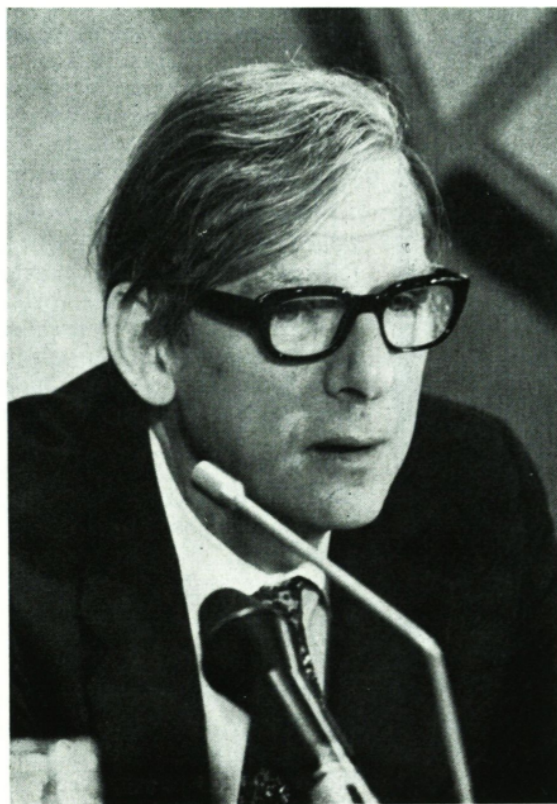


LAND & LIBERTY

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PETER SHORE, Secretary of State for the Environment

SHORE HAS WROUGHT DISASTER

AS SECRETARY OF STATE for the Environment, Peter Shore is one of Britain's most powerful political barons. Last year his department spent £9,000m. Yet despite his vast publicly-financed resources, Peter Shore has based Government policies on an abysmal lack of knowledge. He has helped to wreck the building industry whose prosperity (as the Minister admits) directly affects the general level of economic activity. Builders have repeatedly warned that there is a critical shortage of land. Without land at prices which people can afford to pay, fewer houses are built, which means a cut-back in the rate of economic growth and continued unemployment for people who would otherwise have found new jobs. The Community Land Act and the Development Land Tax have seriously distorted the land market. Peter Shore, however, is adamant that there is no problem. He defends Labour's dogma. But whether there is a problem of the supply and price of land is one which must be settled by the facts—not ideology. We review the facts in this issue. Peter Shore prefers to ignore them. As a result, the pool of available building land shrinks. Prices rise. The building industry contracts. People pay more for their homes. And the Labour Government, not content with the damage it has already done, orders building societies to restrict the amount of money they can lend! The Minister resists the use of commonsense, which he must know would wreck the government's present strategy. But would this be bad? The Labour approach is designed to impede the efforts of producers and curtail the exercise of free choice by consumers. Peter Shore controls 56,000 civil servants: is there not enough brain power among that lot to help him fathom out a few of the facts of life?