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WAR ON WANT

Perhaps it is a legacy of two world wars that there is to-day a growing and universal awareness of world social problems and a wide recognition that the welfare or poverty of one part of the world has repercussions elsewhere. Thus it is that many people, seeing the world to be a patchwork of poverty and of progress, of scarcity and abundance, believe that action taken to relieve poverty abroad will yield beneficial results at home. The provision of aid on a world-scale, and enquiry into social conditions throughout the world, is a major function and purpose of the United Nations organisation, whose poorer members are deemed to possess the right to request certain forms of aid which the richer members are under obligation to provide. For this purpose a number of specialised United Nations agencies have been established. They include the International Organisation (I.L.O.), the Food and Agriculture Labour Organisation (F.A.O.), the World Health Organisation (W.H.O.), and the United Nations Educational. Scientific and Cultural Organisation (U.N.E.S.C.O.). I.L.O. is concerned with man-power and with rendering technical assistance, with the movements of industrial populations and the establishment of labour exchanges. F.A.O., concerned with world nutrition, forestry, fisheries and agriculture, forecasts trends in production, distribution and consumption and makes recommendations as to how specific improvements may be achieved. The establishment of health centres and clinics, education in personal and com-munal hygiene, and similar activities are undertaken by W.H.O. in its mission of curing and preventing disease. U.N.E.S.C.O., active in combating old forms and superstitions, replaces them with the superstitions of the Western World!

These separate organisations and others work together on a number of projects. Two well-known schemes are the Colombo Plan for South and South-East Asia and the American Point 4 Programme. It is not easy to find a concrete definition of these 4 point proposals, but generally they are intended as a method of attacking Communism by a concerted attack on mass poverty, mass hunger and their attendant miseries. They are based on an assumption that the peoples of the North Atlantic community have certain privileges, such as superior education and technical skill which ought to be placed at the disposal of the world's less fortunate. One in four of the world's inhabitants—570,000,000—lives in the

area covered by the Colombo Plan, the estimated cost of which was £1,868,000,000, to be spread over the six years 1951—1957. Since then inflation, devaluation, rising costs and increased taxation have greatly increased the cost of the Colombo Plan as it was first promulgated. A number of supplementary development schemes have further added to its cost. For instance, in Ceylon a Rural Development Plan called for the new net investment of £30,000,000. In Pakistan a single agricultural project will cost a further £175,000,000; while in India the expansion of the area to be irrigated will add another £190,000,000. The cost of these extra schemes alone—£395,000,000—is far in excess of the amount allotted for any period of 12 months.

The cost of giving financial aid, technical advice and assistance on such a scale provides impressive statistics. But such statistics, no matter how impressive they may be, can sometimes be just a little beside the point. The question as to whether it is morally right to take the hat round for somebody whose house you burgled last night, and whose wages you intend to steal at the end of the week, is not affected by publicising the amount you collect—be it ever so impressive. And so the reasons given for this world-wide taking round of the hat are necessarily mixed. No doubt the schemes were prompted originally by ideas of pure Christian charity and neighbourliness, but before long other ideas obtruded which have since taken precedence. The openly avowed justifications are, broadly, to strengthen world opposition to Communism-a point of strategy, not charity-and to create profitable new markets for those who provide financial and other aid. There are a number of other weighty considerations not generally mentioned. For instance the propaganda used to advocate and popularise these schemes diverts attention from underlying maladjustments. Favouritism is engendered which creates a stronger and wider interest in maintaining private land-ownership. In fact these schemes are acting to-day just like the wedge that Henry George wrote about, which instead of going underneath society and uplifting it as a whole, passes through society elevating those lucky enough to be on top and depressing still further those beneath,

One example will suffice to illustrate the obstacles to progress which are being encountered by those who are engaged in trying to raise living standards in the backward areas. Last summer the Manchester Guardian published a report from a special correspondent in Calcutta on the Sindri Fertiliser Plant. The cost of the plant, originally estimated at £7 million rose to £17½ before it was completed. The site was chosen because of its proximity to the Bengal-Bihar coalfields, the planners believing that the otherwise empty returning coal-waggons could be used to transport gypsum to the plant at negligible freight charges. They overlooked the point that Henry George mentions in Progress and Poverty, that a lowering of freight charges is accompanied by a rise in land values. That is what happened at Sindri-land values "shot up" according to the Manchester Guardian's correspondent and the acquisition of land took longer than had been anticipated. Other "snags" which contributed to the immense cost of this project were the price-raising effects of inflation and devaluation and of import duties which hampered the flow

of raw materials and machinery sent from Britain and the U.S.A. Such are the real impediments to the

success of international charity.

