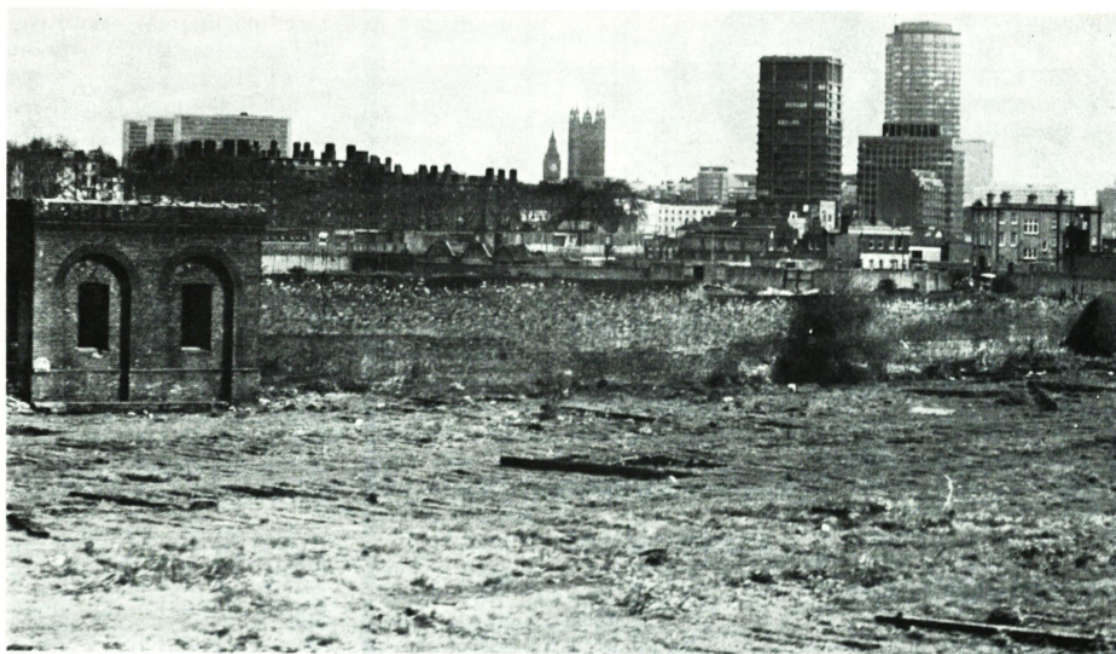


LAND & LIBERTY

JULY & AUGUST
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BIG BEN peers across the Thames to the vast tract of valuable—but vacant—land on the south bank. For decades the private speculator, town councils and statutory bodies like British Rail have allowed our cities to rot away, whether through apathy or the pursuit of unearned rewards which are a cancer in the hearts of the urban fabric. We examine the role of public policy in the slow process of throttling our cities. **WE CHARGE** present and past governments—and compliant Members of the House of Commons—with scandalously wasting the community's scarcest of resources: land. An unwillingness to devise effective methods to compel owners to use land optimally dates back to the Industrial Revolution. The plethora of post-war laws conceal a truth: politicians set up a bureaucratic system because they were unable to conceive of a free society in which people could construct congenial living and working environments by their own individual actions. This gave the semblance of positive action, when all too often the end result was a stifling of creative energy: the economy was con-

The Killing of our Cities

strained by Red Tape. And the problems in the cities were intensified. Today, the Labour Government pretends to be acting to create a civilized urban environment. But the Inner Urban Areas Act, which has just passed through the House of Commons and the £200m of taxpayers' money which is to be dumped into the cities, serve to reinforce those very factors which originated the physical decay and the associated problems of unemployment and anti-social behaviour. Britain, and much of the Western world, is in a depressed state. This affords the chance to create anew a better physical and social environment for our children. For this to be achieved, however, politicians must end their complacent reliance on their Cyclopic vision.