

being capitalised and discounted in the price. It would be unprofitable to hold land idle. Cheaper land would mean keener competition among builders and a wider choice in structures. People would move outwards from the congested areas to the cheaper margin until relative prices were equated by travelling costs. In the meantime some middle distance area rents would fall—some dramatically as has happened in Chicago. These market pressures would build up and as they were satisfied so progressively could the subsidies and controls be relaxed within the framework of a comprehensive plan to restore a true housing market. It is high time that a start was made to clear away the present fog of nonsense.

## GERMANY

### A SURVEYOR LOOKS AT LAND AND PLANNING

\*A new book on land rights, fiscal problems and land use by Gustave Bohnsack, has the following introduction by Professor Hillebrecht of Hanover city council.

THE RIGHT OF LAND OWNERSHIP is an old social and political problem that since the beginning of the 19th century has touched the minds of mankind. The proposals for reforming the right of land ownership are as numerous and multifarious as their motives. Ideological accentuations have in the past often enough rendered objective discussion difficult or even impossible. Also well founded proposals were wrongly suspected of revolutionary tendencies and were thus discredited by those who could not see their true purpose.

The first German townplanner this century, Fritz Schumacher, and many of his colleagues have for fifty years been proffering schemes and proposals for reforming the system of land ownership. They were not characterised by this or that ideology, but by the realisation that the present rights of land ownership no longer suffice for the exigencies of modern society nor to what this society requires by way of town planning.

Fritz Schumacher can certainly not be suspected of revolutionary tendencies arising from some ideology, nor of a narrow specialist outlook. Since his time an incomparable change of structure has come over society and especially over the economy, which requires a continuous adaptation of our cities and their town planning schemes to the changed conditions of existence. Because of the obsolete right of land ownership, however, this process of adaptation is already now being rendered so difficult—

\*Society, Space-Order, City Planning, Land. Published in German by Wichmann Verlag, Stuttgart, 55 pp. D.M. 13.20.

and sometimes even impossible—that the task of modernising our cities in a sensible and expedient way is in serious danger.

Cities, however, are just the local bases of society and its economy. In those cities where the houses are outdated and where—for want of a modern land order—renewals are too difficult, too costly, and too protracted, or in cities that are not capable of carrying through the necessary renewals and adaptation to modern forms, the economy and the community are doomed to stagnation and decay. Thus the land order has become an inner political task of nation wide significance.

In his book Mr. Bohnsack brings proposals for the modernising of the rights of land ownership from the point of view of a town planner and offers them for discussion. For the practical town planner the first problem is to secure land for the further development of the cities and their surroundings. The suggestion for setting up authorities for storing land was originally brought up by Professor Dr. Werner Weber, Göttingen. The indispensable renewal of the old parts of our cities implies a qualitative improvement of the conditions of living as well as of the economy itself, and this involves a considerable demand for land.

Thus the renewal of cities leads to further problems which cannot be solved by the authorities by storing land alone. Therefore Mr. Bohnsack brings *land value taxation* once more into the discussion.

How vital the subject is, was expressed by the Federal Constitutional Court in a resolution of January 12, 1967: "The fact that land is unmultipliable and indispensable forbids leaving its use *entirely* to the opaque and uncontrollable play of the free market and to the option of the individual; a just order of society requires that, in the interests of the community, land be neither economically nor socially placed on a par with other kinds of property. It cannot in judicial proceedings be treated like a mobile good. From article 14, Para 1, sentence 2 of the Constitution, no obligation of the law giver can be deduced that he should submit all objects of property whose value can be expressed in money to the same judicial principles."

(Quoted from the information of German Städtetag Nr. 15 of Aug. 15th, 1967.)

Gustav Bohnsack, municipal surveyor in the building administration of the city of Hanover, has written his book from the experience and from the point of view of a public servant who feels obliged to serve the common weal. Others from a different point of view, but with the same sense of responsibility, may present the problems and their proposed solutions in a different way. In any case, it will be profitable if from the critical and public discussion the legislators will come to a new understanding of the problem and above all to early conclusions that will guarantee a social and just use of land.