

Site-value rating would, in fact, replace the existing rating system whereby rates are levied on properties and improvements - a system riddled with anomalies and injustices. Why should the householder be penalised for improving his house? At present if a bathroom is added to a house up goes the rates bill. Site-Value Rating would change this."

Site-Value rating would indeed, but taxes on "land sites zoned for development" wouldn't.

But we have it wrong, for it is explained that the Liberal policy of site-value rating would "substantially reduce the burden imposed on domestic ratepayers . . . would ensure the rating of undeveloped building land and of unoccupied building sites (same thing?), penalise land hoarding and stabilise land prices."

So it does seem that Liberal policy is the rating of site values plus a betterment levy after all - or is it?

The article concludes: "The acute problems of soaring land and house prices will be a central issue at the next Election. The Liberal policy of land-value taxation explained on this page looks capable of changing the situation in which these problems arise."

Unless Liberal policy is explained better than this, not many voters will know what they are voting for when and if they vote Liberal.

Confusing the Liberals and Tories

AN extraordinary misrepresentation of site-value rating was contained in an election leaflet distributed by Tonbridge and Malling Conservatives during the local election in June. They were attacking the Liberal Party policy of site-value rating and their leaflet was devoted exclusively to this attack.

Whether these absurd statements were made by ignorance or design we cannot tell, but for the record we print the statements followed by our comments.

"Tenants and home-owners will be equally hard-hit."

Home owners would pay rates on the site value of their houses. The tenants, as tenants and not owners, would not. "Hard-hit" is an expression that simply begs the question.

"Rates will be calculated solely on the amount of land your house occupies."

Rates will not be calculated on the amount of land but on its value.

"Basically it is the size of your garden that will decide what your rates will be."

It is not. It will be the value of the plot you occupy garden included. Gardens are already included in the assessments of present rateable values.

"A family living in a £10,000 home in the country with a modest garden would pay more in rates than some-

one living in a luxury £25,000 town house with no garden."

The opposite is the case since the value of land occupied by the town house would be greater than the value of the land occupied by the country house and it is the value of the site which determines the rate, not the size of the plot or garden.

"Very wealthy people would spend a fortune doing up dilapidated houses and then pay very little in rates."

The assessment under site-value rating would be arrived at independently of whether the house was dilapidated or done up. Doing up dilapidated houses may not reduce rates, but they would not be increased as they are under the present system.

"Land would become even more expensive under site-value rating."

It would not. It would become cheaper.

"All high buildings would get off with absurdly low rates because only the area of the site is rated."

It is not the area of the site that is rated but the value. The owners of an expensive site with a high building on it would still pay high rates.

"There could be no rating of unoccupied buildings."

All unoccupied buildings stand on a site, and the site is rated whether occupied or not.

"Site-value rating is a property speculator's dream."

Property speculators would find the speculative element in property (the land) severely curtailed if not eliminated - not a particularly good thing for them to dream about.

"Agricultural land would bear crippling rates, causing increases in the price of food."

If agricultural land were rated it would be paid by the owner of the land and would not be passed on in the price of food. When agricultural land was de-rated in 1929 the price of food did not go down, but the price of land went up!

"Recreational amenities using a lot of land - sports grounds, golf courses, tennis courts and allotments - would be taxed out of existence."

This is untrue. Such areas of land would be rated upon their permitted use value only, so that rates might well be lower, as was indicated with one of the golf courses at Whitstable.

"In a trial study of site-value rating at Whitstable, they even taxed the graveyards."

There has been no tax at Whitstable. What is probably meant is that graveyards were included in the assessment, but cemeteries are taxed today under the present rating system.

"People's rates would increase under site-value rating."

The study of Whitstable showed conclusively that residential properties would pay reduced rates even if agricultural land, church land, etc., were exempt.