

Mr. Michael Stewart (Lab., Fulham) said that at present out of every £1 collected in rates over the country as a whole about 10s. came from domestic property. But for the cushioning of Clause 2 the householder would be lucky in 1963 if he found himself contributing no more than 14s.; with the cushioning he might pay 13s. 4d. or a little less at first. The Bill was "part of a strategy, which goes on all the time, a shift of the total cost of maintaining a civilised society away from taxes and towards rates. . . . It is a shift from a method of collection which is comparatively more fair to one which is comparatively less fair and on the whole, a shift of burden from our richer to our poorer fellow citizens."

Referring to "the considerable rise in the value of land," Mr. Stewart said: "The case for some kind of tax which would draw into the public purse some of the increased value grows stronger every day and every month. If a tax of that kind is instituted, it ought not to be beyond the wit of man so to arrange it that it provides local rather than Government revenue. Allied to that is a proposal for enabling local authorities to raise part of their revenue by a rate on site values. I am not myself one of those who believe that that would be the 100 per cent. answer, but it is one possible form of supplementing our present inelastic system, and there are many other expedients."

MINISTERIAL WHITEWASH

REPLYING to the Debate, the Parliamentary Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph, said that unless there was a coherent basis or principle behind rating, there was bound to be a great deal of distortion, unfairness and anomalies. Industry had never been more dependent for its export markets on the education and health services provided by the local authorities. Industry's burden would not rise significantly. The Minister was forced by an inexorable time table. Arguments that they should wait for further information were simply calls to postpone revaluation. "This attitude of deferring anything which is awkward is absolutely typical of the attitude of the Opposition today." There was no effective alternative to the Clause 2 procedure. What the Opposition called "artificial rents" were the sort of normal rents which alone would produce the new housing to rescue the people in the dilapidated houses which would remain dilapidated while only pre-war rents were charged.

"Apart from the suggestion about site values, very few alternative ideas have been produced in this debate by hon. Members opposite, and site value has been rejected by Committees and Commissions four times in this century. There are all sorts of difficulties in that idea. Difficulties about land, and difficulties caused by the control that planning already puts on land, are never dealt with by the protagonists of this alternative." The present system should be given a chance before judging it. "Surely those who so easily advocate some alternative system, having never even taken the trouble to work it out in detail, must have the imagination to realise that any alternative system would probably have as many

anomalies, or more, as that which they have so freely criticised today . . . Everyone grumbles about rates and people, not only in this Chamber, casually or seriously, are apt to mention alternative systems which they are sure would be much better, but the fact is that no one has yet brought forward any convincing evidence of a generally preferable way of financing local authority services . . . The debate has produced no convincing alternative system. There is no reason to think that if there was the inquiry which has been asked for that would produce an alternative which would be just round the corner. But 1963 is around the corner. If the Bill is not passed, householders will bear the full impact of current valuations without the relief given by industrial rating . . . That is why I ask hon. Members to support this logical, coherent, and yet humane Measure, and to give it a Second Reading by a substantial majority."

Correspondence

EDUCATION IN A FREE SOCIETY

To the Editor of Land & Liberty.

Sir,—In your September issue Mr. Robert Tideman asks: "Can a childless couple properly complain, then, against the state providing free schooling to the ten children of a neighbouring couple? I think not. The childless couple, *when they were children*, had the same opportunity to attend the free schools as is now enjoyed by the ten young fellow citizens nearby."

I think that is very good argument but not good reason. It is better rationalisation than it is justification. The fact that a person is forced to do something as a child is poor reason why he should be forced to pay to make other children do the same thing. Compulsory education means force and that is hardly the attribute of a free society. And even if public education could become permissive and voluntary (which is doubtful), the fact that a child is allowed to enjoy something when young does not mean that he should be forced to pay for other children to partake of the same thing.

Rights are mutual relationships between social units, which might be an individual, or a childless couple or a family. None of those units has a right to expect more from others than it contributes at the time of the trade. A family is unique in that it is a social unit in itself. That is to say it is a *unit*. A family has only as much right to an education as *it* buys. If it doesn't buy any, it should not be forced. A child has no right to command or demand contributions from those outside his family. Conception and birth are not socialised institutions. They are quite individualistic, and only the parents are responsible for children resulting from such processes.

