

News and Comment

NO DR CHUNG!

AN 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

SLOUGH 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

MORE 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,

and rents will be "frozen" by the Government for a "specified period."

One may well question the Government's long-term intentions. If it is acknowledged that the Viet Cong



freely distributed the land in the first place, why is the Government so keen on redistribution? If the peasants already hold the land, then why the need to "guarantee" their occupancy? It would appear that the land has been requisitioned by the Government and held in trust—for the landlords. Being wary of the peasants' reaction to a crude hand-over to the former owners, however, the Government would much prefer to "encourage" the latter to sell out. The Saigon Government hopes to "take away much of the relevance of Viet Cong arguments on the subject of land ownership" by abandoning their former policy of returning land regained from the Viet Cong to the former land owners and applying their own special brand of "land reform."

The one thing not questioned is the sacred rights of the landed class to "their land." The South Vietnamese Government will have to do better than this if it is to achieve a "meaningful victory" over the hearts and minds of its subjects.

Misplaced Pride

T. O. EVANS

"OURS IS A RECORD in which we take pride, for the improvements it has brought to the lives of the aged, the sick, the widowed and other members of the community whose problems our predecessors tended to brush aside. The citizens of Brighton know from their own experience of our massive increase in social service provision."

This was Prime Minister Harold Wilson in a message to Mr. Tom Skeffington Lodge, Labour Candidate in the Brighton (Pavilion division) by-election.

Mr. Wilson went on to speak of the huge programme of hospital building, and of the fact that more than 4,000 households in Brighton received almost £94,000 last year under the Government's rate rebate scheme.

Another boast contained in the message was that the prices and incomes policy had reduced council house rent increases, and that the Government was providing substantial financial aid to Brighton's local and commuter rail services (which will inevitably send up the value of land).

At first sight it might appear that the Prime Minister

Dan Cameron

WE regret to record the sudden death on March 29 of Mr. Dan Cameron, at the age of 78 years. Mr. Cameron had been continuously associated with the movement in Glasgow since 1910 and had been Chairman of the Scottish League for Land-Value Taxation since 1956. He took part in the establishment of the Glasgow branch of the Henry George School of Social Science in 1948 and for the ensuing ten years regularly attended class meetings, where his profound knowledge of economics and clarity of exposition in discussion were of great assistance to tutors and students. The Scottish League has lost a wise counselor and those members privileged to know him, a loved and respected friend.

R.J.R.

Max Toubeau

WE HAVE just learned of the death on March 21 at the age of 86, of Monsieur Maxime Toubeau. Monsieur Toubeau was President of the League of Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade in France and a Vice-President of the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade. To his family go our deepest sympathy.

has something to brag about, but this is because we are accustomed to think that it is a sign of progress that taxpayers' money (for that, of course, is what it is) is distributed so lavishly amongst various sections of the population or spent on various schemes to alleviate the gross effects of the mal-distribution of wealth in society.

If we are to accept that state charity is a measure of good government, then presumably the government to earn the greatest credit would be that which could claim that during its period of office it had given away more than any of its predecessors in attempts to solve the social problem and establish "social justice."

Imagine that we visited an island where we observed poor housing conditions, much sickness, a high crime rate, malnutrition, and all the varied symptoms of poverty, and that there were few hospitals, inadequate schools, overcrowded prisons and a small police force. Now supposing we revisited the island many years later and we were told with pride that more prisons had been built, the police force had been enlarged, there were more hospitals than ever, free food was being distributed and that the government had undertaken to house fifty per cent. of the population. Would we think that this society had progressed? I for one would not think so. These "achievements" would indicate the very opposite