

authorities, which often caused great hardship to many thousands of citizens. These committees were, and still remain, arrogant and largely incompetent. What has Lord Silkin, who was their foster-father, now to say of them? "They have," he says, "all the paraphernalia of a murder trial. The little man who is an objector almost feels that he is on trial."

Lord Silkin went on to say that since he ceased to be in the Government he had had to apply to local authorities for permission to develop. What did he find? "Every possible reluctance, every possible difficulty put in the way . . . Too many local authorities," he added, "regard it as their job to stop development rather than to encourage it. If it is possible to say 'No' some of them prefer to say 'No' rather than 'Yes.'" And the cost of all these inquiries, both to the Government and to the objectors, Lord Silkin confesses, is tremendous.

Here, from a former Socialist Minister, is a more sweeping condemnation of planning than ever came from Tory die-hard. The best thing recently said about the crazy tribe of planners fobbed off on the public by Mr. Attlee and his former colleagues is this new definition of sabotage: "Sabotage," said some B.B.C. comedian, in an unprecedented effort of wit, is "putting a planner in the works."

### From Worse to Bad

Addressing the annual conference of the Town and Country Planning Association (*Municipal Journal* report, November 27), Lord Silkin declared that he was "exceedingly apprehensive" about the future of planning because of the proposals in the 1952 White Paper to repeal the major financial provisions of the 1947 Act. He feared we were returning to the ineffective planning of the inter-war years. From his speech, and from the criticisms voiced by many delegates, it was clear that many feared the Bill to implement the proposals would involve more Government interference with local authorities. There are several reasons why this might be so.

Under the proposals the cost of compensation—to be a Government responsibility—will, according to a Ministry estimate, amount to no more than £100 million spread over an indefinite period, against the once-for-all payment of £300 million envisaged by the 1947 Act.

The *Municipal Journal* remarks: "Not surprisingly, this figure of £100 million has caused much speculation in local government. It has been suggested that the implication is that the country cannot have more planning than it can afford, but many authorities feel it indicates at least a desire on the Government's part to keep a tight hold on planning activities. Seen in this light, the White Paper's suggestion that authorities should 'exercise their discretion with due regard to public economy' has an ominous ring. Another proposal which might lead to more central interference is that requiring an authority wishing to acquire land to pay the existing use value at the date of purchase plus any admitted claim on the £300 million fund . . . When it abandoned the attempt to collect betterment—the development charge—and put nothing in its place, the Government could hardly avoid parsimony in paying out for compensation. It is illogical and unjust to the payer of rates and taxes to do one

without the other. We hope the Government will use the time in hand before it publishes its new Bill to do some more constructive thinking."

### Protagonists within the Labour Party

Well-directed propaganda has been emanating from the Labour Members in the House of Commons who give a lead to their fellow-members in the matter of the rating and taxation of land values. They have constituted themselves, unofficially, as a "Land Values Group of the Parliamentary Labour Party" for whom executive action is taken by C. W. Gibson, C. R. Hobson, J. H. Hudson, H. G. McGhee and R. R. Stokes.

In their communications they have devoted particular attention to members and candidates in marginal constituencies; that is to say in those constituencies where at the last Election, the majority of votes (either way) was small and where by rightly directed effort—on the part in this instance of the Labour Party—these seats could be substantially held or won for the Party. Their appeal is stated in this way:

"We feel that the inclusion of the rating of site values in the Party programme for the next General Election will enormously help those who hold marginal seats, to increase their majority by winning over the middle radical and progressive vote and indeed help those candidates, who aspire to defeat a sitting Tory member, to achieve their objective."

Such is the approach as it were from the political party point of view; as to that, and without ourselves taking any side, the matter is that the memorialists are engaged in a useful and timely educational campaign on the land value policy.

One document points out that the minority report of the recent Enquiry Committee on Site Value Rating now stands unquestioned, since the development charge of the Town and Country Planning Act has been repealed, so that the hostile majority report can now be forgotten. Another lists the 300 Local Authorities which since 1919 have passed resolutions calling on Parliament for the reform of local taxation by which to institute the rating of land values. Another quotes, for the benefit of Labour members themselves, a number of recent sayings and declarations, all directed to the advocacy of land value rating: R. R. Stokes in House of Commons, July 29, 1952; leading article in the *Municipal Journal*, November 11, 1952; J. H. Hudson at the Co-operative Party Conference, Easter, 1953; H. Dalton in House of Commons, April 20, 1953 ("It is regrettable that the Government have not made some suggestions for shifting part of the burden of local rates on to socially created land values"); Charles Hobson and C. W. Gibson, May 21, 1953, in House of Commons; the recent speeches of Sir Hartley Shawcross, at St. Helens, May 3, Tolpuddle, July 7, and Margate, September 30; and other speeches and writings (all or most of which have already appeared in our columns); and more recently, the article by C. W. Gibson in the *Transport & General Workers' Record* on "Taxation or Compensation—Which?" as well as Mr. Herbert Morrison's speech, House of Commons, November 4, in the Debate on the Address in which he brought up the question of land value rating and to which we refer in another column of our present issue.

All this is good work—the stimulation of the Labour Party by Labour members themselves, which is, therefore, likely to be all the more kindly taken—and we feel sure it is having the desired influence.

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