

A Plan for the Planners

by SYDNEY MAYERS

WE may, with evident justice, question the value of the numerous schemes which over the years have been proposed with a view to solving the omnipresent problem of poverty, but certainly there has been no dearth of appealing slogans. One can recall the Full Dinner Pail, the Return to Normalcy, A Chicken in Every Pot, Two Cars in Every Garage and Prosperity Just Around the Corner — not to mention the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Frontier and the Great Society.

Under these banners, there has been a succession of pseudo-economic programs, designed to spread the wealth, raise the common standard of living and improve the unhealthy conditions stemming from poverty. Alas, though the goal is undoubtedly commendable, the results of such efforts have never matched their purpose or their promise. In the U.S.A. we use local nomenclature, but our activities have been curiously reminiscent of the repeated Five-, Seven- and Ten Year Plans worked out by various other countries engaged in similar endeavors.

One would think that by now, after decades of sincere trial and obvious error, our political pundits might at long last realize that, no matter how well-meaning, the anti-poverty plans that have been proposed have been demonstrably unsuccessful. In fact, since these proposals are essentially alike in nature, it is almost incredible that their lack of validity should not be appreciated and accepted. Yet we try the same schemes over and over again, notwithstanding that they are patently doomed to failure.

After all the Five Year Plans which

it enthusiastically sponsored, the Soviet Union has yet to attain economic security for its people. After all the "deals" that have been offered as economic panaceas in the United States, a new "war" recently had to be declared against the poverty still prevailing in this, the most progressive industrial nation on earth. Clearly, the plans and the deals have not worked, and political intelligence demands that economic shibboleths be discarded in favor of valid principles of political economy. If this must be done "according to plan," one is here respectfully suggested, which would be moral, equitable and (we are confident) quite efficacious.

The Plan? It first must be recognized that poverty arises primarily from the curtailed production and the maldistribution of wealth. These conditions ultimately are caused by unjust taxation and the private appropriation of the use-value of land. Elimination of these basic causes of poverty depends on the abolition of the prevalent system of land-holding, which channels to the landowner the site-rent which the community has created. Ergo, if the rental value of land were turned over to the whole community for its own mutual benefit, other taxation would not be necessary, and everyone would receive the full fruit of his productiveness. End of poverty. End of plan.

Simple, isn't it? Perhaps oversimplified. Maybe a nutshell is not enough. Henry George, in *Progress and Poverty*, took 563 pages to expound this plan — but he did it much better! Everybody should read it. Especially Planners.