

U.S.A. and Canada
\$1 a year

Established
June, 1894

VOL. LXVII, No. 796

Land & Liberty

U.K. and Sterling Area
8s. a year

Editor
P. R. STUBBINGS

SEPTEMBER, 1960

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR LAND-VALUE TAXATION, FREE TRADE AND PERSONAL FREEDOM

Open Our Ports To All

Extracts from 'The Forgotten Man', an editorial article dealing with the Common Market and the then proposed European Free Trade Area, which appeared in our March 1957 issue.

PRODUCTION is the handmaiden of trade, and the customer at the shop counter governs and directs virtually the whole of economic activity. In a free society that would be a truism; today it is not, so thoroughly has the obvious been obscured by the spokesmen for privilege. Economists, politicians and manufacturers, aided and echoed by most of the press, speak and write as though the end and object of economic activity is production.

Trade has been made subservient to production, a one way street leading from the factory door to the foreigner whose primary function in life is to receive exports. The manufacturer—particularly if his production is for export—stands supreme, fawned upon by government; while for the shackled consumer and his agent, the importer, scarcely a thought is spared.

It was in this spirit, we believe, that the idea of the European Common Market was conceived. We regard the scheme as being essentially a mere rearrangement of protectionism, in the supposed interests of the most powerful industrialists on the Continent. Any benefits which consumers may derive will be entirely coincidental—and negligible. For the rising class of bureaucrats, on the other hand, the scheme must appear most attractive; it is going to require hordes of experts, economists and planners of every description.

Under Free Trade, the consumer is supreme. The whole world is his shopping centre. It is of no concern to him whether foreign governments exploit their people in the interests of favoured groups by restraints on imports, whether they are liberal or totalitarian. His choice as to quality and price is unlimited. No artificial

barrier stands between him and the man from whom he buys, or anywhere along the long chain that leads—often across ocean and continents—back to the producer who stands ready to meet his demand.

The whole, infinitely complex series of transactions is conducted in strict privacy. No ships or planes or persons are searched, no goods are delayed, no questions are asked, nothing is done to frustrate or impede the fulfilment of the customer's desires. The taxpayer is not obliged to support armies of Customs officers to interfere with the free flow of goods he has ordered, or to pay the wages of hordes of clerks engaged in compiling useless statistics showing how he has chosen to spend his money.

Goods flow from where they can be produced cheaply to where they are costly to make; untrammelled competition between producers throughout the whole world keeps to a minimum the price the consumer pays, and leads to constant improvement in quality. The inefficient pull up their socks or go to the wall—the choice is theirs—but they cannot combine to exploit the consumer. No taxes are levied on goods, whether made at home or abroad.

Above all, the whole system is based upon trust, no incentive to lying or law-breaking is afforded, and the inter-dependence of nations and the brotherhood of man finds practical expression in the free, unconscious and peaceful co-operation which is the hallmark and by-product of true free trade. And while we would wish to see these benefits enjoyed by the people of every country, it is an economic fact that they may be had in a single free trading country though all the outside world remains protectionist.