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BRITAIN'S NEW TOWNS

An Experiment in Living

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Major-General A. C. Duff, C.B., O.B.E., M.C.

*General Manager of Stevenage New Town
Development Corporation, 1947-57*

With a Foreword by
MARTIN MADDAN, M.P.

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PREFACE

A short preface to this book is necessary if only to enable me to express my deep obligation to Sir Frederic Osborn. I have to thank him for permission to reproduce from the Journal of the Town and Country Planning Association the facts and figures given in the Appendix, and I have to thank him still more for his time and trouble in reading through the book in draft and giving me the benefit of his comments and advice. Sir Frederic has been in the van of the New Town Movement since the early days of the Garden Cities, and his knowledge and experience are unrivalled.

I should also explain my own—much more modest—qualifications to write about the subject. I was for ten years, from 1947 to 1957, General Manager of the Stevenage New Town Development Corporation, and those ten years saw the New Town grow from nothing to about half its final size. The opinions that I here express are based mainly on my experience at Stevenage, but there were frequent exchanges of visits and of views between the General Managers of the eight London New Towns, and I have aimed at presenting a picture which is of general application and not confined to Stevenage alone.

There has been no lack of publications dealing with the New Towns. They have included the alarming Blue Books compiled annually by H.M. Stationery Office,

professional monographs dealing with particular aspects, and at least one novel. This book is, I believe, the first attempt to describe the work involved in bringing a New Town into being, and to present the subject in a form which will meet the needs of the layman who is interested in the New Towns and wants to know more about them. I hope, too, that what I have written may lead others to share my opinion that the job of the General Manager of a New Town is one of the most interesting in the world.

And not only interesting but enjoyable, provided that his staff are of the kind and quality he needs. I am glad to take this opportunity to express, albeit belatedly, to the staff of the Stevenage Development Corporation, and particularly its Chief Officers, my thanks for their support and loyalty, during my term of office.

A.C.D.

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FOREWORD

by

MARTIN MADDAN

Member of Parliament for the Hitchin Division of Hertfordshire in which lie Letchworth, the first Garden City, founded in 1903, and Stevenage, the first New Town, designated in 1946.

'It is like looking at a documentary,' remarked a visitor whom I conducted round Stevenage on a summer day in 1960.

To those living in the little towns and villages where a new town is sited, it is the end of the pleasant surroundings they love. To the pioneer residents of a new town, it is little more than a sea of mud in which they live in surroundings devoid of all amenities. To those trying to bring up a young family in a crowded nineteenth-century tenement with their in-laws, it is a dream. To youngsters being brought up in a new town with green fields always in sight or just round the corner, it is a wide horizon. To business men looking for new premises, it is a proposition. To those charged with the building of it, it is a challenge.

There are so many ways of looking at new towns that it is not surprising that there has been—and is—so much controversy about them. Not only are there many opinions: individuals' opinions change with circumstances. What was once a sea of mud looks ten years later 'like a documentary'.

General Duff guides us in this book from the source of the new town idea, from the founding of Letchworth as the first garden city in 1903, through the present phase of new towns developed directly under the government's aegis with Treasury money. He leaves us with our eyes set on the future application of the principles which are thus evolving.

Britain's New Towns is factual and down to earth. We read of the problems of sewerage—merely an essential service, one might think, but as experience proves also one of the most expensive and controversial problems which has to be tackled. We read too that in the London satellite new towns, for instance, contrary to popular myth, only a handful of families think better of their move and return to their London streets—something between two and five in a hundred.

As General Manager of the Stevenage Development Corporation for ten years, General Duff writes with an intimate knowledge of the difficulties involved in creating from scratch in fifteen years a town of, say 60,000 people at a cost of £50 million. But his reader is never allowed to be bogged down in detail. The author carries us along, with a style lucid, urbane and free from jargon, so that as we read we feel the excitement of great endeavour.

Of the 15 new towns being developed in Britain today, many are nearing completion. It seems likely that more new towns will be established. Yet the British public who are not immediately concerned know little of them. Many of those who live within a few miles of a new town never even visit it. But from abroad—from America, Russia and

all over the six continents—there is a constant stream of visitors and admirers. What do they find?

They find first of all prosperity; this is because the industries which have been attracted to the new towns are modern, thriving, expanding ones. They find young, enterprising families; this is because it is the young who are willing to try out new town life, and because they must have been accepted for a job by a local employer before they come. They find modern new factory estates which bear about as much resemblance to the traditional industrial sites of our old industrial areas as do the squares of Belgravia to the rows of tenement buildings in Battersea. They find modern houses, many of them terraced, each with its garden, set in the midst of wide open spaces.

Some critics say that new towns unnecessarily swallow up good agricultural land. Others that the low densities produce a lack of chumminess, cosiness, or neighbourliness. Yet others say that the contemporary appearance of these houses is less satisfying than the conventional semi-detached house with bow window of the 1930's.

The people living in the new towns say that life in them is very much better than in the districts from which they have come. Despite the high rents—due to the high cost inherent in developing towns of such a size at such a speed—there are long waiting lists of families who want to move into them.

At the moment, as General Duff says, our new towns tend to be one class towns. Few of the directors and executives of the firms located in them live in them. But it is hoped that this will be remedied in the final stages. The original conception of 'village life', with all classes inter-

mingled, does not seem capable of successful transplantation into modern urban neighbourhoods. Separate neighbourhoods of middle class houses must therefore be established.

Why is it important to study the experiences we have gained in developing our present new towns? Because it is surely impossible satisfactorily to accommodate the large movements and increases of population which are taking place in Britain without many more new towns being built. It is estimated, for instance, that in twenty years' time there will have been an addition of over 2 million extra people living within 30 miles of the centre of London; again, the areas of the industrial revolution in the North of England must be rehabilitated. Without the creation of new towns as focal points of development, the result can only be more urban sprawl.

Some new towns are already beginning to turn in profits to the Treasury, or taxpayer, who put up the money to develop them. The new towns must balance their housing accounts (with the aid of a subsidy of about £30 per annum on each house), and the profits arise only from industrial and commercial developments. Now that it has been demonstrated that the creation of towns on this scale, and at this speed can in fact be made to pay, one wonders whether large city authorities, or even private enterprises may not be able to take up this method of development.

What has been the principle on which the development has taken place? It is that the Development Corporation should acquire the freehold of the whole of the area over which the town is to be built. The Corporation is itself responsible for the development of the town, and owns the

property established in it, except in so far as it will sell leaseholds. Because it owns the freehold, the Corporation can keep a tight grip which ensures unity of development. Ownership of the whole freehold also ensures that whoever puts up the money and is the ground landlord will be the beneficiary from the increase in the value of the property and site which is brought about by the very activity of developing the area.

This very success of the new towns caused Parliament to approve in 1959 the setting up of a government New Towns Commission to take over the job of landlord from the Development Corporations as each town nears completion.

The new towns have always been supported by the official policy of both the Conservative and Labour parties. As a Tory, it is extremely gratifying to me now to find not only an acceptance but an enthusiasm for the new town idea growing amongst the Conservative rank and file.

Britain today is on the threshold of a tremendous change. The pattern of the industrial revolution concentrated development for more than a century in the Midlands and North of England. Housing and urban development followed in its wake with little regard for amenities, aesthetics, or social consequence. Today a new dynamic force in industry is causing a new pattern of economic geography to emerge in Britain. As we seek to build our homes round it, we can gain much from studying the example and experience of the Garden City movement and the government-sponsored new towns.

General Duff's book is therefore most timely and important. It deserves to be studied by all those who have

an interest in seeing that our grandchildren's children do not blame us not only for having learned nothing from the mistakes of our forefathers in the industrial revolution, but also for having learned nothing from the idealists and pioneers of our own generation.

House of Commons
December, 1960

M.M.

CHAPTER I

The New Towns Idea

Well over a century has elapsed since William Cobbett on his rural rides would pause to glare at the smoke on the horizon and hurl his denunciations at the Wen—the London that represented so many of his particular hatreds; and if he so greatly disliked the modest little London of those days what would he think now of the London which has eaten far into the countryside in every direction and swallowed up so many thousands of acres of the farmland which he loved? One crumb of comfort he might however find; Cobbett would like the New Towns.

Cobbett's views about the Wen were in advance of his time. Until nearly the end of the nineteenth century Wens were in the fashion. Wens and Wealth appeared to be synonymous. The Industrial Revolution produced the factories to house the machines which made the money. The machines required operatives to tend them and the housing of the operatives was a matter of making the minimum provision at the minimum cost. Thus there grew up the teeming slums of the industrial towns, which left their stamp physically and mentally on children brought up in them. In the first World War it was startling to see how

conspicuously the Dominion troops, born and bred in the countryside, excelled the average unit recruited in Great Britain both in body and in mind.

It was not until nearly the end of the century that the stirrings of social conscience began to take shape in bricks and mortar. The Quakers were in the van, as in so many movements of reform. Bourneville came into being, and Port Sunlight. Both these enterprises were on a small scale and both were to some extent inspired by enlightened self-interest, but they gave an indication of what could be done and acted as signposts to a further advance.

The further advance was due to Ebenezer Howard. He was a strange man, as English as Cobbett, and, though in very different ways, almost as eccentric. A shorthand-writer by profession, with no advantages of position or money or influence, yet he had in him a spark of divine fire and it was in his brain that the Garden City was conceived. By the time he died both Letchworth and Welwyn had come into being; and in assessing that achievement it must be remembered that they had to stand on their own feet financially. The New Towns now under construction can borrow from the Treasury all the money they require; the two pioneer New Towns had to obtain their capital privately by Persuasion. The New Towns nowadays are ready enough to enlarge on the manifold difficulties in their path, but they should remember that this particular obstacle, the most formidable of all, no longer has to be surmounted.

Letchworth was built before the first World War, Welwyn between the two World Wars. The second World War gave a sudden and vigorous impulse to town and

country planning in general and to the problem of London in particular. The bombing of London emphasised that its size and location presented an acute strategic menace in war-time as well as a chronic nuisance in times of peace. The destruction wrought by the bombing also ensured that major reconstruction would have to be carried out after the war, both in London and elsewhere. It is to the credit of the Government of the day that they recognised even in war-time the desirability of establishing some principles to be applied when the time came for reconstruction, and took steps to formulate such principles. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Industrial Population had appeared in 1940; it was followed in 1944 by Sir Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan; and in October 1945 the Reith Committee on New Towns was appointed.

