

None So Blind

Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants: it is the creed of slaves.

—William Pitt, 18 Nov., 1753

WHAT we are witnessing in government today is the culmination of myth confounded by error and ineptitude. The economics of collectivism is by no means a practice confined to Labour administrators; in our own society Conservatives and Liberals have adopted its tenets—no matter how much they protest that they stand for individual rights and freedom.

When a pre-war Tory government abandoned Free Trade they took the first steps towards a planned economy and it is irrelevant to the argument that this was not their stated purpose, it being done at the behest of the protectionist lobby. The main difference between a socialist administration and its allegedly non-socialist opposition, is that the former, believing its own propaganda and utopian creeds, moves that more rapidly in the direction of the collectivist state producing economic chaos that much sooner.

There is about the latest fracas over pensions, health charges, and education an element of farce which would be hilarious if the likely consequences were not so serious. What sends a chill down the spine is that the only alternative our future would-be rulers, the Tories, can offer is, as Antony Fisher said in a recent letter to the *Sunday Telegraph*, "sixpence off income tax." Reform for the Tory "think machine" consists largely of taking the same old worn out deck of cards, giving it a good (and not so good) shuffle and dealing out agricultural levies (tariffs) in place of agricultural support, capital gains tax in place of a land levy and so on without such much as a glance over the shoulder at basic principles.

That many of the most pressing problems of our times could be swept away by drastically reducing income tax, abolishing tariffs and exchange control, putting taxes upon the passive factor in production (land) and freeing industry and trade from the multifarious inhibiting and frustrating controls and regulations which abound, has been demonstrated time and again by honest and intelligent men who have a finer regard for justice than those petulant bourbons, our socialist masters, who have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing.

Insult is added to injury by the self-styled saviours who blame the people for the manifold follies they have inflicted on them when the peoples' only crime was to naively believe the Marxian-Keynsian clap-trap which has been the mainstay of all political propaganda these past fifty years.

Liberals who not so long ago were prepared to stand by true liberal principles including free trade and land-value taxation have long since succumbed to the temptations of state direction and control in economic and social matters, thus demonstrating the debilitating effects that an intellectual conspiracy can have on an entire generation.

In paraphrasing Burke we might well ask when will a government arise which is prepared to "govern fifty millions of men and women impatient of servitude, on the principles of freedom?"

N.A.B.

Walter Lippmann

To the liberal mind the notion that men can authoritatively plan and impose a good life upon a great society is ignorant, impertinent, and pretentious. It can be entertained only by men who do not realise the infinite variety of human purposes, who do not appreciate the potentialities of human effort, or by men who do not choose to respect them.—*The Good Society*. (George Allen & Unwin).

A MAJOR BATTLE is brewing up in Kent as the Land Commission presents its case to the Minister of Housing and Local Government to acquire and develop 415 acres of land at Walderslade.

The site is situated about four miles south of Chatham and borders the M.2 motorway in an area considered to be of scenic value. Less than a mile north of this site another area of 230 acres at Princes Avenue awaits development for lack of planning permission.

Considerable opposition has been aroused by the Commission's proposals. Two hundred local property owners who would be displaced by the Commission have formed an association to oppose the plan. They claim that the Princes Avenue site offers a readily available alternative only 1½ miles from the centre of

Chatham, which would be easier and cheaper to service with sewers and other amenities. It would also be more convenient for residents as it would also involve



shorter journeys to and from the town. The land has no scenic value and the owners are anxious to develop. Among the objections to compulsory purchase orders are thirty families who stand to lose their homes and builders and landowners whose applications to develop parts of the land for houses have been refused.

The Kent County Council appears to be opposed to development of both sites and claims that there is already sufficient residential land allocated in the Development Plan for local needs; and further that more development in the area would aggravate already overstrained commuter rail services.

The case will not be an easy one for the Minister to decide. On one side there is a local authority with a seemingly parochial attitude to substantial new building and on the other the Land Commission resolved to get its hands on 415 acres. In the middle sits the local pressure group latching on to a potential developer.

All these interested parties will be involved in an appeal hearing which holds all the promise of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera without the music. But is it all necessary? Could it have been avoided? Is anyone really competent to judge issues of this kind? If the authorities were not obsessed with the sanctity of green belt land, and land was taxed according to its most profitable use, probably neither site would really be considered for development at the present time as there is plenty of other available land closer to Chatham. But statutory planning has fixed a protective belt around the Medway Towns. And the Canute-like Kent Council does not want to allocate large areas of land for future expansion. The Land Commission sees a need to justify its existence; the local interests wish to protect their homes, their businesses and their scenery and the Minister's inspector probably wishes he had never taken the job. Maybe at the end of a year a decision might be made. Eventually some homes might be built. The lengthy democratic process will be seen to have worked laboriously and arbitrarily. And what will the moral of the story be?

Simply this: once freedom, initiative and decision are taken from the hands of individuals, logic and reason go out of the window. In their place we get reasoned justification for arbitrary and politically expedient decisions.