

There are two separate issues here; one is the nature of the ideal, and the other the practicability of achieving it. Those who believe in the single tax argue not only that the economic effects of a tax on land rent are quite different from those of the many taxes on wages and interest, but also that the earth is the birthright of all mankind. They therefore hold firmly to the essential rightness of the single tax. At the same time, the majority of single taxers are not pacifists and so would join with the author of this book in recognising that in the modern world the sad necessity to spend fairly large sums of money on defence renders immediate application of the single tax impossible. This impossibility is not an argument against the single tax; rather it is one more reason why mankind should abandon the wasteful folly of war. If all the counties of England or the separate States of the USA maintained their own armed forces, even the income tax might become a little strained.

To the question that comprises the title of this book, the author's answer would probably be that George was a bit of each: a dreamer certainly, but also a realist in the sense that his proposals were sound, practical and effective. Those who are inspired by the ideas which also inspired Henry George, and which he publicised with so much force and eloquence, would not necessarily disagree that George was both dreamer and realist, but their emphasis would be different. For them, when George dreamed of social justice and a world from which involuntary proverty had been banished, he dreamed only of the end of evils that he knew how to destroy. It is, after all, the mark of every major reformer that he is neither solely a dreamer nor solely a realist, but a fertile combination of them both.

## Sharp Practice at the Polls

by ROBERT MILLER



**B**ELOW are the votes cast at the last two General Elections and the seats secured by the three parties:

Party	1964		1966	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Labour	12,205,581	317	13,049,455	364
Conservative	11,980,783	303	11,406,255	253
Liberal	3,101,103	9	2,320,021	12

A few calculations reveal that a heavier than usual crop of curious anomalies sprouted out of this year's farce—and I use that word because my interpretation of it is something to do with a performance in which ridiculous situations are exploited.

First, it will be seen that whereas in 1964 it took something like 38,000 votes to secure a Labour seat, 39,000

for a Conservative seat, and no less than 344,000 votes to put one Liberal in Parliament, the corresponding figures for 1966 were 35,000, 45,000 and 193,000! (For the purpose of this discussion, I have treated the Liberal win at Roxburgh in March, 1965 as though it had taken place about a year later). All this, and the Liberal "phenomenon" in particular, in spite of the fact that the total vote in 1966 dropped by over half a million!

It is also curious that an increase in the Labour vote of something like 6.9 per cent. over the 1964 figure gave the party 14.8 per cent. more seats; a decrease in the Conservative vote of 4.8 per cent. lost that party 16.5 per cent. of its seats; while a *decrease* of 25 per cent. in the Liberal vote *increased* the Liberal seats by 33½ per cent.

If seats were allotted in proportion to votes cast, the results for 1964 would have been:

Labour	44.7 per cent	281 seats
Conservative	43.9 per cent.	276 seats
Liberal	11.4 per cent.	72 seats

and in 1966:

Labour	48.8 per cent.	307 seats
Conservative	42.6 per cent.	268 seats
Liberal	8.6 per cent.	54 seats

It may be argued that in both cases Labour would have been a minority government, but the fact is that they represent minority opinion. More people voted against them than for them, both in 1964 and in 1966. Proportional representation would ensure that public opinion was reflected in Parliament as near as it is humanly possible to do so.

It may be argued that such a minority government could never achieve much because it would nearly always be out-voted by the other two parties. But need this necessarily be so disastrous? Or even likely? In any case we cannot be so certain that the result of the first "PR" election would be anything like that above. If people knew that every single vote played a part in arriving at the final result, nobody would be afraid to vote according to his convictions; the habit of casting aside minority opinion merely because its chances are practically nil would disappear, and voting for one major party merely to keep out the other would be pointless and unnecessary.

That the so-called "floating vote" of only two or three per cent. of the electorate can transfer power so drastically from one party to another can hardly be said to be government of the people by the people. It is more like government by whim and fancy. Which government will have the courage to organise a mock election—even a pilot one in a few constituencies—on a PR basis, just to see what would happen?

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