

**L**AND REFORM is, in every way, a hot potato. What, then, will the building industry get from it? How might the results of "a new deal" affect our existing institutions, habits and attitudes? Since the answers must be speculative, I submit them as suggestions, not as criticisms.

The ways in which the economic climate may be altered following land reform are manifold. Generally, keener competition on quality, price and service will result. With full payment to the community of the development value of each site, equable rents would obtain on numerous sites used for similar purposes. "Unfair" competition, the tendency to restriction and monopoly, would vanish.

The security position of many firms would certainly improve: taxation would be lifted from labour and enterprise and placed upon unearned income arising from the increased value of a site. A relief from rent and charges naturally follows to those who are not paying freeholders. The effects upon the costs of housing and public services and all manner of building and construction development would be to reduce them (relatively) to what people could afford to pay.

### Takeovers

Gradually, quality and amenity would replace financial return as the criterion of good work, good design, and good planning and development. While the pressure to develop valuable sites would be maintained at the peak, clients would demand from architects buildings more suited to their use than many modern developments appear to be.

Today's tendency to larger groupings of companies, forming of consortia, etc., may continue, but on a basis of co-operation rather than "the law of the jungle," and "the devil take the hindmost." But pressures squeezing middle-range firms into extinction would be resistable, and the growth of specialist sub-contractors, family firms, and co-operative groups accelerated. The industry would regain its equilibrium, and find new techniques, methods and tools invariably to its advantage.

The various bodies representing sectors of the building industry, the federations, institutes, councils and associations, would face a different set of circumstances from those they work under today. The first great change would be that the various bodies not only would marry up, but when the standing conflict between labourer and employer dissolves after removal of its cause, they would lose their character of "resistance to" and supplant it with "promotion of."

### Standards

Clearly, higher standards, individual initiative, free enterprise, and other virtues now evident, will become more important than recurrent crises in discussions on wages, conditions and so on. Thus, the institutions would be free to concentrate on the job for which they are created, and much sterile talk would be hushed. Since contractors would naturally wish to join a free association which is unrestrictive, and exists entirely for the promotion of their gainful interests, irrespective of speciality, place

# Effects of t

By JOHN



*The Shell Centre, the Royal Bank site. After land reform would long be withheld*

in the construction team, and size of concern, the ideal of almost 100 per cent membership would be readily achieved. As single firms of whatever kind—supplier, manufacturer, merchant, stockist, agent, sub-contractor, producer, erector, pre-fabricator—would be fully employed in their specialities, there would inevitably arise a surplus of ideas and opportunities enabling others to set up their own businesses, much to the general benefit.

### Trades Unions

Turning now to the trade unions, I foresee many new opportunities. No longer will the wage level tend to fall to the lowest acceptable, but rise to a higher level. With taxation lifted from men's labour, spending, consumption, and therefore production, would boom, and a great

# he Remedy

SPENCER



Festival Hall, and in the  
s at last on the L.C.C. South  
n, no central plot like this  
from full development.

variety of goods, services, and benefits become available. No longer by necessity obsessed with claims, strikes, and a never-ending stream of complaints, the unions might be freed to turn to the most momentous administrative task in their history.

Briefly, this would fall into two sections. First, to ensure that provisions of a new Act of Free Association, Partnership, and Contracts of Employment was enforced; that benefits were transferable from one site to another; that weather would never cause loss of earnings; and that, within set conditions, hired labourers were assured of their full share of the fruits of their labours.

Secondly, to act much as a Guild, ensuring to all craftsmen, trades, skills, and operatives, that the proper training is given, the highest standards required, and that men

undertake work suited to their natures and their needs. Instead of a closed shop, there would be open inducement to fullest membership—and, of course, full employment. All trades would have equal basic rates and conditions, but individuals would benefit directly from the fortunes of their skills and merits. All this would, I believe, be for the common good.

## Local Authorities

The service of local authorities to their communities would be immensely enhanced by their proposed role in a society undergoing land reform. They would be not only responsible for, and empowered to provide, the best possible services to meet the peculiar needs of each locality, but financially both able, and compelled, to complete them. Subsidies and grants would become obsolete, independence re-gained, and co-operation would become of even greater mutual advantage than hitherto.

Redevelopment of towns and cities would be speeded-up through harmonious co-operation with private enterprise under a joint development plan. The full financial advantage of freeholds would pay for the best services and amenities obtainable, while the developer-contractor would benefit from buildings erected. The condition of properties throughout each district, and the use of land, would, in view of the rent to be paid, be maintained at their best. As beauty and open space enhance value and prospect, so character would accrue to economically feasible design and layout. People would get the kind of town they wanted.

## Different Roles

Many professions would change the character (but not the scope and volume) of their activities following the proposed land reform. Property developers would undoubtedly have a prominent position, as now, in any new society. But they would not benefit from increases in site values, only from the services they provide. Their role would become increasingly that of managers, trustees, and organisers.

Estate agents would continue to have full run of the free market. Regional organisations might well be entrusted with the listing of transactions, so aiding local authorities, with whom all land would be registered, and the facts known. Surveyors, valuers, land agents and auctioneers, would all play their part as never before, bringing their expertise to the service of the community, and profiting from the enhanced standing of their callings.

Planners, on the other hand, would become more closely integrated with economists, the forecasters, historical research teams, and bodies such as NEDC. Clearly, the fragmented organisations dealing with diverse aspects of land use would become affiliated, probably under a Ministry. It would become the aim of Government to interfere as little as possible with the dynamo of a free-flux economy; to reduce restrictions; to guide, not to regulate; lead not suppress; and to discover how to rule with justice and wisdom, not by theories and with force.

Thus I believe land reform is in the national interest.