If we could ever free ourselves from the enormous burden of taxes now on our productive effort, the family wage would rise to better permit the purchase of educational services as the family desired them. And if a cer-

tain family chose to hire more or less educational services than another, that must remain the jurisdiction of that family. It is not for one family to decide how much education another family should provide for itself. If one family wants to help another, that is its right. Charity for one's less fortunate fellows is a beautiful gesture but the child in one family has no right to expect the parents of another family to give it an education.

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Notes on the Month

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL RETURNS TO THE FRAY

THE London County Council resolved on December 6: "That representations be made in favour of the inclusion in the Rating and Valuation Bill now before Parliament of provisions for the rating of site values in order to provide an additional source of income to the Council at a time when substantial increases in land costs and interest charges are throwing a heavy additional burden on the Council's finances." Voting was on party lines: 74 Labour members in favour and 20 Conservatives against. The motion was moved by Councillor E. S. Hillman.

Southall. After Mr. V. G. Saldji, president of the Land-Value Taxation League, had addressed the Finance Committee of Southall (Middlesex) Borough Council the Town Clerk, Mr. J. S. Syrett advised the Rating Reform Campaign that the Council had "decided to request the Association of Municipal Corporations to make representations to the Minister of Housing and Local Government to promote, at the Government's own expense a 'pilot' scheme in the area of a local authority to be selected specially for the purpose."

DEMANDS FOR INQUIRY AND SUPPORT FOR REFORM

MANCHESTER Ratepayers' Council have appealed to Manchester City Council to appoint a special committee to investigate the advantage of the rating of site values and the unrating of buildings, and improvements, reported the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, December 1.

The executive committee of the non-political *Wood Green Ratepayers' Association*, North London, has accepted in principle the aims of the Rating Reform Campaign, and this has now become part of the policy of the Association, the chairman, Mr. G. W. C. Peacock advises us.

Morecambe. At a public meeting, December 2, Councillor Mrs. N. Bolton, Chairman of the Morecambe and Heysham Ratepayers' Association, said that they supported the land value rating system because they believed it to be a righteous cause, reported the *Lancashire Evening Post*. The meeting was convened jointly by the Rate-

payers' Association and the Rating Reform Campaign and was addressed by Mr. V. G. Saldji. About 60 people were present including several members of the Town Council. From the floor, Councillor T. P. Tiplady (Labour) suggested that the Government should be asked to use Morecambe and district for a pilot scheme to test the land value rating system. It is understood that he may place a motion on those lines before the Council. Councillor E. Kershaw (Cons.) did not think the suggestion very helpful unless the whole of Lancashire was included in a pilot scheme.

Folkestone. Articles commending the Rating Reform Campaign and land-value rating have appeared in two recent issues of the Journal of the 1,600 strong Folkestone Ratepayers' Association. Mr. V. G. Saldji is to address the Association's A.G.M. on January 20.

THE LITTLE GENERAL ELECTION HOW THE CANDIDATES REPLIED

CANDIDATES who contested the "little General Election" — eight parliamentary by-elections — last November were asked four simple questions by the United Committee. To reduce house prices would they, if elected, support the taxation and rating of land values and the removal of import duties and of purchase tax from building materials and house fittings. An explanatory letter was sent with the Questionnaire.

The three Liberals who replied each pledged unqualified support. They were Messrs. Michael Digby (Petersfield), Dai Rees (Ludlow) and Frank Byers (Bolton East). From the Conservative camp came three non-committal acknowledgments — nothing more.

Mr. John Garwell, Ludlow, was the only Labour candidate who replied. Had he been elected he would have seriously considered the taxation of land values and any other measure which would end land speculation. He supports removal of import duties where that would lower the cost of living without increasing "our balance of payments problem" and he would seriously consider removal of purchase tax on building materials, etc., but not for luxury purposes. Reduction of high interest rates on local authority loans would enable the rates to be kept at a reasonable level, he wrote. Seemingly, he does not object in principle to rating improvement and exempting idle sites. The Welsh Nationalist, Mr. Emrys Roberts, agreed that the questions raised were very important. From his limited study he did not believe the taxation of land values would prove a final answer to land speculation.

The Conservatives held their six seats with reduced majorities except at mid-Bedfordshire, and Labour retained Ebbw Vale and Blyth. The Liberals ousted Labour from second place at Carshalton, Petersfield and Tiverton and took second place at Ludlow which the party last contested in 1945.