



## A MODEST FARMER

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### **I like my kind acts to get a mention in the press**

I have to admit immediately that I have found retirement a disappointing experience.

I had imagined myself plodding placidly and gracefully down the western slopes, pausing every now and again to give the younger generation of politicians the benefit of my vast experience, which I thought would be eagerly sought by almost everyone.

But it has not turned out like that at all.

It is true that Mavis has let go the political lead rein; she has finally abandoned her plan to make me a minister so that she could look forward to my State funeral, but instead she is now obsessed with getting me posted to Outer Mongolia as our Ambassador there.

So I have to continue being subservient to the good and great; I might just as well still be in Parliament.

I also thought that, when I retired, I would be finished with Eccles for ever, but he continues to haunt me.

And I imagined that Fred would welcome me warmly back to the farming fold, but he continues to regard me with deep suspicion, watching critically for any signs of me going back to my old and evil politician's behaviour.

But I could cope with my "family," as I sometimes call them, with a hollow laugh; what I cannot manage is the kindness of my friends who deluge me in a spate of books and reports.

They must think that I will feel neglected if I am not buried up to the eyeballs in literature, most of it dull beyond enduring.

Most of the books are big and heavy (in more ways than one) and most of these I give ostentatiously to the local hospital.

I find it hard to break the politician's habit acquired after years of practice of making certain that any small act of kindness gets a mention in the local paper.

But some of the books I actually read and these usually make me even more miserable than farming.

I mentioned one before in this column: *Not From Benevolence* was its name. It spelt out far too clearly how the free enterprise section of the community was being swamped almost without a struggle by those who believe in Government intervention.

A few organisations protested that I had overlooked their efforts to hold high the free enterprise banner and one such group was CEDA.

But they appear to be more interested in making cooperation with the Government fruitful than striving for less of it.

And there are too many firms on their executive receiving subsidies by way of the tariff for their protestations to ring true.

But now I have been given, again by the *Libertarian Review* in NSW, an even bigger book called *A Time For Truth*, by a man called Simon who was Secretary of the Treasury of the USA between 1974 and 1977.

With that background he could hardly be regarded as a lightweight. His theme is an almost desperate plea to Americans to stop the slide towards Government intervention.

Yet we imagine the USA to be a bastion of free enterprise. I hate to think what his judgement would be of Britain or us.

On page 229 he makes a plea for a courageous group of businessmen to band themselves to fight openly for the free enterprise system. But let him speak for himself:

But there is one condition that must be met: These businessmen must not just preach free enterprise; they must practice it.

They cannot be hypocritical leeches on the State, who mouth platitudes about the free enterprise system, then come hat in hand to Washington.

This practice only destroys their credibility as spokesmen for a principled cause.

No citizen has any reason to believe a businessman's charge that the State is violating both liberty and productive efficiency when that businessman himself asks for State protection and State favours.

A group of genuinely principles businessmen must be organised who will refrain from asking for one cent of the taxpayers' money, who will honourably accept the risks and penalties of freedom along with its great rewards.

Only such a group can start the process of giving the business world itself some backbone and a clear vision of how to protect us — and our — freedom.

Some of the high protectionist groups such as ACAM will probably blush a bit when they read that. But so will others. Perhaps even the Wheatgrowers' Federation will realise that its halo is a little tarnished.