

Having devoted seven chapters to the problems of marketing, the authors conclude that "The maximum possible improvements in marketing will do very little to solve the economic problems of a forty acre Welsh hill farm; its problems are probably insoluble." The problems of making a basically uneconomic farm pay must always be insoluble!

When they finally get down to it, the authors remark rather timidly that "Whether British agriculture and horticulture should be protected, and if so to what degree, is a largely political question beyond the scope of economists *qua* economists, but as students of agriculture . . . our opinion is that the protection given to many agricultural products has been excessive and should be reduced . . ."

"Reduced," but not "abolished," and yet the presence of protection in whatever form is the primal cause of the problems which the authors have set out to examine in this booklet. "Is the guaranteed price system an effective instrument for achieving optimum food production," they ask. There is only one way to achieve optimum food production—a completely free market. Every criticism which the authors make of present food marketing and production relates to some feature artificially introduced by interfering with the free market.

Dr. Hallett and Mr. James seem unwilling to admit this. In one hopeful passage they go so far as to say "We do not believe that British farmers want to be protected, neither do we believe that they *need* to be protected from unfair competition, *provided that they are given the economic environment within which they can operate to the best of their ability.*" What does this last sentence (my italics) mean but free trade?

However, this is not what Mr. James and Mr. Hallett mean by it. "Inefficient producers, whether their trouble is bad management or uneconomic holdings" they say "must be induced to leave their farms." "The lead must come from the Government." They suggest that the Government should offer all inefficient farmers a life pension if they will give up their farms. The total cost of this scheme will be a mere £1,200 million. But, say the authors cheerfully, "It is better to spend £40 million a year for a specified period, at a total cost of £1,200 million, in order to solve a problem, than to pay over £360 million a year *ad infinitum* to perpetuate it."

That may be so, but that is simply not the choice before us. The "problem" can be solved immediately, and at no cost at all, by simply abolishing all subsidies and grants, removing all import restrictions and opening up a free market. What need is there to do anything else?

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#### FORM OF BEQUEST

*I bequeath, free of duty, to the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, Limited, the sum of £ .....*



## UNTAPPED RESOURCES

By Peter Rhodes

HENRY GEORGE'S AXIOM that "man seeks to satisfy his desires with the least exertion" is the key to nearly all aspects of human behaviour. It is this motive force, to avoid unnecessary expenditure of energy, which drives the market machinery. It is this force, which in a free economy leads to a flow of ideas, that eventually results in improved goods and services. Ideas form the bloodstream of economic life. Without new ideas to vitalise the body economic there could be no progress in the material sense. It is inescapable, therefore, that from the standpoint of functional efficiency it is in the interests of society to ensure that the social atmosphere is conducive to the formulation of new ideas and that there is no impediment which prevents new ideas from taking a material form.

To those of us familiar with the problems of implementing economic ideas it is no secret that between conception and implementation the path is full of difficulties. These difficulties fall into two separate fields of combat: the battle to overcome the deficiencies of established means of communication, and the battle against the opposition of vested and privileged interests. At the core of both battles we find the obstacle of man's inherent conservatism. People do not like change, however subtle it may be.

In a recently published book,\* Mr. P. Clavell Blount draws attention to the wasted talent which results from an inability to make the most of our national idea potential. This wastage, on account of the difficulties already mentioned, has been the author's inspiration in a twenty-year-old battle to establish in this country a national organisation similar to the American National Association of Suggestion Schemes. The author's contention is that many people of limited status are in a position to aid productivity in industry and efficiency in government by putting forward valuable ideas and suggestions. Some organisations, aware of this potential, have created communicative channels to encourage the flow of ideas from the lowest denominator in the structure to the highest levels of administration. There is, however, room for much improvement, both in the organisation of existing schemes and in promulgating new schemes where none at present exist. This work, carried out in the United States by the N.A.S.S., a national co-ordinating body, is sadly neglected in this country despite persistent efforts

\**Ideas Into Action*. Clair Press, 25s.

on the part of Mr. Blount and others to form an organisation here. The story of the author's attempt to establish his own idea reveals the extent of idea hostility and lunatic bureaucracy in communication; as an illustration of persistence without disillusionment it is most commendable.

Examining the difficulties of communication in idea promotion, Mr. Blount stresses the need for adequate rewards to be made to the initiators of accepted innovations, and that care is necessary to ensure that ideas are not squashed or credit for them stolen while on their way to top management or political representatives. These safeguards are very necessary, for human nature shows peculiar quirks when ideas are being considered.

A further point the author makes concerns the profit motive and the national interest. One is reminded of the stories of the everlasting match and the everlasting man-made fibre — stories made more plausible since Vance Packard's exposé of "planned obsolescence" in the U.S.A. Here the danger lies in monopoly, and we return to the necessity of providing a social background conducive to the stimulation of ideas and their rapid implementation.

Under present economic conditions the pressure to think things out is not very great, except from an introspective and protectionist point of view. Employees on the shop floor are reluctant to make suggestions for improving efficiency for fear of reprisals from their colleagues or from the fear of redundancy. The existence of retail price maintenance, market agreements and cartels acts as a brake on invention and as a spur to further conservatism. Subsidies, support systems, tariffs and quotas all play their part in maintaining the status quo. To increase the flow of ideas it is necessary to bring about a favourable climate for ideas in all fields—individual, public and corporative. Viewed in this way the problem is one of political economy, for this is one field where there is no shortage of ideas. What is lacking is direction, intellect and logic.

Innovators, as Mr. Blount surely knows, are in for a rough time whatever the scope of their activities.



## PROTECTION

or

## FREE TRADE?

By Henry George

*The Tariff Question considered with special regard to the interests of wage-earners. A searching examination of both protectionist and free trade theories. Complete edition 10s. 6d. Abridged edition 3s. 6d.*

# THEY SAY

## —But It Doesn't Apply to the Science of Political Economy?

**T**O cure a disease or a social evil you must not merely look at the symptom, useful as a Disprin may be to cure a headache. You must try and remove the cause. Otherwise what you produce is not a remedy, but a palliative, and where the disease is a serious one, you actually aggravate the complaint.

— Quintin Hogg, M.P., Minister for Science.

## Presumptuous and Patronising

**T**O my mind the role of government is very clear. It is to help each individual to make the most of his talents, of his personality and of his character.

— Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

## Impertinent Paternalism

**T**OO many firms are reasonably happy to coast along moderately successfully, without exerting themselves too strongly. They are just good enough to survive as long as the atmosphere is one of mild and gentle competition. Either they must rouse themselves, or we must find means to prick them into activity. Nobody can just sit back and wait for somebody else to plan him into growth.

— Edward Heath, M.P., Secretary of State for Industry, Trade and Regional Development.

## Pernicious Pay Proposals

**W**E have long accepted that a national wage minimum should be enforced in the country. I believe we are bound to reach the stage where maxima should also be set. I do not think this can be rigidly enforced by law, but there is no reason why some sanction should not be applied to firms which grossly exceed what is justified.

— Jo Grimond, M.P., Leader of the Liberal Party.

## Monopoly at the Reins

**T**HE farmer can reasonably look to national agricultural policy to shield him in one way and another from the effects of unbridled competition from overseas.

— Christopher Soames, M.P., Minister of Agriculture.

## Liberalism from a Tory

**I**T is only when a country has lost faith in itself that it looks continually to the central government to order its affairs.

— Geoffrey Rippon, M.P.,

Minister of Public Building and Works.

## Socialism from a Liberal

**T**HE basic services of the country are certainly the responsibility of the government.

— Jo Grimond, M.P., Leader of the Liberal Party.