By that time the New Towns idea was recognised as a partial solution to the congestion of London. The outward sprawl of the London suburbs was to stop and they were to be surrounded by a green belt protected against development. Outside this green belt would grow the New Towns, drawing their populations and their industries from London and thus easing the difficulties attendant on redevelopment within London itself. The terms of reference of the Reith Committee were:—

'To consider the general questions of the establishment, development, organization and administration that will arise in promotion of New Towns in furtherance of a policy of planned decentralization from congested urban areas; and in accordance therewith to suggest guiding principles on which such Towns should

be established and developed as self-contained and balanced communities for work and living.'

The Committee moved quickly. Its first interim report was submitted in January 1946, its second interim report in April 1946, and its final report in July 1946. Its more important recommendations concerned the agency to be employed to build the New Towns; the size of a New Town when completed; the financing of the enterprise; and the relation between the agency and the Government.

As to the nature of the agency to be employed, once it had been decided that each New Town should be entrusted to a separate agency, there were in fact only two practicable forms which the agency could assume: either a public corporation sponsored by the Government or a public corporation sponsored by a local authority. The essential difference between the two would be that the former would obtain its funds from the Treasury, while the latter would obtain its funds from, or through, the sponsoring local authority. The Committee were on the whole in favour of the Government-sponsored corporation. They proposed that the number of members should be between six and eight, appointed by the Crown. The corporation should be given all the powers in law necessary for its task and should be subject to direction by the appropriate Minister.

The optimum size of a New Town was discussed at some length in the Committee's report. They formed, rather tentatively, the view that the normal size should be something between a population of 30,000 and a population of 50,000. They arrived at the minimum figure from a consideration of the various desirable amenities which

too small a town would be unable to sustain. They arrived at the maximum figure by reference to the size of the built-up area and the importance of keeping down the distance separating any house in the town from the open countryside.

The financing of a Government-sponsored corporation was bound to be the responsibility of the Exchequer. The Committee did not enlarge on the terms upon which the money should be obtained, saying only that the terms should be the same as those for local authorities; but they added that the payment of interest should be deferred until the income from the town was sufficient to meet it. They also made it clear in suggestions scattered throughout their three reports that they regarded it as part of the agency's duty to spend money on various enterprises which could not for some time become remunerative, or which contained an element of risk. They suggested, for instance, that the provision of public halls and meeting rooms might be undertaken by the agency in advance of the full demand which would later be created by the incoming population; and even that the agency might provide in part the capital to finance a local newspaper.

The Committee devoted much space to an examination of the relation to be established between the Government of the day and the New Town corporations. The Government would require to have some ultimate sanction at its disposal and this could be provided by making each corporation subject, if necessary, to Ministerial direction; and by empowering the Minister, in the last resort, to dismiss the members from their appointments. Either of these, however, would be an extreme step, and the normal

control would be financial; a corporation seeking an advance of money from the Treasury could properly be required to justify their request. The question which exercised the Committee was whether the machinery should consist simply of a controlling Ministry in Whitehall with which each New Town corporation would deal directly on all matters of policy, administration and finance; or whether the machinery would run more smoothly if another body was brought into being to relieve both the Ministry and the corporations of some part of their burden.

The Committee came to the latter conclusion. They recommended that there should be set up a Central Advisory Commission as 'an instrument for harmonising policy and practice and also for pooling information and experience'. It would be a small body of half-a-dozen members, chosen for their knowledge of large-scale development in its various aspects, served by a secretary and a small staff. The Commission would be in a position to offer well-founded advice, based on experience, not only to corporations confronted with problems but also to Ministries dealing with matters unfamiliar to them.

The next chapter will contain some discussion of the New Towns Act and how far it followed the Reith Committee's recommendations, but before leaving the subject of the Reith Committee a little comment on its views and its recommendations will not be out of place.

One must begin by admiring their prescience. It is fourteen years since their report was published and the building of the New Towns has now reached a point at which further and unexpected aspects are unlikely to come to

light; yet the Committee's examination was so comprehensive that they foresaw, discussed and often illuminated almost every problem which the New Towns have had to solve. An illustration of the accuracy of their predictions was their view that the completion of a New Town of 50,000 persons would take between fifteen and twenty years from the initial decision. It might have been argued that it would take five years, or fifteen years, or fifty years; but it is working out in practice at just about fifteen years.

Here and there in their recommendations the emphasis has proved to be at fault. For instance they do not seem to have appreciated the manifold difficulties which would arise when a New Town corporation and a District Council were called upon to discharge their respective functions in parallel in the same area. The only serious ground, however, on which they may be criticised is that they did not sufficiently emphasise that it was essential for the New Towns to prove successful as strictly business propositions.

The Reith Committee was sitting in 1946, just after the end of the second world war. In war-time, financial controls weaken and fade into the background; controls in terms of money are replaced by controls—often of a most rigorous nature—over labour and materials. The persons interested in the New Towns idea included many who regarded it mainly from their own specialised point of view—architectural, sociological or political—and made light of the very important financial aspect. They talked of 'an exciting experiment' without adding the rider that the New Town idea would be stillborn unless New Towns were able to show that the large sums of money to be

invested in them would pay a dividend and show a profit. In the early days of the New Towns they were looked on with deep suspicion by hard-headed business men and still more so by Treasury officials; again and again one heard comparisons with the groundnuts scheme in East Africa.

That suspicion is now a thing of the past. The New Towns are more than halfway to completion; they are beginning to show surpluses on revenue account and land values in them are soaring. Nor should it be overlooked that the cost of rehousing a Londoner in a New Town is only a fraction of the cost—in building and in subsidy—of rehousing him within the London perimeter. It is true that the Treasury is finding the New Towns a source of grave embarrassment, as they had always expected; but they had not expected that their embarrassment would take the form of having to decide what to do with such immensely valuable assets.

CHAPTER II

The New Towns Act

The passing of the New Towns Act, 1946, heralded the establishment during the next twelve months of the first four New Town Corporations; Stevenage, Crawley, Hemel Hempstead and Harlow, in that order. All four were intended to drain away population and industry from London and all four were located within thirty miles of Charing Cross.

The machinery set out in the Act was in accordance with the major recommendations of the Reith Committee. Each New Town was to be developed by a special agency and that agency was to be a public corporation. The Corporation was to consist of a chairman, a deputy chairman and not more than seven other members, to be appointed for specified periods by the Minister of Town and Country Planning and to be eligible for re-appointment thereafter. The Corporations were empowered by the Act to acquire land, to carry out building and civil engineering operations, and generally to do anything necessary for the development of a New Town. They were also empowered to borrow money for these purposes from the Treasury, and only from the Treasury. It was a

condition of these loans that each project for which money was advanced must be such that it was likely to secure a reasonable return on the capital expenditure.

A stipulation in these terms was one which the Reith Committee had not contemplated. The Committee's approach had been that a corporation should be able and willing to finance enterprises considered to be meritorious without having regard to the return likely to be obtained in hard cash; but such an approach is prejudiced when the money to be spent is Treasury money and the approval to spend it is given by or on behalf of a Minister of the Crown. The permanent officials who advise the Minister have to protect him from any accusation that he has allowed the taxpayers' money to be spent on projects which contain an element of risk. Now a business firm can and does spend money in disregard of this condition; it accepts a calculated risk in order to make a profit, and the correct assessment of the risk is the function of its Board of Directors. A government department is not in the same position. An approval which later turns out to have been a mistake may not only expose the Minister to questions in the House but may subject the permanent officials themselves to criticism by the Public Accounts Committee.

The Act expressly refers to the need to secure a reasonable return on monies advanced and the application of this ruling has led to much discussion between Corporations and the Ministry, and to much delay. As far as building houses is concerned—and building houses makes up the bulk of a Corporation's expenditure—the Ministry has always insisted that a Corporation's housing revenue account must be self-balancing after taking

into account the approved housing subsidies; and this ruling, though it may be difficult to apply, is easy to understand. But what is 'a reasonable return' on a shop or a factory built for letting? Or on land leased for development by another party? Or, more difficult still, on such an item as a fountain or a piece of sculpture, on which the money return is inevitably nil? The room for argument is unlimited.

The application of this ruling involves yet another problem. A Corporation proposing to spend money on any capital project has to obtain the Ministry's approval before letting a construction contract or committing itself in any other way, and in asking the Ministry's approval it has to estimate how much the project is going to cost as well as what return it is going to show. The cost of a big contract of a million pounds or more extending over two years is difficult enough to estimate closely; but there is the further trouble that the Corporation does not know what it will have to pay for the money it borrows. A business firm undertaking such an enterprise would at a very early stage try to decide how it was to be financed: where the money would come from and at what rate of interest. The Corporation only knows that it will have to borrow the money from the Treasury and pay whatever rates of interest the Treasury may from time to time decide. If the circumstances are unfortunate it may be that the average rate of interest payable over the two years of the contract is as much as 2 per cent higher than when the contract began. Thus, if the net return expected by the Corporation and approved by the Ministry was 2 per cent

or less, then the 'reasonable return' will have entirely disappeared by the time the project is completed.

There is one other general comment to be made on the proviso of 'a reasonable return'. This proviso shapes the whole form and nature of the financial control to which the Corporations are subject. The spending of government money is normally controlled by the approval of an annual budget limiting the amount that may be spent on specified purposes in a given year. New Town Corporations do in fact prepare annual budgets for approval by the Ministry, but these represent little more than estimates of cash requirements. The control is not exercised through the budget but through the requirement that every proposed item of capital expenditure—and no exceptions are made—must be submitted in detail to the Ministry for examination and approval. This is a more rigid control than the Reith Committee had ever contemplated.

