

according to their own ideas about priorities. "The lesson" Mr. West stresses, "had to be learned yet again; if rationing is not by price (rents) it is by officialdom."

While it is true that there is room for criticism about the way in which the town planning system operates, it seems very unlikely that any of the political parties will abandon or radically reform it. The immediate aim should therefore be to make sure that the near monopoly advantages of financial gain which the system confers on the few are countered by appropriate fiscal measures. With this in mind, a national land tax on all land with a value would have been a far better approach to the land-value benefit problems than the "land bank" suggestion put forward by the Royal Town Planning Institute and now embodied in the Government's White Paper. What is more, it also seems likely that the proposed compensations code, if enacted, will give rise to renewed contests between the two major parties. The Labour Party favour "existing use" values plus a small extra element with the counties having the right to use extensive compulsory purchase powers and to the first option on any urban fringe land following the granting of planning permission. Such a policy will lead to the "double market" in land in which different conditions will apply side-by-side — a relatively free market where there are no planning issues and a controlled or municipalised market where local authorities choose to intervene.

A bureaucratic system of public acquisition, land ownership and disposal will be cumbersome, unfair as between land owners and users and costly, restrictive and counter-productive. Above all, it will not more than touch the fringes of our land problem. High with promise, it will, like all the piecemeal land legislation of the past, fail lamentably in performance.

The contributors to the I.E.A. booklet, all of whom tend to favour a general lifting of restrictions in the areas of rent control, land use planning and the development industry, are unlikely to be pleased with



the Labour Party's proposals. On the other hand, the *status quo* is no substitute. We must not only turn from the wrong road, we must positively take the right one.

CANADA

Corrupting Land Laws

RECENTLY six acres in the agricultural land "freeze" area east of 232nd St. British Columbia, sold for \$80,000. At this price no-one can afford to farm it. The rent of six acres of farm-land is around \$450 a year, and since the rate of interest is something over 10 per cent, the rent capitalised, which should give us the farming price, is less than \$4,500. It is certain that this land has not been bought for farming, but in expectation of the lifting of the "land-freeze" as increasing population puts pressure on a limited area of land.

There is much acrimony where people who wanted their holdings to be zoned other than agricultural find themselves "frozen" and others unexpectedly rewarded. In Langley municipality, one land-speculating alderman fought unashamedly tooth and claw to have his large viable farm kept out of the freeze, but to no avail. He is now very bitter against the N.D.P. member of Parliament for the area who has a small acreage of rural land west of 232nd which is in an area of wilderness, but not "frozen". Another alderman's holding sticks out like a sore thumb on the land-use map. In an expanse of green representing "frozen" land, stands forth his startling sliver of white representing commercial zoning.

So much ineffectual and even harmful legislation has been enacted against the effects of land ownership that it seems we must despair of ever finding an equitable solution. But the fact that the measures have been so many and varied merely proves that they have all been based on wrong assumptions. In all cases land has been regarded like a house, a suit, or an avenue of trees, all of which are products of human labour, but land which is not such a product cannot rightly be regarded as the property of anyone. We should have the sense to accept things as they are, and make tenure of land conditional upon paying its publicly created rent into public funds. When all unearned income from land is diverted from private to public hands, no-one will have any selfish interest in fighting to have land-use frozen, permitted at a higher level, or denied. Bitterness and invidious ill-feeling will not be caused by proposals to change land-use which must occur if society is to progress. The interest of all will be served openly by using the land in the way which is best for the whole of society.

— E. A. Bryan in *Free Folk*, B.C., Canada.