

although the 1965 Rent Act provides for all controlled tenancies eventually to be reviewed, the Housing Minister has recently declined, probably for political reasons, to make the necessary Order.

Mr. Sherman recognises that part of the housing problem is a poverty problem, and like other contemporary writers, advocates personal subsidies where these are essential. This method he prefers to subsidising dwellings, and argues: "A housing policy based on the assumption of continued widespread poverty can only produce a pauper state. Changes of the magnitude suggested would have to be implemented gradually over a period of years, but always with the ultimate goal in sight. If the purpose of the change was explained to the public the majority would recognise its justice."

It is encouraging to know that in these days of increasing government management of the nation's affairs a belief in market forces is still to be found. Unfortunately, Mr. Sherman, like so many commentators on hous-

ing problems, has failed to see the importance of the high price of land in house production. Until land-value taxes are introduced the cost of land will always be an obstacle in the path of a free housing market. It is large-



ly the lack of a land policy and the continued taxation of improvements that has made the housing shortage as acute as it is. One of the contradictions in our tax policies was recently highlighted in the matter of grants for sound-proofing houses near London airport. No sooner had those who could afford to take advantage of the scheme done so, than their rating assessments were increased.



WHAT'S LEFT?

BY ROY DOUGLAS

The Left and the Liberals by Jim Cousins. (No. 17. New Orbits Group. Liberal Publications. 4s. 6d.)

JIM COUSINS in only twenty-two years old, but his obvious intelligence and learning makes it necessary to judge this pamphlet as a fully adult study. One of the few clear marks of his age is an obvious preoccupation with words. His smart Oxford Union-type witticisms are sometimes telling, but a little too frequent. A more serious fault is his failure to ask himself what words like "left," "Liberal," and "radical," which he uses so frequently, really mean.

There are a few inaccuracies in the historical survey with which he commences the pamphlet. The first Labour Government was in 1924, not 1923; no clear decision was taken after the 1918 General Election as to whether the Labour Party or the Independent Liberals constituted the Opposition; the "Lib-Lab" traditions of the miners can surely not be dated to 1868 since the two first "Lib-Lab" MPs were not returned until 1874. The Labour Party had about thirty more MPs in 1918 than in 1906—not, as Mr. Cousins says, only eight or ten more.

There are also statements which are highly contentious, and, I feel, highly improbable. Thus: "Ever since the days of John Stuart Mill, British Liberalism has rightly shown hostility towards capitalism." "Three Labour governments fell on quite spurious issues of national pride—the Zinoviev Red Letter in 1924, the Gold Standard in 1931 and Dr. Mossadeq's nationalisation of the Persian oil refiner-

ies in 1951." In these three cases there was abundant evidence, long before the incidents in question, that the Government was toppling to its fall.

But there are other more serious criticisms. Mr. Cousins refers to the Liberal Party in the early 1950s and its "debates about free trade and co-ownership that were totally unreal and which took place against a background of arcane abstractions." This review is not the place to take up the cudgels over either free trade or co-ownership, but the author must realise that there were many Liberals who believed each of these policies to be extremely important, perfectly capable of implementation, and highly relevant to the problems of the time. Granted that such views were held, rightly or wrongly, by reasonable people, then why should they be blamed for pressing them on the Liberal Party?

My own reaction to the book is one of depression. It is fresh; some of the ideas are new; but they do not seem to me to be, in the etymological sense of the word, "radical." They certainly do not justify the innumerable rainy nights which innumerable Liberals have spent canvassing for their party. It does not seem to get down to the fundamental problems, either at home or abroad. Except in its reference to specific questions of Liberal strategy, it seems to say little or nothing which could not be said by a very large slice of the Labour and Conservative Parties.

Mr. Cousins is missing the essentials of Liberalism. How *can* one consider Liberalism without a proper examination of such issues as free trade, or land-value taxation, or retrenchment? Whether these ideas are right or wrong, they have been woven into the fabric of Liberalism for an extremely long time; they are still an immediate relevance to everyone—and not least to the hungry half of the world. There *is* in Liberalism a faith to die for; but Mr. Cousins has not expounded that faith here. I hope that one day he will.