The planning provisions of the Act were amended and improved by an Order made in 1950 but they are not entirely satisfactory. There is little cause for complaint about planning approvals for development to be carried out by the Corporation itself, for the Minister's approval to the development carries with it planning approval. The Minister is under a duty to consult the Local Planning Authority, but he can, and often does, disregard their objections. The trouble arises on applications by other parties for planning consents in the New Town. Such applications require the agreement of the New Town Corporation; the County Council—as Local Planning Authority; and the Urban District Council, which has powers delegated from the County Council. In the

background stands the Minister, who can decide the issue if the other parties are unable to agree. It happens only too often that they are unable to agree, even when the proposed development is so small as to be trivial: a tradesman who wants to build a garage behind his shop, or a professional man who wants to convert a room in his house for use as an office. A local issue of this kind may be bedevilled by all sorts of personal considerations. If the objections cannot be resolved the Ministry is invoked and sends down an inspector to conduct a public enquiry. In the end the Ministry's decision is usually in favour of any proposal at all reasonable, but though the applicant may win his case he is left to bear the cost of the surveyor, or counsel, or both, whom he may have employed to represent him. Too many cooks spoil the broth, and surely there are too many planners and too many planning authorities concerned in a New Town's affairs. It ought to be possible to devise some scheme which would delegate the power to approve or disapprove and thus save a great deal of time and money.

In one major respect the New Towns Act did not follow the Reith Committee's recommendations. The establishment of a Central Advisory Commission had been a plank of the Reith Committee's recommendations, but the Act when it appeared made no mention of such a body, nor has it ever come into being outside the machinery provided by the Act. It would have been the function of this Commission to consider problems common to all the New Towns and decide on a policy which all New Towns would be invited to adopt. The omission, whatever the reason, was an immense handicap to the New Towns in their

struggle to avoid being strangled at birth and to make some sort of start in life.

To take a simple illustration, the General Managers appointed in 1947 to the first New Towns had to begin by recruiting staff. What salaries were they to offer? Their natural course was to enquire from the Ministry. The answer they got was, first, that any salary scale they decided on would require the Ministry's approval; and, second, that they should have regard to the salaries paid in the civil service, in local government service, and in business firms. As this provided no definite guidance three of the General Managers got together informally under the auspices of the then Chairman of one Corporation and agreed on a simple framework of gradings and salaries, and this was enough to ensure that they did not compete against each other by offering different terms to prospective staff. Other New Town Corporations, however, had different ideas and adopted different patterns. Diversities and anomalies multiplied, leading to successive claims for salary increases from the staff of each Corporation; and it was only after eight years of wearisome argument that a uniform salary scale was agreed and applied to all the New Towns. Had there been in existence some central advisory body it could have quickly produced an answer based on expert advice and recommended for general adoption.

Another good illustration is the sharing of the cost of building classified roads. It was early accepted in principle that when a classified road was to be built in a New Town the cost should be shared between the New Town Corporation, as developer, the County Council, as highway authority, and the Ministry of Transport. But in what

proportions? The Ministry of Town and Country Planning tried to find a formula acceptable to all County Councils, but failed, and passed back the problem to the New Towns. It was left to each New Town individually to hammer out a bargain as best it could with the appropriate County Council over a subject largely technical and exceedingly complex. Here again was a question which cried out to be handled centrally by an expert and independent body, but no such body existed.

Failing a Central Advisory Commission, some means had to be found to provide an exchange of information between the New Towns and at least some small degree of co-ordination. For a very short time the Minister himself used to summon occasional meetings of the Chairmen of the Corporations, but this system soon gave way to meetings of the Chairmen without the presence of representatives of the Ministry. The Chairmen made it their practice to meet in committee about once a quarter; the General Managers about once a month; and that was better than nothing.

This situation is doubly unfortunate because the men who could compose the Central Advisory Commission and whose knowledge and experience would command the attention and respect of the New Town Corporations are not far to seek. They are already giving their services to the New Town movement but they are doing so as Chairmen or Members or General Managers of individual New Towns. As such, their scope is severely limited and their value to the New Towns as a whole is lost.

In October 1946, the New Towns Act became law. It was then for the Minister of Town and Country Planning,

Mr. Lewis Silkin—now Lord Silkin—who had piloted the Bill through Parliament, to decide how he would employ the powers conferred upon him, where the New Towns should be located, and where he was to seek the individuals to bring them into being.

CHAPTER III

The Selection of Sites

Where were the New Towns to be located? People who did not love the New Towns idea declared that the answer to this question was provided by a gentleman in Whitehall, blindfolded and armed with a pin. Setting this theory aside, it is worth examining the problem and looking at the factors involved.

Outside the London area the location of each New Town was governed by its own special circumstances, but within the London area the factors which affected the location of each of the ring of London New Towns did not greatly differ. The first question was: how far out from London should they be? It was imperative that they should be far enough out to leave space for a Green Belt between the outer fringe of the London suburbs and the New Towns themselves. This Green Belt had to be established and had to be safeguarded, and nobody who was in touch with the Housing Authorities supposed that this would be done without difficulty.

The most ominous shadow was that cast by the London County Council. The County of London was bursting at the seams. Much of its house property had been

destroyed by bombing, redevelopment was hampered by the control of materials as well as by cost, and its housing lists had grown to unprecedented length. Building more houses outside the county boundary was the only step which could bring speedy relief. L.C.C. 'Out-County' housing estates had already been established in Essex, Middlesex and Hertfordshire, and the L.C.C. was looking further afield. Was it practicable to put a stop to this expansion, secure the Green Belt, and trust to the growth of the New Towns slowly to absorb Londoners and relieve the L.C.C.'s swollen housing lists?

Nor would other and smaller Local Authorities in the area welcome the declaration of a Green Belt round London and a further series of Green Belts surrounding each New Town. All the Housing Authorities had long waiting lists; they were all anxious to build, and would not be pleased to find themselves hemmed in by Green Belts and restrictions. To abandon the Green Belt, however, would nullify the value of the New Towns and mean a continuing outward sprawl of the London suburbs. The Government hardened its heart and accepted the Reith Committee's view that the London New Towns should be not less than 25 miles out from the centre of London; and the Green Belt was established and has so far been stoutly defended.

The first areas to be designated for New Towns were in fact about 30 miles out from the centre of London. There must have been some temptation to stretch this distance further still, say to 50 miles. To do so would have widened the choice of sites and eased many of the problems, but it would have carried with it the danger of complete failure.

The New Towns had to attract people to go and live in them; they had to persuade industrial firms that it would be to their advantage to build factories in them; and the difference between 30 miles and 50 miles might have made the difference between 'yes' and 'no': between success and failure. It is interesting to note that the New Town site which has been proposed by the L.C.C. at Hook, in Hampshire, is fully 40 miles out, so this risk appears to have diminished.

The New Towns, then, were to be set on the perimeter of a circle of radius about 25 miles and centred on London. Whereabouts on this perimeter should they be placed, and why?

To take first the question of terrain, it was obvious that farmland should if possible be spared, but areas of 5,000 acres or so of waste land or heath did not exist and some encroachment on farmland was unavoidable. There was, however, room for choice between areas that were flat and areas that were hilly. Basildon exemplifies the former: Hemel Hempstead the latter. Hilly country adds something to the cost of constructing roads and services, but there is no doubt that even some mild undulation is a great help from the aesthetic point of view. Another great help is the presence of trees. In every New Town area a survey was made of the trees, in woodlands or hedgerows or private gardens, and layouts were planned so as to save as many of them as possible. In every New Town young trees have been planted in large numbers, but those New Towns which were so fortunate as to include a sprinkling of forest trees have got away to a flying start.

Undulating land and fullgrown trees contribute greatly

to amenity but they cannot be classed as essentials. The things that are essential to a New Town—or for that matter to any other town—are water, drainage, rail access and road access. These can all be produced at any site, at a price; the skill and the judgement lie in selecting those sites where they can be produced at the lowest cost.

The supply of water, either from an impounding reservoir or from bore-holes, its storage and its distribution, is one of the more straightforward tasks of the civil engineer. Where a New Town is concerned there is one variation from the normal and this lies in the quantity of water required per head of the population per day. The national figure before the war was about 30 gallons a day; this national figure is rising steadily, and in a New Town, where every house has a bathroom and a W.C., the consumption is in excess of the national average. The water engineers of a New Town may be faced with another problem when an industrial firm, in every other way a desirable client, wishes to build a factory in the New Town and use processes which either require very large quantities of water or else pass out into the sewers some particularly deleterious kind of effluent.

A New Town in a hurry may find that its rate of growth is governed by its water supply, though not for engineering reasons. The abstraction and use of water in this country is controlled by a network of Authorities and Undertakings large and small, each with its own Act of Parliament or Order from the Ministry of Health. A New Town seeking to negotiate water agreements will find that this machinery is slow to move—and this is putting it mildly—and that a lot of water will have to flow under

bridges before any water flows from the New Town taps.

A drainage system is as essential to a New Town as is a supply of water, and the one is related to the other; for every gallon which the water-mains bring into the town has to be carried away by the sewers. The design and construction of the foul drainage system presents no particular problem to the civil engineer; where he may find himself in trouble is over the disposal of stormwater. The countryside has a porous surface of soil which absorbs the greater part of the rain which falls upon it and passes it down to hidden natural reservoirs below the ground. When there is too much rain for the soil to absorb, some of it will flow away through the ditches, brooks and waterways which have slowly come into being to serve that purpose. Only an abnormal fall of rain will be beyond their capacity. The building of a town, however, changes the picture, for a considerable proportion of the permeable soil is replaced by surfaces of concrete or tarmac or tiles. The rainwater is no longer absorbed but runs off into the storm sewers, and unless preventive measures are taken the brooks and water-courses will flood after even a modest fall of rain. The civil engineer has various ways of controlling this situation but he must not be expected to make provision against flooding when storms occur of the once-in-ten-years size.

Rail access has proved to be of less importance to a New Town than was supposed ten years ago. This is because of the increasing use of road transport. The factories which have been built in the London New Towns are mainly for light engineering firms, who make use of the roads to bring in their raw materials and send out their

manufactured goods. It is exceptional for a firm to say that it must be served by a railway siding. Passenger traffic on the railways, however, has shown a sharp increase when a New Town load comes on. This is not the result of residents in the New Town finding work in London and travelling up and down every day, but because of the link which is bound to come into being between the New Town and its parent city 30 miles away. Over the week-ends in particular the passenger traffic is heavy.

