

casting time is allotted to the parties on the basis of their previous victories; the government is even considering subsidizing the political parties. Inside parliament, party nominees expound the party dogma and vote as the party whips tell them to. Parliament is thus emasculated. For those who would see a vigorous House of Commons, the two most welcome developments of recent years have been the infusion of nationalists—an admirable expression of democratic fervour—and the accession in March 1974 of a government which could not be sure of a parliamentary majority and was on occasion defeated.

Not only do party men get into parliament instead of independents but those party men are either Conservative or Labour. The Liberals captured nearly 20 per cent of the vote in the two elections of 1974 but won fewer than fifteen seats in each.

The test of an electoral system is its sensitivity to the wishes of the electors. The calibre of government that ensues is incidental, though a government enjoying the goodwill of the bulk of the electorate can govern more effectively than one dependent on the partisan allegiance of under half of it. If parliamentary government is to be respected, the elec-

toral procedure must be revised to furnish a wider range of candidates and more faithfully reproduce the preferences of the electors in the composition of the legislative chamber. Governments would be unable to take parliamentary approval for granted if the party grip were relaxed and individuals voted in accordance with their own opinions. These opinions would be swayed by informed debate, hopefully not devoid of oratory and invective but purged of polemical pettiness.

By his ingenuity and resolution man has accomplished much, but over the natural and urban environment, and over the economic and political institutions of society, man has relinquished supremacy. The more he interferes in the environment the more evident his ineptitude becomes; and the more he strives to manifest his cleverness through collective institutions the more he is enslaved by them.

Mankind has lost the humility that accompanies greatness. He believes he is invincible. He will soon discover that he is wrong: through economic collapse, through social disintegration, and perhaps through the premature conclusion of the entire human adventure.

## Shifting Views on the Community Land Act

THE claim made by the Land Campaign Working Party<sup>1</sup> that the Community Land Act, "a betrayal of land nationalisation," operates in the interests of property developers rather than against them, is lent some weight by the recent statement of the British Property Federation,<sup>2</sup> which calls not for the repeal of the Act but its amendment "so as to make it workable." The presidents of both the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Town Planning Institute have also come out against the repeal of the Act.

The BPF's proposals, among other things, would strengthen local authorities' powers of compulsory purchase, while "carefully safeguarding individual rights."

However, if the individual happened to be a minority owner, his obligations would be overridden "in the public interest" (larger developer's interest?) if they were to hold up a comprehensive development.

The Federation wish to retain some form of betterment levy and to see that local authorities get a share to help them pay for expenditure on infrastructure—the pri-

mary contribution to new development (which of course lowers development costs and raises land values).

The BPF, however, do make the point that betterment levy should be relative to the increase in *land value* not the completed property value.

Not all of the proposals are without merit within the context of the Act, but the interests of property developers do not always coincide with the interests of the community, particularly when projected profits (legitimate) are accompanied by profits from pure land value.

That the Community Land Act and Development Land Tax could be amended so as to improve them in the interests of developers and the community does not make them right in principle. They should be repealed lock, stock and barrel. Indeed, while they exist in any form, it will be assumed that the "land question" has been dealt with and will put up yet another artificial barrier to the only true policy for land, namely the annual taxation of all land values and the exemption of improvements.

The alternative proposal by the Land Campaign Working Party is land nationalisation. In their publication, both developers and land-

owners are attacked. It is a difficult publication to review and gives the impression that it was put together by a committee, in some ways no bad thing in that so many aspects of land use are covered; but it lacks shape and consecutive argument. It is of course socialistic and many of the statements and much of the analysis which lead up to the conclusion that all land should be nationalised will be unacceptable both to land-value taxers and of course developers and landowners.

However, the booklet is worth the modest price both for giving an insight into rebel left wing thinking on the land question and for its own interpretation of the recent land Acts. P.K.

1. Consists of representatives of tenants associations, community groups and projects who came together in 1973 to form the Campaign. Their publication is *Lie of the Land*, 35p from 31 Clerkenwell Close, London, E.C.1.
2. *Policy for Land*, £1 from BPF, 35 Catherine Place, London SW1E 6DY.

## WORLD ECONOMICS SUMMED UP

THE world recession, Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany told the Socialist Congress at Geneva, was due to "130 out of 140 nations printing money they have not earned."