

ship of NATO and other bodies, this argument does not appear to carry much weight. He said that British industrialists believed that for them the balance of advantage lay in our joining but, he added, competition would be severe *whether or not we joined* and costs would be the deciding factor. That, we believe, is absolutely true. It is very different from the rosy picture of a fat, lucrative market ready to fall into manufacturers' laps with which protagonists have deluded the unwary.

In brief, the economic case for Britain becoming a part of the Common Market, as presented by the Prime Minister, is no more than that some part of British industry, languishing under protection, needs the spur of European competition in the home market, while another section, export-minded, would welcome an opportunity to break into or retain European markets. Additionally, British agriculture has nothing to fear and the possibility of something to gain. The political case is that the U.K. and some or all of her EFTA partners would be inside the circumscribing tariff wall which "dangerously divides" Western Europe and shuts off the rest of the world.

These "benefits", as the Prime Minister called them, could better be secured simply by dismantling our present tariff barriers. That would cost nothing. It would threaten nobody. The price of British membership of the Common Market on the other hand, is high indeed. It includes the break up of the British Commonwealth, surrender of our sovereign independence to an omnipotent, central bureaucracy, dear food, tariff retaliation by third countries and loss of overseas markets to them. And whatever concessions the British negotiators may secure from the Six these will not alter the fundamental issues at stake. Britain must keep out.

Labour Motion On Land Speculation

THE Labour Party is almost certain to ratify the state land purchase proposals set out in *Signposts for the Sixties* (L&L, Aug.) at its annual conference at Blackpool next month. Constituency parties have submitted 41 resolutions (more correctly, motions) on land speculation. Fatuously a few call on the present Government to do this or that. The majority, though, seek either to instruct the party executive to take action of one kind or another or to pledge the next Labour Government to a certain course of action. Generally this is to bring urban land into public ownership although some are content to call for "complete control" of land or for an examination of the possibility of eventual public ownership. Acton wants a separate Ministry to secure "meticulous planning of the use of land"—all land, including that owned by the state industries and Government departments,

Guildford wants unspecified measures to be taken to "prevent land speculation" and Leeds East wants the next Labour administration to "carry out the nationalisation of land, *without* compensation."

Only Middlesbrough West eschews fatuity, irrelevance, red revolution and black reaction. Its motion reads:

"This Conference directs attention once again to the evils resulting from the private ownership of land; to the enormous increase in site values during the past decade, and to the growth of private land speculation with the exploitation of the community that results from it.

"It declares that land is not a fit subject for capitalisation and sale, being as it is the basis of all productivity after labour has been applied to its resources. It asserts that land values are created, not by the owners of land, but by the presence, the growth and the industry of the community, and ought, therefore, to be effectively nationalised and collected for the benefit of the community by the imposition of a progressive tax up to 20s. in the £ of the full annual unimproved site value.

"It calls on the Government to restore the ownership and control of land to the community and to destroy private ownership and speculation in land by recreating the Lands Valuation Department set up by the Finance Act of 1931; by making a full comparative valuation of unimproved site values in the United Kingdom and reviewing this valuation every five years by progressively imposing taxes on the values thus ascertained and determined; and by giving to local authorities power to impose local rates on the basis of this valuation.

"It declares that a Labour Government will be expected to take immediate steps to implement the terms of this resolution."

It is vain to hope that the Conference will tear up *Signposts for the Sixties* and adopt Middlesbrough's proposals. But until it does the Labour Party does not deserve to return to office.

The Buckinghamshire federation wants the national executive committee "to consider alternative methods of financing local authorities as part of a new policy to invigorate local government." Reading believes this can be done by making local taxes conform to the ability-to-pay "principle" but London Labour Party urges the executive "to pay particular attention to the rating of site values".

Scores of motions involve the spending of tax monies but only three are concerned with national taxation and are too trivial to warrant notice here. Other motions show that the party is deeply divided on whether Britain should join the Common Market and on defence.

