

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT.

Betty Walden.

With regard to crime in the general sense, the present government's attitude is rather paradoxical. On the one hand they are trying to reduce crime by making a more humane approach to the problem of punishment; on the other hand they institute a controlled economy which, with its many restrictions, must inevitably increase the indictable offences, since government departments have almost unlimited power to issue regulations, and government orders must, to be effective, carry a penalty if disobeyed. In fact, in these "do as you're told" days we can never be sure that we are not committing a crime of some sort, and with all hopes of free trade rapidly receding in the face of bulk buying and bi-lateral trading, customs and currency offences will naturally not disappear but are likely to increase.

Much public indignation has been aroused by the increasing number of cases of parents neglecting their children, but surely to punish people for not maintaining conditions which are quite impossible for them economically is irresponsible. . . . Lack of housing accommodation is a primary cause of bad living conditions, and the tribunals which are set up to prevent exploitation are merely aggravating the position, as rents have risen through the housing shortage, under the natural laws of supply and demand.

The reconstruction of large houses into flats is frustrated by the Development Charge, which would be imposed on the owner for a change of use from a private dwelling. So here again, we have the government on the one hand forcibly restricting rents, while on the other preventing a natural tendency for rents to fall as more accommodation becomes available. — From an address reported in "Land and Liberty," June-July, 1950.

THE CHURCH FATHERS AND LAND.

The early church fathers were enlightened on the land question, even if unfortunately, their successors are not.

St Cyprian: No man shall come into our commune who sayeth that the land may be sold. God's footstool is not property.

St. Chrysostom: God gave the same earth to be cultivated by all. Since, therefore, His bounty is common, how comes it that you have so many fields and your neighbour not even a clod of earth?

St. Ambrose: The soil was given to the rich and poor in common. The pagans hold earth as property. They do blaspheme God.

St. Gregory: They wrongfully think they are innocent who claim for themselves the common gift of God.

The inadequate recognition by church leaders of today as regards the land question is to be regretted, especially in view of the fact that the Old Testament is such a source of enlightenment on the question.

Site Value Rating Polls

MAJOR VICTORIES

Site-value rating secured three major victories in the polls held in conjunction with the municipal elections in Victoria on Saturday, 25th August. There were polls taken in the City of Heidelberg and Borough of Ringwood respectively upon proposals to change to site-value rating from annual value rating. A poll was also taken in the City of Kew upon a proposal to revert to nett annual value rating. Two further places in which polls had been demanded and should have been held at this time were unable to take them due to inability on the part of the councils to complete their valuations in time. These two places were the Shire of Woorayl and the Shire of Phillip Island. In the former case the valuer fell ill during the course of his valuation and was unable to complete it. In the latter the valuer did not give his figures to the council in time to permit the compliance with the act which requires comparative rate statements to be sent out at least three weeks prior to the poll. In consequence the poll was postponed to a date to be fixed. The results of the various polls are set out below.

	Favor Site- Value	Against Site- Value
Heidelberg City		
Fairfield Ward	1,982	1,625
Ivanhoe Ward	7,205	2,804
Heidelberg Ward	4,131	2,194
Greensborough Ward	893	759
Totals	14,211	7,382
Ringwood Borough	1,905	1,396
Kew City	6,027	5,348

These results are most gratifying both in the fact that all three polls were successful and in that the margin in each case was so decisive.

The two new additions to the areas rating site-value mean that that system has become the majority one in Greater Melbourne. There are 30 cities and the Borough of Ringwood comprised in Greater Melbourne. The two additions give 16 rating site-value to only 15 rating annual value. These last are now mainly the inner industrial ones with their extensive blighted areas. The 31 units mentioned comprise a total of 160,000 acres of which 104,400 acres are rating under site-value. This is almost two-thirds of the total.

In view of these facts it is evident that in the Greater Melbourne Bill about to be brought down by the government there should be provision for rating upon unimproved value to be applied to the whole area. With such a single authority as proposed one or the other system would need to be applied. The provisions of the Bill are not known on going to press but should annual value be proposed it is evident that the move would be most retrograde and against the public interest.