

LAND & LIBERTY

Editor: V. H. Blundell

APRIL & MAY, 1963

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EDITORIAL

Disarming and Insidious

THE generalisation that everybody is a socialist today is getting uncomfortably near the truth. Even among people who are outspoken in their condemnation of the socialist states behind the iron curtain there is a broad acceptance of the "welfare state," acquiescence in the decline of individual responsibility and support for government economic planning. And it is a sign of the times that a Conservative speaker can go very much beyond this. Addressing a meeting of Henry George School students at their weekend school on March 23, a speaker from the Conservative Party Central Office said that the welfare state should be preserved and expanded, and that "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need," is just plain common sense.

As F. McEachran points out in *Freedom the Only End*, it is perhaps the supreme delusion of modern times to suppose that governments are more right than individuals, and from this delusion derives the notion that it is the duty of the state to look after the individual.

Most countries have become infected with this idea, and even in the United States which, on the face of it, is solidly anti-socialist there is an ever-growing clamour for state welfare measures and more state planning and state regulation of industry and trade.

Socialism as an economic system may have been rejected, but as a political philosophy it is finding wider and wider acceptance.

The modern concept of state economic planning is not the rigid and often detailed control of every stage of production, as practised for example in the Soviet Union, but paternalistic control which is as disarming as it is insidious.

The Conservative Party, which was elected to power in 1951 with the slogan "Set The

People Free" has in fact achieved very little towards that end. It, too, is wholly committed to the idea of the welfare state (even claiming the credit for it) and to the state-planned economy. It is true that it has discarded some of the more irritating Socialist controls, but it has retained and extended its grip on the economy of the country. Whatever party is in power, it seems that we are in for a period of progressively increased planning and control of industrial and commercial enterprise.

The extent of the present Government's loss of faith in the free play of economic forces can be seen in the establishment of NEDC and NIC, in the intention to find and adopt a suitable wages policy, in many recent Acts and Orders, and in the speeches of Conservative M.P.s. The sad thing is that many who advocate this creeping socialism are genuine freedom lovers, but they consider the loss of freedom involved is not too big a price to pay for what they consider to be an advance in economic prosperity and social justice.

By government interference and welfare state measures we do alleviate the worst consequences of social injustice and it is as well that we do in present circumstances. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the Government itself is responsible for the inequitable distribution of wealth; responsible both positively by its policies of protection and privilege for sectional interests and negatively by neglecting to collect the rent of land for public purposes.

The right course is clear. To establish real social justice and real prosperity we need to eliminate every form of legalised privilege.

Our quarrel with state planning and state paternalism is not the selfish one of not wishing to surrender liberty for the sake of the less fortunate, rather is it that it is not necessary to do so.

The need for a welfare state — at least in its present form — and for government direction of the economy, has arisen because of the failure to face up to the moral issues behind most of our social problems.

Unemployment, slums and poverty are not natural calamities resulting from "blind economic forces." They are man-made ills attributable to the maldistribution of wealth in society which inevitably follows the denial of equal rights to the rent of land.

Paternalism and planning are symbols of failure, not of progress, and if we listen too long to the seductive notes of the Pied Piper of the welfare state, for us, as for the children in Hamelin Town, there will be no return to liberty.

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

HAIR RAISING

MR. W. PROUDFOOT (Conservative, Cleveland) asked the President of the Board of Trade (February 19)

- (1) if he will reduce to nil the import duty of 30 per cent on rear-view mirrors for motor vehicles;
- (2) if he will reduce to nil the import duty of 20 per cent on false beards;
- (3) if he will reduce to nil the import duty of 10 per cent on human hair;
- (4) if he will reduce to nil the import duty of 42 per cent on sunshades;
- (5) if he will reduce to nil the import duty of 20 per cent on riding crops;
- (6) if he will reduce to nil the import duty of 20 per cent on rubber bathing caps.

Mr. Green (Minister of State, Board of Trade), replied: "No."

THE COMMON MARKET SCARE

A CHEERING and optimistic view of Britain is given in the *Christian Science Monitor* by its European Economic Correspondent, John Allan May. In an article headed "More Room Outside E.E.C." he says that one of the consequences of the failure to get into the Common Market is the spread of a quite false impression about this country.

"France, which kept Britain out, is seen by many as strong, confident, energetic, rich and successful. Britain, thrown out, is seen as a motor without a spark, a people that don't care, living in an economy that has failed."

This is just not so, says Mr. May. Far from there being no alternative to membership of the Common Market except decline and perhaps ruin (as the Government has tried to make out), the National Institute of Economic and Social Research has stated that the "net loss to our balance of trade on account of tariff changes that we may suffer as a result of exclusion from E.E.C. is probably smaller than the loss we would have suffered if we had joined."

"Far from being the failure so many imagine," he argues, "the British economy is in many ways still the most successful in Europe. This country is already part of a market of ninety million people and has preferential arrangements with some 700 million others. Britain today has more trade allies than any other country on earth."

He points out that Britain is the largest exporter of aircraft jet engines; has the most firms working on jet cars; is ahead in automatic aeroplane landing devices; is