Given that the New Town is served by a railway, there is an important principle of planning to be noted: to avoid using the railway to establish a division between residential area and industrial area. It looks neat and tidy to have all the factories on one side of the railway and all the houses on the other, but the result is a morning surge of traffic from houses to factories and an evening surge in the opposite direction. To build enough bridges over the railway to carry this traffic, for two half-hours in the day, is exceedingly expensive; yet not to provide them means acute traffic congestion.

And, finally, the roads, the thorniest by far of the civil engineer's New Town problems.

Before the construction of the New Town begins there will be in the designated area some pattern of footpaths, lanes and roads, connecting to some main road, major or minor. The engineer has to plan the road pattern as it will be when the New Town is completed and populated by 50,000, 60,000 or 80,000 people. He has to estimate the number of vehicles of all kinds that there will be, and which routes they will wish to use; and then to calculate the widths and specifications of roads to carry that volume of

traffic. To do this requires imagination as well as knowledge. He is likely to have to fight to get what he considers to be necessary, for road-making is costly and the final road pattern as seen on a drawing-board looks absurd against a background of the existing fields and hamlets. Yet if he miscalculates, or if he fails to obtain his essential requirements, he cannot hope for a second chance; to drive more roads through a newly-built housing estate would be intolerable. The same considerations hold good when it comes to the provision of space for parking cars, for in shopping centres, as in industrial areas, parking space must be provided on a scale which before the war would have been dismissed as fantastic. He may also find himself in difficulty over specifications for materials, surfacing and finishes. The cost of constructing the roads is borne, broadly speaking, by the Corporation, the Highway Authority, and the Ministry of Transport, while the cost of maintaining them thereafter falls on the Local Council; so a specification which entails a high initial cost and low maintenance charges will appeal to the latter, and *vice versa*. And before work can begin all the parties concerned have to agree on a specification.

So much for the siting of the New Towns. Will the planners and engineers have some day to tackle the problem of the siting of a New City? With a population of a quarter of a million? Located far away from London, in Norfolk, or Yorkshire or Devon? The Reith Committee frowned on such ideas but there is an arguable case.

CHAPTER IV

The New Town Corporation and its Staff

There was no great difference of opinion as to the composition of a New Town Corporation. The Reith Committee had suggested a body of from six to eight members: all part-time, paid, and appointed for a period of five years. The New Towns Act directed that the number of members should not exceed nine in all and that they should be paid; it did not specify the period of appointment. On one question, however, the Reith Committee's Report and the New Towns Act were not in harmony. The Committee had proposed that the Corporations, while subject to ministerial direction in major policy, should otherwise have freedom of executive action. Although the new Towns Act contained no definition of the action left to the discretion of the Corporations yet it did lay down that all advances of money must satisfy the Ministry and the Treasury that they would secure a reasonable return.

This provision weakens any analogy between a New Town Corporation and the Board of a business concern. The first function of a Board of Directors is to frame policy and policy cannot be divorced from finance. A New Town Corporation is not financially autonomous and

therefore it does not frame policy. New Towns policy is framed at the Ministry and the Treasury and these policies are enforced by a rigid and detailed financial control. A New Town Corporation which wished to take any action which the Ministry did not approve would be helpless, for the money to carry it out would not be forthcoming.

The only policy decisions that fall to the Corporations are on subsidiary matters within the framework of Ministry policy. What other duties are there for them to discharge? First and foremost, the selection of their staff; next, public relations and 'putting across' their New Town; and, thirdly, helping their executive staff in the implementation of policy.

Where is the Minister to find a suitable man for appointment as Chairman of a Corporation? It is easy enough to write a specification: a man who is enthusiastically in favour of the New Towns, has the character and ability to make him a natural leader, has knowledge and experience of property development on a large scale, and is willing to give up the necessary time—say a day a week. But a man who answers to that specification is exceedingly difficult to find and the Minister and his advisers will usually have to be content with something less ambitious. Even so, enthusiasm for the New Towns should be a *sine qua non*.

When the Minister has found a Chairman for the Corporation he has still to provide the other members. This is less difficult. What are the qualities required? There are no serious policy issues to be determined. The detail of administration is not a member's business. Public relations is mainly a localized affair and very few

members live in or near the New Town with which they are concerned. Probably the most useful contribution which a member can make is to put into the general pool some form of specialized professional knowledge. The building of a New Town is full of problems for the surveyor, the architect, the engineer. If a member has expert knowledge of some small part of this wide field he may be able to give invaluable advice and help.

If it is important that suitable candidates should be found to fill the appointments of Chairman and members, it is equally important to ensure some reasonable degree of continuity in their tenure of office. The period for which they are appointed is not laid down in the Act and in practice it has varied from one year to three years, but the power of reappointment is always available. A tenure of less than three years cannot be satisfactory. The building of a New Town is a major enterprise—most of them are spending between £3m. and £4m. a year—and a highly complex one. A man who comes in as a stranger and has everything to learn in the few hours a week that he spends at meetings of the Corporation, or its committees, cannot hope to obtain much grasp of the business within less than two years. In the appointment of Chairmen continuity is even more important, yet one unfortunate Corporation had five changes in its Chairmanship in six years. The doctrine that the interests of a New Town are best served by a series of bold and imaginative men following each other in quick succession is so downright silly that it should not be necessary to argue against it.

Under the Corporation comes the General Manager and under the General Manager is the staff. The staff of a

New Town Corporation numbers at its peak some 300. The normal pattern is an organization into departments, each with a Chief Officer at its head—architect, engineer, surveyor, lawyer, finance, and public relations. The pattern varies because of the varying extent to which Corporations make use of outside consultants, some even to the point of having no architect at all on their own staff. The pattern also varies with the methods of each General Manager: one may like to centralize much of the work in his own office, while another prefers to decentralize everything possible to the departments. Nevertheless there is a large measure of uniformity as between the New Towns.

This organization is copied from local government organization and most of the staff are recruited from local government service. It is a little surprising that this should be so and that neither the Civil Service nor business firms should have contributed more than a small minority; presumably it is because the building of local authority housing estates is the nearest parallel in this country to the building of a New Town. The quality of the staff recruited from local government has been high, for only men with initiative and enterprise above the average would leave the security and routine of ordinary local government employment to take up work certainly more interesting but also more precarious. In the late 1940s, when the first staffs were being recruited, the future of the New Towns was an unknown quantity. They were looked on askance as another piece of Socialist imprudence and it seemed that a change of government might result in the hurried closing down of such little work on them as was then in progress. Nor did the New Towns offer any

financial inducement to make the risks more acceptable, for the salaries they offered were very closely in line with salaries in local government. Nevertheless staffs were recruited, though always with some difficulty.

The Corporations' staffs have never yet been given the credit they deserve for the success of the New Towns. It is only natural that the more prominent figures of Chairmen and General Managers should attract the limelight and figure in the Press, but it is the staff whose work goes on all day and every day and who have the reputation of the Corporation largely in their keeping. This applies in particular to the Chief Officers. They are not only senior officials of the Corporation but also residents of some standing in the town. If they are good citizens and good neighbours, as well as courteous and businesslike in their official dealings, it goes to the credit of the Corporation. It is pleasant to hear the mother of a daughter leaving school say that she is hoping the girl will get a job with the Corporation because the tone there is good and the girls are well looked after.

The staff of a New Town Corporation are at one notable disadvantage compared with the staff of a local authority in that when the New Town is finished their job is finished with it and they must seek employment elsewhere. It may be that when the moment comes some other New Town will be in a position to take them on; or, if they are still young enough, they may be able to go back into local government service; but there are likely to be a great many who will find themselves stranded, perhaps on small pensions, and unable to obtain further employment. If the New Towns prove to be financially successful—and of this

there is no longer any serious doubt—it would appear reasonable to make more adequate provision than has hitherto been contemplated for the security and contentment of the people who are doing so much towards the success of the venture.

And then, interposed between the Corporation and the staff, there is the General Manager. The General Managers of the New Towns, unlike the staff, were not in the main recruited from local government. Several of them have been soldiers or sailors, one was a barrister, one a surveyor, one came from the Indian Civil Service, one from the Sudan Civil Service, and so on. In the early days of the New Towns good candidates were hard to find; the offer of a substantial salary was offset by uncertainty as to the duration of the appointment and as to the duties which would attach to it.

The first duty of the General Manager is to accept responsibility. If the New Towns are to be built there must be somebody in the New Towns machinery who is prepared to take decisions and to accept responsibility for them even should they turn out to be wrong; but who is it to be? At the top of the tree are the Minister and his permanent officials, who will never under any circumstances admit to a mistake. Next comes the Corporation, which in this context means its Chairman; a strong Chairman will of course make decisions and accept responsibility. But it is on the shoulders of the General Manager that most of the burden usually falls.

CHAPTER V

The Division of Responsibility

The New Towns Act conferred on the Corporations wide powers to enable them to acquire and develop land and to borrow money for the purpose; yet many of the essential component parts of a New Town were either expressly excluded from the scope of the Corporation's activities, e.g., the supply of water, electricity and gas; or were excluded by implication, e.g., the provision of schools and other local authority services. There is no need to labour the point that if these other component parts did not materialize at the right time the New Towns would either come to a sudden stop or would never get started at all. Such a large proportion of the time and effort of Corporations and their staffs has been devoted to the problems created by this situation that it seems desirable to look at their nature and the possible solutions to them.

To begin with an easy one, the supply and distribution of gas and electricity to a New Town remain the responsibility of the appropriate national undertakings. All the New Towns have concluded agreements with the undertakings, and on similar lines. Very broadly, the Corporation contracts so to build its houses that the incoming

tenant is able to take either gas, or electricity, or both. In return, the undertaking, at its own cost, lays the mains and the distribution system and makes its own contract with the tenant as consumer. The system has worked smoothly, especially after post-war shortages of certain materials had been overcome.

