

LAND &

LIBERTY

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER, 1976



The Wasted Years

IN observing Britain's economic plight — unemployment, failing and ailing industries, sterling crises, record high interest rates and talk of a siege economy — it is not the pessimist alone who suspects that things are a lot worse than they seem. Through the fog of ignorance, prejudice and irresponsibility, the shape of our economic plight and its primary cause is slowly emerging for those who would not heed the signs and warnings and could not or did not

want to understand simple basic economic principles.

In trying to tackle the primary domestic problems carried over from the thirties — poverty, unemployment and the housing shortage — what have successive governments achieved in the three post-war decades? Acts for rent control and security of tenure have effectively put an end to the private market for furnished and unfurnished accommodation and where slums have been demolished

new high-rise slums have been put in their place. Only the owner-occupied section of housing has made any real progress — not surprisingly, because it has been left largely to the private sector.

Poverty has not been solved but plastered over with a monstrous system of state welfarism euphemistically described as "social security" which really means "social dependence" in the same way that security of tenure means *dependence on the power of the*

Land & Liberty

JOURNAL OF THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE
TAXATION OF LAND VALUES LTD.
177 VAUXHALL BRIDGE ROAD, LONDON. S.W.1
TELEPHONE 01 834 4266

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER, 1976

Established: JUNE, 1894

Nos. 990 & 991

VOL. LXXXIII

Managing Editor

V. H. BLUNDELL

ISS No. 0023-7574

Annual Subscription:

U.K. and Sterling Area: £2.50

U.S.A. and Canada: \$5

Editor

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state for a home because there is nowhere else to go.

As for unemployment, after the heady days of full and "over-full" employment initiated by the first doses of the inflation drug, "stop-goes" were quick to follow, accompanied by more euphemistic jargon like "touches of the throttle" and "touches of the tiller" which converted a "sluggish" economy into an "overheated" one. A "touch of the brakes" described credit squeezes, pay pauses and wage freezes — voluntary, involuntary, coerced and negotiated. The medicine has always been the same though labelled differently and with different doses "to be taken" at different intervals. Thus, instead of dealing merely with unemployment, governments became increasingly concerned with the deluge of problems arising from the so-called cure. And as if this were not enough, more doses of the drug were given together with the "antidote" to produce the present crisis of debt and disaster, which is, of course, reflected in the value placed upon sterling in the international exchanges.

Unbalanced politicians cannot produce a balanced budget, nor can they produce employment and prosperity via the mint's printing presses.

This is the first lesson to be learnt and applied. Britain has had no economic miracle but has merely survived—so far. A wrong diagnosis has been followed by wrong remedies because effects have themselves been mistaken for causes. The cry has been: A housing shortage? Then let the state build more! Poverty? Sweep it under the welfare state carpet! Unemployment? Let's create employment! No question at any time that these problems may stem from a common cause and are but manifestations of monopolistic and protectionist institutions, not the least important of which is the private appropriation of the economic rent of land, which throws the burden of taxation upon labour and capital and encourages the non-use and under-use of natural resources. Here is where poverty and unemployment begin because the availability of natural resources is not flexible enough to accommodate the re-

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quirements of labour and capital on acceptable terms.

The great God Keynes who dealt with effects has had his day. Perhaps we may now look back to the wiser counsel of Henry George.

* * *

SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH

THE home, the Englishman's traditional castle, should be outside the race discrimination rules, decided the House of Lords in the debate on the Race Relations Bill on October 12.

Said LORD MONSON: "A person has the right to be as eccentric, inconsistent and bloody-minded as he wants within his four walls." Lord Monson's amendment to this effect was carried by a majority of forty-four against the Government—111 voting for and sixty-

seven against.

Ideas as to what constitutes freedom are as inconsistent in the Lords as outside it. LORD HOUGHTON (Lab.) had a point when he argued that much of the Bill was unenforceable anyway, but he displayed confusion on the nature of freedom, when he added that it tended to erode the freedom of some people in order to establish the freedom of others. This attitude of wanting to decide what "freedoms" should be preserved and what should not, was further illustrated when he went on to say that some things should be decided by the citizen himself, "however wrong he may be"—unless he was doing wrong to others and his behaviour was harmful to the community. The unnecessary qualification "some" means that Lord Houghton reserves the right to

make exceptions to the concept of freedom to suit his own prejudices.

The Government wanted to do likewise in the Bill and had included a provision empowering itself to take out any of the safeguards and necessary exceptions to the Bill by merely issuing a Statutory Instrument or Order which would of course be as legally binding as anything else in the Bill.

LORD HAILSHAM was against giving the Minister *carte blanche* to override agreed decisions and successfully moved an amendment deleting the provision.

Most legislation nowadays makes a mockery of freedom anyway but such minor victories for the liberty of the individual at least show some vigilance where it can be effective. The Commons have yet to accept the Lords' amendments.