

It has enabled local authorities to forbid development they dislike, but in all kinds of ways is hampering development which they would approve.

"Here," states one writer, "we have a situation adequately provided for by the authors of the Act, if only everybody would play according to the rules, but which has developed into an impasse because many owners of land and many local authorities think the rules are unfair."

Another writer asserts that "liability for payment of development charge is at the moment being evaded in many cases. . . . A considerable staff is required in order to check not only that development which is being undertaken has had planning approval, but also to ensure that conditions imposed in consents are actually being complied with."

The general impression given by the review is that the development rights scheme runs the risk of breaking down completely, and the constructive parts of the Acts, which enable local authorities to determine the future design and character of their communities, have a chance of succeeding only if planning can be simplified, conducted with imagination, and promoted in such a way as to carry public opinion with it.

Already there is sufficient presumptive evidence of deficiencies in the working of the new planning system to justify a searching inquiry into its effects and costs.

WATER POLICY IN CALIFORNIA

On October 5, the Commonwealth Club of California received from its Section on Agriculture, and will shortly print, its report on *Fundamental Principles Underlying a Water Policy for the State of California*. The following passage occurs:—

"The problem in this case would be how landowners can be induced to develop their lands fully. Practically, this can be achieved through taxation by assessing the land for its share of the project costs regardless of whether or not the owner buys water. This will either induce landowners to develop their land, or sell or lease it to someone who will. In this way speculation can be avoided and, in addition, project costs could be spread more effectively and maximum economic development obtained more quickly and more smoothly. This type of taxation can be applied through Irrigation Districts.

"In the Section-discussion of the above principles it was argued that the overall objective of the development of our water resources is to permit maximum use by our present and future population; that the question is fundamental as to whether there shall be restrictions that may interfere with such development; that the restrictions imposed by the government do away with the liberty of the small farmer who wants to increase his activity and of the large farmer who wants to retain his holdings; that we should not use the (federal) reclamation laws to achieve family size farms; and that the opportunity for unearned increment of land values can be abolished through the traditional and constitutional means of assessing all land under the project, irrespective of improvements, for the cost of the project."

The vote of Club members composing the Section on Agriculture, on this recommendation in the Report was 42 Yes and only 2 No.

The Commonwealth Club of California has some 7,000 members, to all of whom this printed report will be mailed,

and copies of it may be bought by anybody at 25 cents. The Club offices are in the Hotel St. Francis, San Francisco 19, Cal. It is a long and interesting report, with many passages consistent with the portion quoted above. These reports also go to leading libraries, universities, etc., and are also frequently referred to by legislative and judicial bodies.

The Commonwealth Club Secretary has posted on the Club Bulletin Board the list of the officers and Executive of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. There it stood for three weeks, the longest time any notice was left on that board.

JAMAICA

The People's National Party, which is led by Mr. Norman W. Manley, in its "Plan for To-day," which was issued in 1940, made the following Declaration:—

The chief source of production in Jamaica is land. But the best land in the country is in the hands of a few persons. In fact, just over a thousand persons and companies own nearly half the land of the country—and at that the best land—and much of that land is unused or badly used because the owners have not got the money to use and develop it properly and they cannot get the money because the lenders of money are afraid they will lose it if they lend it to them.

Meanwhile, there are thousands of workers who want land and who can work on the land and make it pay. Obviously, therefore, the land must be made available to these workers and one way to do it is to levy a tax on the unimproved value of land—that is, to tax the landowner to the full rental value of the land, whether it is used or not. The result will be that the owner will be forced either to cultivate the land or to get rid of it. If he gets rid of it the worker will get land and work.

Another point about the system is this. At present, if a man has land and puts it to use by building a house or cultivating it, or so forth, the more he builds and develops, the more he is taxed. In other words, he is taxed for putting the land to use. Under the system of taxing the land on its unimproved value the man who is industrious and enterprising will not be penalised for his industry and enterprise, but the man who holds land and makes no use of it, but is merely keeping the land idle and waiting for it to increase in value will find that he is made to pay for doing so.

A later Manifesto, now in circulation, entitled "P.N.P.'s Policy for Land," prints the foregoing on the end page, but in the body of the new statement, the proposal for Land Value Taxation is given a subordinate place, and only in a few lines, preceded by much else that is in direct contradiction with the principles on which Land Value Taxation is based. Thus there is an appeal for "The control of all exports of agricultural products linked up with import regulation"; "in the absence of import regulation local industries and local production will both suffer"; there should be "power to survey the needs of the people and to acquire land to satisfy those needs"; "power to take over all lands that are not being used or are being used wastefully"; "power to pay for lands taken over by the issue of Government bonds at a fair valuation"; the "provision of credits for land purchase and development."

It is unfortunate that those who, in 1940, stated and saw the beneficial effects of Land Value Taxation in breaking up the land monopoly and bringing about the cheapening of land and its good and adequate use, should have been moved or influenced to resort to plans that call for restrictive practices, for conferring privilege through trade controls; for arbitrary regimentation of controls; and last, but not least, for spending the public treasure on

buying from land monopolists the access to land which is by right equally open to all. In other words, the fiscal machinery of the Government would be used to steal the wages of the workers to compensate the rent-receivers and give the latter, as bondholders of public debt, a perpetual lien upon the wealth of the Island which they do nothing whatever to produce. It may be—such are politics even in Jamaica—that for the sake of “unity” there must be some concession to the Socialist and, therefore, also the Protectionist and “economic planning” element in the Party. If so, it could only be excused if the playing to the gallery came at the end of the document, as something to be considered *supposing that Land Value Taxation did not provide the relief and did not liberate the land for the people* as the 1940 declaration so confidently affirmed. But there cannot be any such supposition and the thing to do now is to put the demand for Land Value Taxation once more in the forefront where it was before. Obviously, unless Land Value Taxation is made the first step and is sufficiently applied, there can be no surcease of the Island’s misery.