To turn to a much more difficult subject, the building of a New Town involves the construction of roads. These may be either estate roads, with no 'through traffic' value; or they may have a 'through traffic' value and thus concern the Ministry of Transport. To reach agreement as to the building of the estate roads is a comparatively simple matter, as only one other party is concerned: the District Council which will in due course adopt the roads. An agreement has to be negotiated between the District Council and the Corporation embodying the specification to which the roads are to be built, the period to elapse before they are adopted and the responsibility for their maintenance during that period. Even this negotiation may not be easy, and, when roads with 'through traffic' value are concerned, the difficulties become formidable. Three parties are now interested: the Corporation, the County Council—as Highway Authority—and the Ministry of Transport. It has first to be agreed what 'through traffic' value attaches to each length of road; should it be Class I, Class II or Class III? Next a specification has to be agreed. Then a decision has to be reached on what proportion of the cost should be borne by each of the three parties, and this may lead to almost interminable argument. Finally it has to be decided at what point in time each road should be constructed, in whole or in part. Is a dual

carriageway needed in the initial stages, or would one carriageway serve the purpose? Is a cycle track needed, and if so when? Is a footpath required, or two footpaths? And if any parts of the land reserved for the highway are left temporarily unused who is to maintain the vacant space? In these negotiations the Corporation is at a disadvantage for it is always the Corporation which is in a hurry. It may well be that some part of the New Town cannot be built until a length of classified road has been constructed to give access to it; but the Ministry of Transport when approached for its contribution may say that its financial resources will not allow money to be made available for this purpose for the next year, or two years, or even longer; and if the Corporation is in such a hurry it had better go ahead and find the money itself.

The setting up of industry in a New Town provides another illustration of the dependence of the Corporation on some other government department—in this case the Board of Trade. A firm wishing to build a new factory has to obtain from the Board of Trade an Industrial Development Certificate, and this is not only a formality. From the point of view of the New Towns it is vital to induce firms to come to them in order that housing and industry may be kept in balance. But the Board of Trade takes a much broader view and looks at the distribution of industry throughout the country, and it may well happen that a firm which is anxious to move to a New Town is told by the Board of Trade that it may if it wishes move to Tyneside, or Wales, or another of the 'Development Areas', but not to the New Town where it wishes to go and where the Corporation is more than willing to accept it.

These two illustrations show the dependence of a New Town on the co-operation and goodwill of other government departments, but a more frequent cause of irritation and delay is the dependence of the New Town on the co-operation and goodwill of the local authorities. These local authorities are normally the County Council and the Urban District Council and it was the intention of the Reith Committee, confirmed by the New Towns Act, that these authorities should continue to provide the ordinary local authority services for the New Town in the same way as when a housing estate is being built by a private developer.

The largest and most costly of these services is education. The County Council as Local Education Authority is under a duty to provide, equip, staff and maintain the primary and secondary schools required to serve its population. In the County of Hertfordshire there are four New Towns under construction, bringing in some 10,000 immigrants a year, as well as two L.C.C. out-county estates, and the birth rate in the New Towns is approximately double the national average. The resulting programme for building new schools is staggering and the County Council has not only to call on its ratepayers to find the money but has also the unenviable task of explaining to its long-established centres of population that they must go on making do with schools that now seem old-fashioned and out of date while money is being poured into the New Towns.

The schools are the County Council's business. What part has the Corporation to play in their provision? It falls to the Corporation to agree with the County on the

location of the schools, to reserve the sites required, to keep the County informed of the estimated rate of growth of the population, to make houses available for the school-teachers when they arrive, and to watch continuously the progress of the school programme in order to nag at the County if it falls into arrear. (New Towns so fortunate as to find themselves in Hertfordshire have had little occasion to do so).

Another major local authority service is sewerage. The provision of sewers is the duty of the Urban District Council, but the sewage treatment works and outfall sewers required for a New Town may entail capital expenditure amounting to millions of pounds and present an impossible task for a small Urban District. The New Towns Act, foreseeing this difficulty, empowered a New Town Corporation to undertake the provision itself, and to borrow Treasury money for the purpose. This has enabled a New Town to ensure that its growth is not brought to a standstill by lack of sewerage facilities but the result has been to create a wonderful financial tangle. The Urban District is levying the sewerage rate and may be operating a small sewage works of its own. The Corporation has spent on sewerage a large sum of money on which it has to meet the loan charges and has no income towards them other than any contribution it can obtain from the Council. Who is to pay whom? And how much? And when? These are problems which are only likely to be finally resolved when the time comes for the New Town Corporation itself to disappear.

The various other local authority services involve much smaller sums of money but they give rise to no less argu-

ment. A small Urban District, where the product of a penny rate is a few hundred pounds, has to be cautious over even the smallest expenditure, although, as time goes on and the New Town grows, its rate income will of course grow with it. Its Council is likely to feel that the Corporation, disposing of much greater resources, ought to be ready to accept liability for expenditure without inquiring too closely whether the responsibility is in fact the Corporation's or the Council's. A doorway is ready for them whenever they feel that they have a case deserving consideration, for Section 11 of the Act provides that a New Town Corporation may, with the approval of the Minister, contribute towards expenditure incurred by a local authority in the performance of its statutory functions in relation to the New Town. And this leaves the whole field open.

Thus relations between the New Town Corporation and the Urban District (or Borough) Council are likely to require careful handling, even granted that there is goodwill on both sides, and unfortunately goodwill has been the exception rather than the rule. The Councillors are aware that the members of the Corporation devote much less of their time to the business of the New Town than do the Councillors; that the members are paid but the Councillors are not; that the members are for the most part 'strangers from London' while the Councillors are all local residents; and that the members are nominated by a Minister while the Councillors are elected by the ratepayers. The Councillors would be more than human if they did not on occasion feel some measure of both envy and resentment.

The fact remains that this division of responsibility is a weakness in the New Towns Act. Into a growing New Town there pour simultaneously three different kinds of money; a river of Treasury money, spent by the Corporation; a stream of ratepayers' money, spent by the local authorities; and quite a sizeable brook of private money in the form of capital invested in shops and in factories. Only the first of these three is under the control of the Corporation; when it comes to the other two, the Corporation can plead or argue, but it has no power to compel.

It has been suggested that a solution lies in transferring to the Corporation, within its own area, the powers and responsibilities of the local authorities. There would be many difficulties, of which the fundamental one is that the spending of the rates could not be put into the hands of a body not elected by the ratepayers. Another possible solution would be some measure of rate stabilization to relieve the local authorities from the fear of having to raise their rates because of the advent of the New Town. The maximum rate to be levied might be fixed by comparison with the rate levied in adjoining areas which have not had New Towns fathered upon them, and the Corporation would pay to the local authority whatever sums were needed to hold the rates at that level. There is much to be said in favour of this solution, in particular its simplicity, but it would presumably mean imposing on the local authority some form of inspection or control to ensure that a pegged rate did not mean a farewell to economy. Such a control would not be welcomed, but it might be accepted in view of the solid advantages it would bring.

CHAPTER VI

The Development Programme

The moment comes in the early days of every New Town when some staff have been collected, an office has been secured and the first fence has been cleared by the production of a master plan. This is usually the work of a consultant, one of the group of architect-planners who have made their names in that field. The master plan does not profess to enter into detail. All it claims to do is to provide the outline into which the detailed planning can be fitted in due course, stage by stage. It includes the main rail and road communications, the zones for residential and industrial development, the shopping centres, and the locations of the principal civic and cultural buildings; and it indicates the order of priority of the various stages of development. To draw up some such master plan is not a particularly difficult task; where the skill lies is in assessing the economic factors. Generally speaking, the more compact the development the better its financial outcome will be. A straggling pattern which includes large open spaces and road frontages not fully used will run up the cost of development per acre, and if the master plan necessitates such operations as building

bridges over railways or rivers the expense may well prove prohibitive.

When the master plan has been subjected to a formal Public Inquiry and has been approved by the Minister, the Corporation is in a position to begin the physical development of the New Town. The following comments are devoted only to the building of houses and not to the building of factories. The two are equally important and must be matched with each other, but the building of factories cannot be planned to meet the Corporation's wishes, for the Corporation is not allowed to build factories as a speculation and then look round for tenants; the tenant has to be secured and his signature obtained to a tenancy agreement before the building of the factory is allowed to begin. Consequently the building of houses, which is under the Corporation's control, has to be matched to the building of factories, and not the other way round.

Assuming that enough industry has been secured to make a start, the Corporation will have undertaken to provide some specified number of houses for the firms' workpeople by some specified date. The Corporation will also be committed to providing houses for many people other than those employed in manufacturing industry. The growth of the population means the arrival of what may be loosely termed 'service industry'—shopkeepers, bus drivers and conductors, postmen and a dozen other assorted occupations; and, if the Corporation does not make houses available for them, there is nobody else who will, for the District Council is not concerned with housing people coming in from outside the town. So an estimate is

made of the total number of houses that will be required for the first two years or so, and the master plan indicates the first area for residential development. How does the work begin?

It must begin by the construction of the civil engineering services to feed that area—roads, water-mains and sewers; and as the location of these services will govern the layout of the houses they cannot be constructed until the layout has been planned in detail. Once this detailed planning of the area is completed, the construction of the services can go forward while the contract for building the houses is matured and tenders invited.

It is possible that instead of letting contracts for building houses a Corporation may prefer to recruit a force of building labour in its own employment and build the houses without using the services of a contractor as intermediary. The argument advanced in favour of doing so is that the middleman's profit is thereby eliminated and the cost of building reduced by that amount. This argument, however, assumes that a building contractor renders no service which the Corporation could not itself provide, and this is not so. The internal affairs of the building industry are a tangle of trade-union rules and customs and the building contractor is able to provide the knowledge and experience to keep his contract moving as well as straightforward technical competence in putting together bricks and mortar, timber and tiles. The great majority of New Town Corporations have either left directly employed labour severely alone, or have used it only to some small extent to carry out maintenance work and repairs.

If, then, a contractor is to be employed a great deal of

office work has to be done before tenders can be invited. A housing contract may, and usually does, include a quantity of subsidiary building as well as houses proper: a few shops, some blocks of flats, a number of garages, and odds and ends of civil engineering and landscaping. For all of these items and for each type of house, working drawings have to be prepared and bills of quantities taken out and printed. The firms to be invited to tender are chosen from a selected list maintained by the Corporation, and the larger the contract the more firms are invited. Another problem lies in deciding how many houses to include in any one contract. It is not economical to let very small contracts to build a dozen houses or so, but to go to the other extreme and invite tenders for a contract to build 500 houses or more, though it is likely to produce tenders at satisfactorily low prices, may bring troubles in its train; in particular that, during the two years that it will take to complete the contract, there may be changes in policy, or design, or finance, yet the Corporation is committed to the contract which it has signed. There can be no hard-and-fast rule but a satisfactory normal contract is for 200 or 300 houses.

