

competence and prejudice.

The financial Press from time to time publishes lavish reviews of industrial prospects in other countries. There was one recently dealing with South Africa but never a word that in the city of Johannesburg all local rates are on land values only. Similarly, when writing on Australia there is never a word about the advantage to industry of having improvements free from local taxation

Yours faithfully,

ASHLEY MITCHELL

Huddersfield, Yorks.

CONSUMERS KEEP OUT!

SIR—What kind of warped thinking do our rulers have when they talk of “trade concessions” as though through freer trade we are doing the other country a favour instead of ourselves?

In the Common Market discussions the consumer is always ignored. If he benefits or suffers, it is only by the way. The only people who matter, it would seem, are the exporters in one country and the protected in the other. It's a private fight, and governments confuse the consumer with talks of “Britain's” exports and “Britain's” imports, when in fact they are nothing of the kind.

Exporters, importers, producers and consumers have different interests—often opposing ones in this protection racket. The only real criterion is one that does justice to everyone—and everyone is a member of the consumer club, which always loses by protective tariffs no matter what country or community is involved.

Yours faithfully,

R. L. RATTERY

London, S.E.18

CRISIS?

SIR—Shortly after the present Government was returned to power we were told that the country was facing a serious economic crisis—that unless steps were taken to correct the so-called deficit in our balance of payments we should all be in “Carey Street.”

Following a somewhat traditional pattern, the Government has frozen wages, investment and prices. What is the result? Unemployment is rising in a menacing manner, capital investment projects have been curtailed, the cost of living has risen, and apprehension clouds our future well being. The crisis has now become an established fact.

The Government's action has been supported by learned economists

and others, but obviously there must be something radically wrong with their thinking. Let us look at the problem simply and without all the unintelligible economic jargon with which these people surround it.

First, the balance of payments is nothing other than the trading account of our importers and exporters, and we may expect the great majority of them to conduct their business on sound lines. If there is a deficit in the national aggregate of their account, therefore, it must be caused by something beyond their control, possibly a slump in world trade or detrimental political fiscal action.

Assuming that variations in the balance of payments do affect the economic well-being of the state, more than fluctuations in domestic trading can do, how can we in our individual capacity change an adverse balance into a profitable one? None of us can be sure that his individual effort will be really effective. All we can do is to work harder than ever and produce more wealth, but it would be ridiculous not to expect a higher income for so doing. The fact that we were earning more

and increasing the overall supply of wealth would be indisputable evidence of nation-wide prosperity.

Contrary to Government reasoning, the more we have to spend (exchange), the better off we are; furthermore, if we curtail our spending it must inevitably result in a surplus of unwanted and unsold goods. This is inescapable. As the recent Board of Trade figures show that our exports and imports are now in balance, can we expect that the Government will repeal all its fiscal legislation?

Let no one be misled; it will not. The selective employment tax will remain. The Chancellor, when he introduced it, said that “future Chancellors would bless him for it.” Control of wages, investment and prices will be eased, but the power over them will be retained and strengthened.

The balance of payments argument is at heart a protectionist political slogan which of recent years has become a powerful weapon in the Government's armoury to maintain and amplify its power over our lives.

Yours faithfully

STEPHEN MARTIN

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Miscellany

Cannot Afford Independence

NOT all peoples are clamouring for independence: some are actively opposing it. *The Times*, December 9, reports plans for a “common front” of people in Mauritius, Gibraltar, Fiji, and the Seychelles Islands to resist any attempts by the British Government to grant them independence.

Said Mr. James Lancham, President of the Seychelles Democratic Party: “We have heard on the grapevine that there are moves in Britain to thrust independence upon us, but we don't want it. We cannot afford it.”

Presumably, nor can the British taxpayer. When these countries do get independence they will have to start thinking about ways of raising revenue, and they need not look to Britain for an example.

Beating The Ban

ACCORDING to a recent *Sunday Express* report, well-to-do Britons, who are instinctive free traders, if not political ones, have devised a way of beating the Treasury ban on taking more than £50 out of the country. Says the report: “They fly via Nassau to Freeport in Grand

Bahama, a sterling area island off the Florida coast. There they exchange their pounds or Bahamian dollars for chips at the local casino. These are immediately cashed for US dollars—no gambling involved—and the ‘customer’ flies on to Miami.”

Get these personal free traders into an economic argument and ten-to-one they'll support exchange control—for others, of course!

Twaddle—Public or Private

WHAT principle can justify a public service in supplying, at the licence-holder's involuntary expense, twaddle which private people are only too eager to supply free of charge?—*The Daily Telegraph*, December 21, commenting on the White Paper on the future of broadcasting.

Rising Land Values

PROPERTY developer Leslie Marler owns eleven acres of Knightsbridge, London. Some of this land had been owned by his grandfather, who sold it in 1906. Since the war Marler has bought it back—for fifty times the 1906 price.

—Reported in *Weekend Telegraph*