

Letters to the Editor

FREE LAND, FREE MEN

SIR, — The idea that the Town and Country Planning Acts do not seriously conflict with the principles of the taxation of land values appears to be gaining acceptance among contributors. A little thought will dispel this misconception.

Obviously a valuation held under conditions of land tenure imposed by such legislation will differ considerably from a valuation made solely on the basis of unimproved site values. There is no difference in economic effect between land restricted in use by private ownership and land so restricted by the town and country planning authorities. Land of high fertility, industrial and commercial potentiality, and even possessing mineral resources, is designated to its existing use by both planners and private owners alike.

The evils of the private ownership of land are not solely that land is held out of use but that land is not used to its best advantage.

An inquiry into the operators of the planning authorities will reveal countless examples of arbitrary and useless interference with the working of economic laws as they apply to the rent of land. Marginal land which owing to the pressure of population could have been brought into use, remains derelict. Valuable land ripe for development has sunk to marginal value. Attendance at any of the many appeal inquiries held by the planning authorities is an eye-opener. In the great majority of cases the appellant loses in spite of the most cogent reasons given for the proposed development. Impertinent and searching questions are asked, and often the opposition evidence from other interested parties, entitled to representation at the inquiry, is based on the competitive effect on themselves should the appeal succeed.

All land should be free for all men to use as they think best provided they return to the community the economic rent of their holdings. It is only within this concept that planning can be effective.

Today, too much emphasis is placed on planning which economically speaking is only a link in the chain of production. That it may call for specialisation is beyond dispute but this should not lead us into accepting the arbitrary direction of

our lives and activities by an authoritarian bureaucracy.

Yours faithfully,

STEPHEN MARTIN

Fordingbridge, Hants.

TESTIMONY

THE following letter, over the signature of AVON, which appeared in the Estates Gazette recently, lends support to Mr. Martin's letter.

(Editor.)

IN 1957 an old gentleman sold me a parcel of land on the South Coast which had been kept sterile since 1947 because the education authority wanted it as part of the grounds of a primary school.

"It was let at 2s. 6d. a year to a local farmer, who was farming it as part of a larger area in multiple ownership as part tenant, part 'squatter'."

"In 1962 the education authority decided they did not want the land and I applied for town planning consent to develop the land, which was in the centre of a fast-developing residential area. This was refused because the planning authority had decided to reserve the land for development as part of the projected Town Centre scheduled to be built in 1981.

"I served a purchase notice on the local authority, who refused to pur-

THE INDIVIDUAL

THE principle or justification for the collective right of government is based on individual right. The common police force that protects this collective right cannot logically have any other purpose or mission than that for which it acts as a substitute. Thus, since no individual can logically or legitimately use force against the person, liberty, or property of another individual, then the common force — for the same reason — cannot logically be used to destroy the person, liberty, or property of individuals or groups. — Frederic Bastiat

chase because the land was 'capable of reasonably beneficial use,' being under cultivation. The local authority was upheld at a local inquiry instituted by the Minister of Housing and Local Government.

"This area, comprising many acres, will have been struck with sterility for thirty-four years by 1981, so far as building is concerned."

PROTEST

SIR, — I shall be grateful if you will print the following two protests in your columns.

1. The piece over my name did not make it clear that what was being reproduced was a letter to *The Times*. I do not know what that paper thinks about it, but even if permission is not asked the source should be acknowledged.

2. The heading "A Socialist backs Capitalism" is quite untrue and is not borne out by the letter. Capital investment is needed by all economies. The rate is much higher, for example, in the Soviet Union and in Sweden than here. But to say that advocacy of capital investment is support of capitalism is as false as to headline a medical letter in favour of vaccination "Doctor Backs Smallpox".

Yours faithfully,

HUGH JENKINS

House of Commons, S.W.1.

(Our apologies to *The Times* and to Mr. Jenkins for our omission in not stating the source of Mr. Jenkins' remarks. We must grant Mr. Jenkins his second point also, for our heading gave a political implication to what was an economic statement and was hardly fair. Editor).

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A Chance To Make A Start

GOVERNMENT grants may come under review at the next Budget in April, though any major change may await the outcome of the investigation being undertaken. Alternative forms of finance have been flogged before, and apart from site-value rating are hard to find. Site-value rating involves a valuation and could hardly be introduced before 1968. As a replacement of the rating system it would not normally be introduced without an exhaustive examination of its implications, with evidence by parties concerned, but it might be introduced initially to supplement the ordinary rate.

— Rating and Valuation Reporter,
January 21