No matter what contractors are employed, or what the size of their contracts may be, the root problem is the supply of building labour. A rough guide to 'productivity' is that one man builds one house in one year. If, therefore, the Corporation's programme is to build 1,500 houses a year, 1,500 building workers must be employed on the site. As most of the New Towns are located either in virgin country or beside small towns or villages they cannot hope to find locally more than a handful of this labour. Where

is it to come from? The problem is for the contractor, for he has signed a contract to build a given number of houses in a given time and it is his business to obtain the labour to enable him to fulfil his contract. As the labour is not to be found on the spot it must be imported, and this importation may take either or both of two forms. Men may be collected somewhere within a 30-mile radius, brought in by coach in the morning and taken home by coach in the evening—for most of the New Towns this means labour from the London suburbs; or, if a hostel exists in the New Town, men may be found willing to live there for the working week, leaving their families at home. It is the customary practice of building labour to do the former and of civil engineering labour to do the latter. In either case it costs the contractor a substantial extra expenditure of money in payments for transport or hostel charges, and this is reflected in his tender price for the work; which is one of the reasons that house-building in a New Town is expensive. The Corporation may be able and willing to help. It may build and administer a workmen's hostel, where contractors can send their men to live in reasonable comfort at a reasonable charge; and it may offer the inducement of tenancies of some of its houses to building workers who have for a long time been working on contracts in the New Town. As time goes by there comes some easing of the situation, for a proportion of the incoming tenants will be building workers and there will be other men in other kinds of employment who will transfer to the building industry for the sake of the high wages; so that there will be created a small pool of local labour on which contractors may hope to draw.

If the Corporation is aiming at completing 1,500 houses a year its contractors must by some means or other attract about 1,500 building workers to the site. If they fail to do so the programme will fall behindhand and the Corporation will not be able to meet its commitments to industrial firms and others for providing houses. In theory, the Corporation can seek redress from its contractors, with whom responsibility for the failure lies; for any contract will include a clause providing for the payment of damages if the contract is not completed on time. In practice this clause is of no value, for it is virtually impossible to prove in a court of law that the delay was due to circumstances within the contractor's control. The sanction lies not in suing the contractor for damages but in striking him off the list of approved contractors, and the threat of doing so is ineffective for so long as the building industry has more work offering than it can undertake. In any event, the Corporation is left with fewer house completions than it needs and it may be tempted to try to increase the flow of houses by letting contracts for building more houses. Experience has shown that this is likely to make matters worse, not better. Letting more contracts is easy enough to do but unless the new contractor can tap sources of labour not hitherto exploited the result is that the same amount of labour distributes itself over a larger number of houses under construction and the flow of completions is thereby not accelerated but actually retarded. In the conditions prevailing between 1950 and 1960 in the building industry and the labour market, it appeared that no matter how many houses a year a Corporation put into its programme it could not in fact assemble enough labour to complete

more than 2,000 houses a year as a maximum, and most Corporations had to be content with a good deal less. A very distinguished architect, the Chairman of one of the New Towns, touched on this question in a lecture he gave some years ago. He said: 'In wartime completion dates are the only things that matter. You can say to the man in charge: "I don't care what it costs; I don't care what it looks like; I don't care if it falls down in ten years; but it's got to be finished on time." That's all right in wartime, but you can't do it in the New Towns.'

Nor is it certain that a completion rate as high as 2,000 houses a year is desirable, apart from the question of whether it is practicable. 2,000 houses a year means about 6,000 newcomers to the town, and this is a very large intake to absorb. Newcomers need a little time to become assimilated, and if they arrive in too great numbers they may give rise to various forms of indigestion.

Looked at over the whole period of the growth of the New Town, the development programme should begin slowly, work up to a faster pace as the labour force is collected, continue at that pace until the end is in sight, and then gradually slow down to its completion. It may be necessary to modify the programme from time to time; if the factory programme falls away the housing programme may have to be cut. But modifications are best avoided and they cannot be made at short notice. Neither an acceleration nor a retardation will become effective in terms of house completions for twelve months or more after the policy decision has been taken, and it may well happen that during those twelve months policy may swing back to where it was before. To modify the development

programme upsets the many agencies which have to keep in step with the Corporation, disturbs the co-ordination between the Corporation's own departments, and runs up the Corporation's overhead costs. Few and fortunate are the New Towns which have been able to frame a satisfactory development programme and stick to it!

CHAPTER VII

Houses or Flats?

Houses or flats? Every New Town had to face this problem. It was accepted that some proportion of the dwellings to be built should take the form of flats—defined in this context as dwellings with no gardens; but what should the proportion be? The question was one on which the Reith Committee's Report hardly touched and it proved to be a thorny one.

Some attempts had been made to assess the probable dimensions of the demand for flats. Surveys had been carried out in some of the London Boroughs by questioning people on the housing lists, and the conclusion was that the demand would be of the order of 5 per cent. There are certain categories of tenants who are likely to prefer a flat and not want to be bothered with gardening: unmarried people of either sex, and the elderly or infirm; but the great majority are clear that what they want is a house and garden.

A little guidance was also forthcoming from the sociologists. A young couple should start their married life in a flat or a two-bedroomed house. As the family increased they should move into a three-bedroomed and

then a four-bedroomed house. In course of time the fledglings would leave the parental nest and the process should then be reversed until the couple ended up in a flat, as they had begun. And that, no doubt, is what they should do, only in this imperfect world the trouble is that they don't.

It was reasonably certain that 90 per cent or so of the prospective tenants would prefer a house and garden to a flat. Customers are said to be always right, but not when the customer is a New Town tenant; for there are two important and influential persons who hold that in this respect at least he is wrong. One is the architect, the other is the farmer.

The New Town staff architect is entitled to some sympathy. The bulk of his work is bound to consist of the design and construction of two-storey housing, and he can only exercise his skill by obtaining the best possible value for a minimum of money. He must insist on a decent standard of materials and workmanship, and secure a result which is pleasant to look at yet does not involve extra cost. It is useful work, indeed invaluable work, but it is not exciting. 'Jam yesterday, jam tomorrow, but never jam today.' When the jam comes in sight, in the shape of a church, or a cinema, or a block of offices, the work is probably put out to some consultant architect with a big name; or when the engineer, his opposite number, is designing a bridge or an underpass he may be invited, at the last moment, to 'put on the architecture'. The reaction from designing two-storey housing is one reason for his yearning to build flats, but his strongest motive is that blocks of flats will give him a chance to break up the sky line. Most of the buildings in a New Town are necessarily

two-storey and the monotony of the two-storey skyline wearies the eye. Nature may give some help, either in the form of irregularities of terrain or of fully grown trees to be preserved and treasured. Failing help from nature what can the architect do? He will of course consult the planner to obtain the maximum aesthetic value from such tall buildings as are likely to be needed in or near the residential areas; churches of various denominations; public-houses, which may run to three storeys to provide accommodation for the manager and his wife; blocks of shops with maisonettes over them; even a water tower if well designed and suitably sited. But such buildings are few and far between, and the architect longs to build a number of multi-storey blocks of flats. It is, however, an unfortunate fact that building flats, in this country at least, is more expensive than building houses; to produce the same amount of floor space costs nearly 50 per cent more. Why this should be so is not clear; in part it is because extra height increases the contractor's labour costs under the working rules of the building industry; in part because building blocks of flats is something comparatively new in Great Britain.

Flats also come into the philosophy of that school of architectural thought which coined the word 'Subtopia'. Its disciples dismiss the New Towns with contempt as monotonous, unimaginative and lacking in 'urbanity'—whatever that may be—and they hark back regretfully to Bath and its terraces; and to Chester and its arcades. They seem to forget that conditions have changed, as to costs and as to incomes, and that there is no room nowadays for architects who believe that their function is to build

beautiful dwellings which in course of time become infested, unfortunately, with creatures known as tenants.

The farmer's argument in favour of flats instead of houses has the merit of simplicity. He says that every acre of land taken for airfield runways, or arterial roads, or power stations, or New Towns, is an acre lost to cultivation of one kind or another, and Great Britain becomes by that amount the less able to support her population. This is plausible, but the acreage of land diverted from agricultural use is very small while the productivity of land has increased enormously over the last ten years. The agronomist thinks nothing of making two grains of corn grow where only one grew before, and it should be child's play to him to secure the further small increase needed to compensate for the land lost to agriculture because of its appropriation to other uses. Nor is it correct for the farmer to claim that because an area of, say, 5,000 acres is designated for the building of a New Town, therefore 5,000 acres are lost to agriculture. Some of that acreage will survive as arable and pasture, some of it will become allotments, intensively cultivated, and a large proportion of it will be enclosed as the private gardens of private houses. Agriculture, horticulture, and gardening are rather loose terms, but the average small private garden will contain not only flowerbeds and a patch of grass but a vegetable plot as well. It is undeniable that the building of a New Town means some loss of agricultural land but the farmer would get more sympathy if he did not so often and so grossly overstate his case.

There are one or two other aspects of the houses *versus*

flats controversy which are of more interest to the professional planner and the developer than to students of the New Towns in general. One fiercely contested question is the scale of the Government subsidies payable on new blocks of flats. On expensive sites, such as those in London, the subsidies on multi-storey blocks of flats are very large; if it were not so their cost, and their rents, would be prohibitive. It is claimed that the result is the building of residential accommodation in London at a cost to the nation much higher than the cost of providing the same amount of accommodation in houses in the New Towns—or indeed elsewhere—outside London. This is a useful argument to those who wish to see a start made on building more New Towns, and it appears to be valid, but it provides no answer to the future use of the expensive London land.

Another related question is the optimum population density in a New Town. The term 'density per acre' requires most careful definition. It may be applied to houses, or habitable rooms, or persons. It may mean per acre of the area designated for the New Town; or per acre of the built-up area; or per acre of a particular housing estate; or per acre of the usable land within a particular housing estate. To a layman the simplest standard to use for purposes of comparison is the number of houses per acre within a housing estate, and this figure does not vary greatly from one New Town to another. It is exceptional to find a density below 12 houses per acre, or above 16 houses per acre. To obtain the figure of population multiply the number of houses by approximately 3.

