

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE LANDLORDS

During May 1990 H. I. Meyer, a United Kingdom architect, attended the 17th Triennial Conference of the International Union of Architects, held at Montreal, Canada.

Submitted to that Conference were 220 papers concerning various social, political and economic aspects of Architecture. Mr. Meyer reviewed all papers for his professional Journal 'Building Design'.

The names referred to in Mr. Meyer's extract are those of Architectural Practitioners, Professors and experts in the field. The Australian Philip Cox referred to is Professor of Architecture at Sydney University. The extract which follows was first published in a submission made by Mr. Meyer to the United Kingdom Green Party, advocating the retention of community ground rent as the sole taxation plank in the Green Party Manifesto. This submission was entitled "Green Grow the Taxes, Oh!". The two papers are both available from the author directly by writing to him at 82 Bishops Park Road, Fulham, London SW6 6DY.

Only in two of the papers does even a hint of the 'inimical thought' which will confront the global status quo ante of this decade surface. These hints are given by the Australian Philip Cox and by the Indian Subrata Chattopadhyay. Within this hinting we unmask the definers, evaders and engagers whose acceptable papers make up the acceptance rules of architectural criticism. The first hint is given in "India's urbanization scenario: case study of Calcutta" in which this 'inimical thought' is made manifest by Chattopadhyay:

"A study to find the root cause of migration of people from villages to cities reveals, there is a strong 'push' 'pull' factor operating in the rural and urban areas respectively. The problem is not only a sociological problem, but also a socio-economic and political problem. An unequal distribution and concentration of wealth and decision making power in the hands of a few is a major cause. Often the existence of large scale slums in the cities is viewed as an effect of housing shortage caused by large scale migration. Rural urban migration is due to increasing number of landless labourers, increasing unemployment and exploitation in the rural areas. Land is concentrated in the hands of a few

in rural areas and the landless labourers and small and marginal farmers work under the dictatorship of the landlords. All these forces constitute the 'push' factor on the one hand and on the other hand there is the lure of jobs and better livelihood of the big cities. This strong 'pull' factor attracts scores of people from the villages. But the cities are reeling under the pressure of the added population."

Of all the papers dealing with urban over-population and rural depopulation only Chattopadhyay touches on the root cause of all population movement from rural to urban sites.

"Land is concentrated in the hands of a few in rural area and the landless labourers and small and marginal farmers work under the dictatorship of the landlords."

In this universal and self-evident fact "the dictatorship of the landlords" lies the cure to the growth of Brazilian favelas, Chilean over-population in Concepcion, the paralysis of 'over-population' in Cairo, the exponential growth of Athens, the rape of the Bosphorus, the 'crisis' of Budapest's architects, the need for 'low-cost' housing in the USA and throughout the Third World, the explosive growth of Cuidad Leon, Mexico, population pressure on Kyoto, Japan.

As Henry George so cogently explained: "When a few things go wrong it is useful to look for proximate causes but when everything begins to go wrong then it is wise to search out one common cause". The one common cause for the universal crisis of the globe is no 'over-population' but landlessness.