

LETTERS

PLANNERS — FRIENDS OR FOES?

SIR, — as reported in the *New York Times*, a bill to force States to plan the use of land, which has been accepted by the Senate, has met with difficulties in the House of Representatives. They are receiving a flood of mail from real estate developers, chambers of commerce, and the right wing Liberty Lobby denouncing the proposed legislation as an attempt to upset "the cherished principles of private property." *The Times* contends that "it is not that at all and is simply one that will ensure that the existing state zoning powers are made effective by "statewide land use programmes, regulate land sales and large housing developments, and set standards governing such matters as environmentally sensitive lands," and, "financially aid" them to carry it out.

They also claim that the few states which use their zoning powers effectively only do so "to preserve established land values" rather than introduce "the kind of integral planning that can forestall the loss of wet lands, forests and natural shore fronts or foretell the best location for future power plants, airports, highways, or sewage disposal facilities."

All of which seems to suggest that you have to be a town planner and give tax payers' money away to the private owners of the economic rent of land as a defence against land speculation. Indeed it is astounding that a newspaper of the standard of the *New York Times* should be so ignorant of the economics of land use as to support a misconceived and contradictory concept.

The only reason that planners get away with it is because in the great majority of cases the land owners affected by planning decrees know that the value of their

land will rocket. Indeed, I can quote instances where the owners of land adjacent to sites where out-lining planning permission has been granted, have subsequently applied for and gained the same privilege. Planning authorities are not unaware of this — one official admitted to me that he was often concerned about the resulting speculation in land value. What he failed to see was that his planning concessions had actually whetted the appetite of land speculators. It is my contention that land owners are not always aware of the speculative value of their land until it is made obvious in some way or another. As a land owner you may think that the encroaching development will absorb your site but you cannot be certain. The planner often resolves it for you. Incidentally all this concern about land use planning and "environmentally sensitive land" — whatever this may mean — sounds strange coming from a country where farmers are paid to hold their land out of use. How mixed up can they get?

Yours faithfully,

STEPHEN MARTIN

Fordingbridge,
Hants.

EEC PARLOUR GAME

SIR, — Fred Harrison's column is always interesting, but I must take him up where he extols the "benefits" of a United Europe" (L & L Nov./Dec.).

United in what? In the interests entirely of the monopolists, whether political or of economic power. (As Solzhenitsyn, in his Nobel Speech Prize, aptly re-christened UNO — the United Governments Organization. . .)

The idea of "democratic duty" has not prevailed markedly in intra-EEC disputes so far; whereas those "conditions which ferment extremism" were unfortunately built into the EEC from the start:

that is, the assigning of power without responsibility to a vast and growing bureaucratic machine. The only point to add is that the Hitler that will emerge from this will be Euro- rather than German-sized.

"The only way to influence change is peacefully, from within" may be a "simple enough" philosophy; there is a children's rhyme which reminds us that it may, rather, be *simple-minded*. But we are apt to leave children's wisdom behind us; and so, when political spiders spin their web, and issue the familiar invitation to "come in", it is not surprising to see their parlour-games bringing them likewise success.

Yours faithfully,

SHIRLEY-ANNE HARDY

London W11.

70 PER CENT NOW AGAINST THE EEC

SIR, — An opinion poll, carried out at the request of the EEC commission, and published in Brussels, shows that only 31 per cent of the British people favour membership of the Common Market. In Denmark only 42 per cent support membership. Support among the other seven countries ranges from 56 per cent in Eire to 69 per cent in Italy. The results of this poll which was printed in an obscure position on page four of the pro-EEC *Daily Telegraph*, show as predicted by LAND & LIBERTY, that once inside the Common Market, opposition has grown rather than diminished.

Mr. Heath promised not to take Britain into the EEC without the full-hearted consent of the British people. Will he now arrange to take Britain out again?

Yours faithfully,

PETER TRACEY

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DEVELOPERS' FRIEND

THE amount of office space in central London occupied by central Government departments is about 20 million square feet.