

Sydney Mayers

VIEWS THE NEWS

The recent declaration of "War Against Poverty," proclaimed in Washington and echoed in many states and cities, demonstrates a forthright admission of its existence and a commendable desire to eradicate it, but we are regretfully dubious that the means proposed to wage this noble campaign will be effective. Instead of reviving the costly government-sponsored "pump-priming" programs which have proved sadly unavailing in the past, it would be better to war on poverty by attacking its basic causes: land speculation, the private collection of economic rent and the taxation of production.

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Notwithstanding fervent avowals of antipathy for communism and its adherents, the U. S. A. is selling wheat to the Soviet Union, Britain is selling buses to Cuba, and other Western allies are carrying on a thriving business with the Eastern bloc. Some might cynically observe that "when business comes in the door, ethics fly out the window," but this column is more philosophical, we have an idea that trade transcends politics — and even an Iron Curtain cannot separate willing sellers from willing buyers.

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The federal government has agreed to pay \$29,000 living West Coast Indians \$29,200,000 as compensation for tribal lands claimed to have been seized by white men during the gold rush over 100 years ago — the highest settlement of its kind on record. Our red-skinned natives seem to have learned at least one thing from the appropriators of their hunting grounds: the ever increasing value of land.

The Wall Street Journal reports continued expansion in the field of door-to-door selling, citing numerous cases of large firms' distributing their products widely through itinerant sales agents. A variety of cogent reasons are offered to explain the growth of this type of retailing, but one aspect of it is not mentioned by the Journal, the intriguing fact that the bell-ringers pay no rent for their business premises — and now who dares assert there is no longer a Margin of Production?

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The U. S. Department of Justice has instituted suit against one of the nation's largest cosmetic manufacturers, charging conspiracy to fix retail prices, thereby denying consumers the benefits of free competition. On the other hand, this same producer (like countless others) must comply with so-called "fair trade" laws that *prohibit* deviation from established retail costs — an excellent example of "Damned if you do and damned if you don't!"

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According to The New York Times, Dr. Oscar Gestido, a high-ranking Uruguayan political leader, has declared that his country's present troubles are due more to moral and spiritual failings than to economic faults — and after due contemplation, we find some validity in this opinion. While we believe the ills of Uruguay can no doubt be remedied by economic reform, the only efficacious reform would be that based on the highest moral principles, i.e.: a free economy founded on a system of land value taxation.

HENRY GEORGE NEWS