

All-Round Reform

The author is employed at a remote gold mine in Natal. Now in his fifties, he has not faced the camera for a quarter of a century.

IT was not until 1935 that I found in *Progress and Poverty* the answer to our economic problems. Fifteen years earlier I had been adversely affected by the then prevailing depression. However, being then only a boy, I had not questioned my elders' opinions that business depressions are unavoidable and "just happen" and must therefore be accepted more or less as "Acts of God."

In 1927 I went to the United States where for two years I enjoyed the "boundless prosperity" of that country. In 1929, depression hit the world. For the next two years I read and listened to the opinions of the top men in the business and the financial world. One after the other they prophesied revivals and upturns of business, next month, in the spring, after the summer, etc., etc. Finally I came to the sad conclusion that their views and ideas on this subject were no better than mine.

When I was again in Cape Town, in 1935, I came across by chance an Everyman's Library edition of *Progress and Poverty*. I had read so many books and magazines and newspaper articles purporting to explain depressions and booms in business, that I skimmed rapidly through *Progress and Poverty* expecting that it, too, would fail to give a satisfactory explanation. In the course of my "skimming" I found none of the factual errors, faulty logic, contradictions, and so forth, which had caused my dissatisfaction with the other books. Therefore, I immediately re-read it with the deliberate intention of finding the flaws. My search was fruitless; I was unable to find even a misprint!

Soon after having thus completely satisfied myself that *Progress and Poverty* held the answer to the perplexing problems of depressions, etc., I read in the Cape Town papers one or two short news items reporting the activities of a group led by (then Advocate—now Judge) Frank A. W. Lucas. On moving to Johannesburg early in 1936, I associated myself with this group, finding, in the process, friendships that have endured.

A problem immediately arose. The economic justice of the principles set forth by Henry George was self-evident and incontrovertible. The problem was—as it is still, for me and everyone else—how to get economic justice embodied in and upheld by the law of the land. I was led on to reflect that even in supposedly democratic countries, the party in power was frequently in office on a minority of votes. My conversations and researches brought me inevitably to the necessity for proportional representation by the single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies. I now have the opinion that this system of election for all public authorities, from village management boards up to the state legislature, is an essential if any major progressive reform is to be obtained by democratic means—the possibility of a whole-hearted Georgeist becom-

ing a dictator seems very remote. And I hold to this opinion even though both the Republic of Ireland and the State of Tasmania use Proportional Representation and yet fail to take any action to inaugurate a system of economic justice within their respective spheres.

My next step was to consider the land as such: the necessity for re-afforestation in many areas, the advance of the deserts in all parts of the world, wide-spread erosion from wind and water, the creation of dust-bowls, the loss of fertility, etc. Books have been written, and groups exist in many countries, dealing with these problems. However, few of the authors or group members appear to grasp the full implications of the economics of these problems. They all advocate, rightly, I think, that the governments concerned should take prompt and large-scale action by spending the taxpayers' money for planting trees, building dams, and the like. What they fail to see is that the erection of a dam, for instance, with taxpayers' money merely enables some small group of landowners to derive the economic benefit. All the taxpayers get is the moral satisfaction that they have done something to "save our soil" or, more correctly, some individual landowner's soil.

If these earnest and patriotic people would realise that their soil conservation and water conservation plans would be financially more feasible and economically more just if the land values (inevitably increased by any successful conservation scheme) were to bear the burden, they would be ardent supporters of the principles set out by Henry George.

The absurd state of the present economic system is fully shown in the Cape Province where the local authorities levy rates on improvements. In times of drought the local authorities plead with the occupiers of land to use less water from the mains, even sometimes imposing penalties for its use and forbidding the use of water at all certain hours of the day. Yet if a public-spirited landowner adds tanks to his house and builds dams in his fields in a noble attempt to use rain-water or surplus water instead of water from the mains, the local authority increases the valuation of the property, and he has to pay higher rates.

Next my researches into the land question brought me to the question of health. There are increasing numbers of people in many countries who see that bad agricultural practices, such as mono-culture and excessive use of artificial fertilisers, are lowering the humus content and the actual fertility of the soil. Plants and animals (including mankind) fed from soil of low humus content are unhealthy. The food we eat does not have the nutritive qualities it should have. Even "fresh" fruit has probably been sprayed several times with some insecticide (injurious to mankind as well as poisonous to insects), and the tree

on which it grew has been similarly sprayed with poison repeatedly.

