

tenants without secure leases have been evicted and replaced by day labour or machines. Some projects in Ethiopia provide examples of the phenomenon. Also, the introduction of new technologies under standard crop-sharing arrangements, which are based on profit-sharing or fixed proportional crop shares, has often—though not always—led to a disproportionate increase in returns to the landowners.

—From an article on development projects in *Finance & Development*, an IMF and World Bank quarterly.

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### PLENTY OF CHEAP FOOD

**A**T the time of the Referendum and during the preceding year pro-marketeers were fond of saying that there were no longer supplies of cheap food available in the world for Britain to import. So they concluded that Britain was better off within the CAP which it was held would offer security of supply. This argument was based on very exceptional features, namely poor harvests in two consecutive years in the Northern Hemisphere. Thus the Russians imported large quantities of North American grain and (temporarily) emptied the granaries. Grain prices rose to unusual heights—for a short period in 1973/74 to above the EEC price. Anti-marketeers were brushed aside when they pointed out that this was a temporary situation that would be corrected as a result of the United States and Canada abandoning their acreage restrictions.

How right they were. A couple of bumper harvests have restored supplies, halved the wheat price in two years and caused President Carter to propose a 20 per cent cut in the wheat acreage to be planted in 1978 because there is little prospect of selling and difficulty in storing the American grain surplus.

But the price has not halved for the unhappy British. This is because we are within the EEC's agricultural regime with its artificially imposed high prices. The EEC imposes a levy on imports from outside the Common Market to raise the price to the EEC level. The levy on imports into Britain was raised on 1st August (the date of one of Mr. Heath's transitional

steps to full membership) to £51 a tonne. This represents an import tax of almost 100 per cent on the wheat imported to make the British loaf. No wonder bread prices have gone up.

—*Common Market Watchdog*, Autumn.

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### AN OVER-RATED PROPOSAL

**A** SITE of almost an acre in Knightsbridge has been sold for nearly £1,000,000. It is planned to build twenty-six houses, each of which could sell for £200,000. The land cost for each house on this reckoning, works out at £40,000 a plot—one fifth of the total cost.

Under the present system the rates would theoretically be levied on the annual letting value of each house. In practice, the rateable value would be assessed substantially lower than this but it would be considerable.

A buyer of one of these houses will have to consider his substantial rate liability—and the developer, knowing this, will have taken it into account when calculating what price the market in such houses will bear. Taking account of the building costs and his normal profits, this figure will have been reflected in the price he was willing to pay for the land.

Now remove the total rates liability, as the Tory Party have promised to do, and the land value will go up by that amount since building costs will have remained unchanged by the abolition of rates. The owners of the houses will get a gift of their local rates which will immediately be reflected in the higher price they can now sell their houses for.

Future house buyers will find that the rate relief has been capitalised and added to the price asked for land.

Is the Tory party still the party of the landowners?

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Secrecy & Economic Skulduggery

**S**IR, — I was interested to read the comments of T. O. Evans in *Land & Liberty* (July/Aug.).

In his comment Mr. Evans makes the very valid point that the Government relies very heavily upon the phenomenon that "what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve over". Our Government uses the Official Secrets Act to hide from the people of Britain the benefits which they are denied because of bad economics.

I have been in politics for many years and have made an extensive study of economics to work out the best strategy with which to achieve worthwhile reform. The prerequisite of reform in such an emotionally charged area as economics, is to first establish a right to know the truth. So much skulduggery goes on behind the curtain of secrecy provided by the Official Secrets Act that no parliamentarian has a sporting chance of correcting matters.

Fortunately the prospect of achieving prosperity is an acceptable carrot with which to arouse the interest of ordinary people. Establishing their right to know the truth is rather a dull and boring concept on which to run a national campaign.

If Mr. Evans wonders whether the call for Freedom of Information is a peg on which to hang some good economic horse sense, or whether the promise of economic sanity is a good way to attract support for Freedom of Information, then I believe he is looking at both sides of the same coin.

Secrecy is suppressive. Suppression breeds poverty.

Man has an innate tendency to prosper unless there is suppression.

By ridding ourselves of secrecy we help to break free of suppression.

On first principles Freedom of Information can be expected to restore prosperity to Britain by getting rid of secrecy and liberating the power of true wisdom in economics.

I shall be glad of all the support which you can give to the cause of Freedom of Information. Land, liberty, freedom to know the truth and the right to privacy are all vital factors in the structure of true democracy.

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