

LAND & LIBERTY

Editor
V. H. BLUNDELL

Asst. Editor
R. C. GRINHAM

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TWO SHILLINGS



The Threat of Benevolence

THROUGHOUT the history of the civilised world we can find evidence of a desire for faster change in material development. We can also find, if we look close enough, the comments of those writers and observers who have questioned conventional wisdom and who have been suspicious of the social and economic trends of their time.

Most people are concerned only with those acts and events which have a direct influence on their personal circumstances. To the man who is on the brink of buying a new car, an increase in purchase tax may be very significant. To the man dedicated to walking, however, the tax is of no consequence, and although he might find comfort in the thought that because of the tax there will be less cars to create pedestrian hazards, such secondary considerations are rarely made. There are signs today, however, that growing numbers of people are concerned about the future and the direction in which events and political actions are leading us.

One commentator recently wrote: "A central problem of the next century may well be the reconciliation of personal liberty and democratic action with the power of the state . . . Democracy must become real in political terms and extend into economic and social fields."

Some people might consider that we are already reaching the watershed of this issue, for the forces working against both democracy and personal liberty are daily becoming more apparent. Little by little the range of personal choice is being limited by statute, monopoly or financial barrier. The sad thing about the host of restrictions that have recently been adopted, or which are lurking under the parliamentary draughtsman's pen, is that they have been, or will be, presented as being necessary in the interests of social equity, good order and material benefit.

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The pleas for more control are always backed by plausible arguments which often conceal the shallow reasoning behind them.

Are we heading for a mutually uncontested oligarchy or a misguided dictatorship under the guise of benevolence? If we are, and the writing on the wall is in large letters, is there yet hope of better things to come for those who stand fast by the principles of individual responsibility, and who believe that there is a universal co-operative spirit among men that has yet to be exploited to the full?

Many political "solutions" to apparent problems in the socio-economic field have only intensified the need for a deeper and more thorough examination of rock bottom causes. It is increasingly fashionable today to claim that economic matters are so complicated, and the proliferation of conflicting interests so great, that there is little left but a Hobson's choice of more controls.

Many of the complications are attributable to wrong remedies being applied to basic conflicts that have arisen through a lack of sound judgement based on simple truths

and common justice. If this admonition appears to be trite, it is because we have lost touch with the sound ethical platform of the classical social crusaders. If policies are to be judged "on their merits" rather than against a set of absolute standards a society can be dangerously permissive to the extent of favouring the few against the many. Today it is no longer respectable to seek to maintain standards of justice, integrity, and morality. Indeed, the ideas themselves are questioned and their validity put to doubt. Could they be invoked again in the future?

One thing seems clear, things could become very much worse than they are, relatively quickly. Is it not time that genuine self-interest were put to the test and attempts were made to reassert individual responsibility? To give these things a fair trial, great courage would be needed to tackle many injustices and restore basic rights. What is needed is not a new morality but a refurbished one. The question remains; where should a start be made? Surely, with the basic right of all men to share equally in the natural resources of the country—best achieved by full land-value taxation.

NEWS AND COMMENT



PARADISE FOR SETTLERS

MALTA has no surtax or rates and scarcely any income tax, but it has plenty of sunshine; thus it is an attractive place to live. The rush to go to Malta, says Anne Sharpley in the *London Evening Standard* recently, has caused a housing problem for the indigenous Maltese.

The Maltese Government is encouraging and tempting British settlers to take up residence in the country—particularly because they need spenders to replace the four thousand families of British Service personnel who have now left.

"The first wave of some 1,200 of the new settlers since 1963," says the article, "produced a devastating effect on land prices, some of which shot up more than ten times. Malta's housing shortage is estimated at 10,000 (population 330,000)."

MIRROR ON THE WALL

SOcialists, after some considerable time in power have come to realise that they cannot hope for economic progress and increasing prosperity—upon which their own continuance in power must ultimately depend—if the country's economy is centrally controlled."

Wishful thinking by opponents of the Wilson mis-Government? No. It is the considered judgment of Dr. Erik Anners, former professor at the University of Uppsala, in Sweden, former member of the Swedish Parliament, and author of many important works.

The above quotation is taken from his latest study, *Socialism versus Progress* (International Freedom Academy, Zurich). The professor was writing of Sweden,

of course; but what a ring of truth his words have for socialists in Britain (of all parties) in the light of the the present economic crisis which has so clearly been brought about by the Government's fanatical obsession with state control.

There is irony here, too, for our socialists have always been fond of holding up Sweden as a mirror reflecting a perfect image of the benefits of socialist control. Professor Anners shows it to be a distorting mirror. In Sweden, housing and the public services, social welfare and education reflect indisputable deficiencies and shortcomings as a result of state administration.

BARCLAYS BANK CALLS FOR FREE TRADE POLICY

AT A TIME when British trade policies are in question it ought not to be a matter for surprise that the policy of free trade gets an airing. Yet so conditioned have we become to protection that the mere words "free trade" are often enough to curl the lips and raise the eyebrows of modern economists and politicians alike.

It is therefore refreshing to get a straight call for free trade from no less august a body than Barclays Bank. A leading article in Barclays Bank quarterly *Review*, published in November, calls for "far-sighted" political decisions to return Britain to free trade.

Says the *Review*: "Those who for so long have wished to see the pound devalued have had their way. The problems of world trade may now begin to take a different shape. The nagging fear must be the possibility of moves towards a new protectionism. The reason for this is not hard to find.