

THE LATEST textbook in the Longman series "Social Policy in Modern Britain" grandly entitled *Housing and Social Justice* by Gill Burke, senior lecturer in social administration at the Polytechnic of Central London, is almost a paradigm of the Marxian polemic masquerading as a sociological text.

As such it repays investigation, not because it can either provide a valid basic assessment of the social problems of housing, or because it can even provide a coherent policy for social amelioration of housing shortages and deprivation, but because it is an ideal case of the fallacy of attempting to explain modern housing policy and social evils on Marxist grounds. It is a prime example of disguised Marxist dogmatism.

The pervading presence of Marxist thought in this text can be readily described. The method is one basically of linguistic definition and value judgments attributed to chosen words. Thus, be sure that if you see in a text the frequent use of words such as "solidarity", "commodity", "class", "condition", "working-class protest", "collective", "ideologies",

Who should be compensated?

LANDOWNERS want to drain 5,800 acres of wetlands on the Norfolk Broads, on England's east coast. This would boost agricultural output and raise the value of land.

The project, originally proposed by the Inland Drainage Board, has been opposed by the Broads Authority because it would destroy a scientifically important wildlife habitat.

But now, in a compromise plan, the Broads Authority has said that it would drop its objections if there were legal guarantees that the 1,100 most beautiful acres were preserved.

To secure the support of landowners, the authority has offered £25,000 "compensation" to owners of the 1,100 acres who agreed to the deal.

Ian Barron writes: Compensation is supposed to make-good the loss incurred by someone. In this case, the owners did not buy the land at a price which capitalised the benefits of drainage; they could not, therefore, be said to have suffered injury if the drainage scheme did not touch their holdings. On the contrary, insofar as the drainage is at public expense, the landowner who benefits should compensate the general taxpayer. This should be effected through an annual tax on the value of the improved land.

MARXISM: DEAD DUCKS AND DOGMATISM

Housing And Social Justice, Gill Burke, No 6 in Social Policy in Modern Britain Series Longman Group, London 228 pages, £4.50.

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"historical development", you are reading a Marxist tract.

Thus it is not surprising that Burke summarizes his view of housing as follows: "The housing situation we have today has been historically determined through changes arising from economic processes."

Nor is it surprising that the very first quotation in the text is from Frederick Engels. Nor is it astonishing that not one quotation is used from Henry George, even though the problem of land-rent is the prime reason behind what housing shortages do exist throughout the world.

Land & Liberty Press offers readers a remarkable opportunity to buy a standard work of reference on the history of the land question in the UK.

LAND, PEOPLE & POLITICS



A History of the Land Question in the UK, 1878-1952

By Roy Douglas

Published in 1976 by Allison & Busby, and retailing for £9.95, this important book can now be bought from 177 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1, for the price of £2.20 or US\$5, postage and packing included.

To indicate that there are none so blind as those blinded by ideology, here is a sprinkling of tantalising verbal hints from his own text which Burke totally ignores.

● "Other attempts and alternatives (to the slum) such as the chartist land schemes did not last long."

One question *why* chartist land schemes do "not last long"?

● "Kindly interest in the tenant's welfare was combined with a strict insistence upon regular payment of rents. Eviction was the consequence of falling into arrears."

One question *why* the "strictness of rent" is more important than welfare?

● "The reader is asked to imagine an estate embracing 6,000 acres which is at present purely agricultural and has been obtained by purchase in the open market at a cost of £40 per acre".

One question *what* gives a "site value" to agricultural land?

● "The population density of the new city will be from three to six times greater than the idealistic ruinous and inoperative figures recommended by urban authorities still bound with romantic ideology. This new intensification of population density thus becomes the justification for our enterprise; it increases the value of the ground".

To anyone familiar with the theories of Henry George, the verbal hints given in these random quotations are plain. Whether we deal with housing, with the scarcity of jobs, with labour, money, housing accommodation, political economy or social justice; whatever the economic question that may be broached in the modern day, the answer is always capable of being found in the simple statement "go back to the land question!"

Only when the textbooks of the future generations of social engineers, economists and students are imbued with the ideas and natural political economy of Henry George will the vital problems of land, labour, capital and progress be triumphantly solved.

Until that time any welfare, sociological, decoy attempt at achieving "social justice" through well-meaning altruism, or through appeal to the "solidarity" of the "working classes" is just a Marxist "duck" and a very dead one at that.