Too many "health food" groups fail to realise that farmers are forced to produce as much as possible (even in peace-time) in the shortest possible time, regardless of vital quality. They are driven by the existing system of taxing commodities and incomes instead of site values.

It is little use advising people that their health depends on "fresh fruit and vegetables straight from your own garden" when the present systems of land-tenure and taxation prevent most people from having any sort of garden. Nevertheless, the "Health Food" groups are thinking on the right lines, as is demonstrated by the many advertisements for medicines for stomachs, bladders, kidneys, livers, etc. They should support the economic reform which would make it possible for more people to get fresh fruit from their own gardens.

Another group which should have no difficulty in grasping the essential justice of the basic principles set forth by Henry George is the consumer Co-operative movement. In Britain this is very large and financially well-organised, but it barely exists in South Africa. It is the merest step from realising that the profits of production and distribution should be returned to the consumers, to realising that the site values created by the growth of population should also be returned to the "consumers" or users of the land.

Thus, we have three important groups, each one becoming more important as time passes—the "Save the Soil," the "Health Food," and the "Consumer Co-operation" groups—each of which has to advance just a little farther if it is to obtain fulfilment of its objects. (Of course, I am well aware that some individuals in each group have already taken that step).

For my part, I am convinced that each of the reforms I have mentioned is necessary. Healthy food is essential, and so is the arrest of soil erosion and the advance of deserts. An increase in consumer co-operation, if perhaps not quite an essential, is certainly highly desirable if our "civilisation" is to survive. But the basic reform which would enable these objectives to be achieved is an alteration of existing taxation and land-tenure laws so as to bring them into line with the principles so convincingly set forth in *Progress and Poverty*.

Book Review

Are British Farmers Doomed?

BRITAIN'S trade in eggs with Denmark and Australia has been virtually smashed in three years. Even some of the free traders (among them many of our readers) who fought the proposal to set up the Egg Marketing Board did not realise that the damage would be so swift and terrible. The story is told by George Winder, a free trader who farms in Sussex, in his latest book* *Are British Farmers Doomed?* He comments:

* From *City Press*, 4 Angel Court, London, E.C.2, booksellers, and Land & Liberty offices.

October, 1958

"When a thing like this occurs a great many people suffer, for trade is a two-way transaction. When men cannot sell, they cannot buy. We should therefore realise that the loss of this trade in eggs has also meant the loss of the sale of hundreds of tractors, and motor cars, and thousands of pounds worth of machinery and other manufactured goods which the workers of Great Britain are so skilled in producing.

"No one, surely, will declare that the destruction of this trade is a desirable thing, yet the British taxpayer is forced to pay millions of pounds a year to bring it about. In 1956-7 it cost him £28 millions. This is the amount paid in subsidies for eggs to the home farmers."

George Winder's book is full of facts and reflections of that kind. It has ten chapters of seventy odd pages and costs 5s. 0d. It is well worth reading. Of particular interest is his rebuttal of the charge that pre-war agriculture was neglected and that protection is necessary on defence grounds. Quite the contrary, says Mr. Winder. Convincing arguments support his claim.

Those who detest marketing boards will enjoy the militant chapter he devotes to them, while humbug-haters could take first the chapter on Imperial Preference. And anybody who has ever said "I am a free trader but . . ." should turn immediately to the chapter on how the small farmer would fare under free trade.

A passage we noted with particular pleasure (because some free trade writers overlook the land values question) deals with landlords as follows:

"There is another point that must be considered regarding the huge subsidy now being paid out to the farmer. There is no doubt that, for some years after the war, the farmer was the recipient. Part of the Government payment may have gone to swell the profits of millers and others who supplied the farmer with some of his requirements, but, during the war and for some years after, rents did not rise, so that the subsidy was not paid to the landlords.

"Today, this position is rapidly changing. Rents all over the country are rising. Any benefit the farmer receives from subsidies is rapidly being transferred to his landlord. The result is that the community is being taxed, not for the benefit of the farmer but for the landlord—an individual who can usually do very well without such assistance."

