



UNSOPHISTICATED RIGHTS TO LAND

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WARS, REVOLUTIONS, MASSACRES and despoliation bring suffering that often lasts for long afterwards. But eventually time heals the wounds. New generations arise and the suffering becomes part of history. Some acts, however, have effects that are passed on from generation to generation undiminished in their intensity, indeed, sometimes worsened by the passage of time. The greatest of such acts is the appropriation of land, and the landless people of the world are still suffering from the grabbing that took place centuries ago.

The situation of the Tangwena people of Rhodesia is slightly different. Their land was sold to a European from underneath their feet. It was bought by a Mr. William Hamner, way back in 1930, as part of a huge 250,000 ranch, but he has not yet taken possession.

Attempts are now being made to evict the four thousand Tangwena.

Apparently the Tangwena were not told at the time that their land had been sold. Says *The Times*: "Four times Chief Rekanyi has been hauled into court, trekking thirty miles on foot over the mountains to get there, charged with offences under the Land Apportionment Act. He has been convicted and fined, threatened with eviction, and even visited by Mr. van Heerden, the Minister of Lands, who came by helicopter to offer alternative sites. But Rekanyi refuses to budge. 'This is our land,' he says simply. 'This is where our fathers lived and their fathers before them for countless generations. We have to tend the spirits of our ancestors; they would be angry if we moved from the land!'"

The tribe of Tangwena, says the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, must sign labour agreements with the owner or they must go. The tribe will do neither: it seems that they have felt secure because of their belief that the boundaries agreed with Cecil Rhodes at the turn of the century, were still intact. "If the Government want this land," said Chief Rekanyi, "they will have to kill us. We would rather die than leave."

What puzzles the Tangwena is why the land is wanted at all. It is not a rich farming area; it is barren and hilly, with a climate that changes violently and unpredictably, and the white man's cattle cannot thrive there.

This, of course, explains why the land was not seized before, but why is it wanted now? Says *The Times*: "There is no easy answer. It may be that the Smith regime is sticking to a point of principle; the Land Apportionment Act must not be flouted by these obstinate Africans. It may be that the area's proximity to the Mozambique border gives it some security significance, or it may simply be that Mr. Hamner wants to sell the land—

though he is likely to have trouble finding a European buyer. Whatever the reason, no one is telling the Tangwena."

Gold, Dollars and Inflation

AFTER the British Government had devalued the pound sterling, the fact that American gold reserves were reduced—this no doubt occasioned by a renewed faith in this most stable metal (or rather a loss of faith in paper money)—is not a surprising event in itself. Many explanations of why this happened have been given in the Press, but the following letter from P. J. Kieser, of Pretoria, published in *The Economist*, puts the truth about the dollar/gold relationship in no uncertain terms.

Taking issue with a previous correspondent, Mr. Kieser challenged the point of view that the dollar reigns supreme in world currencies and that everything is coupled to it. "Surely this cannot be the case," he wrote, "if deficits are going to be piled on indefinitely, and there are no indications that this trend will be stopped.

"As a practising economist in South Africa my thinking about gold and devaluation may be biased. But the promise 'to pay the bearer on demand x dollars,' the dollar being defined as one thirty-fifth of an ounce of pure gold, is a broken promise. The world is beginning to realise this, except for those unfortunate enough to be average American citizens, and the innocents, who, under their influence, still believe in their Alice-in-Wonderland monetary philosophy that the credit rope has no end and hence no point for knotting round one's neck.

"We have, however, the acceptance by gullible governments and political opportunists of the proposals of the Bretton Woods meetings of 1945, which became the prelude to the creation of the International Monetary Fund. The whole international monetary structure has since grown into a maze of complicated and artificial devices that would put the labyrinth of Crete to shame. No woollen thread is long enough to find one's way through all the mess. Over the years the deficits piled up on this structure by the United States and Britain have made it as unstable as a pyramid standing on its head.

"I must admit it will be mentally and physically difficult for the United States to devalue the dollar, because so much artificial prestige has now been hung about it, and so much pressure has already been built up against it, that the sudden release of this pressure to normal will certainly cause major disruptions. Let us hope the dollar will devalue soon so that Americans can face the music while they still have some prestige and some gold left."

The switch from paper monies to gold is a sure sign of declining faith in the former. Eventually, resort to the printing press is always discovered, witness the 40 per cent devaluation of the Argentinian peso in March, 1967. For Argentina this was the tenth devaluation since 1964. Perhaps the time will come when all governments realise that the twin evils of currency inflation and protective trade policies always work against national interests.