

LETTERS

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

SIR,—Much of what T.S. and I.R. Torrance say in their article "On Equality" is refreshingly fundamental, but on the question of equality of opportunity they glide ineffectively around the central issue, namely that of inheritance.

It is true that the inheritance of material goods, and the assurance of the families' future by using influence in placing their members in positions of status and authority, must be logically acceptable in a just society, and its denial would be a negation of personal liberty. However, one is tempted to protest that, if practicable, this should be accompanied by a confiscation of that part of wealth gained from monopoly and arbitrary privilege.

It is equally acceptable that children should not be denied the opportunities of breeding and advancement gained from sacrifices made in their upbringing.

What did not occur to the authors was that inheritance of the ownership of land and the economic rent therefrom makes nonsense of the claim that everyone has an equal chance to achieve "office, status or wealth."

Equality of opportunity can exist provided that the whole of the value attached to the holding of land is returned to the community who create it.

Equality may be an emotional problem, but equality of opportunity is essential to the creation of a good society.

Yours faithfully,

STEPHEN MARTIN

Fordingbridge, Hants.

EQUALITY AND CHRISTIANITY

SIR,—Most thinking men would agree with T.S. and I. R. Torrance in their statement about equality. However, a deeper meaning attaches to the word which could make it both an ideal and an aim.

All men are brothers because they are children of God. Freedom dwells

in and flows from this. A man who is free would not have his brother to be less than free.

Freedom is the prerequisite and essential attribute of love. Love expresses itself in sharing and in exchange—that both may be one. Those who love are equal in their mutual participation in the goods they enjoy, for love gives all and accepts all.

Brotherhood, Freedom, Equality—was not the discovery of the French Revolution but of Christian thought that preceded it and that penetrated immeasurably below it.

Yours faithfully,

JULIAN SANDER

Crowborough, Sussex.

ANOTHER REFORM GROUP PUBLICATION WANTED

SIR,—As you say, "On Equality" (LAND & LIBERTY, December 1968) takes a fundamental approach to what has always been dealt with in a rather confused manner.

If the Reform Group has carried out a similarly clear analysis of "monopoly" and "privilege" perhaps you would publish this in your next issue.

Yours faithfully,

L. F. S. BENTLEY

London, N.W.6.

A PLEA FOR THE PLANNERS

SIR,—I would be among the first to agree with Stephen Martin (LAND & LIBERTY December) that "by dictating the uses to which land may be put, planners are aiding and abetting the build up of land monopoly" for this is true in many cases, particularly where the land allocated for a particular use is less in quantity than that for which there is a demand. On the other hand it should be remembered that "the planners" are not always to blame since most planning decisions are made not by

planning officers but by elected councillors.

I think that most of my colleagues in town planning would argue that it is the land planner's job to ensure that land is available to meet all demands. There must always be opportunities for expansion and a good land use plan can ensure that it is in the right places so as to serve the best interests of the community. No doubt Mr. Martin would argue that what is in the interest of the individual is in the interest of the community. But I do not think this argument is relevant to land use. Just as there is a common interest in land rent there is a common or public interest in land use.

While we have the private appropriation of the rent of land there will be a need for some form of land use control. In fact it is the former which has probably given rise to the need for the latter. But even if we had the public appropriation of land rent (and heaven knows we are a long way from that) there still would be a need, in my view, for land use control if only to conserve our most valuable natural heritage amenities.

In our highly mechanised society land use decisions can have wide ranging effects on environmental matters. I would not pretend that all is well with our present planning system and much unfortunate development has taken place in spite of planning control. On the other hand what we see is only the top of the iceberg. Many projects which would have had an adverse effect on our towns and villages have been rejected and are not seen. The professionals may appear to be fighting a losing battle against the deteriorating quality of urban living but I think we would be worse off without them. Of one thing I am sure: we will never make land-value taxation a political reality until we demonstrate (as we so easily can) that it will give a new impetus to the solution of land use problems within a planning framework.

Yours faithfully,

P. R. HUDSON.

London, S.E.13.