

Round the world

HALIFAX

Free as the wind?

BOGLAND in Yorkshire is increasing in value, because owners have found a way to charge rent for the wind that sweeps over their hills.

Twenty-three windmills have been erected on the moors, which has prompted 10 new planning applications. And, according to a report in *Planning and Development*, a journal of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (Vol.2/9), there is a formula for capitalising the rental value:

"The wind passing over the land is an endless regenerating source of energy; proportional to the cube of the windspeed - twice the speed, eight times the power and hence eight times the revenue. If the site is large....The development can be self-funded, jointly funded with a commercial developer, or the wind rights leased to a commercial developer for an annual rental, or share of the revenue....A government contract is the most attractive proposition. Typical returns on capital are high."

But the Yorkshire windmills, which power 4,500 homes, are opposed by local people who object to the defacement of the landscape.

• In Wales, residents are angry at the noise level generated by 103 turbines in the valley of Llandinam, Powys, which one environment-conscious builder said was like "an aircraft engine [with] occasionally a thumping noise like a helicopter rotor blade. We can't even open the windows at night because the noise keeps us awake".

• Last year, wind generators in California produced enough electricity to power San Francisco and Washington DC.

SAO PAULO

Land of slaves

BRAZIL has about 500,000 child prostitutes - more than any other country except Thailand - according to a congressional enquiry. In mining areas in the Amazon basin, some girls are held as virtual slaves; some of them are murdered and thrown into the river to be eaten by fish, according to one woman who recruited child prostitutes for gold and tin miners.

The girls are daughters of landless peasants who are lured from their families on the pretext of being hired as cooks.

GUATAMALA

Land tax plan

THE National Association of Municipalities is expected to introduce legislation in Congress calling for a property tax on land alone. "As the process unfolds, other developing countries will be looking to Guatemala to learn how to tax land more effectively," reports *Landlines*, the newsletter of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Mass.

SYDNEY

Land rights

ABORIGINAL people have stepped up their claims to land rights in Australia. The mining industry has been served with its first land title: an aluminium producer in northern Queensland has received a claim on its bauxite mine.

The political recognition of ancient rights is most advanced in Canada, where the Eskimos have signed an agreement that gives them self-governing status in the Arctic territory of Nunavut (850,000 square miles, about a fifth of Canada, with 22,000 people). Nunavut means "Our Land".

The conquest of aboriginal peoples continues apace, however. The latest "lost" tribe of stone-age nomads has just been discovered in Papua New Guinea, where three rival Christian groups are now racing to introduce them to God.

HARARE

Land grab

PRESIDENT Mugabe of Zimbabwe intends to buy or appropriate farmland for redistribution among the nation's landless poor - and, he declares, if necessary, he will defy constitutional and legal norms.

"If we have to resort to a unilateral declaration of independence on land we will do so," he has announced. "We will get any land we want from anyone, be they black or white, and we will not be restricted to under-utilised land," he revealed, after introducing the Land Acquisition Act.

Zimbabwe's 4,300 commercial farmers own 27.5 million acres (nearly 40% of the farmland). They produce about 80% of the cash crops.

Mugabe is trapped between the need to maintain productivity, while stemming the loss of electoral support in rural areas.

LONDON

Crown land

BRITAIN'S Crown Estate - officially owned by the Queen - paid a dividend of nearly £76 million to the Exchequer last year, despite a drop in the value of the property portfolio.

The Estate's portfolio is made up largely of commercial property, including Regent Street in London's West End. The Estate out-performed all major UK property companies during the property crash, because the estate had antici-

pated the recession and terminated development projects in 1989.

• Not so lucky were the Church Commissioners, who pay the stipends of the Church of England's clergy out of rents. Their portfolio collapsed from nearly £3 billion (1989) to £2.16 billion last year. The Commissioners have decided to reduce their investment in property.

• The Bank of England has urged banks to sell loans to property companies in the form of property-backed bonds. This support for a market in distressed corporate debt is supposed to free companies to raise new capital, strengthen balance sheets and "in some instances [it] injects liquidity into the market".

• Chancery, the first British bank to go under when land values dropped in 1991, is now being investigated by the Department of Trade.

TOKYO

Kiss and profit

THE WORLD'S richest man - landowner Yoshiaki Tsutsumi (*Forbes* magazine estimates his worth as at least \$9 billion) - has buried the hatchet with his half-brother, Seiji Tsutsumi, who owns a hotel chain. Together, they are setting up a joint TV channel which will multiply their prospects of profits in a Japanese economy where property values have been hit hard by the recession.

LOS ANGELES

The wages of speculation

PROPERTY company director Gian Luigi Ferri sprayed bullets which hit eight people and then shot himself, as a result of his fears about the outcome of a dispute over a property deal.

News in Brief