

cellent thing of its kind, well worth to potato growers as a class the five shillings charged for it, that would be the limit of its usefulness. But the authors are not content with such a limited sphere of influence. In their "conclusions" (page 63), they leave one in no doubt of the role they intend their publication to play in the wide drama of National Economics.

"Agriculture has a vital contribution to make to Britain's Economic Progress, and its record over the last twenty years is second to none. But it is its role over the next twenty years that must now be decided. The problem has two facets: 'What contribution can agriculture make to the country's future economic well-being?' and 'how can those who work on the land earn incomes comparable with those in other occupations?' The future prospects of British Agriculture will depend on three main factors: the rate of growth of productivity in farming, the continuing development of an affluent society, and the influence of European economic integration."

The rest of their "conclusions," more specifically concerned with potatoes, may be taken as a warning, backed by their 76 pages of documentation, graphs, tables, etc., that growers of the humble spud are in for a thin time all round unless "the producers and distributors . . . exploit every opportunity for advancement." The way to achieve this, apart from greater efficiency on the farm, appears to be through a tightening up of the methods and powers of the Potato Marketing Board, which of course is the sort of conclusion one would expect from the type of mind which can discuss potatoes in relation to such factors as the "continuing development of the affluent society and the influence of European economic integration."

## MACLEOD CUT DOWN TO SIZE

**M**R. IAIN Macleod's recent statement that a change from the present method of determining rateable values to one based on site values "could hardly cost less than £500 millions," far transcends the bounds of credibility.

As one with experience of property valuation for rating purposes, I can assure him that the only additional costs involved in making any revaluation would be the salaries and working expenses of any additional valuation officers who might have to be employed. Thus, if a generous figure of £2,000 were allowed for each additional valuation officer, the £500 millions would be sufficient to pay for the services of 250,000 new valuation officers, or one new valuation office for every 64 rateable properties in England and Wales!

Since 1950 the work of rating valuation has been carried

out by the Inland Revenue Department. This Department, besides collecting over £3,000 millions in taxes and stamp duties, in 1961 carried out a revaluation (for gross rateable values) of some 16 million properties.

Yet the total number of staff employed in the Inland Revenue Department in 1960 was only 56,000 and the expenditure of the Department was only £50 millions in 1959-60.

Mr. Macleod was extremely unwise to assume that valuation costs have increased, during the period 1911-1962, in the same ratio as the increase in the total rate burden of England and Wales.

The total number of properties to be valued has only doubled in this period, but the total rates levied have increased from £50 millions in 1911 to nearly £700 millions today. During the same period the total value of Assessments in England and Wales has increased fourfold and the average rate in the £ (which in 1910 was 7s. 1½d. for County Boroughs and 4s. 4d. for Rural Districts) has increased by between three and four times.

Taxation on the basis of site values is just another method of producing redistribution of the rate burden. Some of us may differ as to the extent to which the valuation should be restricted to unimproved land values. We are, however, certainly all agreed that land, which was rated from 1601 to 1896 and partially rated from 1896 to 1929, should again be rated.

If land which is scheduled for development within the next five years were to be rated, the rate burden carried by existing ratepayers could be substantially reduced. Such land would also become liable to a Schedule 'A' assessment, since this is at present based on the pre-1956 rateable values.

One thing is certain. The present basis of valuation which was first introduced in the Parochial Assessment Act of 1936 is completely out of date and it must be replaced.

The standards of valuation still vary from district to district and from one class of property to another. The general public has little or no confidence in it. Public dissatisfaction will become more vocal and more widespread when the 1963 valuations are published at the end of this year.

Mr. Macleod should be interested to learn that rates cost between £4 and £5 per £100 to collect and that the annual cost of rating valuation is of the order of ten shillings per £100. I should certainly be interested to find out how he explains the spending of £500 millions in order to collect £800 millions in rates.

It is, I am sure, safe to assume that the remainder of his calculations of the costs of the Liberal Party's proposals are as absurdly inflated as are his estimates of the effect of the introduction of site value taxation.

— Councillor Arthur Gaskell, *Liberal News*, July 28.