

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

Morality and Controls

Milton Friedman—*New York Times*, October 29, 1971.

WHEN YOU and I make a private deal, both of us benefit—otherwise we do not have to make it. We are partners, co-operating voluntarily with one another. The terms, so long as they are mutually agreeable, should be our business. But not any longer. Big Brother is looking over our shoulders. And if the terms do not correspond with what he says is O.K., one of us is encouraged to turn in the other. And to turn him in for doing something few people have ever regarded and do not now regard as in any sense morally wrong; on the contrary, for doing something that each of us regards, when it affects us, as our basic right.

By any standards, the edicts of the pay board and the price board, like the initial freeze, will be full of inequities and will be judged to be by ever increasing numbers of people. You believe that you are entitled to a pay rise, your employer agrees and wishes to give you one, yet the pay board says no. Will there not be a great temptation to find a way around the ruling? By a promotion unaccompanied by any change in duties but to a job title carrying a higher permitted pay. Or by your employer providing you with amenities you formerly paid for. Or by one or another of the innumerable stratagems—legal, quasi-legal, or illegal—that men devise to protect themselves from snooping bureaucrats.

In general, I have little sympathy with trade unions. They have done immense harm by restricting access to jobs, denying excluded workers the opportunity to make the most of their abilities, and forcing them to take less satisfactory jobs. Yet surely in the present instance they are right that it is inequitable for the Government retroactively to void contracts freely arrived at. The way to reduce monopoly power of unions is to remove the special legal immunities they are now granted, not to replace one concentrated power by another. The excuse for the destruction of liberty is always the plea of necessity.

Office Controls

The Estates Gazette, November 27, 1971.

WHEN Mr. George Brown introduced the Control of Office and Industrial Development Act in 1965 the Conservatives opposed it strongly: but now, in the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Bill, they have provided for office development control to be extended for a further five years. When controls were first brought in the Government of the day was warned that they would deter a number of foreign companies from

establishing themselves in this country; and that they would add yet a further disincentive to economic expansion. The Government was also warned that controls affecting the building industry are all too easy to impose and reasonably swift in operation, but that, when the time for expansion occurs, the industry, for a variety of reasons, is slow to respond. Despite these warnings the policy was pursued . . .

In extending control for a further period there should surely have been some consideration of its effects, together with an assessment of its objectives in the light of changing conditions—but the Bill received a second reading without the subject being given more than a passing mention. The control of office development has in fact had all the undesirable effects which were predicted; indeed it could be claimed that the actual results have been even worse than were feared. No one foresaw that

COMPETITION

THE Free Trade League are pleased to announce an Open Competition for an essay on the subject "Why Free Trade must be the alternative to Common Market entry." This competition is open to all comers. It should consist of up to 1,500 words, preferably typed, and on one side of the paper only. Entries should be submitted not later than February 28, 1972 to Competition Secretary, Free Trade League, 177 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1 and should bear the pseudonym of the author only; the author's name and address should be put into a sealed envelope with the chosen pseudonym written on the outside. The envelope should accompany the essay.

The Judging Panel will be appointed by the officers and committee of the League and their decision will be final.

The Prizes: The prizes will be the payment of £50 for the essay selected by the Judging Panel as being the best and payment of £20 as second prize and £10 as third prize. Consolation prizes of books will also be awarded to runners-up for essays of merit.

The Panel is not obliged to select any entry unless they are satisfied that it has sufficient merit.

The copyright of prize-winning essays shall belong to the Free Trade League who may publish them in their Journal and elsewhere as they decide.

The result of the competition will be announced on March 31, 1972.

(The prize money is being donated by the Cobden Club from the Richard Cobden Memorial Prize Fund.)