

actually victimised under conditions as they are. All we can say is that if a really free market prevailed, if the ports were thrown open to the untaxed produce of all the world, and if the barriers that make the use of land an exclusive privilege were removed, there would be abundance instead of the present scarcity and we should see prices of food and all else taking very much less out of the earnings of labour than they now do.

Further in regard to the guaranteed prices, the most important factor of all must not be overlooked. Farming is conducted on lands of differing productivity which for an equal expenditure of labour and capital give differing returns. The surplus over the margin is neither wages nor interest; it is rent of land. It is surely obvious then that if the guaranteed prices are so adjusted as to meet the condition of the man on the poorer land in use, they shower a bonus or windfall upon all land of higher natural capacity as to situation and other advantages. Farmers who are in that fortunate position and who are themselves landowners pocket that windfall in the form of rent, and those tenant farmers who are meanwhile secure in their tenancies participate in it. But inexorably, as land comes on the open market for lease or sale, the whole benefit of all grants, aids and subsidies intended for the farmer passes into the hands of the landlord. One has only to read the reports of the real estate agents to see how land speculation now bestrides agriculture, boding ill for the man who thinks of buying a foothold within the industry. It is one of the startling achievements of the Planned Economy.

We cannot leave this document without drawing atten-

tion to one or two more aspects. The farmers in their assured markets must not be allowed unlimited scope. It is found "imperative to discourage much further expansion of output of milk and (to some extent) eggs." The Government, in its cleft stick, would be bound to pay the guaranteed prices for the increasing output, whereby the food subsidies would be increased and the taxation to pay for them. It has shut that door. No prospect is offered of farmers competing with one another to produce more and more at lower prices to benefit the consumer, and the thought of allowing the competition of imported produce is quite debarred. That would break the monopoly ring which the guaranteed prices has created, the prices which are alleged to be so low that they victimise the farmers. Import restrictions on eggs are so to be used that only that amount is allowed to enter which will not spoil the farmers' market, the consumer being forced to submit to the planner's estimation of the "correct seasonal variation of supplies." The order is given to encourage, by adjustment of guaranteed prices the output of meat. To do this, more grazing land is apparently to be made available by reducing the wheat and potato acreage each by 50,000 acres. The taxpayer looks on powerless while agriculture is twice dislocated. Grants are given to plough up the land and when all that money has been spent, the land is thrown out of production. In his public statement, May 22, the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Williams, hoped that the structure of this price-fixing review, with its results, would satisfy the economists. It does not satisfy us.

A. W. M.

HUNGER IS SHARPER THAN THE SWORD

Much is written and spoken these days about Human Rights, and of the concern of the peoples and politicians of the "western world" with moral and spiritual values. To safeguard them against possible attack by those to whom these abstractions are less highly regarded, we are persuaded of the need to arm ourselves to the teeth. Thus it is sad and strange to notice the present increasing surrender to the pernicious doctrines of Malthus. Examples from among press reports and articles published recently are:—"Can India's Millions be Fed?" in *The Listener*, April 12; "Can India Feed her Masses?" *News Chronicle*, April 24; "Bihar under threat of Famine," *News Chronicle*, April 26; "Europe's Overpopulation," *Manchester Guardian*, April 24; and "Population Problems in the West Indies," *Manchester Guardian*, April 24. All purport to show that hunger and poverty are caused by an alleged tendency for population to increase faster than the means of subsistence.

Formidable statistics are presented to illustrate the dire straits in which millions of our fellow-men and women find themselves. Mr. O. H. K. Spate in his broadcast talk (published in *The Listener*, April 12) contrasts the present grain ration of nine ounces a day, plus an additional four ounces for heavy workers, with the ration scales suggested by the Medical Research Council for far eastern conditions, namely, for moderate work, twenty ounces a day; for heavy work, twenty-four. Geoffrey Murray, *News Chronicle*, April 24, refers to the census recently completed which shows that the population of the Indian sub-continent has increased by 13.4 per cent. during the past decade—an increase of at least 42 million mouths "all clamouring to be fed." Population has been increasing since the first complete Indian

census was taken in 1881. For a hundred years India has been spared war and pestilence. Early marriage, the comparative rarity of famine and an improving standard of health have further contributed to the trebling of India's population since 1850, when it was officially estimated to be 150,000,000.

Each of these articles appears designed not merely to inform its readers but also to kindle in them a sense of responsibility to give doles to the "surplus" peoples of the world. Many and various are the remedies proposed. But on two points there is such unanimity among these writers as to suggest a "gentleman's agreement" to turn a blind eye to the real cause of poverty and hunger. Firstly, they all appear to accept poverty and hunger—especially in Asia—as a natural circumstance caused by a large and increasing population unable to support itself upon an unfriendly soil. Secondly, they fail to recognise that every person born is not only a consumer but also a potential producer; that every "new mouth clamouring to be fed" is accompanied by a pair of hands capable of producing the food it needs. They are unaware that even in a Garden of Eden there would be poverty, hunger and unemployment if, by the instrument of private property in land, one group of men could charge all other men for the right to live, or could withhold from them the very means of life itself.

Not understanding the significance of the land problem, and blinded by a ready acceptance of the glib and superficial explanation which Malthus advanced, these writers, and the authors of many government reports, advocate shallow and superficial measures. At best these can but alleviate to some small extent, and for a short time only, some of the worst effects of a rapacious landlordism.

