

# News and Comment

## NO DR CHUNG!

**A**N ATTACK on the Hong Kong Government's "laissez-faire attitude" towards local industrialists was made at an FHKI-sponsored seminar on local industry by Dr. S. Y. Chung, Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, reports the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, March 5. In a speech outlining the Colony's industrial problems, Dr. Chung spoke about the growing problem of trade blocs, tariff restrictions and the Government's failure to offer any protection to local industry.

"The Hong Kong Government," he said, "does not offer any incentive, provide any subsidy for, or give any protection to, local manufacturing industry. Employers are in fact exposed to the worst environment."

Dr. Chung said that conditions of employment could be substantially improved in many branches of the local manufacturing industry if some usual protective measures were instituted by the Government against imports. He cited the steel, cement, paint and flour industries as examples of those in need of tariff protection.

Dr. Chung described Hong Kong as one of the very few territories, if not the only one, that had remained completely faithful to liberal economic policies of free trade and free enterprise.

Leaving no doubt as to their own views on the matter, the *Hong Kong Telegraph* in their Opinion Column replied: "No, Dr. Chung, we want no protective tariffs here. If Hong Kong industrialists cannot produce the goods competitively enough for their home market, they should first put their own production houses in order. Hong Kong manufacturers have a proud record for thriving under adverse conditions. Let's keep it that way instead of joining the whining crew who shout for protection at the drop of a hat."

## BACK FOR SECOND BITE

**S**LOUGH ESTATES LTD. was accused of endeavouring to procure £3½ million from the local ratepayers by claiming "compensation" for refused development "rights," by Lord Denning, Master of the Rolls, when he dismissed the company's appeal against an earlier High Court refusal to allow it to develop factories on 90 acres of Slough Trading Estate (*Slough Observer*, March 28.)

The company's action in seeking to revive defunct planning permission, originally granted in 1945, was deplored in that not only had it abandoned the consent

then given, but had actually received £178,545, in government compensation ten years later for loss of development rights. The company was apparently seeking to resurrect its claim either in order to erect the factories at great profit or to extract millions from the ratepayers by way of "compensation."

Three years of litigation at a cost of over £50,000 has not, however, deterred the company which is intent on pressing its claim to the House of Lords if necessary. A company spokesman is quoted as saying that probably the final claim for compensation (if it won the case, but was still refused permission to develop), would be in excess of £3½ million in view of the fact that an acre of land now fetches nearly £60,000 at current market values.

## LAND REFORM PRESSURES IN S. VIET-NAM

**M**ORE LAND to the peasant farmers was the pledge given by President Nguyen-Van-Thieu at a press conference on February 6 (*Viet-Nam Yesterday and Today*, Viet-Nam Embassy).

In measures designed to counter the Viet Cong's apparent popularity in rural areas, where they invariably distributed the land under their control to tenants or landless farmers, the Saigon Government proposes:—

1. A one or two-year moratorium on rents paid by tillers of "contested land" (i.e. disputed possession between former land owners and new tenants). During this period they will not be forced to quit by returning land owners or charged rent where none had been previously charged.

2. To encourage landlords to sell their land to peasants applying to buy it.

3. In order to create more land for distribution, the maximum acreage per farmer allowed by law will be reduced from 247 to 74.

Tenant-farmers resent the return of government officials into former Communist-held territory because they have reinstated the landlords and imposed new levies. The Viet Cong have won the support of the peasants by breaking up the land monopoly and redistributing the land expropriated. Now the Saigon officials appear to be waking up to the idea that it is the vexatious question of *land* that must be resolved before the people are willing to put their trust in them.

More land will become available following successful "pacification," states the report, and occupancies,