

New Towns and Land Development

The "New Town" idea may be unpalatable to many Americans and may smack of "socialism" to some, but it's an idea much bruited about in government these days. Just what is it that Big Brother may have in mind for you by way of instant cities?

The Department of Housing and Urban Development, otherwise known as HUD, has just published a "New Town Supplement" describing the new town scene internationally. Examples are drawn primarily from England, Scotland, and Ghana. Some pertinent information: new towns are generally created as part of a national policy of land development. Frequently they are established in regions considered economically underdeveloped, and potential residents are given incentives to move there. New towns can also be planned to provide a place for people to go while old towns are being renewed.

New towns almost always are zoned for "neighborhoods" of residences, industry, and commerce. residential areas

themselves are planned to hold 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants, with each area separated from the others by green spaces and each possessing its own services. The governments of new towns contain varying degrees of central government control.

In Britain, rents are set according to size and quality of the unit, and the inhabitants' ability to pay partially determines both rent and taxes. Things that determine how pleasant any community feels, such as population density, architecture, and gardens, are worked out in advance.

The last article in the HUD Supplement includes a list of recommendations and conclusions for Britain indicating that no more new towns should be started until the old new towns are nearer completion and fully functioning. Smaller new towns, moreover, are preferable to larger new towns, which tend to produce "social problems." Owner occupation is seen as a goal to replace rentals. And

finally, "Greater efforts must be made to draw together the objective approach of the professional planners and the subjective approach of those affected by plans they produce."

The Supplement contains maps, diagrams, photos, tables, and some provocative information. For a copy, write to HUD, Washington, D.C. 20410.