

LAND & LIBERTY

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MARCH, 1968

TWO SHILLINGS



Only Right by Half

ASKED what were the primary economic and social problems that have occupied the minds of politicians and economists during recent years and which have been the main subject of newspaper editorials and television panel discussions, one might come up with this short list: balance of payments, devaluation, inflation, employment, prices and incomes, cuts and economies.

The government has not lacked advice on these problems, whether sought or unsought, but its failure to produce anything faintly resembling a solution to any of them is indicated by its clutching at the latest gimmick popularly known as the "Back Britain Campaign."

The main Opposition in Parliament, however, can offer nothing better itself. If the Conservatives knew the answers, they would have applied them when they had the chance. From this, one might reach the conclusion that there are no answers—at least no long-term ones—and the ordinary man might be forgiven for assuming that the country's economic problems are like the weather—beyond our control.

This would be a wrong and dangerous assumption. Wrong, because our economic ills are of our own making; dangerous because such a view leads inevitably to the cry for more government intervention. Even those who find scapegoats, whether they be the "gnomes of Zurich," labour unions or capitalists, see no answer but in more government control, intervention and economic planning.

The few voices raised against government economic planning, led by Enoch Powell, Conservative M.P. for Wolverhampton, S.W., do offer logical answers to our many dilemmas—they consist largely of not getting into the dilemmas in the first place.

Only Right by Half	19	Editorial
News and Comment	21	
Economic Nonsense on the Housing Scene	23	Peter Rhodes
A Surveyor Looks at Land and Planning	24	Rudolf Hillebrecht
Archaic and Backward Land Systems	25	
The Same Patterns, Problems and Palliatives	26	P. R. Hudson
Costless Public Improvements—A Nod in the Right Direction	27	
Site-Value Rating and Modern Trends	28	J. Bruce Brown
The Oregon Tax Trail	30	
Land Commission: Pious Hopes for Planners	31	Paul Knight
Unsophisticated Rights to Land	32	T. O. Evans
Misguided Militancy	33	A. J. Carter
Henry George and Karl Marx	35	W. J. Cadman
Unimproved Site Value—its History, Development and Difficulties	37	R. J. Maclachan
Letters to the Editor	38	
Miscellany	39	



JOURNAL OF THE UNITED
COMMITTEE FOR THE TAXATION
OF LAND VALUES LTD.

177 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1.

Tel.: 01-834 4266

Annual Subscription:
U.K. and Sterling Area £1.
U.S.A. and Canada \$3

Established
JUNE, 1894
VOL. LXXV. No. 886

MARCH, 1968

19

The advocates of a free and unplanned economy, outcasts on the political scene for many years, have recently come into their own. They were right about devaluation; they are right now about the need for the abolition of exchange control. They were right about the farce of the National Plan and they are right now as to the real instigator of inflation—the government itself. They were right about the virtual impossibility of controlling prices and they are right now about the inevitable collapse of the incomes policy.

These voices have not been crying in the wilderness; they have been echoed in unexpected quarters where disillusionment with the orthodox economic ideas has given rise to an examination of what have long been regarded as economic heresies.

It is something that in the financial columns of the *Sunday Mirror* the obvious was stated with such unequivocal clarity. "The more the Government spends, the more paper money it spews into the economy, and that chases prices up. In three years the volume of bank notes in circulation has swollen by £473,000,000 to over £3,200,000,000."

A number of articles on the subject of monetary inflation were sparked off by the publication of the "National Recovery Programme" published by the Commonwealth Industries Association and the Economic Research Council. This booklet, (5s.) sets out with devastating logic the sequence of events leading up to inflation and puts the blame fairly and squarely where it belongs—on the Government.

The Times, February 7, carried an article by Professor John Jewkes arguing the case for free enterprise and condemning the planned economy with its big and little "Neddies." A week later, Fred Catherwood, Director of the National Economic Development Council, attempted a reply. The most significant paragraph in Mr. Catherwood's article was this: "The trouble with the anti-planners is that they seem to live in an idealised world with a perfect self-balancing international economy, and not in the rough, hard, unbalanced world of today, a world of restrictive practices, international tariffs, quota restrictions, border taxes, economic nationalism, absenteeism, and all the other actions of non-economic man."

So, in effect, we are being told: "Do not rid yourself of all these anti-social and economically unsound restrictions; accept them and plan your way out!"

It is no argument to talk of being a realist as Mr. Catherwood continually does. Being a realist and not a dreamer in Mr. Catherwood's book means unquestioning acceptance of the injustices in society and a religious faith in the government.

But the free marketeers, logical and sensible as their arguments are, offer only a sound mechanism for the production, distribution and exchange of wealth within a climate of freedom and real hopes for steady growth in the economy. But this is not enough. The mechanism of the free market will always be superior to any that man can devise, but without equity in the

distribution of wealth (not a free market function) our basic problems of poverty will remain.

Those who argue for the unplanned economy are fighting not only the power-happy bureaucrats and certain entrenched interests but also the genuine socialist reformer who in his pursuit of social justice erroneously blames *laissez-faire* economics. To answer them, the non-planners must show the real cause of the maldistribution of wealth and the remedy, and this they cannot or do not do.

Reports on Land Prices

(From the *Estates Gazette*)

ASTOUNDINGLY HIGH PRICES

CONTRARY to our expectations agricultural land held its value up to the early summer, and since then there has been a strengthening of the market. Prices now seem to be higher than ever. Formerly £200 per acre was considered an exceptional price for heavy land, but during the last few months £250 per acre was coming to be accepted as an ordinary figure for only moderate heavy agricultural land. Fenland sold well at astoundingly high prices.

EKINS, WITHEROW & HANDLEY
Huntingdonshire.

GOLD RUSH DEVELOPMENT

THE EFFECTS of selective employment tax and a variety of other restrictions of cumulative significance have markedly influenced the whole pattern of retail trading, and, therefore, quite logically, conditions in the central-shop market.

Perhaps the most depressing feature of this market is the "gold rush" developments to be seen up and down the country, with only a handful of shops let and the remainder standing as board-fronted empty shells. It is difficult to see how these so-called "centres" are ever likely to achieve the titular optimism of their developers.

J. W. WATSON & SON

LAND OWNERS SITTING TIGHT

DEVELOPERS are still using land in their own "land banks" and there has been little general demand. The supply has also been cut noticeably and most land owners are now sitting tight, whereas previously they were pursuing an active policy of land disposal where planning potential was established.

JNO. OLIVER WATKINS & SONS
Swansea.

As we go to press we learn the sad news of the death of Frank Welch, Quaker and Georgist for very many years. On behalf of the United Committee we offer our sympathy to his family.

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