War on Want, a world survey published recently by the Association for World Peace, illustrates the attitude of many who advocate international assistance for under-developed countries. On page 52, for instance, the problems of peasant communities are attributed to "avaricious landlordism, or to outof-date systems of land tenure, or simply to sheer pressure of population" (they actually separate them). "The world can show far too many areas where overcrowded peasant communities have been driven to deplorably low standards of life." The root cause is laid bare—" avaricious landlordism." And in the same paragraph the remedy is advocated—"the problem of overcrowded land requires the opening of new areas." We know that new areas have been opened up because the development schemes have come into being. We know also that the land was not free, for had there been free land there would have been no problems. We must conclude that the "avaricious landlords" were first bought out. Yet throughout this booklet there is no mention of the sums paid for land purchase. Haven't we the right to know? Is it any wonder that Asians are "sick and tired of paper plans and promises and are clamouring for results"?

The people whose living standards we are attempting to raise are poor and "backward" because they have been robbed of their equal rights to the land on which they were born. They have been, and are being, exploited by their own countrymen as well

as by Europeans. What the Lord provided for all has been appropriated by a few. A study of the plans to develop the backward areas of the world leads one to conclude that what the western nations are offering is not really aid at all. No attempt is being made to restore even a part of what has been taken from the landless—that remains securely in the possession of the expropriators. Instead the taxpayers of the world are obliged to contribute to these peoples' rehabilitation.

When representatives of the "poor" countries come cap in hand to the round table to plead for international charity, they should be asked one simple question: In your country, what is the relationship between the people and the land on which they were born? Means tests and large scale enquiries are unnecessary; this one question provides the acid test. If the answer is that a few own the land while the rest are landless, the plea for financial and other assistance should be dismissed. The delegates should be instructed to return to their own countries and to inform their Governments that the means for helping their people lies in their own hands-not in the mulcting of foreign taxpayers. For the immediate and fundamental "aid" that the people of the backward countries require-just as do their brothers in the West-is the restitution of their equal rights to the land, the value of which collectively they create and enhance. Unless and until this is achieved, foreign assistance is powerless to help the exploited; it merely condones and consolidates privilege and injustice.

L. J. HUBBARD.

NYASALAND - WHY FEDERATION IS FEARED

A survey of developments in the Nyasaland Protectorate, which adjoins the north-eastern boundary of Northern Rhodesia, affords useful information on the question whether Africans can develop land. As that Central African Protectorate embodies some of the aspects of West and East Africa other details are also of general application. Here, in 1889 and 1891, the British Government, pressed by anti-slavery opinion, proclaimed a Protectorate "with the consent and at the desire of the chiefs and people." There was a somewhat denser population in a fairly well watered country and the inhabitants were adaptable and well disposed. After slave raiding had been suppressed the cost of maintaining peace and public works was remarkably low, and to save further expense the administration tended to avoid interference. Hut tax for revenue was according light. Europeans who had already acquired land from chiefs-in the most promising situations-naturally were confirmed in possession, but further land grants were made only reluctantly. The steady progress of European plantations demonstrated that Reserves, Pass Laws and Colour Bar regulations were not necessary for development. Africans began to acquire technical skill as well as scholastic education; a few started to grow export crops on their own account.

Europeans and African cultivators continued to thrive. In the Labour Government's White Paper on Federation figures of imports, exports and revenue show that, during the ten year period to 1950, Nyasaland's rate of progress in every instance but one surpassed that of both its partners in the proposed federation. A more reliable guide to prosperity, however, is furnished by growth of population. Nyasaland's population is estimated at nearly 2½ million compared with approximately two millions each for Southern and Northern Rhodesia, countries that are respectively four and eight times the area of Nyasaland, perhaps equal in fertility and favoured by immense mineral resources, whereas Nyasaland is lacking in them. Part of Nyasaland's prosperity is derived from wages paid to Nyasaland Africans who, when it suits them, work in Rhodesia for the higher rates payable, due to the proximity of great mineral wealth, and then return to their homes in a freer country where the cost of living is lower.

After the first World War a number of settlers came to Nyasaland from Rhodesia and the Union. Finding all freehold land at a monopoly price and labourers, unhampered by Pass Laws, able to change employment at will, the newcomers pressed for Pass regulations and the alienation of more land for These requests were refused on the Europeans. ground that Nyasaland was a Protectorate. A group of these settlers then determined, as they said, to "smash the Protectorate" by some form of amalgamation with the Rhodesias. To familiar observers, of which I was one, they were quite frank about their motives and these do not accord with the tone of later official statements of the proposal. For a time the agitation languished, but as increasing peasant pros-