Throughout the building of the New Towns there has been argument about the optimum density. A high density

commends itself to the Treasury and to the professional estate developer, for a high density and a 'tight' layout are economically sound; the cost of roads, sewers, and what the planner rather drearily describes as 'Public Open Space'—parks, gardens and woodlands—is spread over a larger number of inhabitants. The Corporations and the Local Authorities tend to favour a rather lower density which permits larger gardens and even here and there 'an English unofficial rose' blowing in the hedge. Flats can play an important part in this argument, for the addition of a few blocks of flats to a housing layout will sharply increase the population density and may provide an answer acceptable to all the interested parties.

How the problem of houses *versus* flats has worked out in practice can be illustrated by figures available for nine of the New Towns in March 1957. Up to that date the maximum proportion of flats built was at Harlow—21 per cent of its dwellings—and the minimum at Cwmbran—3 per cent. The average figure was 11.6 per cent. This proportion may, and probably will, alter as time goes on, but in which direction? Is man becoming a flat-dwelling animal? M. le Corbusier thinks so and has built the *unité d'habitation* in which people can pass their lives high above the ground and avoid all contact with the earth below. Has he built a marvel or a monstrosity?

CHAPTER VIII

The Establishment of Industry

The basic idea of the New Towns is that they are places in which people both live and work. Unlike the city suburb or the local authority housing estate, a New Town has failed in its purpose if its residents travel daily to work elsewhere. A man who wishes to move to any of the London New Towns has normally to satisfy two conditions: he must come from London and he must have a job—or the promise of a job—in the New Town. If he lacks these two qualifications the Corporation will not offer him a tenancy.

It follows that throughout the period of the construction of the New Town a balance must be maintained between the building of houses and the building of factories. To express this balance in terms of numbers requires the use of some arbitrary constants. How many persons per thousand of the population will seek employment in manufacturing industry? Say about 25 per cent. How many square feet of factory floor space will be required per person employed? Say on an average 200 sq. ft. From such assumptions it is possible to calculate roughly how many houses a Corporation must complete

in any given year in order to match the industrial development to which it is committed over the same period.

And what kinds of manufacturing industry is the New Town anxious to recruit? It has to be a light industry; heavy industry would not come to the London area even if it were allowed to. An important qualification is diversity; a New Town does not want to collect firms all of one type and expose itself to the risk of mass unemployment should that particular industry fall on hard times. A useful characteristic is a high proportion of professional and technical staff to help in breaking up the one-class pattern which the New Towns are finding it so difficult to prevent. The very large factory seems on the whole to be better avoided, as if one firm is bigger than all the others put together it may become too powerful in the New Town's affairs; and, perhaps more important, if it falls on adversity the New Town will suffer. On the other hand the firm must have sufficient standing and financial resources to justify the Corporation in granting it a lease. And every firm wishing to move to a New Town has to satisfy the Board of Trade that the move would be in the national interest.

The maintenance of balance between housing and industry requires some careful timing. Ideally, when a new factory of, say, 50,000 square feet is completed and opened the Corporation should at the same time complete 250 new houses and be ready to accept 250 new tenants and their families. To strike a balance with such precision is of course impossible. Contracts for building houses result in a steady flow of so many completions a week and a Corporation cannot allow its houses to stand empty when they

are ready for occupation. Nor would it suit a firm to try to jump into full production at a single bound. The process is usually spread over a period of some months. Before the factory is completed some of the firm's key men will have moved into the New Town. If, as is usually the case, the firm is moving out from London, these men can go up daily to work in London until the new factory is open. Once the new factory is open it is possible for employees living in London to come out daily to work and go back in the evening until the Corporation is in a position to house them. A very careful programme has to be agreed between the firm and the Corporation well in advance of the move if the transfer is to take place with a minimum of dislocation and loss of production.

In establishing its industrial estate there is an important policy question on which the Corporation is free to take its own decision. Does it wish to build the factories itself, borrowing the capital from the Treasury, and rack-rent them to the firms? Or does it wish to lease land to the firms on a ground rent and leave it to the firms to provide the capital and build their own factories? There is something in favour of either course. If the Corporation provides the capital it will fix a rack-rent to show a reasonable return, and as the amount of capital is large even a small percentage of profit will produce a substantial income on revenue account. The danger lies in what may happen if the firm is hard hit by an economic crisis, or some other misfortune, and is compelled to pull in its horns. The Corporation may find itself with the factory back on its hands and all the firm's employees—and they are the Corporation's tenants—out of work and unable to pay their rent. If on

the other hand the Corporation leases the land to the firm and leaves it to the firm to build the factory, the Corporation will have to be content with a very modest annual return; but the New Town will stand to gain when the moment of crisis comes, for the firm which has sunk its own capital in building its factory is committed. It must stand or fall with the New Town, and the stability thus obtained is a very valuable asset even though it cannot be expressed in terms of money. There is no need for a Corporation to treat these two courses as alternative and decide between them. A judicious blend of about half-and-half is probably the best answer. Nor can Corporations afford to be too unyielding, for it may happen that a firm which is a particularly desirable customer says that if it may not build its own factory it will go elsewhere.

One other question of policy is what size of return the Corporation should try to secure, both on rack-rents and ground rents. In the early stages of a New Town, before any industry has materialised, the Corporation will have to be content with something modest and make a low rent one of the attractions it can offer. Later on, when the first firms are in production and there is a queue of other firms anxious to follow, the Corporation may be in a position to ask for rents, both rack-rents and ground rents, which will show a very high percentage return. The general opinion of those experienced in property development is that it is unwise for a New Town to exploit this scarcity value and raise the level of rents so high that the firms are burdened by having to pay them and resent the Corporation's attitude. It is better to be satisfied with a reasonable return and a contented customer.

The first New Towns in their early days found it difficult—sometimes very difficult—to persuade industry that they had something to offer. In the eyes of Big Business the New Towns were deeply suspect; it was bad enough that they were the creatures of government but that it should be a Labour government made things far worse; a firm moving there would find itself tied up in red tape, mothered, smothered and grandmothered. The New Town Corporations and their staffs found it an anxious task coaxing, cajoling and persuading, and showing by personal contacts that a firm moving to a New Town would find itself dealing with reasonable human beings. The effort was rewarded, for it took a wonderfully short time—two or three years—to reach the stage of having to say to any firm wishing to come to the New Town that the best that could be done was to put it on the waiting list. This was due not only to the number of firms wishing to move to a New Town but also to the expansion of firms already there. It has been common for a firm to plan its first extension before its original factory was finished, and to start building its second extension before its first extension was in production. A firm would not embark on such expansion unless it was satisfied with its new surroundings.

The proximity of London raises an awkward question as to wage rates. The higher wage rates paid in London are not applicable in the New Towns outside it. From the point of view of the factory employee the cost of living in a New Town is generally higher than in London, yet the wage rates are lower; though it is true that he does not have to spend time and money in travelling to and from his work. From the point of view of the employer he would

forfeit one of the advantages of moving to a New Town if he were to pay London rates; and furthermore there are in most of the New Towns factories established long before the New Towns were thought of, and they would feel themselves unfairly treated if the new factories were to pay London rates which they would have to adopt themselves if they were to keep their employees. The situation may ease if, as seems possible, the cost of living in the New Towns becomes relatively less as they approach completion; and it should cease to present a problem when, as is bound to happen in course of time, the New Town is no longer new, the Corporation has disappeared, and the inflow and outflow of population is governed by supply and demand instead of by arbitrary rules as to who may or may not be allotted tenancies of the houses.

The typical industrial area of a New Town presents a remarkable spectacle. It covers some hundreds of acres of land and is segregated from the residential neighbourhoods. The factory buildings range in size from 5,000 square feet to 100,000 square feet or more. They are new, they are clean, they are virtually smokeless—totally unlike the picture that the term 'factory' suggests to an older generation. They are interspersed with car parks, for the factory employee of today tends more and more to drive his own car to the works rather than travel by bus or bicycle. The roads have wide verges and lay-bys and the whole industrial area is planted and landscaped. The only amenity lacking is trees; nothing but time can bring the young trees to their full growth. After dark the area is bright with street lighting and the lights from factories working night shift, and crowned with the neon lamp

advertising of the big firms. All this is in an area which less than ten years ago was meadowland or arable.

Last year a public reference was made to one of the New Town's industrial area as 'an aristocracy of industry'. The firms now in production in that particular New Town include the English Electric Company, Imperial Chemical Industries, the De Havilland Aircraft Company, International Computers and Tabulators, and Kodak. Is not the term 'an aristocracy of industry' entirely appropriate?

CHAPTER IX

The New Town Residents

The London New Towns which were begun between 1947 and 1949 are now about halfway to completion and they have housed in all about 200,000 new residents. What sort of people are they and what are they making of their new surroundings?

Look at a typical family—a man and his wife, both of them young, with one small child. They are living in one of the outer London Boroughs, in a council house or flat if they are exceptionally lucky; otherwise sharing with his or her parents or paying a high rent—sometimes astonishingly high—for furnished rooms. The husband is in regular work and earning good wages but he leaves home early and gets back late. There is nowhere for the child to play except on the pavement, and they want to have more children. Husband and wife are both wondering whether all their married life is to be spent with no privacy and no room to turn round.

Then a way of escape opens. A friend of a friend has moved to one of the New Towns and reports that he and his wife like it and are happy. The story sounds too good to be true; a place where all the houses are new, where

every house has its own kitchen, bathroom and lavatory, where every house has a garden. They realize that there must be some drawbacks but they are an enterprising couple and they write to the New Town Corporation to ask for a tenancy. The answer is that they will be welcome but only if some firm in the town will give the husband a job and nominate him for a house. This is the Corporation's basic principle—residents in the town should work in the town. This principle would not be satisfied if the New Towns accepted tenants on the ground of housing need, reasonable though this criterion might at first sight appear. A basis of housing need would result in a population which included a high proportion of less welcome types; people with very large families, or suffering from chronic illness, or indifferent workers. The tying of house to job means that a man will not get a house unless some firm thinks well enough of him to nominate him for a tenancy, and this hidden process of selection works towards an appreciable raising in the levels of skill and of character.

