

rates reform hits setback

By

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property tax by the turn of the century. The non-domestic rate would continue, but with a tax rate determined by central government.

This time-table enables Mrs. Thatcher to enter the next general election without having to implement an impracticable fiscal policy while pretending to the voters that she has a concrete plan of action, if only people would vote Conservative.

According to the government's own figures, about 2m households would lose over £2 a week if local



● Margaret Thatcher

taxes were drawn 70% from the "community charge" and 30% from the property tax.

Land use data under threat

THE PAUCITY of land use data in Britain is a national disgrace, according to the *Estate Times* (Nov. 8, 1985).

In a hard-hitting editorial, the newspaper castigated the government for trying to save £200,000 by ceasing to collect and publish commercial and industrial floor-space statistics.

This "rather furtive" action would, at one stroke, deprive analysts of their last crude source of countryside land use data.

"Ironically, while the Government seems hell-bent on driving environmental planning into an information dark-age, the hardware to sort out and analyse land-use and business data is daily becoming more sophisticated," declares the newspaper.

"The more cynical might perceive a Machiavellian Government plot to frustrate opposition by depriving critics of ammunition for argument.

"It is a disgrace that after 40

years of land-use planning and regional policy that no clearly defined data bases or viable urban models have been developed. And it is the dearth of reliable data that is the problem."

SPECULATIVE CLAWBACK!

OIL COMPANIES are now paying land owners five times as much as they were a year ago, according to the Country Landowners' Association. The current going rate for an oil site is £2,500, which the oil companies claim is higher than the prices on the other side of the Channel.

THE British government spent a record £82m on reclaiming derelict land in 1985. Land the area of London's Wembley Stadium, venue of the FA Cup Final, was returned to use every working day. Even so, over 85,000 acres of wasteland remain in England.

Housing 'TIME-BOMB' TICKING IN CAPITAL

LONDON'S housing problem is a time-bomb, says SHAC, the voluntary Housing Aid Centre. For there are nearly 25,000 homeless families in the capital, and as many as 18,000 people live in bed and breakfast accommodation.

In all, there is a shortage of well over 100,000 homes, and a backlog in repairs to the existing housing stock of well over £3bn.

Builders complain that they could provide the houses, if the land was available at affordable prices.

But Jean Conway, in a SHAC research report (*Capital Decay: An Analysis of London's Housing*), claims that "Inner London community groups argue that there would be sufficient housing land in the inner city if vacant and blighted land were brought into use and speculative office development were curtailed."

The city's housing problem will intensify during the coming months, as unemployed tenants who have fallen into arrears with their rents are evicted from their homes. In the borough of Southwark alone, 20,000 tenants — more than a third of the total — are more than a month in arrears.

● QUOTE: Basil Bean, Director General of the National House Building Council: "The council is concerned about the continuing escalation of housing land values, particularly in the south of the country. The higher cost of land to the builder may force him to cut back on other aspects of his budget, such as density per acre and house size."