

exotic birds so that they might be driven carefully over the waiting guns . . . and two out of three easily shot."

One might add that there was something even more ludicrous and sinister in the fact that to make room for



this so-called sport, people who had been putting this fine land to productive use were ousted from it.

In a "Statement of Grievances by Crofters in the District of Morven" which was read to Lord Napier and his fellow Commissioners, and is included in one of the several appendixes of this book, is a bitter parody from the Bible. "Our Lord and Saviour said, 'How much more valuable is a man than a sheep?' But our landlords say, 'How much more valuable is, not even a sheep, but a game bird than a man?'"

This Statement of Grievances incorporates many complaints. Foremost is one concerning the great hardship of being excluded from the good land, formerly under cultivation, going to waste at their very doors, ". . . back to a state of nature, and overgrown with heather and rushes." The suggestion, from "a certain medical gentleman," that Highlanders who were no longer able to keep a cow for want of pasture should rear their children on cheap beer instead of milk was repudiated "with scorn."

Philip Gaskell makes it clear in his preface that he has tried to avoid the "customary over-emphasis on the misfortunes of the Highland peasantry." While one appreciates the thorough investigation that has resulted in a book of undoubted interest, students of social and economic history will find in it much that is debatable.

The author writes: "We must remind ourselves that the Highland clearances were a symptom of the inability of the old Highland economy to adapt to a changing world, and of the breakdown of the old Highland way of life, not their cause. The proprietors who cleared their farms for sheep were acting under severe economic pressure . . ."

One can cite a newspaper report of 1882—again given in an appendix—concerning a small group of evicted people who moved to a wild off-shore island of "little else than rocks and heather with stretches of unreclaimed moss." After years of labour they turned this into a productive farm, raised their families, built better houses and prospered. These improvements caught the eye of a neighbouring sheep farmer, and once more they were cleared out. Under such treatment as this, what chance could any economy have "to adapt."

Nor can one feel much sympathy with the "severe economic pressure" on landlords whose servants, surfeited with salmon, had to stipulate that they would not eat it every day—landlords who could sell their land, as the villain of the piece, Patrick Sellar, did, for much more than they paid for it—£10,000 more in his case.

The author indicates the irony of a situation in which the building of a "pompous castle . . . gross symbol of

landlordism," for Valentine Smith, owner of 39,000 acres and twice a millionaire when he died, provided full employment for local workmen, thus cutting off the main cause of their discontent and helping to bring the Land League movement to an end.

Gratitude is due to Mr. Gaskell for a generous helping of excellent ammunition in the way of statistics, diaries, notes, maps and photographs which can be used to argue against his belief that in this case the end justified the means.

He suggests that the clearances were for the good of the greatest number, yet describes "a marked deterioration in the social coherence of the parish." For example, in the early part of the century, £11 was enough to support the poor and destitute of the district. Yet in 1883, with a population of less than half, more than £600 was required.

This deterioration continues today. The population density of Morven is about one-and-a-half persons per square mile on average. "Huge tracts of former farmland are now occupied by Forestry Commission plantations or are abandoned altogether." Emigration is high—there is nothing to keep the young and active. Agriculture is low. Nor is Morven noted for its sport!

In view of this present-day position, the "reforms" of the nineteenth century do seem to have fallen a little flat. This was a battle won by nobody and nothing. The land is virtually empty, and its people are gone.

The Riddle of the Sphinx

BY ROBERT MILLER

A review of a paper read by Lady Jackson (Dr. Barbara Ward) to the World Council of Churches Fourth Assembly at Uppsala, Sweden, July, 1968

LADY JACKSON draws attention to a vital fact that although we have "heard it all before," we really know little of the facts themselves. She reminds us once again that by 2000 AD world population will more than double, that most of this increase will occur in the underdeveloped lands, and that, by an apparent opposite equation, by the same time the wealth of the developed nations will have quadrupled. In trying to trace causes of this universal and apparently everlasting economic anomaly she says that it began with the advance in technological knowledge in the eighteenth century, and is coupled with the "milch-cow" economy whereby development seems to be confined to ports at the expense of inland areas whose role is limited to the extraction of natural wealth for export.

