

Author with a Future

ROY DOUGLAS

ONE OF the "with-it" periodicals like *New Society* should run a weekly list of O.K. clichés. The current Top Ten might well comprise the following: -

1. "A sterile exercise in economic and political reassertion"
2. "conceptual inadequacies"
3. "reassessment and restructuring"
4. "coherent and relevant analysis of socio-economic realities"
5. "searing confrontation"
6. the triptych of American bewilderment, British myopia and French economic expansionism"
7. "the hysteria of defensive lament"
8. "latent disjunctions"
9. "incipient jingoist backlash"
10. "an emasculated council of ministers" (Ouch!)

All of these gems have one feature in common. All appear within the twenty-four text pages of James Bellini's booklet, *Britain's entry: Labour's nemesis**. No-one will be startled to read that the author is a Fabian whiz-kid, the product of Cambridge and LSE.

The good readers of *LAND & LIBERTY* will, one trusts, sympathise with their reviewer, who has attempted to wade through a lot of this sort of thing. So far as he could make out, the author of the pamphlet considers (a) that we shouldn't join the Common Market, (b) that, nevertheless, we shall, (c) that Labour has done several somersaults, and (d) that the EEC will bust anyhow. Your reviewer may be wrong on any or all of these points. Perhaps anyone else who cares to slog through the pamphlet will tell him. No doubt, the author has a great future ahead of him - probably as a Cabinet minister.

* Young Fabian Pamphlet 30 : 25p.

Letters

MANDATE FALLACY

SIR, - Your comment ("Consent by Party Machine", May/June issue) seems to suggest that the government would have had a real mandate from the electors on the Common Market question if, at the general election, it had said that it was intending to apply for membership, instead of merely to negotiate.

I doubt whether this would have made much difference. For, if we consider a Conservative supporter, against joining the Common Market but anxious to turn out the then Labour government, how many such people would have voted anything but Conservative? The myth that a government has a mandate for everything that was in its election manifesto is absurd, for there is no means of knowing how many people voted for the party because of any given item in that manifesto, and how many in spite of it.

A true mandate for or against signing the Treaty of Rome could be obtained by the same method that enabled the Irish voters in 1922 to give their mandate for accepting the treaty then offered them by Britain. That is, the single transferable vote form of proportional representation, which gives each voter a free choice among different candidates and reasonable certainty that the choice he expresses will affect the result. Any elector would be able to vote,



say, Conservative while giving preference to a pro-Market Conservative, an anti-Market Conservative, or a Conservative candidate who

was undecided and wanted to examine the case further.

Yours faithfully,

ENID LAKEMAN

The Electoral Reform Society,
London, S.E.1.

THE PLANNERS IN THE DOCK

SIR, - My mind goes back to the "bad old days" before 1914. I remember a certain housing estate at Mitcham, Surrey, where the builder in a sales promotion drive offered "one house free to the purchaser of fifty." They were three-bedroomed houses priced at £250. "Cheaper by the dozen" seems incredible in the light of the modern scene of people queuing hours on end to buy a house at £8,000. Even after the first world war when the average price was £750, a visit to a new housing estate formed a pleasant Sunday afternoon walk, shopping around for houses - unbelievable today. Many of these estates included new shops to let or for sale, and no one forbade or prevented you from using them for whatever purpose you desired or thought most profitable. If you could afford a mortgage, a building society would grant it without enquiries into your income. In 1947 the Town and Country Planning Act was passed, and since then no one, but no one, can dwell or work anywhere without the permission of our planning overlords, often in the name of protecting each and everyone from their own indiscretions and stupidity. Twenty-five years have gone by and what has been achieved? Wherever you travel monotonous rows of architectural barracks meet the eye, and our cities and towns are full of monstrous industrial and residential beehives in which thousands of human beings known as commuters spend their lives. No wonder we now find pleasurable relief in searching out and visiting the few old towns and villages which have so far escaped the planners' clutches.