That point was made in our April editorial. Perhaps it should be added that even when rents were fixed, the owner was able to capitalise the value of the subsidies, etc., on the rare occasions when he had a farm for sale with vacant possession.

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THE FREE TRADER

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Comically Irrelevant?

Liberal Press Comments Rebutted

Being radicals does not mean banging on what were radical drums in 1906. What Henry George said about landlords is rightly regarded as irrelevant by intelligent voters today.

—News Chronicle editorial, September 4.

There is no [Liberal Assembly] resolution dealing directly with the immediate economic issues—and a motion to support the taxation of land values is hardly so much as a comic substitute.

—Manchester Guardian editorial, September 4.

The *Manchester Guardian*, September 8, published protests from Miss Enid Lakeman (Tunbridge Wells) and Mr. Stephen Martin (Sidcup, Kent), adding this editorial disclaimer:

We have received many letters in similar terms. What we ridiculed was not the taxation of land values but the absence of any other resolution on economic policy from the Liberal conference agenda. Ed. "Guardian."

Miss Lakeman wrote:—Your leading article says the Liberal resolution on the taxation of land values is "hardly so much as a comic substitute" for immediate economic policy. You are right—it is not comic.

My own town sees nothing comic in having had on its main street for 30 years a derelict site whose owner all that time contributed not one penny towards the expenses of the growing town or of the country, while the enterprising firm that has now improved the site by building a handsome shop is punished by being made to pay several hundred pounds in rates and goodness knows how much in taxes.

To seek to reverse that cock-eyed arrangement is not comic; it is common sense.

Mr. Martin wrote:—The statement in your leading article on the agenda of the Liberal Party Assembly that the taxation of land values is not even a "comic substitute" for one dealing with "immediate economic issues" shows a distressing ignorance of the subject. Would you deny that man cannot apply his labour or use his capital without land, and that any proposal affecting the tenure of land has the greatest economic and political implications?

Great new roads are being constructed, harbour developments at Milford Haven and elsewhere, new towns planned, and speculation in the value of adjoining sites of land grows with every penny of public expenditure on these projects. Every subsidy paid to agriculture and industry ultimately finds its way into the pockets of those people who own valuable land.

This value is created by the community. It is the just source for revenue for community purposes. The private appropriation of this value is the root cause of the continuing maldistribution of

wealth. To avoid its consequences the Government resorts to excessive taxation, inflation, protection of privileged interests. No, sir, it is certainly not "comic."

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The *News Chronicle*, September 9, printed letters from Mr. Ashley Mitchell ("prominent Yorkshire Liberal") and Mr. C. J. Burgess (Ealing), and the next day one from Mr. G. L. Birch (Hassocks, Sussex) as follows:

Ashley Mitchell:—Those bright fellows who have secured fortunes by smart take-over purchases of companies have shown how they recognised that the terrific increases of land values have registered in huge increased values of property.

We are 50 years behind many other countries in this matter, and present conditions require the taxation of land values more than ever.

C. J. Burgess:—You say in a leader on the Liberal Assembly: "What Henry George said about landlords is rightly regarded as irrelevant by intelligent voters today."

I presume the voters in Denmark, Australia, New Zealand and Jamaica are sub-intelligent, for in these countries the preachings of Henry George are carried out, and are welcome.

G. L. Birch:—As an "unintelligent" voter who still regards the taxation of land values as highly relevant to our present problems, I think you must come forward with some stronger arguments against the proposal before I am convinced that there is any better way out of our difficulties.

We are burdened with a mass of complicated fiscal legislation that keeps one army of men engaged full time in administering it and explaining it to a dull-witted public, and another army of men engaged in finding its loopholes.

If you are content with the present state of affairs, I am not. And, thank God, this motion on the Liberal Party's agenda shows that there are other people too who realise that there is another, simpler and better way to raise revenue, and that is to tax land values.

Where the ruler takes to trading, the subjects must go a-begging.—AN OLD INDIAN PROVERB.

HOW HIGH TAXATION RETARDS PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

Letter by Lt.-Col. J. O. Horne in *The Recorder* (September 6) and *The People's Guardian*

There are far too many taxes which, although not aimed at, do actually succeed in destroying initiative and enterprise and which react unfavourably on the economy.

