



better in quality than it is today.

It should be noted that a considerable percentage of the new homes being constructed today are required for the new, younger households being formed from the increased population. What does this increase in population mean in relation to land resources?

At the moment, urban land use accounts for nearly 12 per cent of total land in Great Britain. This compares with just over five per cent in 1900. If the population growth continues and in 1990 is about 75 million people as forecast, urban land use will then account for about fifteen per cent of the total land surface. We can therefore safely say that talk of any shortage of land for future development is an absolute nonsense. On the other hand, there is no denying that there will be regional disparities in demand, but this is a different problem.

Another point made by Ray Thomas is that the crucial weakness of the present planning system has been the failure to tackle the price of land problem. "The last Labour Government," he says, "vainly hoped to increase the supply of land by putting a tax on development. The Minister of Housing should have consulted with the Minister of Agriculture and asked him what would happen to the supply of farm products if they were taxed instead of being subsidized."

Strong words indeed. But not only is Mr. Thomas aware of the faults, of earlier legislation, he is also well aware of a better approach to the picture. This he makes clear in no uncertain terms:—

"A tax on land for development would change the situation. Even a low rate of taxation would provide some incentive to sell. A high rate of tax would make holding the land an expensive business."

It is here, in the proposal for a land tax, that we find the seed of a sound emergent policy for the development of the urban fringe. As most development is likely to occur at the edge of cities or in self-contained communities beyond them, it is vital to the country's growth that there should be a strong physical incentive to ensure that where land is earmarked for development it is developed. Moreover, if the problems of inner urban areas are to be tackled, there is a need to ensure that there is a supply of reasonably priced land at the urban margins. Similarly it is equally essential to make sure that the maximum use of urban land compatible with modern standards and amenities becomes reality. The land-value tax can do much to help this. Until politicians appreciate the significance of the urban land price problem, the prospect of a better life in the future will be strictly limited to those who can afford to pay the outstandingly high price. The need for a policy is more urgent than ever and Mr. Thomas' advocacy of land-value taxation comes at a very opportune moment. Let us hope that someone will heed his advice for with the supply of land standing still while population increases and normal progressive demand increases, land prices can only go up and the number of houses bought, down.

The Waste Makers

MARY RAWSON

Broadcast 14 January, 1971 as "B.C. Viewpoint" over CBU radio, Vancouver B.C.

WE HAD A RARE snippet of news from Manitoba on the radio recently; it happened to be about the no deposit/no return bottle. Someone, apparently a bottle manufacturer, told a Manitoba committee that to require a deposit would not work and that what was needed was a comprehensive approach, especially anti-litter education.

It occurred to me that the container-makers lobby has a press agent since we ordinarily get little Manitoba news. This agent is active. He seems to be moving west bringing his message, for a few days later the *Province* newspaper told us the soft-drink manufacturers will be playing

"spin the bottle" to see who pays refunds under the B.C. Litter Act.

The Act's refund section came into force on January 1. It requires persons offering or selling beer, ale, carbonated beverages or drinks in glass, plastic or metal containers for use off the premises, to pay a minimum two-cent refund on the return of the empty containers. The old re-usable bottles, according to the makers, cost about 10 cents each but the throwaways, the adman's "one-way" "no return" bottles, cost only 3½ cents. Someone in the manufacturing chain is going to feel the pinch from the new Act, it's true, but it was either that or a deluge of bottles on the public roadside.

"An industry spokesman" quoted by the *Province* says the one-way bottles might be recycled for glass bricks, insulation, or better highway surfacing. There are two plants in B.C. recycling non-reusable bottles but, he says, "we will just have to wait and see."

The public had better spring to action so the "wait and see" school doesn't become the "wait and don't see" lobby. It wouldn't take long for such a lobby to become well financed and very vocal. When you make a hundred dollars through some privileges such as the privilege of polluting the public asset, it is worth your while to spend ninety-nine dollars to keep the privilege. The

sponsorship and financing of lobbies by the biggest litterbugs of all should not surprise anyone.

But, let us wholeheartedly support



their plea, suspect though it is, that a comprehensive approach be taken.

Yes, let's have the whole works. Let's have anti-litter education; let's have deposit/return bottles and tins; let's have a cent in the pound tax on the manufacturer. Let's have every inducement and pressure at every responsive point.

The problem of waste in our society is so vast, so pervasive, so inter-related in all its aspects that single-shot solutions are, clearly, not solutions at all. They just move the garbage around. The garburetor in the kitchen sink cuts down the amount of waste trucked to the sanitary landfill, only to increase the

amount of muck pouring into the sewer and then into the water. The incinerator devours mountains of waste at ground level only to spew it in gases and particles into the air we breathe. Today's waste becomes tomorrow's pollution.

The old adage "waste not, want not" is still true. Indeed, its truth is deeper than we ever thought. Waste itself is obsolete. The consumer never needed it; the community can't afford it. The target now, for all of us, is re-use, recycling. The B.C. Litter Act is a step in the right direction.

NEW ZEALAND

KEEP TO LAND-VALUE RATES

(From the Unimproved Value Rating Association. Wellington, New Zealand)

Tax-deductible rates provides the answer to increased revenue needs of local government



THE COUNTRY is in urgent need of strengthening and reform in local government and the key lies in making the homeowner's rates tax-deductible.

Local government needs additional revenue not only to meet the rising cost of present needs but also to enable it to play its proper part in the future. The prospect of a decentralised administration in the form of regional authorities, efficient and effective, able to assume some of the functions of central government, and able to deal with the many questions that affect our environment, clearly calls for financial resources beyond the present.

To meet this need several arguments are currently advanced:

It is claimed that we need an additional source of revenue supplementary to the rating system. This has been the subject of a fruitless search by numerous commissions, committees and enquiries who have unsuccessfully proposed poll taxes, a local sales tax, a special income tax and latterly an increase in the petrol tax. The proposed petrol tax is remarkable for the opposition it has aroused even from within the Municipal Association who pressed

for it. The search is prompted by an assumption that site-value rates have reached saturation point.

While rates and taxes may have increased to a near impossible level, this is not so of rates alone. Over the twenty-year period 1950-70 unimproved land values rose 310 per cent. Over the same period rate revenues on land values rose 324 per cent. In other words rates have only just retained their relationship with property values which are the rating base for 74 per cent of rate revenue.

In these days of a managed economy the tax areas of central and local government are well established and what is required is to make it possible for local government to intensify its traditional revenue raising method. The way to do this is to make the homeowner's rates tax-deductible.

In an urban area such as Wellington the homeowner comprises 93 per cent of the rate-payers and pays 56 per cent of the rates. The homeowner is thus a majority rate-payer paying a major proportion of the rates. To accommodate him in this matter is to provide for an increase in rates to be made that much more "painless." In rural areas the farmer's residential

rates are already deductible.

It is claimed that the non-property owning resident should share the cost of local government. This can only mean the general taxpayer.

To institute a local income tax, poll tax, petrol tax etc. will of course hit the property owner as well as the non-property owner and to that extent is ineffective in its aim. Of course a petrol tax would enter directly and indirectly into local government cost so that the nett gain would be fractional.

Just what exactly are the local services enjoyed by the non-property owner that he doesn't or couldn't pay for directly has never been well established. The notion is really more fantasy than fact and something of a grasp at straws. Furthermore it is the presence and activities of just this person that enhances the value of the rating base.

If nevertheless it can be established that this person should share the cost of local government then the correct approach is to make the cost of local government a charge against the non-property owner's tax liability as fixed by the Government of the day. This can be achieved either by government grant, which is bad for local