

hope that at some future date they will get a still better price for it. But that is the only thing that can be done in order to deal with the high price of land."

LORD HASTINGS (Conservative) replying for the Government, said that in answer to Lord Silkin's question, the Ministry of Housing were conducting regional surveys into land needs and were reminding local authorities of the problem by sending them circulars. "There is a constant stream of new town maps and reviews of plans coming into the Ministry of Housing", he said.

Lord Silkin had put undue emphasis on the availability of land—"a very precious commodity in this small island and a heritage of unsurpassed beauty which many may say has been squandered in wanton fashion over the past forty years." A lasting effect on the market could be made by removal of all planning restrictions, but that the Government had no intention of doing. Neither did the Government believe in statutory restrictions on prices.

Lord Hastings said that development charges had slowed down the supply of land coming on to the market, and asked was that the point being made by Lord Douglas (it wasn't). He thought perhaps Lord Douglas meant a tax on the increased value of land (he didn't).

Lord Douglas rose to put him right on this, and Lord Hastings continued: "The noble Lord there is, of course, proposing a general land tax, and that is a very large political subject which I will not touch upon this afternoon, and one with which I think many noble Lords in all quarters of the House would strongly disagree."

Lord Hastings thus skated neatly round the subject of a land-value tax. He called it a "large political subject," but what better place to debate political subjects, large or otherwise, than the House of Lords? The refusal to discuss land value taxation became all the more significant when Lord Hastings went on to say: "In respect of this problem the noble Lord, Lord Hawke, confessed himself non-plussed, as I believe did every other speaker except the noble Lord, Lord Douglas of Barloch." If Lord Douglas was the only speaker with a definite proposal for curing the problem his proposal surely merits some consideration.

The utter bankruptcy of the Government's ideas on the subject was revealed by Lord Hastings when he said, "I think I have shown that a good deal is being done to make land available by surveys, by thorough investigation, searching for surplus land, and by redevelopment of existing land. My Lords, the measures I have outlined and the encouragement and guidance being given by the Ministry of Housing will help to make more land available and to ensure that the land produces as many houses as possible."

HENRY GEORGE ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE. A symposium of memorable passages from his writings and addresses. An ideal gift or bedside book. Handsomely bound in blue cloth. 107 pages. 3s. 6d.

NEWS FROM DENMARK

Problems of Assessment



By Our Danish Correspondent

THE Justice Party can point to the fact that for some forty years it has played the part of Cassandra as far as the land problem is concerned, and Cassandra now stands rehabilitated. However, that is all in the past now. The present is a different era, divided between some hope and some confusion.

Opinion polls have indicated that the party would get enough votes to pass the fateful 60,000 limit below which no faction can be represented in the Danish parliament. There has been a considerable amount of optimism after this year's annual conference where Niels Andersen was chosen as Chairman. The 10,000 signatures required before candidates can run for parliament is no problem.

★

Former Minister, Justice Party member Oluf Pedersen, has made an interesting analysis, in *Vejen Frem*, of the sale of a farm property. It sold for 933,000 kroner. According to the Land Registry the officially assessed value was 559,800 kroner, and according to the law of 1960 regarding increase of land values, the taxable portion of this amount is 539,800 kroner (20,000 less than the assessed value).

The sale evoked several comments to the effect that the glaring difference between sale price and assessed value proved that the 1960 law is worthless. Oluf Pedersen does not think so. The assessment represents what a rational buyer would offer for the property, he says. 20,000 kroner are deducted (according to a highly technical rule in the law), and current land taxes plus tax on the increase of land values since 1950 are levied on the remainder. He concludes that all the value created by society has thus been collected by society.

"Not so!" answer four party members in the ensuing issue of *Vejen Frem*. Their unanimous verdict: since in actual fact the property sold for 933,000 kroner this is the value that should be taxed. The "rational buyer" offering forty per cent. less is a figment of fantasy. The seller still pocketed a profit of close to 400,000 kroner for which he had done nothing. The consensus is that the land values dealt with in any piece of legislation aiming at the solution of the land problem should be those which result from supply and demand — not some artificially contrived quantity.