

what is best for them but has a duty to solve their difficulties. From perfectly proper motives the state provides more and more. It has not contented itself with giving people the means to provide for themselves. It provides in kind, it builds, it runs businesses. And as it does so the will of people to do things for themselves is worn away. Like birds in a cage they lose the use of their wings. Freedom from the cage is of no value to a bird which has lost the art of flying."

Regrettably the rest of the book is not up to this standard and most liberals will be disappointed with it.

"Liberals favour private enterprise" says Mr. Grimond in the chapter on economic policy. Yet "we do not believe that private enterprise should invade (*sic*) every aspect of life". Private enterprise is all very well in its place, I suppose, i.e. under government domination. Liberals, says Mr. Grimond, would plan suitable conditions under which free enterprise could flourish and would tell it broadly what to do. Yet "Freedom is probably the concept most closely associated with political Liberalism". Freedom to do what the government tells you!

Liberal Party reforms of Government, Parliament, local government, the civil service, nationalised industries, etc., are dealt with in some detail, and the discussion ranges widely over the whole field of politics. In the section on taxation occurs one sentence that will gladden the heart. "Liberals also of course believe that there is an overwhelming case for taxing land values."

To a genuine liberal, however, the general tone of this book is disheartening. The answer to the opening question must be that there is very little connection at all.

CHURCHILL ON THE LAND

ALL over Europe you have a system of land tenure far superior, socially, economically, politically, to ours. But the benefits of these superior land systems are largely, if not entirely, taken away by grinding tariffs on food and the necessities of life.

Here in England we have long enjoyed the blessings of free trade and of untaxed bread and meat; but, on the other hand, we have to set against these inestimable boons a vicious and unreformed system of land tenure.

In no great country in the civilised world, in no great country in the New or in the Old World, have working classes yet secured the advantages of both free trade and of free land, by which I mean a commercial system from which, so far as possible, the element of monopoly is rigorously excluded. "You who shall liberate the land," said Mr. Cobden, "will do more for your country than we have done in the liberation of its commerce." — *Winston Churchill at Manchester, 1909.*

The Liberal philosophy that emerges from these pages is a vague identification with humanitarianism. A desire to do good without searching for the cause of the bad beyond the political institutions of the day. A somewhat dreamy and idealistic image founded on no clear sentiment or expression beyond trying "to make people happy."

The word "liberal," like the words "laissez faire" and "radical" and so many others has been abused and debased until almost nothing of its original meaning remains. It is sad to see a once proud and respectable philosophy of freedom and justice, resting on a sure knowledge of the cause of injustice, degenerate into the sort of woolly-minded nitwittery prevalent today where all fixed standards have been abandoned and expediency is the only guide-post.

Individualism and independence are "out", collectivism and paternalism are "in". What Jo Grimond seems to be offering us is the ultimate political paradox—State Planned Liberalism. R.C.G.

The Long Road of Poverty

By JULIA BASTIAN

WHY DO MEN TRAMP? The cheerful and often picturesque figure walking across country with a bundle of belongings over his shoulder, or trundling an old perambulator through the streets, has given way to a New Look in tramps. The vagrant, like the millionaire, is an extreme social case and both are the result of the prevailing economic structure.

To get the best out of Philip O'Connor's colourful exposition on vagrancy,* one must be prepared to wander with him over the hills and dales of his mind, which is often wonderfully poetic, sometimes frankly confused, but which undoubtedly throws light on to the question of why men tramp. Vagrants — respectable and otherwise — are paraded across the pages of his essay, bringing home the fact that in London alone over a thousand men "sleep rough" every night, hunched on the seats of railway termini or wrapped in sodden newspaper in public parks. There are hundreds who turn up at reception centres to be compulsorily washed, put to work for an hour or so and moved on to the next centre. There are the aristocrats of vagrant life who may find a bed in a kip-house, one of the hostels run by a charitable institution (3s. a night for bed and breakfast). Conditions in these places are usually tragic, not only because the surroundings are worse than prison but because the atmosphere is one of utter despair.

"From here," says O'Connor, who seems to have spent a good deal of his time in the cess-pit of society, "the

*Britain in the Sixties: *Vagrancy* by Philip O'Connor. (Penguin Special, 3s. 6d.)

Welfare State looks like a rotting ladder with the bottom rungs missing." He goes so far as to say that "the tramp's ethos is percolating through the whole of our society: misfitting is steadily becoming a larger and larger part of the rule." While the freedom-loving tramp is in decline, the dis-oriented member of established society may be on the increase — witness the Mods and Rockers, Soho layabouts, thieves and thugs, hire-purchase songsters, or indeed, the perpetual travellers in any social class or tax group.