Yet in spite of this commendable discernment, Lady Jackson seems to have overlooked the fact that man has been exploiting man for many centuries, since long before the eighteenth century, in the matter of the exclusive ownership of land. And the "milch-cow" phenomenon is not a cause, but a symptom, of this exploitation. If the wages of labour remain at bare subsistence level, there can be no effective demand for imports, and there

can certainly be no accumulation of capital whereby new enterprises may grow and standards of living increase.

The question is, how is it that wages are so often kept so low? Why do peasants abandon the countryside and



flock to the towns and cities to swell the ranks of the unemployed? Lady Jackson almost tells us in several places, but not quite. She seems to suggest that the main cause of this despair of earning a living on the land is the peasant's lack of know-how. But this simply will not do. Give men the freedom of the land and they will wring a living from it, and a healthy and hearty one too. And it has little to do with the poverty of the soil either. In the South American countries, where poverty is well known, more than eighty per cent of the land is owned by less than ten per cent of the people, and most of these ten per cent are rich. On what do they grow rich? On the dust of the desert? Well then, are these countries overcrowded? They are not. The people number less than forty to the square mile, whereas in Europe, where most people are far better off, there are ten times as many. One may venture the suggestion that not so many people have heard that before. Yet these facts can easily be verified in any reference library.

Lady Jackson mentions speculative booms but does not specify what is most often speculated in—land. Nor does she go on to remind us that every depression is preceded by a speculative land boom. Perhaps by now we have heard the word “land” so often that we really begin to consider the advisability of classing it as a “four-letter word.”

Here and there, Lady Jackson hints at “reforms in land ownership,” of “un-redeemed economics” with land owning families “staying rich and getting richer,” but what practical remedy does she suggest besides a world tax of one per cent of G.N.P. Is this good enough for Christians, she asks. No, it certainly is not, nor for anyone of any other faith or none. Charity, whether international or private, is admirable, but it is not enough. The removal of injustice is of primary urgency. Charity assuages the suffering caused by injustice. Today one third of the world is quite capable of giving of its bounty to the other two thirds of its hungry millions, and no doubt could continue to do so indefinitely. That would be perhaps the greatest act of charity the world has ever known. But meanwhile the greatest injustice would continue—indeed it would be perpetuated—of the private and exclusive ownership of most of the surface of the earth by the privileged few, who demand by legal right all that those who labour upon it produce—all but enough to maintain existence and continue labour.

The remedy, the most urgent reform, lies in a tax upon the land owner based on the value of the land he holds. Not dispossession, not confiscation and re-distribution of the land, not increasing taxes upon his house and other possessions, nor a tax upon his capital, but a payment to the community in proportion to the privilege he holds, a return to his fellow men of the value they have created. How can a Christian, or anyone else for that matter, disapprove of that? Nowhere do we find that God ever said: “This land I give unto this man, but not to that; unto this man give I the right to live on rent, but upon that man be the duty to surrender to another most of that which he produces with his own labour.” Yet to hear many politicians expounding on the subject of land tenure, even today, one might almost think the above to be found in the Bible.

So who among those in political power will at last see the light of reason and justice and insist upon the collection of the economic rent of land and so return to the people the full fruits of their toil? Who shall be the first delegate to the United Nations to call boldly for the sweeping away of this age-old iniquity of land monopoly and most of humanity's miseries with it?

Bold Views On a Touchy Subject



A. J. CARTER

IT IS NO WONDER that that hoary British institution, the Royal Commission, is still so popular with governments. The government frames the terms of reference and appoints the members. If this does not bring about the desired recommendations a minority report can always be preferred to that of the majority, and, if necessary, the entire report can be set aside and forgotten, with or without an announcement that the relevant ministry is urgently considering the matter. If the government agrees with the commission it can make use of its support to help carry public opinion with it. If the government cannot make up its mind about an issue it can refer it to a royal commission and forget about it for a year or two. It is a very helpful device indeed, and in the frequency of its use one cannot help being reminded of those gentlemen of all political parties whose idea of policy on a particular issue is to create a new ministry or board to deal with it.

The subject of trade unions is a political matter if ever there was one, and a subject, moreover, on which passions tend to be quickly aroused, particularly in view of the Labour Party's (obsolete?) connexion with the trade unions. In April, 1965 the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations was appointed, under the chairmanship of Lord Donovan, and the govern-