To those who still believe that no progress can be made without overhead authoritarian planning, let me

ask the most pertinent question of all. How did we manage without it for so many centuries of time? Remember, the first serious sally into state authoritarian planning was in 1926. How did our great cities, towns and centres of industrial activity come into being and prosper without any central planning direction? True, there has always been a minimal amount of local authority control, but it never interfered with economic activity, being largely concerned with safety precautions, building malpractices, and the effective organisation of essential community services.

There are many facets in state planning which may seem insignificant, but in the final analysis do affect the economic conditions of society. For example, you may succeed in getting outline planning permission for certain users for a site, but before you start you have to submit a detailed plan of the building and its use. Your troubles are only just starting. You may wish to have green roof tiles, arched doorways certain types of windows or you may favour a particular style of architecture. But no, you cannot have these things. You must submit to the planners' ideas or "throw in the sponge." The only way you can dodge it all is to live the life of a hermit. Of course they can still kick you out of your cave or woodland shelter. Let us suppose you find the planners' ideas acceptable, but still have some personal conception concerning amenities and services in the town or village you live in. You will then find there is a planners' Town Map. Now this map has no statutory backing; you cannot object to any of the proposals shown thereon until the planning authority grants outline planning permission. You may not like the idea of an industrial site alongside your residence, or you may think that the disused railway track could become a useful highway. You cannot do anything about it, and meanwhile all the real estate merchants are working hand in glove with the planners.

What about the financial aspects? Limit the use of certain

sites and you inevitably increase the speculative value of land unaffected by such prohibitions, and when the planners have misjudged the demand for building land, as they have today, speculation in developed sites is intensified.

Any global valuation of land under state planning legislation must produce anomalies and inequalities. For example, two adjacent sites, one without planning permission, the other with, have a

market value of £400 and £4,000 respectively.

How can the real value of a site be assessed if the authorities ban its use for any particular purpose? While the planners have the power to arbitrarily direct the use of land the natural economic compulsion is cancelled out.

Yours faithfully,

STEPHEN MARTIN

Fordingbridge,
Hants.

Miscellany

Crazy World of Disney

AN economic whirlwind stirred up by the creation of the Walt Disney World entertainment complex is transforming central Florida into far more than the nation's newest vacation mecca, says *US News & World Report*, June 12.

The impact generated by visitors flocking into Florida by the tens of thousands is being felt throughout the business structure of the entire State.

"Employment is climbing, construction is hitting record peaks, retail sales are soaring and the population is growing at an eye-popping rate."

Disney World itself is constructed on 2,500 acres of a 27,400-

acre tract south-west of Orlando in Florida's heartland.

Land for the project was quietly and gradually bought for about \$200 an acre. When plans for the centre were announced, real estate prices "took off like rockets from nearby Cape Kennedy."

Some land in the area was selling for as little as \$6 an acre only a few years ago, says the *US News & World Report* and now highway frontage around Disney World averages about \$40,000 per acre.

A 40-acre orange grove was bought for \$4,000 an acre before the boom and later eight acres of it sold for \$510,000.

Sunk Without Trace

THE LAND question briefly showed its face recently on a BBC television programme entitled "Who Owns Britain?" but was soon sunk without trace. The commentator seemed concerned to show how difficult it is for large landowners to make their estates pay though the question as to why, if they were such a great burden were they not disposed of, was never broached.

That the programme never once threatened to scratch the surface of a very thorny issue may be judged by the comment that since the nationalised industries figure among the ten largest landowners, "it is we, the people, who are the

SAFEGUARD OR DANGER?

WE HAVE never had hyperinflation in Britain.

We don't have it now, or anything like it. Furthermore, we are unlikely to have it. Control of the money supply being with the Government of the day, a serious inflation depends upon Government acquiescence.

- Edward du Cann, MP, in the Daily Mail, June 21