Clearly, a life of continual movement has something to do with instability, both social and psychological, the one closely reflected in the other.

Jim Phelan, a famous tramp who also wrote books, puts it this way: "If I went to work in an office, and handed myself over for so many guineas per week, then I would cease to be Jim Phelan, and my work would not be the same . . . the prison nightingale cannot sing or the captive buffalo breed. For them the missing factor of freedom sweeps everything else into nothingness."

This raises the question that there may be a confusion in the official and public mind between *work* and *employment*. Official opinion has it that the vagrant does not like work, whereas it may be true to say that he does not like employment — such as may be available to him. Employment surrounds work with a set of routines and social relations that cut across what might have been a natural pleasure. It is therefore understandable that the vagrant hates employment. And, indeed, because millions of respectable, fully-employed men and women find no pleasure in their jobs, psychologists are busy adapting misfits to the present society — of which they presumably approve.

O'Connor draws attention to this strange allergy to employment, this dislike of working for a "boss," which is so common in Tom, Dick and Harry. "All work," he says, "will call forth qualities of the artist in the workman, while all employment appears to inhibit the *nature* of the artist." Briefly he means that if all work is "joy", then all employment is like a life sentence. What he does *not* say is that if land were freely available for any man who so wished to work it himself, the choice of work would be that of the worker. The fact that so many might be self-employed would mean that the level of wages would rise to attract the labour necessary to expand any single enterprise.

One of the best chapters in this book is not written by the author at all but popped in by the publisher, ("Mr. O'Connor has asked us to provide the following.") What follows is a first class run down on the Poor Laws, lifted mainly from Leonard's *Early History of English Poor Relief*, and *English Local Government* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. This, of course contains the key. It describes the break up during the fourteenth century of the feudal structure based on rights in land, and explains how hardship was mitigated in those days by local charity and the Church, as necessary. It describes the first land enclosures, and the introduction of the

system of cash payments which took the place of payment by services. It mentions the Black Death which reduced the population by one-third within a year or two, suddenly making labour in short supply and raising wages. Labourers began to move about the country to sell their labour to the highest bidder, and many who by so doing gave up their rights in land drifted into poverty and vagrancy. As baronial armies were disbanded, more sheep runs enclosed, the numbers who took to tramping the roads increased, until in the first part of the sixteenth century, the tide reached flood proportions.

State intervention in the matter of poor relief had been growing since the Act of 1388. Through the centuries all manner of punishments were inflicted, but even a three-year whipping campaign carried out in the grand manner in nineteen counties had no effect on the numbers of vagrants who were destitute far more from lack of work than from idleness.

There were numerous attempts to teach the poor a trade. There were many charitable movements to improve their lot. And in a period of extraordinary callousness idealists like Edwin Chadwick and Buller were thrown up.

Since the sixteenth century an army of "displaced persons" has been tramping around Britain, until in 1948 all but the professional tramp became the responsibility of one or other of the social services. Since then the National Assistance Board has expanded at explosion rate.

The 1948 Act, the most sympathetic piece of legislation in the long and dismal history of the Poor Laws, gives the vagrant the legal right to live — provided that he agrees to be led up the garden path to the factory. If he refuses, he is deprived of assistance because his behaviour is looked upon as unnatural. What is missed completely is the deep-rooted cause of so much vagrancy. What has yet to be seen is the situation where man is prevented from coming into direct contact with land for his own livelihood.

The strange phenomenon of parasitism is considered in detail, and O'Connor suggests that Christ was a property-less vagrant — owning nothing. How then does the man of property appear when good men (or wise men) do not concentrate upon the acquisition of wealth? "We are forced to wrench an ethical life from one obviously materialistic" O'Connor says, "—cut off from the Welfare State, the mendicant has become like a naughty child who could, if he would only pull his socks up, become a skilled bricklayer, which is but the first step to a win on the pools or becoming a Rockefeller." The working classes do not exploit, the author points out, which is the greatest kind of virtue. To which one may reply that they are virtuous in this respect because they are not clever enough or fortunate enough to be otherwise.

Tramping on with O'Connor towards the end of this book, one is inclined to feel that a firm root in the soil (and some sensible classes in economics) would have done him the world of good, but then perhaps some of the poetry of movement would have been lost.