

Letters to the Editor

AUSTRALIAN RENT

SIR, — In his instructive and readable article "Collecting the Rent of Australia," E. P. Middleton estimates "site rent collected" by public bodies as "under two per cent."

This figure results, however, from inadvertent substitution of the words "site rent" for the words "capital value." What is meant is that annual site rents publicly collected amount to less than two per cent of the capital value of land — in other words, public bodies, on the average, collect less than £2 per year from land that sells for £100.

The percentage of site rent collected by a two per cent rate on the capital value is larger than might be supposed. If we estimate a five per cent annual return from land, £100 worth of land yields £5 to the titleholder plus £2 to the public, £7 in all. Thus a two per cent rate on capital value collects about 2/7 or 29 per cent of the rent.

Considerable benefits accrue to Australians from these public charges upon land. Let us not underestimate them lest Australians dismiss them as too trifling to defend against the counter-attacks of landed interests. Such indifference is widespread here. Many land tax proponents are unaware of how much they have to lose.

Yours faithfully,

ROBERT TIDEMAN

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PORNOGRAPHY

SIR, — Although in full sympathy with the spirit of A.J.C.'s review of Professor Street's book *Freedom, the Individual and the Law*, I do not think he has probed deeply enough into the subject of pornography.

Some libertarians might have noticed the anomaly that when pleading for freedom in land rights and in trade they are in a small minority, but on the subject of pornography they find themselves in company with a vast horde who are quite indifferent to the freedom of their fellows in any other respect. This anomaly requires explanation.

Freedom is natural. It is not natural that normal persons should deliberately and laboriously endeavour to debase the thoughts and feelings of others. Writers and publishers do this

for profit, and it is an unnatural profit arising from the legal privileges of copyright. The only valid justification for publishing one's thoughts is the love of truth and cultivation of the higher qualities of human character. If one is sincere one will do this without the bribe of material reward.

As soon as printing was invented, governments, to preserve their power, introduced licensing laws to suppress awkward aspects of truth. In England the efforts of such men as Milton and Locke eventually abolished licensing, but printers, who had discovered that the licences were valuable privileges, pressed for copyright as a substitute. Genuine lovers of free discussion, such as the great jurist Lord Camden, opposed them, but the monopolists finally prevailed. It is on this basis,

combined with the far-reaching effects of other privileges in a monopolist society, that the whole structure of the publishing business has grown up.

Independent writers have given way imperceptibly to a professional intelligentsia who instinctively exploit shallow judgments and weaker feelings. And as the writing of pornography becomes increasingly lucrative so it becomes increasingly tolerated and respectable. It is significant that Tolstoy, the last great writer to advocate the ideas of Henry George and the supremacy of the moral law, refused the protection of copyright.

If Libertarians today, instead of bothering about the powers of the Lord Chamberlain, demanded repeal of the laws which subsidise pornography they would find themselves in a minority. But in a servile society that is where they belong.

Yours faithfully,

RADICAL LIBERTARIAN

Miscellany

One Man, One Vote—In Advance

DR. FRANCOIS DUVALIER, president of Haiti since 1957, has been elected President for life by a referendum in which all the ballot papers had been marked "yes" before they were handed to the voters.

— *The Times*, June 16

Creative Protest

A PROPOSAL to tax the works of artists in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (U.S.A.) has led to a threat of a public burning of paintings in the city's main street. One artist stated: "This is a blow to creative people. Before I'll pay taxes on my work I'll burn it!"

It is perhaps a pity that all others who produce goods and give services have neither the moral convictions of the artist nor the determination to resist taxation. At the price of being a nation of bohemians and vagabonds we could, perhaps, defy the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

They Don't Know

THE Board of Trade has not yet reached the stage where it has statistics about everything.

In reply to two questions in the Commons it was admitted by the

ON LIBERTY

BETTER by far to perish by one's own choices than to be enslaved by the arbitrary "laws" of self-imposed saviours.

— *Jack Schwartzman*

THE only freedom that deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. — *John Stuart Mill*.

Government that no information is available as to the yield of revenue from purchase tax on harps and blackcurrant juice.

Obviously, someone is slipping up here. The importance of these two items in the control of the national economy has evidently not been fully realised.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Valuation of Real Estate by A. Ring. (Prentice-Hall International, 60s.)

On the Accuracy of Economic Observations by Oskar Morgenstern (second edition) (Princeton University Press. London: Oxford University Press, 52s.)

European Resistance Movements 1939-45 Pergamon Press, £6.)