

Beautiful salmon but not to be poached

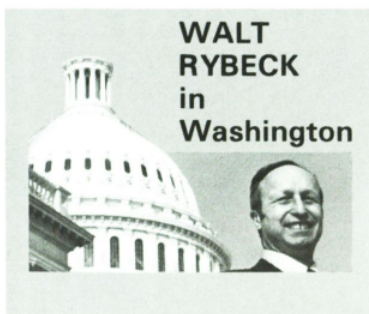
HERE are "snapshots" from a trip to England, Scotland and Ireland that afforded some rare opportunities to explore vital human issues with kindred spirits.

A Scottish Highlander worked all his life but now, his wife told us, he was "redundant". A strange term to Americans. To the British it simply means unemployed. To us, the literal meaning, implying that a human being is unnecessary or superfluous, made the term grate on our ears.

Bill, now 60, has held many semi-skilled jobs, mostly, in recent years, in distilleries. Now the distilleries are closing. He believes high whisky taxes are a big part of the problem. Even those who work in the distilleries buy the cheaper wines from the Continent.

As if to underscore this problem, friends in Dundee had begged us to bring them something from the United States - a couple of bottles of Scotch.

Bill and his wife, the day before we visited them, were walking beside a stream when they spotted four large salmon on the bank. Each had a little bite out of it, just behind the head.



"Looked like the work of otters," Bill said. "Nothing else was touched."

"Their eyes were still glistening," his wife added. "They were so beautiful you could almost taste them."

Did these "redundant" people who could afford little meat take the salmon home to cook? They left them to rot. The fish, they explained, belonged to the laird. The fine would be heavy and the shame in the community would be great if they were accused of poaching salmon from the laird's stream.

The American notion that wild fish and game belong equally to all, not to

any particular landlord, seemed as puzzling to them as their perspective did to us.

PEOPLE concerned about the Third World should be beating a path to Raymond Crotty's door in Dublin. In critical respects, he says, Ireland is a Third World country, and he has analysed its problems thoroughly.

Ray started life as a farmer. "It came to me that I could not be a good farmer and a good Irishman at the same time," he said. "The less my inputs, the higher my profits."

Researching this upside-down situation in which non-productive land holding was more remunerative than production, Ray was surprised that Henry George had already discovered "his" secret finding.

Now an economics professor, Crotty has produced a gem of a book, *Irish Agricultural Production* (Cork University Press). It explodes myths and makes Ireland's tortured history more understandable. Chapters on "Lessons of the Past" and "Land Tax" offer keys to resolving socio-economic ills.

LIBERAL DREAMS ABOUT 'HOME RULE'

I HAD aimed to spark optimism among the economists who let me address them at London's famed National Liberal Club, as I told about the growing number of U.S. cities with modest land taxes.

The audience seemed to draw little hope from this account. It gradually dawned on me that they had good reason: Britishers lack the *home rule powers* that we Americans tend to take for granted.

American cities and states have rare opportunities for diversity. One small enlightened group can, with persistence and a bit of luck, persuade a locality to try a new approach. Would the progress that we in the United States point to be occurring if we had to persuade a majority in the Congress to adopt our proposals?

Britain's local officials cannot alter their tax systems; they merely enforce laws imposed by their central

government. No wonder that, faced with the need to win over an entire Parliament, London reformers do not necessarily share Americans' current optimism.

FAR FROM pessimistic is Shirley-Anne Hardy in her white stone house with red roof nestled beneath high cliffs near the town of Moulin and in sight of the Highland community of Pitlochry. Stones of the ancient Picts line the Hardy garden.

As we drank herb tea, we watched squalls sweep across the fields, woods and valleys stretching below us. Flashes of sunshine painted rainbows

across the panorama, fitting symbols of our visit.

The beauty and strength of the land, and the history embodied in it, comforted us even as we discussed the social inequities stemming from out-of-kilter land tenure systems.

Shirley-Anne is reminding Scottish people that many of their own economists and philosophers were moved by the same vision of the land that stirred Henry George. She is helping environmentalists see that, to be effective, they must address underlying economic forces that are interfering with harmonious relationships between the people and their land.