

LAND and LIBERTY

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SEEING IS BELIEVING

WE OPPOSED the European Economic Community from the outset, because it was a major obstacle to free trade.

Politicians argued that the Brussels-based bureaucracy was the focal point for a union of friendship, when what they meant was a self-seeking bloc designed to enhance the interests of some sectors of society at the expense of others.

Most notably, the EEC created one of the most damaging trade barriers the world has ever seen.

It's called the Common Agricultural Policy.

The cynicism behind that policy has been exposed by the horse-trading now going on among premiers and presidents, all of whom want to prevent the EEC going bankrupt (because of the exorbitant spending on farming) — but not at the expense of THEIR farmers.

THE agricultural policy has done immeasurable damage:

- **DAMAGE** to poor Third World countries, whose farmers have been denied the chance of selling their food on the world markets. This is because Europe's subsidised exports (in the United States it's called the Export Enhancement Program) have forced the prices of many products below production costs.

That's not fair trade from the peasant farmer's point of view.

- **DAMAGE** to the natural environment, destroying wildlife habitats and eroding the soil. The huge subsidies are directly responsible for encouraging farmers to adopt the intensive methods of cultivation that has abused the land; the nitrates in some areas of Eastern England have poisoned the drinking water.

That's not fair dealing with the lives of future generations.

These distortions in the economy can be measured in terms of the extension of cultivation beyond the natural margin of cultivation.

Millions of acres in Europe — and North America — ought not to be

cultivated. Much more of the world's food ought to be grown in other regions, at lower cost.

In Britain alone, given the rising trend in yields of cereals and dairy products, five million acres of land would have to be taken out of production by the early 1990s if we are not to increase output above existing surplus-producing limits.

And that's without taking into account the cutback in the use of land that would result from a reduction in subsidies and other income-protection methods used by the EEC.

EUROPE is discussing the "set-aside" system in use in the United States, where farmers are paid to leave 30% of the land fallow.

But by supporting prices above competitive levels, farmers are encouraged to intensify production from their remaining acres! So we get the worst of both worlds: abuse of the soil, and stockpiles that have to be dumped.

Yet farmers continue to manipulate the politicians whom they have in their pockets by trotting out facts which, by themselves, are meaningless. For, example, to justify present policies, they say that there will be another 1 bn mouths to feed by the year 2,000.

The hungry mouths might be there; but will they have the money with which to buy food? For many of them, alas, the answer is no.

We have stockpiles of surplus food today, while hundreds of millions of people around the globe go hungry. They lack the income with which to buy their daily bread.

It all boils down to the need to restructure the economy so that everyone has a fair chance to earn a living wage. The EEC has played a major part in preventing that.

Europe plans to abolish the obstacles to free trade in manufactured goods between member countries in 1992. We'll believe that when we see it!