

THE PLANNING ACT UNDER FIRE

"Seldom can legislation of such a meretricious and far-reaching nature have been insinuated so silently and so skilfully into the domestic life of Britain as the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, which cast its totalitarian tentacles over the nation to-day. Development of factory, shop or house can only be effected by paying toll to authority, and future enterprise is strangled at birth. *This obnoxious piece of totalitarianism is so complex that it cannot fail to produce chaos, and it will be surprising if, when its full import is properly realised, the people of Britain do not make an imperative demand that it be swept away.* Here, indeed, is State autarchy and rule by bureaucracy being clamped on a once-free nation."—*Hull Daily Mail*, July 1st.

"Under the new Town and Country Planning Act a number of officers are automatically transferred from joint planning committees to county councils or county borough councils and from county district councils to county councils. Any authority unable to employ an officer who is transferred to them under the regulations may have to pay him compensation for loss of employment until he obtains another post, and may have to pay him for loss of emoluments if he has to accept a post at a lower salary."—*Local Government Journal*, July.

"The Town and Country Planning Acts come into force; in whose interest? I am almost tempted to ask if any person or community will benefit as much as the lawyers. Nobody, except one of their profession, seems to be able to interpret and apply the complex financial provisions. And, even among their interpretations such controversies are probable that the sponsor of the original Bills contemplates another to explain them. This is legislation gone haywire. Few causes need complications less than the reconstruction and the development of the land. In view of the snail's pace in building, local planning authorities need every incentive to get on with their job."—"Hall o' the Wynd" in the *Evening Times* (Glasgow), July 1st.

"The preposterous consequences of the Town and Country Planning Act faced Angus Planning Committee recently. They were told practically no building could be erected without approval of the Planning Committee and the Scottish Land Board. A landowner who wishes to develop his land is involved in a fear-some rigmarole, in which application in quadruplicate is only the first step. The cost of staff which the Act may make necessary has to be met by the ratepayers. Yet local authorities have no power to alter the regulations. This fettering of local authorities is one of the worst features of a typical sample of bureaucratic legislation."—*Courier and Advertiser* (Dundee), June 10th.

"Mr. Silkin has said that at least 10,000 more trained planners are needed. To-day local authorities are very short of staff who are competent to decide, between July 1st, 1948, and July 1st, 1951, the best future use for each piece of land within their boundaries. These officials will need to possess pronounced powers of prophecy if they are to make accurate forecasts of economic trends within the next three years."—*Illustrated Carpenter and Builder*.

"If a man is compelled to pay heavily for the privilege of redeveloping a property, he may well decide that the effort is not worth while. Why should he not disregard rebuilding altogether? To my mind, this Act will result largely in the sterilisation of building development by private enterprise."—W. Stanley Edgson (Chartered Surveyor), in *Daily Telegraph*, June 30th.

"I have to erect two cattle sheds and an implement shed on an estate in Cambridgeshire and a dutch barn in Northamptonshire. In each case three copies of the plans, three copies of the site plans, and five forms of four pages each have to be sent in. Two of the forms are for the Central Land Board to determine as to development charge, although the Act specifically excludes agricultural buildings from rent charge. Consider what this means in time and work for officials and their staffs at the Central Land Board and with local authorities, to say nothing of the land

agent's office. And besides still further delay than has existed hitherto in getting buildings erected this additional occupation of man- and woman-power is taking place at a time when production for export, production of food and of consumer goods is of paramount importance."—A. V. Spencer in *The Times*, July 15th.

"... The planning authority will see to it that country villages too remote from the services of water, drainage, education, and the rest which the local authorities are now bound to supply shall not be permitted to grow and shall be gradually faded out, their inhabitants encouraged to move to a place marked out for residential development."—*Middlesex Advertiser*, July 2nd.

"The Government has departed from the well-tried truth that home-ownership is the finest of all steadying influences. Thrift and a proper sense of independence are, it would seem, to be qualities no longer required. Instead, municipal ownership of houses is to become the rule, and a crushing burden of subsidy is to be hung in perpetuo round our necks. The justification, in Mr. Bevan's view, is that mobility of labour is better achieved when people rent rather than own their homes. We hope that an early move towards clarifying this statement of Mr. Bevan's will be taken in the House. If confirmed as representing the Government's policy, then we think that no more dangerous step has yet been proposed."—*Builder*, June 18th.

"The best advice to all those about to buy land at the present time is do not do so unless you obtain proper professional advice before entering into any contract."—"Surveyor," in *Derby Evening Telegraph*, June 16th.

"The country to-day is being strangled by a legislative octopus whose tentacles, in the form of regulations, stretch out in all directions. The need is for more individual initiative and less concentration of power, fewer penalties, less injustice, and less extravagance. Progress towards prosperity is impossible so long as enterprise is throttled and people are kept in bewilderment as to the effect of the law upon their interests and conduct."—*Birmingham Gazette*, June 16th.

"My firm of chartered architects and surveyors has recently applied for consent to erect a small house near London when conditions render it permissible for a private owner to receive a building licence for this purpose. The local authority requires us to deposit six copies of the plans, fully coloured, two of the copies to be on linen, together with application forms in triplicate for town planning consent, an application form for by-law approval, and an application form for the assessment of the development charge under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947. The colouring of the necessary six prints will take a junior assistant two days at least. This is required in order that our client may erect a small three-bedroomed house."—Cyril G. White, in *The Times*, July 21st.

"Mr. Bevan, Minister of Health, in a circular to local authorities on the Town Planning Act, emphasises that they should not pay more than the 'existing use' value for land. Excessive prices would tend to undermine the whole structure of the Act. Prices in excess of the district valuer's figure would not be approved, nor would loans be sanctioned when the local authority had paid too high a price."—*Daily Telegraph*, July 20th.

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