It is hardly credible that the very men and women who want to improve our economy, the value of our currency and our living standards should impose such punitive taxation. And, what is adding insult to injury, they give concessions and subsidies to certain sections of the tax-paying public ostensibly to encourage some businesses which are reputedly hard-pressed by these very taxes, thereby admitting that the taxes are inequitable or unjust.

These concessions, subsidies, etc., are without any moral sanction. They encourage unnecessary expense to avoid tax, they take taxpayers' money for purposes for which the taxpayer, in many cases, would not voluntarily subscribe.

We all know that a government must have money to run the country but Party Politics have goaded the two big political parties into a competition to see which can provide the better and freer services for the public in an attempt to prove themselves the more fit to govern, but actually proving the reverse. These "better and freer" services create a demand for bigger and bigger revenue which only succeeds in destroying initiative and enterprise.

Earnest thought should be given to other and more just ways of raising revenue, one of which is taxation of land values. This form of raising revenue is in existence in Denmark. Australia and New Zealand use it to raise funds in an ever increasing number of municipalities instead of the usual rating system, and California used it in a modified form in their meteoric rise to prosperity.

Every country or community in which taxation of land values has been adopted can boast a rise in prosperity. Besides this there are many advantages accruing to it. It cannot be evaded as can all present forms of taxation. Immediately

it is adopted, and before, the rent of land will fall to an economic level, giving more scope for fair profits and better wages. Cost of housing will fall proportionately. It is entirely just as it is only taking money in return for the use of the land and the proceeds are used for the benefits of the community who created the value of the land. It encourages land to be used and not to be held for greater profit. When used instead of the present rating system, it encourages instead of discouraging expansion and enterprise.

We need one tax only and this form of taxation is the only really just and constructive form of raising revenue.

It is time the people were freed from the present burden of unjust taxation and who can better initiate the removal of this burden than the People's League for the Defence of Freedom?

"Follow-up" by Mr. F. Dupuis,
September 27

Colonel Horne's letter raises a subject of the highest importance, bearing directly on all the aims of the League. Most trade unionists do not wish either to blackmail the public or to obey the orders of power-loving bosses, but as long as living costs continue to rise, they have no option. And the first cause of high prices is taxation, including currency

debasement, that most dishonest method by which governments take wealth from the people.

Everyone dislikes paying confiscatory taxes but as long as each section of the people tries only to transfer the burden to others the rulers can ignore their protests. To establish a principle of taxation would automatically check the amount governments could take from us, and thus force them to economise. And Colonel Horne puts forward a principle which, if applied, would operate so as to reduce prices. What could be more important than this? It certainly warrants the closest discussion by members of the League.

People and Places

Noah D. Alper, president of Public Revenue Education Council, writing from **St. Louis, Mo.**, had a lengthy letter in the *Christian Science Monitor*, September 8. He related to the American scene the *C.S.M.'s* report (see L&L September) on municipal land-value taxation in New Zealand. "By electing to use more rent of land and less of taxes which fall on human products of incomes of labour and capital possession, they [New Zealanders] have drawn a two-way benefit: lower cost of access to land for use in home and farm-making, for industry and commerce, and, in effect, lower costs on things produced such as materials for housing and finished housing, home furnishings, and the like. This is in direct contrast to what is now the American way which makes both access to land and finished products higher in price.

"In the United States a trend in the direction of this N.Z. plan is found in **Pennsylvania** under what is called the graded tax plan. Pittsburgh and Scranton have only half the tax rate on improvements they apply to land. A few years ago the Assembly of Pennsylvania voted in the Senate 50 to 0, and in the House 184 to 1, to make such a plan of lower rates on improvement compared to land values available to 47 cities of the third-class.

"Some 120 **California** irrigation districts pay all district costs by land-value taxation exclusively. In these districts the land is held largely by small holders or family-sized farmers; there are few, if any, parasitical land speculators in these districts.

"There is a lesson to be learned from this N.Z. experiment—one that, if applied generally to government, might reverse the trend we witness from free enterprise to socialism; one which might, in fact, so cleanse free enterprise as to move it in a direction that would make socialism,

as a basic system, impossible in these United States."

Beckenham. The *Advertiser*, September 25, reported:

PERIODICAL WILL NOT BE IN LIBRARY

Beckenham Council had no right to decide for the public what was good for them to read or what was bad, declared Coun. C. M. Hamilton (Lab.) at Monday's meeting.

