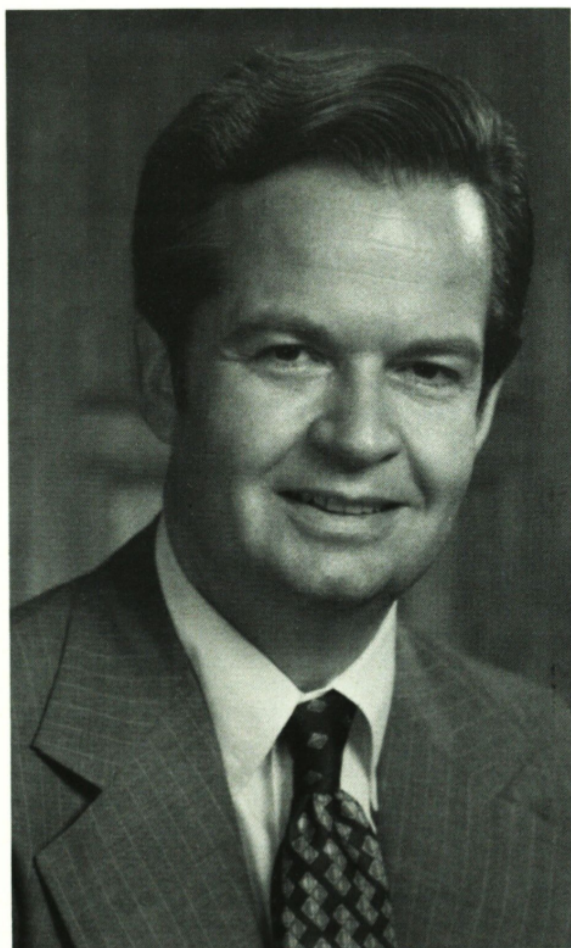


LAND & LIBERTY

Prince Philip has told a conference on wasteland that land "should not be sterilised against private developers. There is no excuse for any urban land to lie waste. . ."



World Congress on land



PRESIDENTIAL candidate Ed Clark wants his Libertarian Party to break the two-party system that dominates US politics. The official Libertarian creed, however, protects the greatest monopoly of all – land monopoly. The New Hebrides, the South Pacific nation that has now enjoyed one month's independence from her Anglo-French colonial masters, has had a taste of the Libertarian philosophy on property rights – and rejects it as bitter. Report, P.72.

THE FIRST World Congress on Land Policy was held in June. Three hundred experts pooled their knowledge. While the international organisations under the UN umbrella continue to neglect this vital dimension to our social and economic existence, it was left to a private organisation, the Lincoln Institute, to initiate a major conference at which students and practitioners of land policies could confer on what they generally agreed was a "problem". There was near unanimity about the elements of the problem – soaring land prices, speculation, dislocation in the market leading to urban sprawl – and also a disappointing consensus among a large number of participants that the solutions had to be found in physical planning and government ownership of land. The assumptions on which this view are based went largely unchallenged. There was virtually no examination of the proposition that the free market could effectively mobilise land in a manner consistent with both efficiency and equity, *if steps were taken to neutralise the monopolistic dimension to the land market.* *Land & Liberty*, while examining the alternatives, makes no secret of the fact that it believes that the only satisfactory solution is an annual tax on the value of land which both shares out unearned income and deters the speculative motive. Evidence was produced at the Congress which amply demonstrated that vesting legal ownership in a public authority was not a satisfactory solution. Landowners, of course, would much prefer land appropriation by governments (which means developing the economy in the direction of centralised bureaucratic planning), because this ensures that they receive "compensation". A land tax, while creating the desired goal of a market responsive to the multifarious needs of individual consumers, offers no such cash comfort: it does, however, afford the opportunity of reducing the tax burden on labour and capital. In future issues, *Land & Liberty* will publish features, and reports of speeches at the Congress, in which the alternatives will be examined in greater detail.

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