For instance, the Bore Report ("the Beveridge Report of India," as Geoffrey Murray calls it) recommends the adoption of measures for increasing agricultural productivity, which doubtless is very important, and the spreading of knowledge of birth control. Others point to the need simultaneously of bringing fresh land into cultivation. Norman Cliff comforts his readers by telling of the "sound hope of saving India from future famines and helping to solve the food problem of Asia" by developing tapioca as one of the principle items of the Indian's diet.

The *Manchester Guardian's* leading article (April 24) devoted to "Europe's Overpopulation" suggests among other things the possibility of establishing an International Labour Exchange, and of aiding limited and controlled emigration. As is the vogue these days of Colombo Plans and Point Four programmes it points also to the need for "higher productivity" to achieve which extra capital is needed. Since, however, it continues by stating that the "necessary capital to build up productivity is short in all Europe" this begs the question.

Those who seek to extirpate poverty and the threat of "over-population" in any part of the world find themselves in a cleft stick from which no amount of international planning, doles or loans will extricate them. There is poverty because of the lack of capital, they say in effect, and until more capital is available poverty cannot be eradicated. Yet, whether it take the form of simple ploughs, better housing or a new village well, or of great hydro-electricity and irrigation schemes, capital is not readily available.

This scarcity of capital is as unnatural as the poverty which, it is claimed, it alone can combat. Capital is merely that part of wealth whose present consumption men are willing to forego to some future date. They may use it themselves to increase their own production or lend it to others. But is it any wonder that the mercilessly rack-rented Indian peasant cannot afford to put aside some part of his wages to buy the simple implements with which he could raise his production? All that he produces is taken in rent and taxes save just enough to permit him to live.

Generous emergency shipments of American wheat will not remove the spectre of famine; at best they keep alive the hungry until another famine occurs. Neither the granting of self-government nor the building of the most grandiose and wonderful development plans, which it lies within the wit of man to devise, will abolish once and for all the serfdom and destitution in which millions of people live. So high is the price of injustice that already the vaunted £1,800 million Colombo Plan is being dismissed as being inadequate. It will only "scratch the surface" of the problem in South and South-east Asia.

It is more than a mere coincidence that at the end of the month in which the newspaper articles already mentioned were published that the *Sunday Express*, April 29, gave prominence to an article about the Maharanee of Baroda. "How lovely to be a very rich man's wife" gave the game away. Everything this wealthy princess possesses represents the fruits of labour expropriated from poverty-stricken Indian peasants. While despairing men, women and children were dying of hunger in Bihar, and stone-throwing hunger marchers were being fired upon by the police, Her Highness told the *Sunday Express* reporter "I love being rich; but money alone won't make you happy," and spoke of her possessions and her life of luxurious idleness.

This graphic contrast between excessive wealth and extreme poverty contains in a nutshell the reason for the misery of the so-called "backward countries" of the world and points the way to its abolition. In India, no less than in England, it must be recognised that the natural fertility of the soil is a gift of nature to all men. Its value, and those other values of land which arise from the presence and activity of the community, must be collected for the good of the whole community.

The dilemma of would-be social reformers, well-meaning politicians and confused economists hinges on their failure to recognise that the bottom cause of poverty throughout the world lies in the system of land tenure. The private ownership of land operates to restrict the total production of food and other wealth; it robs those who work of their wages and rewards those who toil not. Labour which could be expended upon land to produce the necessaries of life, and to provide the capital goods required to yield abundance and thus raise the living standards and lighten the toil of the weary peasants, is used to build and maintain palaces and yachts and other luxuries for those who are able to say: "this land is mine."

P. R. S.

"CAME OUT BY THAT SAME DOOR"

Whilst to a Single Taxer there can be no element of truth in the Communist creed, one cannot read without a considerable amount of sympathy the autobiography of Mr. Douglas Hyde*, ex-News Editor of the *Daily Worker*. It is a sobering reflection that so many Communists start their political life with high ideals and the best of intentions. In Mr. Hyde's story there is something of peculiar interest to followers of Henry George, although his name, even if known to the author, is not once mentioned.

Brought up in a Methodist family and destined for the Ministry he became conscious in early life of the phenomenon, apparent in all civilised communities, of the maldistribution of wealth. In his search for knowledge he came under the influence of Communism through listening to its advocates on the Downs above Bristol in the late nineteen-twenties when unemployment was rife. He readily accepted the thesis that as social injustice always accompanied the unequal distribution of property, private property was obviously wrong and should therefore be abolished. Thinking he saw an opportunity to redress great wrongs he accepted the faith and threw in his lot with the Party. Never, however, did he nor could he make distinction between property in the products of labour and property in land, so that moral perceptions in that regard wholly escaped him.

For twenty years Mr. Hyde lived and worked for Communism, and for the latter half of that time on the staff of the *Daily Worker* as News Editor. He never, however, quite lost his sense of the fitness of things and was from time to time puzzled, if not troubled, by the somersaults made by the Party, but in his enthusiasm for that better world he had in mind he was persuaded that the end justified the means.

But when a series of threatened libel actions necessitated his reading as much as he could of the Roman Catholic Press he was impressed by the difference between the tone of those writings and what he had learnt to expect by his Communist training from that source. He began to doubt the justice of Communist tactics and

* *I Believed*, by Douglas Hyde. William Heineman, Ltd.