

THE SCANDAL OF UNRATED RURAL LAND

By H. I. Meyer

1% of the population of the United Kingdom owns 52% of the land.

The estimated annual land rent of the United Kingdom is a minimum of £82.6 billion a year, or almost £30.00 per week for every man, woman and child.

If this total annual land rent were collected on behalf of the community instead of as now, enabling a privileged few to lead life-styles which are an obscene scandal worse than Ethiopia, Sudan and Bangladesh combined, then it would be possible to balance the public sector books without income tax, VAT, rates or corporation tax.

No income tax? No VAT? No local rates? No corporation tax? Is this possible? It could happen tomorrow!

Who is doing the impossible now? 52.5 million of us live in cities and pay ever higher rates and taxes, while over 52 million acres of rural land **PAY NO TAXES OR RATES AT ALL.**

Those underpopulated and almost vacant rural shires benefit from the largest Government subsidy of all, the annual E.E.C. C.A.P. payments on the farm surpluses in excess of £15bn. a year. No wonder they don't care what VAT, income tax or local rates demands are. **THEY HAVEN'T PAID ANY TAXES AT ALL SINCE AT LEAST 1660!**

- More than 50% of farmers are in the top 10% of wealth holders in Australia by virtue of their real estate holdings.
(Comment: This of course largely means land holdings.)
- During 1983-84 the Australian Government approved 186 proposals by foreign interests to acquire urban property (valued at \$418m) and rejected 22 proposals. It also approved 57 proposals to acquire rural land with a total value of \$62m. A further 13 rural proposals were rejected.
- Government expenditure on housing in Australia as a percentage of G.D.P. is a low 0.4% compared to an average of 1.8% in the eight major O.E.C.D. countries.
(Comment: The widespread application of site value rating throughout Australia in checking land prices could be a major factor here.)