

HOW OUR LAND IS USED

by P. R. Hudson

GREAT BRITAIN is about the sixth most densely populated country in the world, yet in spite of all the survey work conducted by the universities, the planning departments of the local authorities and the government itself, surprisingly little is known about present-day land usage in Britain. The Second Land Use Survey of Britain, an exercise which is being conducted under the direction of Alice Coleman, has now been running for four years and it is hoped that in due course it will help to fill in some of the gaps in our present knowledge.

The survey derives most of its inspiration from the help of volunteer surveyors who have already contributed at least a quarter of a million man hours of spare time and holidays to cover about sixty per cent of the country, but the completion of the survey is still a long way off. One of the most difficult tasks is the collation of information from survey maps and transference to master copies of the land-use maps. These are eventually printed in eleven colours and cost as much as a thousand pounds each to produce. It is hoped that in order to speed the production of more maps, government grants and private donations will be forthcoming. It is due to the enthusiasm of the organisers and of the volunteers that so much has been achieved out of an initial outlay of £2,000. Since this is the only set of maps being produced that gives a comprehensive detailed picture of land use, it is hoped by the sponsors that eventually the government will initiate a permanent census at ten-yearly intervals.

The salient details that have emerged so far include an extensive breakdown of the vegetable-growing areas stretching from Yorkshire to Kent. Encouraged by the developments in the frozen food business and the resultant bulk contract agreements made to them, farmers have been quick to adapt production to the new market. This has led to a movement of cattle to indoor feeding or to the central and western areas of the country. There has also been a marked increase in the reclamation of fen-land by better irrigation. Former pastures and marsh lands are being converted to support more profitable arable crops.

Perhaps it would not be wrong to suggest that there is a similarity between today's agricultural trends and those of the period 1780-1850. Once again we see an expanding population progressing with a technological revolution. This is leading to a more intensive use of land for agricultural production and other purposes.

It is unfortunate that such a land use survey could not be linked with a land value survey, for the one without the other gives but half of Britain's land story. If two such projects could be related, the result would be of immense value to the government and the public, to

say nothing of future historians. As Miss Coleman remarks, "The resources of a nation are generally considered to reside in its people and in its land."*

This survey will provide part of the answer to the question of how these resources are deployed: the real question to answer is how much of the product of these resources goes in or represents rent for land. A national land value survey would throw plenty of light on this side of the picture. A land-value tax, by the way, would no doubt result in a further land use revolution.

* *The Geographical Magazine*, April 1964

THEY SAY

All On His Own!

THE steadily rising prosperity of the country is not a flash in the pan. . . For this Mr. Maudling can take the greatest credit. He has managed the economy superbly.

— PAUL RAYMOND, M.P., Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party.

To The Barricades!

I WOULD like to emphasise that the Liberals are the only Party with a concrete plan to reduce the appalling burden of rates from which we all suffer, and which takes no account of the ability to pay. Our plan is a revolutionary Site-Value Taxation plan.

— RICHARD AFTON, prospective Liberal candidate.

59 Per Cent Laissez Faire

TODAY as I speak we are committed to a programme which will take up not less than 8s. in the pound, 41 per cent of the National Income.

— QUINTIN HOGG, M.P.

59 Per Cent — The Whole

THE freedom in which we believe is not an optional extra to be super added if things go right. It is an essential of a whole way of life, and the foundation stone of freedom is private enterprise.

— QUINTIN HOGG, M.P.

And He Should Know!

IF these programmes are not financed by saving, it can mean only one of two things: either still higher taxation, or rampant inflation—which is a polite way of saying the Government would merely print the money.

— HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P.

Well, He Believes It!

WHEN the Conservatives came to power in 1951 they made two promises to the electorate. Firstly, that they would set the people free and secondly, that they would double the standard of living of the people of England in twenty-five years. The first task has already been accomplished and the second is well on the way to being achieved.

— MICHAEL HUGHES-YOUNG, M.P.