

Not So Free Enterprise

MEASURES already operative or in the pipeline "will, within the lifetime of most of us, qualify Britain to become a member of Comecom (the Soviet version of the Common Market)," says Russell Lewis, in an Aims for Freedom and Enterprise study.*

The socialist societies of the eastern bloc are not wholly socialist, says Mr. Lewis. "The enterprise which makes even the Soviet economy tick is based on the freedom of some people . . . the peasants on their private plots, the fixers in the wasteland of Soviet economic planning, and the managers in their factories The decision-takers have rights denied to the rest of the community and, in return, they up to a point deliver the results their masters require.

"In contemporary Britain, by contrast, the opposite is happening. The position of the managers is steadily worsening. Rising taxes add to the weight of business overheads, reduce net profits, diminish reserves and erode incentives.

"The abiding weakness of State industry which invariably makes it a drag on the economy is not only that it is cushioned from market pressures by the taxpayer. Still more important, the managers are never quite free to get on with their job of production and, in this respect, are worse placed than their counterparts either in the Soviet Union or in free-enterprise firms here, because politicians interfere with them, especially over pricing and redundancy.

"All the signs are that the National Enterprise Board will be no more inhibited than Mr. Benn intended it to be about buying up or into any company that takes its fancy. A large part of British industry and commerce will be tied up in planning agreements, any failure to achieve the targets of which will presumably fall under the heading of "failing the nation" and will make them easy game for takeover or victimisation should they do anything to displease the

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THE best economic system is one broken down into as small parts as are economically possible and where those parts are run by the constituency for whom they are supposed to operate; and here, if anything happens that is harmful or corrupt, the victims have nobody to blame but themselves.

—Ralph Nader

Minister or his minions.

"One does not find free societies—not anyway in anything like the form we could recognise—except where one also finds the institutions of the free market and the private ownership of property.

"Democratic politicians seemed to vie with one another to treat the free enterprise goose like a battery hen, and the result has been a debasement of the golden eggs, by means of inflation, which, as Lenin long ago observed, is the surest way to destroy capitalism."

Cost of Planning Delays

THE costs incurred by developers due to town planning delays often now comprise a significant element in the cost of housebuilding, according to a recent report.

Mr. Brian De'Ath, who runs a small building company, says: "In the past two years alone I reckon the delays have added £3,000 to the price of each house, and over the whole period the prices will have doubled from £7,000 or so to nearer £20,000."

Wates, one of the largest housebuilders, are considering suing Surrey County Council for up to £350,000 worth of costs incurred during the past four years of negotiations for a £100 millions project.

Planning delays are now so



widespread that the problem merits a sub-committee of the Commons Select Committee on

Expenditure, which is to examine the system of land-use planning to find out why the delays occur.

The land and planning spokesman for the National Housebuilders Federation, Roger Humber, claims that planners have forgotten their prime function and instead are trying to be architects: "I have come across a case where they were arguing over the depth of the groove in the wooden doors of garages on a private estate. They frequently try to change the type of window for cosmetic reasons—and then go on to specify the size of the window pane. They may be pursuing excellence, but they seem to have forgotten the maxim laid down by the Department of the Environment—their ultimate boss—in Circular 9/76: 'The best is often the enemy of the good.'"

Books Received

Civilization on Square Wheels by W. Stuart Morrell. Vantage Press, Inc. N.Y. USA \$5.95.

Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Reformism by David Lehmann. Faber & Faber, paperback £1.80.

Climate and the Environment by J. F. Griffiths. Paul Elek, £2.95.

Defending the Undefendable by Walter Block. Fleet Press Corporation NY, USA. \$9.95.

Food and Poverty by Radha Sinha. Croom Helm Ltd, £6.50.

MARGARET BATEMAN

Margaret Bateman became interested in the philosophy of Henry George through the late John Anderson of Montreal who started the Henry George School of Social Science in Montreal in 1938. Margaret Bateman taught in those early classes and helped Mr. Anderson to get the School on its way.

In 1941 Margaret was invited to become assistant director of the Henry George School in New York and in a few years became director upon the resignation of the late Mr. Frank Chodorov. She held that position until about 1950 when ill health forced her to resign. She was author of *Whose World?* a compendium of land tenures throughout the world.

After twenty-three years of increasingly serious heart condition, she died early in March 1976.

STRETHEL WALTON

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