

in the Indian culture had the effect of creating a new category of privately-owned Indian land.

Interestingly enough, the viceregal government did, eventually, try to protect the landed interests of the Indians, to help them avoid being swindled. But under the system adopted, the local "protectors" (in areas outside Lima) were usually Spanish land-owners! Keith places considerable emphasis on the official measures, finally taken, to protect the Indians. At first sight, this altruism seems curiously at odds with the later experience of European colonialism (the natives of Africa and Asia were not accorded any systematic protection for their communal rights

in land). My scepticism was well-founded.

Control of land, as Keith notes, had always been less important than control of water. For the coastal agricultural system relied on irrigation from canals dug out of arid land. And it comes as no surprise to learn that the protection of Indian land rights was not equally matched with preservation of water rights. Unfortunately, the discussion on water rights—such a crucial aspect of the whole economic (and therefore social) system—is restricted to seven pages; this is a critical weakness in an otherwise very informative, well written book.

Land Speculation in Canada

A LAND SCANDAL has blown up in Winnipeg that has all the familiar aspects—land speculation, windfall profits, accusations, justifications, government threats and high moral indignation. And, as is to be expected, the government is to try the old familiar remedies—betterment levies, etc.

To set the scene here are some quotes from Winnipeg newspapers which also have that familiar ring:

♦"These companies . . . they make you an offer, and you just can't afford to say no When you consider that they are going to hold on to that land for years before they develop it, then the land is going to be worth a heck of a lot more than when they bought it."

♦"They have bought up all the land. A small developer today can't buy affordable land, and if they do, they cannot afford to hold the land."

♦"A royal commission will be set up very soon to study land development economics in Winnipeg, Urban Affairs Minister Saul Miller said. The purpose will be to look at the cost of land, both raw land and serviced land, and the price that is paid by the consumer today. Mr. Miller said, 'it isn't enough to say simply, here is a villain, isn't he terrible.' How do you cope with him?"

♦"Mr. Handler, a senior executive officer of a giant land development and construction empire, has resigned from the company because of his personal involvement in quick roll-over land deals He said that his land speculation paid off because as an engineer he saw that the properties had a

potential nobody had recognized."

A Bill passed at the last session of the provincial legislature gave municipalities power to impose taxes on the transfer of land but first, the city must pass a bye-law, which would then be referred to provincial cabinet for approval.

Councillors are urging the City of Winnipeg to give prompt consideration to a land-speculation tax. A land-transfer tax is already in force in Ontario which taxes twenty per cent of realised gains.

Perhaps Winnipeg will do the same and if that fails to work, introduce a Land Commission and when that fails, try our Community Land Act. There is a whole field of land legislation to explore, including Lloyd George's land duties, before they give up trying. It is unlikely they will try yet awhile an annual tax on all land whatever its use or state of development, for this would be to jump ahead of time. As with all governments, right remedies are rarely implemented until all the wrong ones have been exhausted.

DON'T COMPLAIN!

NOBODY should complain about the computer that demanded payment of an unpaid balance of \$000.

When the farmer who received the demand observed that nothing was owing, he ignored the demand. But the computer continued to send the same demand for the next three months, and then sent him a registered letter threatening to turn his unpaid account over to a collection agency. So the farmer sent it a cheque for \$000 and soon received a letter from the computer thanking him for having paid in full.

Unthinking persons may rashly

react with sneering or derisory remonstrations against the fallibility, futility and rigidity of electronic bureaucracy. But wiser observers, after a little calm reflection, will surely conclude that what the incident vouchsafes to us is the model of perfection that ought to be followed universally in matters of bureaucracy.

What is one of the most legitimate complaints concerning our advanced society? Surely it is that bureaucracy is impinging increasingly on all aspects of our real affairs, and is all too often doing so in a hamfisted and bungling manner.

But in this incident, the computer performed with flawless efficiency. Every statement it made was accurate, and every proposition logical and reasonable. There was none of your human bureaucrat's bungling or miscalculation. And instead of dealing with real—and therefore dangerous—matters, the computer busied itself entirely with harmless nothingness. Furthermore, when it received a logical response it politely and courteously went away and left the farmer in peace.

So, don't complain about the behaviour of the computer in this case. Is this not the very ideal—that bureaucracy, electronic or otherwise, should function flawlessly, tirelessly, punctually and politely but should confine itself to dealing exclusively with the non-existent, while leaving our real lives and real affairs untouched and unnoticed?

What a mercy to be able to look forward to saying that the computer—like the House of Peers in Iolanthe—did nothing in particular, but did it very well.

Edmonton Journal, Alberta Canada