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HAM & HIG

I won't play games with other people's homes

YOUR letters page last week was headed "Case for Levy is wrong on every point," yet even Mr Tomalin conceded that on most points I was right!

The whole of the Booker - Gray - Bates - Claudius scheme depends on a Minister confirming a compulsory purchase order on the Stock Conversion land.

So far three Ministers have refused such a CPO—Tony Greenwood, Kenneth Robinson and Julian Amery. Mr Tomalin says I should not despair because Reg Freeson would! I wish I had his faith.

When Mr Freeson agreed to put his name to the pro-Claudius pamphlet he had very little information before him. The leader of the Labour group sent the full dossier to him, including counsel's opinion, the day after the pamphlet was issued.

Let me say loudly and clearly, that I am in favour of land nationalisation—it's a pity that the last Labour Government did not do it. (Incidentally wasn't Mr Freeson a member of that Government). Until then my purpose is to provide ordinary men and women with a decent place to live. I am not very interested in making grandiose gestures, especially ones which are doomed to failure.

I have lived in slums, which is more than can be said by most of the gesticulators, and I do not feel that it is right that I should play games with other people's homes and their chances of establishing a decent life for themselves and their families.

—IVOR WALKER,
Camden Town Hall,
Euston Road, NW1.

MAY I support the policy set out in your editorial of last week concerning the Levy deal?

The Labour leadership, though for the best reasons, seems to feel impelled to enter upon grand schemes of collaborations or confrontations with capitalist developers which end in Duke of York exercises, and, to be harsh, ineffectual positions of injured innocence and noble martyrdom.

However much these failures may be due to insufficient public support and disunity among Labour

councillors, they are like opposing a man-eating tiger in its natural habitat without a gun, and expressing hurt surprise when the tiger settles the matter with its naturally inhuman jaws.

The Indian proverb "He who rides the tiger can never dismount" puts the matter clearly.

Labour leaders who still believe in exploded ideas of mixed economy should surely give them up, and with them all compromises with private developers, who hold all the winning cards.

The Claudius plans are very ingenious and generous, but are unlikely to work under this Government unless backed by massive public support and a fully united council. Though Labour might back them if only to show this Government up for what it is, it should not revert to the Levy scheme if its application is rejected.

I suggest that Labour should go in for multiple small plans uncluttered with developers. As the result of walking through every street in the borough, I am convinced that there are opportunities for building at least 5,000 new living spaces, and by imaginative reconstruction of dilapidated properties, at least another 1,000.

Do we not need to remind ourselves that the Vietnamese did not defeat the massive American armoured tigers by grand confrontations and collaborations, but by multiple small guerrilla actions which turned the armour into a liability?

—CLIFF ROWE,
9 Eton Avenue, NW3.

THE recent exhibition of "85 years of Housing by LCC and GLC architects" at the ICA had lessons for Camden which can be applied to the Tolmers Square re-development, whoever does the developing, if Camden so wills.

Almost the first picture one came to at the exhibition was of an attractive elevation from the Boundary Street project, Shoreditch, the first slum clearance by the LCC. The caption said redevelopment was at 200 persons per acre because of the "legal obligation to re-house the

people in the same area".

Anyone familiar with re-development of slum areas will realise this must have been exceptional, but ideas die hard; one of the discussion evenings at this exhibition, entitled Participation, was about the Swinbrook Road re-development, where most of the people opted to stay in the area when, on the insistence of the Golborne Neighbourhood Council, the GLC gave them the opportunity.

This can only be done by demolishing and re-housing by stages ("phased re-development with on-site decanting" is the officialese) and in this case the plan is to use a new structure along Acklam Road for the dual function of temporary re-housing and permanent sound-barrier against the noise of Westway to the south. The project is now before the Ministry for approval.

Another interesting decision is that the shops on the north boundary are to be renovated rather than rebuilt because the shopkeepers could not afford the new rents otherwise.

Readers may remember my letter about light industry in Tolmers square, which could have been construed as opposition to having housing there.

Actually, it is a very good place for housing an essential

element in the improvement of public transport: bus crews and their families. Improvement of public transport is the key to reducing congestion and thereby improving Tolmers Square as a place to live.

It's also true that the housing will be there when the petrol is gone. In the meantime, the hazards can be reduced by using the street level for shops and light industry (but no more car parks please!) with all housing above podium level, amply ramped to provide easy access to shops and public transport for pensioners and pram-pushing housewives.

May one, therefore, propose to pioneering Camden that the people of Tolmers Square be granted participation in the re-development of their neighbourhood, with a proportion of the housing set aside for occupation by committed bus-crew staff.

Perhaps then non-motorists won't need to take a cab to go out in the evening!

—NAT BROWN,
46 South Hill Park,
NW3

THE newly political Major Samuel Waldman is so anxious to rush in to print over Tolmers Square that he does not bother to check his facts on Centre Point.

That development was between the Labour controlled LCC and a developer in whose company the Co-operative Insurance Society held a sizeable shareholding.

—MRS J. HESLOP,
22 Somali Road, NW6.