

# WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

## **Parkinson's (Land) Law**

C. Northcote Parkinson, November 15 1968.\*

**T**O HAVE the things we want in education and elsewhere we shall have to pay. We need material resources, as well as voluntary talent. We don't want more taxes; we would rather have lower taxes. But we do want money. I would suggest that the secret in California is to allow the State to share in the profit from increased land values. That is where the money is in a State into which people are migrating at the rate that we see them come. Especially, to my mind, the State should be entitled to share in the land values which the State and the federal government have, in fact, created or improved. Half the time the land value is increased by a new freeway, a new aircraft factory, or a new factory in the private sector which is working wholly on government contracts. Here you have land values which triple overnight. Why should all that go to the speculator and not to the State itself?

I would like to see the formation of a State Land Corporation as a separate investment body, which would buy land on better information than is available to the private speculator. It would sell it later to the highest bidder, preferably on lease, not trading. The only loser would be the speculator in real estate, and he can afford it. Among land owners, the golden rule is, of course, never to sell anything. Remember that the State as a land owner can take a much longer view than the individual. Most individuals want their money back in ten years or twenty years at the outside. They want it in their own lifetime. The State can get it back in thirty years or fifty years, and can afford to wait.

## **Slum-Promotion Taxation**

Irwin Miller in *Harvard Business Review*  
March-April, 1969.

**L**ET US CONSIDER money, and let us look at taxes which are governments' source of income. Today any system of taxation is by definition a system of incentives; it cannot be otherwise. Individuals, corporations, banks, and investors, all study the system of taxes under which they operate to take maximum advantage of them. Their plans are often influenced as much by the potential advantages in the tax system as by their own non-tax purposes and objectives.

When, therefore, the incentives in the existing system encourage the development of policies and acts contrary

to the national purpose, all the compulsion imaginable can scarcely force a change in a better direction. On the other hand, since incentives are always present, the sensible first act of the "systems manager" would be to bring these incentives into line with the national purpose—to close some doors and open others.

To take an example from the viewpoint of taxes, slum property is now the most lucrative real estate investment a man can make in many cities. But if he repairs his property to raise it above the slum class, he earns significantly less money on his investment than if he permits it to depreciate. Public policy might well consciously reverse this condition and these incentives.

## **Weasel Words**

Anthony Lejeune in *The Daily Telegraph Magazine*, March 21.

**M**OST WEASEL WORDS are lovingly bred for a political purpose. They then slip into the vocabulary of commentators, columnists, party spokesmen, trade union leaders, modish economists, and popular twitterers of all kinds. From there they go on to betray the arguments, and indeed the thoughts, of innocent people who would never consciously have accepted the implications which the weasel words carry like foot-and-mouth disease . . .

Experienced weasel spotters will have recognised the tell-tale adjective "social," a sure sign that the following word, whether "wage" or "costs" or "justice," is going to be used in some slippery way.

Tribute should be paid to Mr. Peter Jay for his assertion that the Government might have to curtail "privately financed personal spending," a nice fat weasel phrase meaning all expenditure except that of the Government and of people who live on government hand-outs.

Listen now to a superlative weasel sentence by Mr. Sid Greene at the Trades Union Congress. "Freedom," he announced solemnly, "doesn't mean freedom with licence but freedom under controls." Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin would have agreed with him. So would everybody who thinks that freedom is a difficult word that needs re-interpreting—weasel-wise—for modern conditions.

## **Newcastle for the Gravy**

*London Property Letter*, March 22.

**W**E EXPECT a general upsurge in property prices, taking them up towards the national average, not only in Newcastle itself and the area roundabout,

\*An extract from "Parkinson's Law and the Creative Society" an address by Dr. C. Northcote Parkinson, sponsored by the California State Deputy Directors' Conference and presented in the Esquire Theater, Sacramento.