Fraternal solidarity with their comrades in the Palace of Westminster is at low ebb in Blackpool—"the Parliamentary Labour Party is not functioning fully as an opposition to the present Government"—and in Brom-

ley, Kent, which urges the Parliamentary leaders, "now that they have so courageously overcome the nuclear disarmers, to show equal courage in attacking the Tories." But as this motion shows, the Labour Party in Motherwell, in the Scottish coalfields has not forgotten what the socialist brotherhood of man means:-

"This Conference calls on all organisations of the working-class movement to resist with all their strength the importation of American coal into South Wales. Further, Conference agrees that such an attack on the British miner should be resisted by the broad Labour Movement in Britain."

British workers, unite! — against American miners, and force up the price of steel against yourselves and others!

The Heart of The Matter

FOR further acquainting his readers with our views on private property in land and his kind personal remarks we are grateful to the editor of the *Estates Gazette* for the note as follows which he included in his July 29 issue:-

"The July issue of *Land & Liberty* contains a good-natured account of some critical remarks we made in our issue of May 20 about betterment theory in general and the *Land & Liberty* brand in particular, and the editor recognises that part of what we said was deserved. He winds up with a reaffirmation and possibly a reassessment of policy:

'Land values should be publicly collected not because they are community-created, but because all men have equal rights to land and to liberty. The matter is neatly summed up in the slogans, God gave the land to the people, and The land belongs to the people. Plausible polemicists may dispute such assertions, but let them produce a single title deed which does not owe its origin to force and fraud and attempt to prove that some men have greater natural rights than others. Those who support the private misappropriation of the public revenue and the artificial enhancement of land values are ill-placed to accuse those who would end this situation (*sc.* of being) the something-for-nothing school. If our policy were fully adopted land would be free only in the sense that it would not command a purchase price and would be more readily available. Its rent would be fixed by competition as at present, and its best use would be ensured.'

"We have not reprinted this passage in order to mock the editor's views, which are obviously deeply and sincerely felt, and one of our motives is that we want readers to know what his case is, giving him a fair crack of the whip. We do suggest, however, that the argument about force and fraud is both a mistaken and a revealing one. The way in which title to land was acquired many centuries ago has little relevance to the circumstances under which it is held today. After passing through many hands, its ownership usually represents not remote force and fraud but capital resulting from thrift, hard work,

brains and enterprise; and the demands of the Inland Revenue, in life and in death, are rapidly taking away the financial benefits of any surviving element of ancient prerogatives."

There is nothing here to make us wish to swallow our words or to rewrite them. The force and fraud argument is a matter of fact which, understandably, the *Estates Gazette* editor has not attempted to refute. Instead he seems to imply that the passage of time effects a subtle seachange whereby past wrongs become present rights. Does the passage of time make a counterfeit note legal tender? Does his thrift, hard work, brains and enterprise give the innocent purchaser either moral or legal title to stolen property? Merely to pose the questions destroys our adversary's argument. The restoration of stolen property to its rightful owner is the law and who would question its justice? The practical way of restoring the equal rights of all to the land is not to be achieved by tearing up present title deeds but by requiring their holders to pay each year to the community the "economic rent" (i.e. the annual unimproved value) of their holdings.

Leasehold Reform

THE *ECONOMIST* headed its correspondence columns, July 29, with this letter from Dr. Frederic J. Jones of Cardiff:—

"As a member of the Welsh League for the Taxation of Land Values, I should like to reply to your article 'Wales on the Lease,' of July 22nd. The various 'leasehold reform' organisation in Wales are vaguely aware that an injustice exists, but none (especially the M.P.s who have been recently jousting on the issue) has come up with any satisfactory solution. The reason is that they fail to get the problem of leasehold into its proper national perspective of soaring land-values, and so their solution of 'reasonable redemption' is at best unconvincing and at worst an attempt to replace one injustice with another.

"The only equitable solution is an indirect one; the taxation of land, whether freehold or leasehold, nationally. This will not prevent land values rising, since land prices depend on supply and demand; but it will return to the community community-created land values and leave landlord and tenant with no pickings to argue over. This would lead to decay of the leasehold system altogether, and it would be replaced by a just and logical system in which the state appropriated all land values but left the individual the absolute right (as opposed to the present restrictionism of both leasehold and freehold schemes) to develop land in the most economic way possible.

"Thus it will be seen that the real problem underlying the leasehold system in Wales is by no means a local one; it is even more pressing around London than around Cardiff, except that it is not recognised as such."