

tion of government to provide a standardized dwelling unit for every citizen. Any individual who might attempt to disturb this dream of social equality by improving his own unit would have to be taxed back into line!

Partially Equal

THE FOREGOING illustration will be challenged by the majority of social levelers as going beyond their objectives. They will say that their goal is not absolute equality—that only the lower 5 per cent or 10 per cent or one-third of the population really deserves to be equalized upward. A favorite stunt of politicians who want to be known as defenders of private enterprise is to argue that, of course, we don't need 100,000 units of public housing a year—we only need 80,000 units! But this kind of a breaking point leaves no stopping place in principle. If all the people are to be taxed to build the new homes which some of the people cannot afford, this very tax will drive others down into the eligible "substandard class." There will always be a lowest 5 per cent, until absolute equality is reached. And the disrupted market place will not be allowed to indicate by way of price changes just who wants what.

If 5 per cent of the productive efforts of individuals are diverted, through the taxing powers of government, to the building of hous-

ing which a free market would not justify, then it must follow that something other than housing will not be made available for consumption. The subsidized housing may be provided by curbing the output of fine cars and television sets and fur coats. Or, the housing may come at the expense of workshoes, clothes, food, medical care, and other nonluxury items. This much is certain: Whatever other values may be claimed for it, it is not logical to claim that taxation is a device for improving or even sustaining the productive activities of individuals. The taxpayer, the recipient of the subsidy, and the supervising middleman are all invited by the compulsory leveling process to be less productive than they could be. This curtails the total supply of things which can be consumed. Such compulsory exchange for the purpose of equalizing—unlike the market process of voluntary exchange for mutual gain—inevitably drives the over-all level of living below that of which free men are capable.

The Unseen Individuals

THERE IS indeed a sharp contrast between the poor housing conditions of the "slums" and the more exclusive homes of the "heights." And, not infrequently, it is out of the picture windows of the more fashionable homes that the "slums" are seen to be "community eyesores,