

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.