

TRUST WORTH PAYING FOR

IN CENTURIES gone by there was common land for use by all, and much has been written of the tragedy of the enclosures. It is precisely because of enclosure and because man employs huge amounts of capital in improving land and putting fixtures on to it that we have to consider economic remedies to the problem, all of which involve restoring economic value to the dispossessed. However, it is already possible to allow people equal and free access to land.

In Britain, the National Trust's Enterprise Neptune Appeal was established in the 1960s, to preserve the beauty of the coastline. All moneys raised are used to purchase land adjoining the coast (and in some cases to restore it). The main aim is the purchase of land, not buildings or other improvements, for the enjoyment of the public.

The Trust can now boast that more than one in every six miles of coastline in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is safe under their protection.

What is this project but a

COMMUNITY LAND

LAND-value taxation is one way to socialise the benefits of land, but IAN LAMBERT draws attention to another model for achieving this result.

national, and international, community land trust project? The Enterprise Neptune Appeal effectively is a non-governmental scheme for nationalising land, but with full compensation to existing landowners. (It may be galling to have to buy back our own country, but we should never have allowed it to be taken in the first place.)

On a continuing basis, in economic terms the Trust is applying the economic rent of the coastline for the benefit of those who seek to use it - the national and international public. The National Trust is really international in that, although it only owns property in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, anyone in the world is entitled to access to their proper-

community. Homes would be bought. "People take care of the homes they own. It's not the resale incentive of the home; it's more 'This is mine, it represents me.' It's a psychological rather than a pocket-book realisation."

Says Sadiki Kambon: "Incorporation means we would rebuild from the ground up, feeling good about our families. It's a physical thing, taking and building on the land, but this is associated with the spiritual thing. We have to build up the community.

"We are offering LVT as innovative; it must be offered to the people. We are not saying what Roxbury is going to be called - Mandela - and it is the same with the land tax: it will be up to the people, the community, to determine whether they adopt it."

ties, either as a member or upon paying a fee for admission.

WHY are so many landowners and businesses keen to promote this appeal? Some of them may be motivated by philanthropy, but others might just benefit commercially. Imagine: you are developing some flats or holiday cottages. Wouldn't it be nice if the National Trust bought up the adjacent coastline, restored it and gave everyone free access? That would certainly improve the value of the developer's own sites.

By promoting the purchase of coastline for preservation, landowners actually reduce the supply of land for the purposes of economic production, thereby pushing up the price. (The Trust is the largest private landowner in Britain and its lands are by statute inalienable.) Don't get me wrong; I am not suggesting that the National Trust should develop Britain's coastline - far from it; I am merely pointing out that there are many indirect beneficiaries of the Enterprise Neptune Appeal, and they always keep quiet about it.

The National Trust must be finding it more and more difficult to buy the remaining land. They must be suffering the same kind of problem as the railway companies in the last century. Suppose you want to build a railway line from London to Bristol but you cannot afford all of the land. Instead you buy up half the land and build as far as Swindon. The fact that you have built as far as Swindon makes Swindon very attractive and pushes up the price of land between Swindon and Bristol. Once speculators hear about this, the price of land is driven up almost exponentially. *The same phenomenon has killed the London Docklands and any prospect of widening the M25 - now officially the most dangerous motorway in Britain.*

ENTERPRISE Neptune sites must come close to a government sponsored form of single tax community. The National Trust is a charity and therefore exempt from taxation on income and capital gains. Moreover, most donations

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That would create more jobs and improved living conditions.

Vacant land, they say, can be developed for "very serious money". They would eventually develop Mandela's downtown into a thriving centre, generating enormous tax revenue. The social effects would also be striking.

• Crime would diminish. "Options are opened up," predicts John Marshall. "Right now, young people have no opportunity that they consider to be realistic. We have smart people in TV and records, so they [obviously have the ability to] develop to being a chef or own a restaurant or be a construction worker or policeman or hospital worker or teacher."

• New pride in the com-

Cash in, Kinnock



• Neil Kinnock

LVT can boost minimum wage aspirations of Labour, says HENRY LAW

IF THE next general election brings Labour, led by Neil Kinnock, to power, we can expect it to introduce its promised minimum wage legislation. It would not be the first time that governments in Britain have tried to regulate wages.

The first attempt was made six centuries ago, in the reign of Edward III, and there were further Acts in the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I and George II. The Elizabethan act provided that the justices of the peace should meet annually and assess the wages of farm labourers and certain other workmen. Penalties were imposed on all who gave or took a wage higher than the figure laid down. This was maximum wage legislation; the Act of James I was minimum wage legislation, since it imposed a penalty on all who gave a wage less than that fixed by the magistrate.

These laws were still in force in the closing years of the 18th century, but it seems they had long been almost entirely ignored. If invoked at all, they were regarded as laws for fixing maximum wages. By this time, a crisis was approaching.

The economic position of labourers in England deteriorated as rural enclosure gathered pace after the 1760s.¹ Enclosure had been going on since the 13th century, but it has been estimated that as late as 1685, 60% of the cultivated land area of England remained unenclosed.

People then enjoyed a complex and elaborate set of ancient rights: to graze cattle and geese, to gather firewood, to glean and, most important of all, the ownerships of strips in the common arable fields. Such rights provided the opportunity to live

by a variety of means, of which work as a paid labourer was but one.

With enclosure, these rights were extinguished. The accompanying agricultural developments, notably a widespread change from arable to pasture, led to increasing poverty and a fall in the demand for labour. Wages fell and increasing numbers of poor families were forced to rely on parish relief. By 1795, the combination of widespread poverty and rising food prices led to the eruption of riots all over England.

As a response, there were proposals for regulating the wages of agricultural labourers, by relating pay to the price of wheat. In 1795, a Bill was introduced into Parliament, which provided for the setting of wages every year, with fines for employers paying less than the prescribed rates. Initial reaction was favourable, but the Bill was rejected without a vote being taken.

The feeling was that it was better to allow wages to find their own level. The year 1795 saw, however, the introduction of a variety of measures, some short lived, which attempted to remedy the lot of the poor. To the student of welfare and wage control, the most important of these was a formula devised by a group of Berkshire magistrates who met at the Pelican Inn, Speenhamland, on 6th May 1795.

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to it are or can easily be made tax deductible; this is where the element of sponsorship comes in. The only relevant taxation must be the Schedule E income taxation (and national insurance) which is deductible from employees' salaries, but I imagine that the Trust has been able to reduce these by taking on volunteers and/or employees with extensive benefits-in-kind which the Inland Revenue value at a very small amount. What you have then is a single tax community, with no taxes on labour, wealth or capital; and economic rent being applied for the benefit of the community.

Is it appropriate to charge an

entrance fee? Should entrance not be free? In my view, the users of land should pay a fee, first to pay for improvements, restorations and repairs, and secondly as a user fee - effectively an economic rental payment. To the extent that they do not, the rents and values of adjoining sites not owned by the Trust must be driven up. The Trust therefore ought to charge fees and use the moneys so raised to buy up more of the coastline.

*Further information about Enterprise Neptune can be obtained from: Coast and Countryside Appeals Manager, The National Trust, Heywood House, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 4MA.

THE purpose of the meeting was to raise wages, and so make the labouring classes independent of parish relief.

The Speenhamland system was based on a table of allowances tied to the price of bread. What happened was this.

Parishes would find work for the unemployed by sending them from house to house; this was known as being "on the rounds". In some places, householders were bound to provide employment. Elsewhere, the "roundsmen" were wholly paid by the parish. If a labourer was employed, the difference bet-