

prime responsibility for the violence must rest with the political establishment of the Republic which, consistently since 1921, has chosen policies designed to raise land values at the cost of the continuing loss of livelihoods for the people.

Blaming Britain

Opening up the debate on the causes and the remedies for violence in Northern Ireland and directing that debate along new and more analytical lines offers the prospect of an early reduction in violence. There is in Ireland now no realistic prospect of a reduction in unemployment, and therefore there is no realistic prospect of an end to Protestant insistence on privilege or of Catholic opposition to that privilege.

Rather, as economic crisis deepens in Britain and Ireland and as the Irish public finances approach complete collapse, the prospect of economic growth lifting Ireland into a new era of employment for all, of abundance and equality for all becomes more remote and chimerical than it has been for decades. Given these circumstances of shattered hopes, of disillusion and of an unrelieved prospect of continuing loss of jobs and continuing sectarian discrimination, Irish nationalists will be increasingly attracted to the simplistic view that Britain and Britain's Protestant garrison are responsible for Irish failure.

It will be increasingly easy to persuade young Irish idealists that violence against Protestants and against British personnel in Northern Ireland is the most effective means available of removing British influence as the prerequisite for Irish prosperity.

No plausible alternative to this simplistic nationalist thesis exists now. My analysis suggests an alternative thesis. Restructuring along the lines of an evolved, indigenous, Gaelic system the land holding system that was imposed on Ireland by Tudor, Stuart and Cromwellian conquerors would halt and reverse the decline in jobs. Young Irish nationalists so persuaded would perceive that there is a way to secure a livelihood and equity for all that is more effective, more certain and more honourable than the sectarian violence that now appears to be the only grim way to the realisation of legitimate national aspirations. This perception should bring about a redirection of patriotic effort from violence to constructive, constitutional, but radical change.

Community Rent or Land Bank

David Redfearn

THERE is plenty of land for everybody in Britain. If our 56,020,000 inhabitants were housed in families of four on plots measuring 27 x 100 feet (including 18 feet for road and pavement), the acreage would be 868,078, or only 1.46 per cent of the United Kingdom's 59,552,640. Even if half the rest were unusable, there would be more than enough for all other purposes; and each family would have its own kitchen garden. The land is there; so why in practice is it not available, or available only at a high price?

The answer is large-scale private ownership brought about by centuries of enclosures. Take for example the estates of the Duke of Bedford, totalling 80,000 acres. Even in the year 1838, for which figures happen to be published, the seventh Duke received £72,610 per annum from his 119 acres in London, but from his provincial estates of 79,881 acres only £36,939. Because of this large income from London (£610 an acre), he was not obliged to secure the best use of the country estates (averaging £0.46 an acre), or even any productive use at all. His successors, supported by much increased London land values, have certainly used 'their' countryside more for recreation. That is the story of one Dukedom. There are others; and Dukes are not the only landlords.

The Ecology Party says the question now is, how to make the unused or little-used land available for new rural communities. Their land-banker's plan would have the following consequences:-

- (a) The present landlords would be compensated for loss of the right to levy a toll on production without contributing to it. (They owe this right to their forerunners' adroit manipulation of the powers of government).
- (b) The ultimate payers of the compensation would be the victims of present injustice, and the descendants of past victims. But these are the very people who should be receiving compensa-

tion, not paying it.

- (c) The end result would be a country of many landlords instead of few; but the landless, still in a majority, would be better off.
- (d) Prospective members of the new communities would find that land would cost as much as it does now.

The economic forces that depopulated our countryside would still exist.

The land-value taxer, on the other hand, considers that the only rightful landlord is the people, and that the way for the authorities to put this principle into practice is to take all ground rents for public revenue, including estimated ones for unused 'private' land, and reduce existing taxation accordingly. Now competition among prospective tenants ensures that wages and interest, taken together, are governed by what labour and capital can obtain from the least productive land in use. Everything in excess of this is rent, which, if taken for the Treasury, could not be taken again by the landlord. He would therefore have three choices:-

- (a) To work the land himself with his own capital, and receive the wages and interest.
- (b) To provide the capital only, and receive the interest.
- (c) To sell whatever land he could neither work himself nor furnish the capital for others to work. Since he would be selling also the liability to 'community rent', the price would tend towards zero.

All this would give the new communities the best possible start.

The Ecology Party has already accepted the principle of community rent. It should now be clear that it is incompatible with compensation for landlords, and that land rationing will not be needed; for there is plenty of land.

NOTE: It is thought that the Duke of Bedford himself does not now own a single acre of land in Britain. The considerable Bedford estates in London are in the hands of trustees the principal beneficiary being the Duke's grandson!