

## THESIS AND ANTITHESIS

[*Mr. Powney writes*]

Notwithstanding the extreme form of Mr. Robbins' Distributism, he admits that property in the Catholic sense involves a co-operative organization, not a competitive one, and that protective legislation is necessary not only for its restoration, but also for its maintenance. But if the relations among the owners within the Distributive State are to be of a co-operative nature, doubtless this protective legislation must extend to the use as well as to the acquisition of property, which is what I have maintained.

The civil servants of such a Co-operative Distributive State could very well be misrepresented as ruthless controllers of one thing and another, and the dilemma Mr. Robbins presents me would then be his too. But this would not advance the argument a single step. The fact is that a State conducting its economic life on the principle of co-operation would require an organization and organizers, which the mere distribution of property would not of itself effect. Mr. Robbins, however, does not see these implications in his premisses.

The crux of the matter as expounded by Mr. Robbins is whether the tests of liberty and happiness would find their verification to-day in a social order that had renounced the achievements of the past centuries. Mr. Robbins is convinced that they would ;but that is because he equates these things only with big guns and big business.

The wisdom of Europe's rejection in the past of the steam engine is surely questionable, for droughts and famines were not unknown in the Middle Ages, and a better means of transport need not necessarily have had a deleterious effect on liberty or happiness. That the accomplishments of the past few centuries have not always made for general happiness may not be due in every instance to the things themselves, but to the individualistic manner of their incorporation within the social system. To call them irrelevant on this account where social reform is in question is to lose sight of this simple distinction.

In any case, a co-operative order of the simple type as favoured by Mr. Robbins is a different thing from a primitive one, and would involve a considerable division of labour and series of exchanges. My analysis of property would therefore again be verified.