It is now more than five years since a Government Commission, appointed by the Governor, Sir John Huggins, issued its report, which recommended in favour of Land Value Taxation; and it was only in May, 1949, that the *Crown Colonist* was able to report that “legislation is being prepared to introduce land taxation on unimproved value.” In 1948 advertisements appeared in papers in this country and in Australia and New Zealand offering the post of Valuation Commissioner in Jamaica, qualifications required being “considerable experience of the practical administration of a system of taxation based on ‘unimproved value.’” Later it was announced that the post had been given to Mr. L. C. Harris, Chartered Surveyor, formerly valuer to the Borough of Kingston, in Surrey, England. But as the necessary legislation has not yet been enacted, Mr. Harris can hardly have begun his work. The position is obscure and we wait upon private advices which may help to clarify it. But in all the intervening time there was surely a chance for the People’s National Party to press all they knew for the carrying out of the recommendations so admirably and so emphatically contained in the Report of the 1944 Government Commission.

HENRY EDGCUMBE

In the death of Henry Edgcumbe, of Wimbledon, on October 29, the Henry George movement has lost a most zealous and loyal supporter. In his enthusiastic belief, he saw in it a way out of our economic difficulties and it was a subject very near his heart. In his quiet unobtrusive way he worked for it. He took the Christian approach to the righteousness of equal freedom and equal opportunity and of the “Earth for all,” as he did to every other interest in life. He caused his own leaflets to be printed, always carrying a few about with him and leaving them where there was a possibility of their meeting the eye of a stranger—such as by insertion in a library book, or a hymn book, and by placing them on the seats of any public meeting he attended. Among the Committee meetings of fellow-workers in London, those of the Liberal Liberty League gave him particular joy and it was a great disappointment to him that illness latterly kept him at home. His kindly and genial presence will be greatly missed. To his widow and his daughters and son, and to the family circle, we extend our sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

THE CENTRAL LAND BOARD

The Report of the Central Land Board for the period to March 31, 1949, has been published, price 4d., as White Paper, No. 223, and is available from H.M. Stationery Office. Appended tables give figures analysing the receipts from the development charge, but since then, a question in the House of Commons, November 1, elicited the information that to the end of September, £1,525,000 had been paid in respect of development charge and a further £1,530,000 had been determined and set off against claims on the £300,000,000 compensation fund which is to be distributed to landowners some time in 1953. This “setting off” of the development charge affects those privileged interests—and the Act is shot through with such concessions—which are to have a prior claim on the £300,000,000 so that they get as much out of that fund as the amount of their liability for the development charge. Borne in mind should also be the owners of the “dead ripe land,” as the Act defines it—virtually the land which provides the most notorious examples of land speculation, land of high value, standing vacant and completely exempted from either local or State taxation (other than death duties). The owners of it are in a special category, having no claim on the £300,000,000 nor being subject to the development charge. They are in the same privileged position as they ever were—the appropriators *in full* of the land value and assured of the monopoly price. A question was asked in the House of Commons on May 17 as to how many had made claims that their land was “dead ripe” (by which they would be entitled to pocket all this land value to themselves). The answer was 13,785 in England and Wales and 246 in Scotland, the latter covering 903 acres, but the acreage in England and Wales could not be stated.

The resignation of Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve from the chairmanship of the Central Land Board and of the War Damage Commission was announced on September 20. Sir Thomas Phillips has been appointed Chairman in his place. Sir Robert Fraser, who was secretary of these two bodies, has now been made a member, and has been appointed Deputy Chairman of the Board. In a published letter to the Presidents of the Surveyors’ Institution, the Auctioneers’ and Estate Agents’ Institute, the Institute of British Architects and the Federation of Building Trades Employers, Sir Malcolm Eve referred to his position as Chairman of the War Damage Commission since 1941 and Chairman of the Central Land Board since November, 1947. Knowing that the administration of “compensation” legislation was a burden which no one could carry indefinitely, he had accepted the latter office on the understanding he would be free to tender his resignation after two years if he wished to do so. He had thus been faced with the alternative of continuing in public service until he was too old for anything else or now cutting adrift into another sphere. He had chosen the latter, although he did not yet know what the other sphere would be. He closed with tribute paid to the help and goodwill the Board and the Commission had received from the bodies he was writing to, without whose generous co-operation his work must have been rendered impossible.

The members of the Central Land Board, which is the supreme authority in control of the valuations required under the Town and Country Planning Act, appear none of them to be professionally trained in that special field. They are: Sir Thomas Phillips, until recently Secretary to the Ministry of National Insurance and formerly Secretary to the Ministry of Labour; Sir Robert Fraser, before occupying his present offices, was Secretary to the Scottish Board of Health, 1939-43, and principal Secretary to the Treasury, 1934-39; Dame Myra Curtis, the Principal of Newnham College; Sir Luke Fawcett, Secretary of the Building Employees’ Trade Union; Sir Basil Gibson, one-time Town Clerk of Sheffield; Mr. J. R. Philip, K.C., a member of the legal profession; Mr. A. MacDonald, one-time general manager of an insurance company, and Mr. J. R. Rutherford, who has spent his life in Scottish local government.

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