He was criticising the Libraries Committee's decision not to provide a periodical—"Land & Liberty"—in the reference library.

He stressed that he had no sympathies or connection with the periodical but felt that it should be in the library for people to read. He added that technical journals were provided though he doubted whether they were necessary.

Coun. E. W. Read (Con.), chairman of the Libraries Committee, replied that the committee treated every magazine and pamphlet on its merit.

They had to pay regard to what they considered would be the demand by the public.

"Land & Liberty," he explained, was largely associated with the Liberal Party.

Completely independent, L&L is frequently critical of Liberal Party policies and personalities. The Advertiser was unable to accept, in the form submitted, our advertisement making this clear and offering a 3-month free trial subscription.

Fairhope, Alabama. From Mr. Noah D. Alper of St. Louis, Mo., we have received the August issue of *Scenic South*, a promotional magazine issued free by Standard Oil Company (Kentucky). Two pages of photographs are devoted to Fairhope. There are pleasure yachts and cabin cruisers, bathers, and local boys netting crabs, shrimps and small fish in front of their bayshore beach home. One

caption reads: "Visitors enjoy early morning dip at Fairhope, which was founded in 1895 as the first Single Tax colony in the world" and another "Fairhope's pine-forested setting and magnificent parks commemorate the foresight of those who founded this unique American Community." A review of *Fairhope, 1894-1954*, by Paul E. and Blanche R. Alyea appeared in our December, 1957 issue. The book is published by University of Alabama Press at \$4.50.

Germany. The September 21 issue of the popular Sunday newspaper *Die Welt am Sonntag* published in Hamburg printed as front page news, this brief report by its own reporter in Kiel:

DECLARATION OF WAR
AGAINST LAND SPECULATORS

Housing Minister Lücke at the Party Congress of the Christian-Democratic Union said that the growth of land speculation is "a bad stain on the slate of democracy since the war". With the slogan "a nation of proprietors" the Minister indicated the sharpest fight to the "evil gang of speculators". (Translated by **Mr. Erich Zincke, Hanover**)

Hampstead. A church used to stand at the north-west corner of Avenue Road, known locally as "Millionaires' Row." The church was recently demolished and at the London Auction Mart on Thursday, July 3, the site, having an area of 18,500 sq. ft. was sold freehold for £31,000. In homely terms, a manual worker would have to give eight hours labour to pay for a scrap of land there the size of two pages of L&L.

India—Bangalore. From **Donald G. Groom** writing on behalf of the Sarvodaya International Centre, the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain has

received a request as follows: "There are many in the Sarvodaya Movement in India who take a great interest in the writings of Henry George. I wonder whether you could make a gift of a set of his books to the International Centre that Vinoba has recently opened in Bangalore. If you could, I can assure you of putting it to good use. There is a special request for LAND & LIBERTY and if you cannot send anything else, please send this and I can arrange for payment on receipt of your invoice. A catalogue would be very welcome too."

L&L and a number of books, pamphlets and leaflets have been supplied. We receive similar requests from many parts of the world.

India—Bombay, etc. On behalf of the Libertarian Social Institute (Arya Bhuvan, Sandhurst Road, Bombay 4) **Miss K. R. Lotwalla** writes: "We are doing our best to propagate the idea of land-value taxation and to present Henry George's views to our leaders and intellectuals. Whatever literature we receive from you will be made full use of by our Institute and our branches."

For some years we have supplied LAND & LIBERTY to the Institute and received in exchange its valuable journal, The Indian Libertarian. Now published fortnightly, it contains many items on LVT. The Institute has also opened branches in Bangalore, Madras and Baroda. We have added them to our complimentary mailing list.

Kenley, Surrey. Messrs. Machin and Graham-King advertise 1½ acres of rural land with outline consent to erect 16 flats and garages. The asking price, freehold, is £8,500.

There's money in mud.

Kingston Hill. Coombe Neville, Warren Road, comprising about four acres of building land with planning permission for 12 houses was sold by auction for £24,200 by Knight, Frank and Rutley on June 26.

London—Route 11 will run eventually from Ludgate Circus to Aldgate High Street. On June 30, Mr. G. H. Nugent, the parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Transport, inspected the 1,280 feet of roadway from Falcon Square to Coleman Street. The *City Press*, July 4,

reported: "The cost of the work is over £1,000 a foot. Partly this high cost is accounted for by the high cost of land in the City which absorbs £846,000 of the total . . ."

