

# Letters to the Editor

## USEFUL EUPHEMISMS

SIR,—Your reprint, "The Doctor and the State" in the May edition, is a fine example of old-fashioned "commonsense."

It is good to see the old terms again—"individual responsibility," "glib and extravagant promises made by vote-seeking politicians," "expensive and time-wasting bureaucracy," "socialist aspirations," "loss of personal freedom," "normal market forces," "consumer choice"—they are all there. It quite takes me back to my boyhood—all those dear old terms which have now been rationalised by economists and political lecturers.

Alas, the worthy author does not know that today the voter merely cleans the cart—the driving is done by "competing élites" (formerly known as "vested interests")—and that the outward expression of the basic problem is "inequality of incomes" (formerly known as "poverty").

What a beautiful, olde-tyme, square, switched-off statement is "a price is a price." But so wrong. Today a price is "average revenue" and any home handyman with a protractor and a pair of compasses can show that it is compounded of cost plus monopoly rent.

Nor, of course, today are there any "dishonest suppliers." These are now "oligopolists," and their activities are "imperfect competition."

As, Sir, you reprinted the article by kind permission of the *Medical News*, surely you should offer your kind permission to that publication so that it may give the medical "competing élite" the benefits of your May editorial, which explains the situation somewhat.

Yours faithfully,

L. BENTLEY

London, N.W.6.

## A CHANGE OF VIEW

SIR,—Some years ago I had a letter published in *The Daily Telegraph*, in which I opposed Britain's entry into the Common Market. Today, I am not sure that this is still a sound view.

Our share of European trade will doubtless diminish and British industry become further protected if we keep out, whereas our joining would enable us to promote a more universal approach to free trade, based upon the success that is bound to follow the complete removal of internal

European tariff barriers.

As regards the political implications, too much, I think, has been made of the dangers of a powerful European Parliament. Presumably individual countries will always retain the right to veto any real infringement of their national sovereignty.

Yours faithfully,

R. L. SMITH

London, N.16.

## PLANNING v. FREEDOM

SIR,—Mr. Hudson's article "Land Planners and Land Taxers" (*LAND & LIBERTY*, April) suggests that there need be no conflict between these two bodies of people—a proposition I find rather optimistic.

Mr. Hudson himself puts his finger on the heart of the matter when he says that most town planners believe that today's problems are the result of unrestricted free market forces, and that they distrust these forces and seek to control them. The land-value taxer believes just the opposite—that free market forces are benevolent and that government intervention usually makes things worse. If town planners come to see the wisdom, efficiency and justice of land-value taxation and the free market, they must cease to be planners in the public sector and turn to private practice.

The argument that the siting of airports, trunk roads, etc., must be a government decision is merely to argue that civil servants (who really make the decisions) are endowed with greater wisdom than businessmen. The ineptitude of the Ministry of Transport over, for instance, the motorway programme, sufficiently belies this. As for the planners protecting the public from undesirable development, the planned marring of Liverpool Cathedral by a new ring road system and of Guildford Cathedral by the building of the University of Surrey on the slopes of Stag Hill, gives one anything but this impression.

"Land economics" may be in its infancy as far as academic specialists are concerned, but every builder, every businessman, is, and always has been, a "land economist." The planned development of shopping centres where no businessman would put them, like that in, for instance, Croydon, proves the futility of arbitrary decisions. The shoppers simply ignore the new development.

The form of human settlement that

will give the maximum return to private and public investment is that brought about by the free market—but it must be truly free, and free to everyone.

Yours faithfully,

R. R. WICKHAM

Gloucester.

## PLANNING AND IMPUDENCE

SIR,—When we talk about "free" land we mean land which is free for use provided the economic rent is paid over to the community. Land cannot be free when some superman or authority dictates the uses to which land shall be put. One of the nagging thoughts that I have about the value of the Whitstable Survey is that the planning authorities' dictates over land use in Whitstable did influence to a greater or less degree the land values shown in the report. In fact I do not see how it is possible to get a real valuation of land anywhere throughout the country unless the Town and Country Planning Acts are repealed. All I know is that here in Fordingbridge such a valuation would be full of anomalies.

One of the most serious aspects of our society today is that everybody unquestionably accepts overhead planning. HM computer has picked me out to fill in a census form. I am quizzed on twenty-five questions: Have I a job, name and address of employer, occupation, method of transport. Have I any degrees, diplomas, vocational qualifications, etc. When, where, how? Have I got a hot water tap, water closet (outside or inside)? How many cars? Where are they kept? How many rooms, etc.? Am I an owner occupier? Do I rent and who from? A pamphlet accompanying the form says: "A new picture of Britain is needed now; it will enable us to look and plan ahead to get new schools, houses, roads, hospitals and factories built in the right places."

I shall not answer these impudent questions: to provide the Government with this information would be to go against my convictions.

Yours faithfully

STEPHEN MARTIN

Fordingbridge, Hants.

## In a Nutshell

"A TAX on true economic rent, after due allowance for all imputed wages and interest, cannot be shifted but would have to be borne by the landlord. Basically this would be the site rental value of land."

—Frison K. Zingler, Professor of Economics, University of Houston