

tions that would have to be made; scope for administrative delay would be formidable. Labour's Land Commission could also discourage owners from bringing their land forward, especially if there were hopes that the Tories might shortly return to power.

The *Financial Times* has little faith in the present Government's policy as things stand, for it says: "About two-thirds of the land needed for re-building the South-East will simply change hands in the market at prices which have been pushed up sharply by planning decisions."

Commenting that there is room for some new practical suggestions, three proposals are advanced:

- (1) Compulsory registration of titles to land.
- (2) More ready use of compulsory purchase.
- (3) A tax that would reflect the value of land that is raised by the decisions of planners.

The first of these proposals we endorse, the second we

feel unnecessary if the right remedy is applied, and the third, while it makes some approach to the question of land values and who enjoys them, is inadequate for the job whichever way it is interpreted, since as envisaged it would apply to only those increases in land values where change of use takes place.

Recognising the weaknesses and inadequacies of both Labour and Tory policies, the *Financial Times* nonetheless makes the same mistake of not looking at the whole picture. Our present and future problems of municipal and private development, or oppressively high land prices, speculation and land "shortage" are not to be solved by piecemeal legislation. Too much of that has been tried unsuccessfully in the past. Not until we adopt the bold and full policy of land-value taxation applied to *all* land and *treating all land owners alike*, will the community as a whole ever be able to realise the full benefits of material progress and the great potential that lies ahead.

NOTES AND NEWS

Prosperity — Promise and Performance —
Radio "Pirates" — Another Crop of Subsidies.
Bahama Bonanza



NO GROUNDS FOR OPTIMISM

"IT IS TRUE that disappointment has followed disappointment. Discovery upon discovery and invention after invention have neither lessened the toil of those who most need respite nor brought plenty to the poor. But there have been so many things to which it seemed this failure could be attributed that up to our time the new faith has hardly weakened. We have better appreciated the difficulties to be overcome, but not the less trusted that the tendency of the times was to overcome them."

So wrote Henry George in 1879, and eighty-five years later that faith in the efficacy of material progress to extirpate poverty has not weakened. To be sure, nobody today believes that a free market alone will solve the problem, but with the enormous forces for production now at our disposal, and with intelligent direction and planning of the economy, it is unquestionably asserted that man can cure want and poverty. We haven't done it yet, but we are on the point of doing it now. Such is the extent of man's faith in his own ability. Oxfam. War on Want, Christian Aid, Food for Peace, Alliance for Progress, War on Poverty—all these reflect the unbounded confidence of man to (ultimately) solve the poverty problem.

In Britain all three political parties are promising an earthly paradise if only they are returned to power at the coming election. A year ago Lord Hailsham told us: "For the first time in the history of the human race I

believe that we are in sight of an age when industrial production could be on a scale to banish want altogether."

Now the Twentieth Century Fund in America has produced a report which gives, in the words of *The Times* (April 29), "A superbly confident picture of the American economy—prosperous, strong, and with ample resources to cope with such persistent problems as unemployment, poverty and the social needs of the people."

"Barring war or national disaster," the report states, "responsible Americans believe that perhaps for the first time in its history the United States will have the energy and the resources to erase its shortcomings and to build the kind of nation that was dreamed of by the men who originally created it."

But all these attempts at eliminating poverty, all these actions by government and private agencies, are aimed at one thing—to increase production. But the problem is not one of production but of distribution. How can the problem of poverty ever be solved without regard to the distribution of wealth? Governments have accepted the problem of poverty as part of the natural order of things, to be overcome by their beneficent intervention. They have ignored the lessons of the free market; they have attempted to override economic laws with laws of their own making; they have contrived to plan and control man's environment. Yet with all the Government action, particularly over the last fifty years, the problem of poverty is no nearer to being solved—no nearer even to being understood.