From this it appears that the land is roughly twice as costly as the road which, because it provides civil defence and underground parking, is unusually expensive.

Stephen Martin had the following letter in the *Farmer and Stock-Breeder*, September 23: Whatever may be thought of the ten-point resolution on agriculture on the agenda of the Liberal Party Assembly, the item calling for the taxation and rating of the unimproved site value of land, is, I suggest, distinctly original and radical.

It means that rates and taxes will be taken off houses, farm buildings, improvements and industry, and levied on the value of the site, according to its fertility and to its proximity to the markets.

Obviously those farmers on marginal land are not likely to pay any taxes or rates, but those on the best land and with the lowest transport costs will pay the most. On the face of it this would appear to be an equitable arrangement.

In fact, it would surely give the greatest possible incentive to efficient production because it ensures a full return to the farmer for his labour and capital investments.

Denmark (where I believe a small degree of land value taxation has existed for some time) is now considering its full implementation.

Earlier in the month, in addition to letters in the N.W. Kent local newspapers, Mr. Martin secured publication for the Georgeist viewpoint in the Manchester Guardian (see page 176) and the Liberal News and this, headed "Cheap", in the News Chronicle, September 4:

Early this year a rapid increase in the imports of cheap butter was "causing distress" in the main producing countries. The Government soon put a stop to it. Now cheap tin imports are curbed. Cheap food or raw materials—they must be stopped. Prices must not be allowed to fall. The consumer must pay.

What stupidity, what a contradiction of the constant plea to cut the costs of production so that our competitiveness

in the international market may be improved. Once again sectional protectionist interests have won the day.

Mr. Martin also has an enviable collection of rejection letters from editors of the most diverse publications.

Milford Haven. The Pembrokeshire county planning officer, Mr. J. A. Price, said that he was "not too happy" about the speculation resulting from the multiplicity of land ownerships. This was a matter on which the county council had been unable to take action. Mr. Price was answering questions on the paper on the development of Milford Haven which he delivered (August 26) at the Town and Country Planning Summer School in Bangor.

Mr. Herbert Morrison, M.P., in his presidential address, on local government, at the conference of the Association of Municipal Corporations (at Scarborough, September 17) is reported by the *Manchester Guardian* to have said that he would like to see some independent means of revenue for local authorities and one method he favoured was the rating of land values.

New Malden, Surrey. An "excellent site" of ½ acre having a frontage of over 100 ft. to main road is said to be "of interest to developers, speculators and others." It is occupied at present but could be cleared for the erection of maisonettes, flats and garages. The asking price, freehold, is £20,000.

No wonder there is a housing shortage and self-respecting people are driven to look to the local authorities to provide them with rent-controlled, heavily subsidised accommodation.

Robert G. Varlow writing from **Wellington, N.Z.**, (September 20) comments: "I welcome falling prices for foodstuffs yet the Conference in Montreal is talking against lower prices—the hidden hand of land monopoly! Personally I am glad to see New Zealand "talking turkey" with Japan. Trade with the Japs will be a splendid help to us here—we should get cheaper goods for our wool, etc., as a result . . . Now is the time for England to speak bluntly to New Zealand as regards butter prices in London but of course English landlords are of a like nature to those we have here."

DEVELOPMENT PLAN ENRICHES IRAQI LANDLORDS

These two brief paragraphs tell an all-too-familiar story which those who support Colombo Plans, Point 4 schemes and the like stubbornly refuse to heed.

"Even more fundamental was the way in which the much-advertised development programme left the social structure of Iraq undisturbed. To call Iraq's social structure 'feudal' is gross flattery; it has all the faults of feudalism and none of the virtues. The sheiks who are the

great landowners do nothing at all, in most cases, for their destitute tenants; they simply take half to two-thirds of the crop, giving no service in return.

"Up to now the biggest fraction of development spending, which totalled nearly \$200 million last year, has been on

irrigation and flood control. Thus its effect has been to increase land values while leaving the land itself in the same hands, making the rich richer and the poor no better off."—Blair Fraser writing from Baghdad in the August 30 issue of the Canadian magazine *Maclean's*.

