

# Letters to the Editor

## VIEWS ON RATING

SIR, — I am sorry that your contributor, Paul Knight, feels that this Association is "not too enthusiastic about site-value rating as an alternative to the present system."

Our own recent memorandum stated the simple fact that the research we have so far managed does not provide sufficient information on which we can reach a final conclusion, but we certainly feel encouraged to undertake a more extensive exercise and the only bar is a financial one.

We certainly do believe that efforts should be made to eliminate residual doubts about the practicability of the system through further research and we have always regretted that far too many people condemn site-value rating on the most inadequate of grounds. As a professional body we thought it right to clear the air so that future discussion of this alternative could be on a fair and realistic basis.

May I assure Mr. Knight that given the financial support we shall not want any other encouragement to involve ourselves in a much larger and more informative research project.

Yours faithfully,

FRANK OTHICK.

Secretary, Rating and  
Valuation Association.

London, S.W.1.

## HUMAN ECOLOGY

SIR, — Seeing that my review, as it appeared in the October issue of your journal, seems to have lost in printing the part which dealt with Stapledon's positive ideas (as contrasted with his warnings of danger), I should be grateful if you would permit me to present them here instead. I feel that they will be of particular interest to readers of this journal, for like all deep thinkers Stapledon's faith was based ultimately on a true discernment of the *laws of nature*. Like others, he finds that these, at their deepest level, work constructively, not destructively.

Thus, reviewing our dilemma: how we have driven ourselves so far along the pathway of separation, with its suffering caused to us in every sphere of our lives, that we are unable, even if we would, at this stage altogether to reverse our trend — Stapledon hears the voice of the "common-

sense" man airing his "practical wisdom," (in this case simply a counsel of despair): "you cannot have it both ways."

As he observes, however, "the fact is entirely otherwise . . . the very spirit of life is drawn from apparently irreconcilable opposites." Man's task is, as always, to achieve the "harmonising of the incompatible." Why else indeed has he been given the power of shaping his existence, if not thus to achieve consciously what nature achieves unconsciously at all lower levels of life? Stapledon's prophetic eye discerns in fact that the era of segregation has run its course — that a new era of integration has already dawned.

I hope that this brief summary of Stapledon's faith may give some idea of the depth and originality of the man, to which my review was able to do all too little justice; and of the importance of his book for our times.

Yours faithfully,

SHIRLEY-ANNE HARDY.

London, W.11.

## LIBERALS AND THE LAND COMMISSION

SIR, — I was deeply grieved and shocked to hear Mr. Lubbock say at the Liberal Assembly that the Parliamentary Party might reconsider its decision to vote against the Government on the proposal to levy development charges on land. To support such a proposal would "torpedo" the taxation of land values and indeed is quite contrary to the principles of land-value taxation. The proposal is simply an increment tax on *some* land.

The price of land when granted "outline planning permission" bears no relation to the actual *unimproved site value*. Indeed, but for the fact of the planning authority's action in refusing development permission to the owners of certain sites, high prices for others would not be achieved. The planners' action is very little different from that of private owners who withhold their land from use for similar reasons.

And what about speculation in land that is already urbanised or developed? The proposals contain nothing to deal with the sales of such land. The owners of houses will still be able to sell and pocket the increase in site values.

The effect of levying development charges will be to increase the cost of land and to restrict its supply. One cannot compel an owner to sell. Attempts will be made by owners and developers to recoup, either by lowering standards of development or by putting up the price of building. Indeed, it is a tax on development — on labour and capital.

The central point to appreciate about land-value taxation is that its objective is to take or collect for community purposes the whole of the *economic rent of land* and this means that *the rewards of labour and the return to capital must be separated from the economic rent of land*. Therefore it is obvious that without a global valuation of land these development charges must absorb some part of wages and interest.

Yours faithfully,

STEPHEN MARTIN.

Fordingbridge, Hants.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE LAND COMMISSION

SIR,—The Land Commission White Paper, despite the deficiencies of the scheme, has had a more enthusiastic reception in some quarters than it deserved. The trouble is that land has become such an issue these days that almost any plan is accepted by the Press and by the public as better than none. Unfortunately, public attention and concern has been directed almost exclusively at *increases in land value*, and even then, only when such increases follow the granting of planning permission.

The Conservatives, fearful of being caught again without a land policy, have accepted in principle the idea of a development levy. The Liberals, not wishing to be associated with the reactionary anti-levy elements, are likely to endorse the levy even though they don't like the actual Land Commission part.

The Town and Country Planning Association has hailed the scheme as "a very sound and practical approach to a complicated problem" which "should command the widest support." The County Councils Association and the Association of Municipal Corporations welcomed the Government's objectives but have expressed some doubts about the methods to be employed.

It is probably true to say that the Land Commission proposals are regarded by the public as primarily a form of collecting unjustifiable profits arising from land development, and therefore command wide support.