has increased, and is now back to its 1886 level.

WHO is now politicising its efforts. "What we are doing is to spell out why many least developed countries are regressing rather than progressing in health terms and pointing the finger at poverty," says John Martin, who heads a new WHO task force. "We are here for peoples in greatest need, including groups marginalised in the US and UK."

NAIROBI Land hunger (1)

KENYA'S conservation programme is being threatened by the shortage of arable land. World-famous anthropologist Dr. Richard Leakey has resigned as director of the Kenya Wildlife Service because of a government-inspired campaign against him. Dr. Leakey claims that a vendetta was di-

rected at him because he refused to grant mining or commercial concessions within the nature reserves. Britain's Overseas Development Agency has withdrawn a £12m grant because Kenya is not protecting its forest reserves.

JOHANNESBURG Land hunger (2)

The African National Congress, in its manifesto for the April election, called for the redistribution of 30% of agricultural land. It promises to create a land claims court to restore land to Africans who were dispossessed in 1913, when 87% of the land was reserved for whites. The programme also aims to reduce poverty, provide jobs through public works and improve the health and education services for black citizens. The ANC claims that it will raise the rate of growth of the economy above historic levels, and meet much of the additional financial needs through a reduction in the waste of resources in the public sector.

HARARE Land hunger (3)

PREMIER Robert Mugabe has ordered an enquiry into how government ministers, army generals and top civil servants have obtained land confiscated from white farmers - which was supposed to be given to land-hungry peasants. With an election due next year, Mr Mugabe launched a popularity-raising campaign to take land from white farmers (who own half the country's arable land) and reallocate it to some of the 7m blacks who live on reserves. But the peasants have not benefitted from the programme. Under heavy public criticism, the government decided to launch its enquiry.

OSLO Painted black

NORWAY'S government, pressed for new sources of revenue, devised a new wheeze for squeezing money out of artists last year. A law was passed, ordering artists to pay taxes on the value of all works unsold more than one year after production. The artists claim that it can take anything up to 30 years to sell a painting (Van Gogh died in poverty: he did not sell a single painting in his lifetime!). On April 12, about 500 artists protested outside the Storting (parliament). They vent their feelings at the tax law by destroying their works of art with axes and knives.

BUDAPEST Ban on foreigners

FOREIGNERS are banned from buying farmland in Hungary, under a law passed on April 6. It allows non-nationals to lease no more than 500 hectares for a limited period of 10 years. The government's policy is viewed as hostile to foreign investment, which observers claim is necessary to revive agriculture to its pre-communist levels of activity. But the government was responding to rural hostility towards foreign purchases.

HONG KONG Price row

A DISPUTE has broken out over the cause of soaring land prices in the British colony. The government blames developers, and says it will "break the monopoly" of a small group that has withheld apartments from sale - helping to accelerate the rise in residential prices.

But developers blame the government, claiming that the refusal to release land has caused a 50% jump in the price of prime office space in the first quarter of this year. There has been a 22% increase in office rents, helping to push Hong Kong prices above those of Tokyo.

Into this controversy has now stepped Hongkong Bank, the colony's largest financial institution, which on April 26 issued a report implicitly criticising property developers for hoarding land. Prices would moderate if the government released more land, but steps would have to be taken to ensure that the land was developed quickly and "not simply added to developers' land banks".

Responding to complaints, the government has announced it would curb the hoarding by developers and also release more land. Its task force is expected to report by July.

• Over 50% of the earnings of stocks included in the Hang Seng index are directly dependent on property.

LONDON Queen of subsidies

THE QUEEN of England is to receive over £1m of taxpayers' money for not ploughing her acres at Sandringham Castle.

The land set-aside plan is supposed to reduce the output of unwanted food. The Queen will receive £220,000 for each of five years, but output is not expected to decline. The Sunday Times (June 5) was told by a Sandringham official: "You would be stupid not to set aside your least productive land".

The Queen's daughter, Anne, will receive £400,000. Last year, the programme cost taxpayers £125m.

News in Brief