

\$32,000 or 1.47 per cent of the market value of the land. Either the State of California was swindled by paying too much or one lucky taxpayer had been passing off his tax load to the rest of the property taxpayers of California for many years. I would also like to see all property tax exemptions removed, whether for schools, private or public, churches, or housing for veterans, elderly, or land owned by federal, state or local governments. Help the disadvantaged groups by direct subsidy, if necessary.

This is a complex topic, related to other tax and reform problems, but I am pleased to see that as time goes on, we are beginning to recognise this problem, and possible solutions, by way of untaxing improvements for property tax purposes. Look at how long it took this country to realise that high tariffs were a hindrance rather than a help to our trade and economy. The Douglas Commission and other groups are beginning to be more interested in looking at the possibility of shifting the emphasis on the property tax from buildings to land use, and I am encouraged.

Some day, when land gets scarce enough, we may have to consider letting people lease rather than own land to protect it for future generations. This is already being done in a few places in the United States and abroad.

We may be years ahead of most of the other countries in bathrooms, air conditioners, fixtures and gadgets, but we still have a way to go to ensure better site lay-out and design, undergrounding of utilities, removal of eyesores like billboards and auto junkyards, and just generally providing a better and healthier esthetic, social, biological, and physical environment for ourselves, and hopefully, for coming generations. It will take more than wishful thinking to solve some of these problems, especially those of low income housing. Recognition of the problems of housing and of saving our environment has to come first. But mere recognition is not enough. It has to be followed by constructive action.

Danger - Meddlers at Work

Peter Simple in the *Daily Telegraph*, June 19

WHAT IS THE MAUD REPORT on Local Government but one more example—the greatest so far, but not the greatest, I am afraid, when all is said and done—of change for the sake of change, reform for the sake of reform, a determination to leave nothing, absolutely nothing alone?

The abolition, in effect, of the English counties, with all the historical traditions and loyalties that go with them, the subordination, in effect, of the country to the towns, under cover of averting that very thing; the disappearance in effect of the country altogether: all this is persuasively described as sensible and neces-

sary if we and our descendants are to have a tolerable and efficiently organised existence.

But lurking somewhere behind it all there is something neither sensible nor necessary. It is the huge smile of a demented social engineer cutting up England into neat, serviceable segments like so much cardboard, in the interests not of living people but of a hypothetical future.

Who will dare defy him now? Has he not got decimal coinage, metrication, comprehensive schools and other successes behind him? He is confident there will be no resistance. Who is going to wipe that smile from his face and prove him wrong?

Of the £370,851 which the Redcliffe-Maud Commission cost, just on £111,000 was spent on printing and publishing the report, evidence and research studies.

News and Comment

INDIA'S GREEN REVOLUTION

—WHO BENEFITS?

MAHINDERPAL SINGH, an enterprising and modern farmer in the vanguard of India's "green revolution," is so advanced that he is now preparing for the introduction of remote control for his tractors, reports the writer of a special article in *The New York Times*, May 28.

"Few Indian farmers are as advanced as Mr. Singh," he says, "but hundreds of thousands are hastening down the road he has travelled. Especially in the northern wheat belt, which came up with a gaudy 40 per cent increase in production last year and now seems to be harvesting an even bigger crop, the incomes of many farmers have more than quadrupled." The writer then adds: "Land values have soared."

Smaller farmers are not doing so well and the writer instances Tej Singh, "the debt-ridden owner of a paltry two acres" at Abupur 30 miles east of New Delhi. Tej Singh still farms the way Indians farmed 1,000 years ago and cannot recall the origin of his crushing debt on which he pays interest of 24 per cent to the moneylender. He knows the value of new methods and new seeds and fertiliser but said: "Those things are for the rich land owners, not me."

The strategy of the "green revolution," says the writer, calls for the concentration of modern farming methods in what are termed the most progressive parts of the country, those with assured irrigation, which account for roughly 15 per cent of the 565,000 villages. Within these it has not been the "backward

peasants" but the "progressive farmers" who have gained the most, progressive often being a euphemism for well off—those with the money and standing it takes to command cheap credit. If there was ever any



doubt that social and economic inequalities have been widening, it was banished by the green revolution.

Far from the green revolution strategy helping the small subsistence peasant farmers—40 million of the 60 million farm families in India—it has frequently worsened their plight. "Roughly a fifth of the land is farmed by tenants and sharecroppers, for whom the green revolution has sometimes meant higher rents or even expulsion."

As for land reform, rising land values, says the writer, have helped to close the question for all time as far as most progressive farmers and politicians of all description are concerned and the law which limits family holdings to 30 acres is now widely evaded, with little government effort to enforce it.

Landless labourers, who are not employed in the event of bad harvests, are still seemingly nobody's concern. A big farmer, asked if this was not hard on the labourers, replied: "They have only to beg, borrow or steal. We have to uphold our prestige, pay our servants and save our cattle. We are really much worse off."

If this is the best kind of "revolution" that can be thought of, India might eventually find herself with a very different kind of revolution on its hands.

A REAL WELFARE STATE FOR U.S. FARMERS

UNDER FARM SUBSIDY programmes in the United states in 1967, 8,778 producers in the fifteen cotton-growing States of the South and South-West (half of them in Texas and Mississippi), received payments of \$20,000 or more each, reports *The New York Times*, June 1. Representative Paul Findley of Illinois inserted in the Congressional Record recently a list of 16,430 persons who now get more than \$25,000 each in farming subsidies. Mr. Findley has been trying for four years to get a limit placed on government subsidy payments, and he has succeeded in

getting the House of Representatives to set the limit at \$20,000 a year for restricting crop production. Agriculture Department officials will now try to persuade the Senate to revoke it, as it did last year.

The Senate can muster formidable opposition to the limitation, says *The New York Times*. "Senator James C. Eastland, Mississippi Democrat, got \$117,000 in cotton subsidies last year. He is one of 82 persons in Sunflower County, Miss., who receive more than a quarter of a million dollars annually from the Government."

While one can have some sympathy for Mr. Findley and his friends in their attempts to nibble at this legalised farm protection racket, one might as well argue that Dick Turpin should limit his loot to an agreed figure.

The cost to the U.S. taxpayer of government regulation and subsidization of farm crops is \$5,000,000,000.

Crop restriction payments are defended on the ground that excessive production would depress prices and drive small farmers out of agriculture.

Farm subsidies, of whatever nature and wherever applied, to the extent that they boost the returns to farming, can have only one principal effect—to boost land values and lower the margin of cultivation. Land below the margin, which in normal economic circumstances should long ago have gone out of production or have been diverted to other uses, remains productive because of subsidies. As with protective tariffs, a vested interest has been built up. Economic land produces a living and better land produces fat returns. The "fat" farmers shed crocodile tears for the small farmers and in seeking their protection, safeguard their own.

Livestock farmers, it appears, are not subsidised—their production swings with demand; and oddly enough the country's largest farm organisation, the Farm Bureau advocates an end to government subsidies and a return to the free market.

Agricultural land values are only a segment of total



land values and it should not need an economist to trace the ultimate effect of all forms of subsidization of production and to discover who the residual legatees of government subventions are.