The couple devote a day to visiting the New Town. One of the Corporation's Housing Managers takes them round, shows them the various types of house on offer and tells them the rents. The man goes to the Labour Exchange which sends him on to a firm in need of his particular trade. The firm likes the look of him. They offer him a job and they undertake to nominate him for a house after three months. The couple go back to London and have to make up their minds whether to move or not.

It may seem surprising that very often the strongest deterrent to moving is the prospect of 'leaving Mum'. Mum may be either the husband's mother or the wife's,

more often the latter, and she is the embodiment of close-knit ties of family and of environment. It may well be that she and her daughter live so close together that they meet each other every day. She is the repository of family news and circulates it to the other members. It is to her that her daughter turns in time of illness or distress for advice or help or money. Whether this close connection is socially desirable is a matter of opinion, but there can be no doubt of its potent influence. To move to a New Town means that a weekly meeting is the most that mother and daughter can hope for, and even this is only possible because the New Towns are within 30 miles of London. The result is that every week-end there is a mass migration of visitors in both directions; New Town residents going back to see the friends and relations they have left behind in London: friends and relations coming out from London to inspect the new house in the New Town.

They make up their minds to move. For three months the husband works with his new firm, starting early and returning late, two hours journey each way. The Corporation's Housing Manager writes to tell them which house they have been allotted and the date they can move in. The day comes, the furniture van brings out their belongings, and next morning they wake to their new world.

After a week or two they are in a position to realize both the advantages they have gained and the difficulties they have to face. To take the latter first, although they are surrounded by houses they have no friends or even acquaintances. Their neighbours are not unfriendly, but they too are recent arrivals and are immersed in their own

affairs. Even the streets are alien, rows and rows of little front gardens and maybe half a mile to go to the nearest shop or the nearest pub. The fact that each house has its own garden means that the population in any given area is much less than in London; the streets are less busy, the traffic is less dense. The New Towns are not 'cosy' places. They may too find that they are hard pressed to make both ends meet. Rent and rates are high and they are probably heavily committed to hire-purchase payments—furniture, cooker, T.V. set—although the man may be able to increase his income by overtime working and there is the opportunity for the wife too to make some money by working, either full-time or part-time, if the size and age of her family permit.

On the other side of the account the first item is that they have a house of their own, and perhaps the next is that they have a garden of their own. The way these gardens are kept is one of the New Towns' surprises. Three gardens out of four have obviously had time and labour and money lavished on them, and this not by countrymen born but by Londoners few of whom have had so much as a window-box of their own. Gardening is helped by the proximity of the factories to the houses; a man can, if he wants to, spend working in his garden the hour in the evening which elsewhere it would have taken him to travel home. Another great attraction lies in the good schools. The primary schools are so arranged that every child can get from home to school without having to cross a main road, and all the schools and their playing fields are new and attractive. Throw in the sunlight and the fresh air and there appears to be a balance on the

credit side. This is a fair deduction from the stability of the incoming population. Not all of them settle down for good in the New Town; some are moved elsewhere by their employers; some emigrate—the people who are attracted by a New Town are likely to be the same people who are attracted by the idea of life in one of the Dominions. But the numbers who go back to London because they just can't bear the new kind of life is minutely small. It varies from 2 per cent to 5 per cent of the total.

We have been looking at a family typical of those that move out to a New Town, the man working in a factory and taking a tenancy at a weekly rent, say between 35/- and 40/-, of a subsidized house—the equivalent of a 'council house' elsewhere. But what progress is being made with the 'balanced community'? This phrase was used in the terms of reference of the Reith Committee and they made quite clear in their report what they understood it to mean. 'If the community is to be truly balanced, so long as social classes exist, all must be represented in it.' Although they appreciated that there was a problem they do not seem to have realized how exceedingly difficult it would be to find a satisfactory solution.

Employed in any New Town are men earning large salaries—the Managing Directors and senior executives of the firms which have moved there; but not one in ten of them lives in the New Town. What inducement is there for him to do so? He does not want to live cheek by jowl with his own work-people, nor they with him. He does not want to live in a place that is still in process of being built. He does not want to sink a substantial amount of capital in housing himself in an area where he may not need

to stay indefinitely. He does not mind being half-an-hour's run, or more, from his office. So either he buys or rents a manor house or vicarage in some country village as much unlike a New Town as it can possibly be; or else he takes a flat in London, where many of his business connections live.

It will be some years at least before that type of man is likely to live in a New Town, but lower down the income scale the prospect is more hopeful. What sort of accommodation will suit the junior executive, the man on a salary of about £1,000 a year? A manor house in the country is far beyond his means, yet he is a cut above the council house, or even the council house-plus-extras which the Corporation will offer him. He probably would like to own a house but the cost and chanciness of building for himself are too frightening. So then the speculative builder comes to the rescue. The term 'speculative builder' has come to have a derogatory implication and it may be equally accurate and more polite to call him a private builder. Most of the New Towns have sold areas of land to private builders, and the private builders have proceeded to build houses for sale, and to sell them. It may seem strange that the Corporation should not do this for itself without invoking the aid of private enterprise, but the reason is that the private builder can always build more cheaply than the Corporation. This is no slur on the Corporation's architects; it represents the difference between the spending of government money and the spending of a private firm's risk capital. Admittedly the private builder who builds, sells, and goes away, may cut his specifications finer than the Corporation which is

building houses to let and will be responsible for their maintenance for many years; but he cannot do so to excess as his specification will be subject to the Corporation's approval. His costs are lower because he does not employ an architect, because he buys his components and fittings in bulk, because he builds at a time and a season to suit his convenience, and because he is willing to alter his design at any moment to make use of materials immediately available. These economies are not open to a Corporation which has to be prepared to explain and correct any defect found in its houses, but they enable the private builder to save something like 10 per cent on the Corporation's costs. The private builder, too, understands the art of selling. The 'show' house, nicely furnished, is open to inspection. He makes the arrangements for the mortgage and the finance. All the would-be buyer has to do is to decide whether he can afford the specified weekly payments, and if so to sign on the dotted line.

Such purchases suit the customer, who gets what he wants; they suit the private builder, who makes his profit; and they suit the Corporation, which is anxious to encourage house ownership as a change from the usual weekly tenancies. In some of the New Towns they amount to some 20 per cent of all the houses built.

It is possible to make one or two generalizations about the New Town residents, whether they are weekly tenants or owners of houses. They are young, they are enterprising, they are house-proud and garden-proud, and they are glad they came to a New Town.

CHAPTER X

Rents and Amenities

Rents and amenities may suitably be grouped together, for it does not require any wide interpretation of the term 'amenities' to bring within it the payment of a rent not so high as to be burdensome to the tenant. If the level of rents is unduly high this will by itself depress the standard of living in other respects and put out of reach some or all of the amenities which demand the spending of money.

This problem of rent levels is common to all the English New Towns and the basic policy is laid down by the Treasury. The New Towns are not allowed to reduce the rents of their houses by taking advantage of any profits accruing from other sources such as their shops or their factories. They are required to keep their housing accounts in balance; that is, they have to collect in rents enough money to pay the annual outgoings on housing, of which by far the largest item is the loan charges on the capital they have borrowed to pay their building contractors.

When the New Towns started building operations, twelve years ago, interest rates were comparatively low and they were able to borrow Treasury money at about

3½ per cent; but fluctuations in Bank Rate since then have been generally upwards, and by 1957 they were paying about 7 per cent. The increased borrowing rate has to be reflected in the rents and an increase of 1 per cent in the borrowing rate means an increase of 7/- a week in the rent of a typical Corporation house. Nor is this the only factor which has pushed up Corporation rents. Over the last ten years building costs have gone up and up; sometimes they have run level but at no time have they fallen and they are now more than 50 per cent higher than they were in 1948. Adding these two increases together, it follows that if two identical houses had been built in the same New Town, one in 1948 and one in 1958, the cost of the second—and consequently its economic rent—would be nearly double that of the first.

What is the Corporation to do? First, and obviously, to try to reduce costs by cutting, as far as they think permissible, standards of size and of finish. The Corporations' architects have worked wonders in finding ways of saving a little money here and a little money there without damaging the houses as a whole, but the savings thus achieved are not enough, or nearly enough, to restore the balance. Corporations have therefore been compelled to increase rents.

The extra income required could be obtained by fixing the rent of each house, or group of houses, in accordance with its actual cost; but to do so would produce such gross anomalies as to make it out of the question. An incoming tenant cannot be asked to pay a rent of say 50/- a week when his neighbour, occupying an identical house built five years ago, is paying only 30/-. The alternative is to

raise the rent of the sitting tenants so that they pay rather more than they did originally, and use the surplus to reduce the rent of the incoming tenants to something less than the full economic figure; and thus to keep the housing account as a whole in balance.

Raising the rents of sitting tenants is bound to be unpopular and to give rise to complaint. All the New Towns have been compelled to do so and it says much for the good sense of the New Town residents that attempts to promote 'rent strikes' have found little sympathy or support. Successive increases of up to five or six shillings a week have been accepted on the whole philosophically and with a realization that they were unavoidable. Many of the New Town residents appreciate that they have been mercifully treated by the Government in that the housing subsidy of about £30 a year, which is no longer paid to local authorities, has been continued for the New Towns, and this represents a deduction of more than 10/- a week from the strict economic rent. It is true, on the other hand, that a local authority is in an easier position than a New Town when its housing account is threatened with a deficit; for a local authority will have a proportion of houses built cheaply before the war, giving scope for rent increases; and a local authority may, and usually does, help out its housing account by substantial subsidies from its general rate fund.

Turning from rents to amenities, a criticism often levelled at the New Towns is that the provision of amenities has failed to keep pace with their growth in size and population. The term 'amenities' may be construed in a broad sense to cover such near-necessities as water, gas

and electricity, but these may be taken for granted. What, then, are the other things the tenant looks for?

First of all, he expects to find shops. The countryman is used to going some distance, often a long distance, to do his shopping. The Londoner is not. He—and still more his wife—will be at a loss unless he can buy his day-to-day requirements without having to walk more than a few hundred yards. This was realized by the New Town planners and they included in their layouts not only a main shopping centre to serve the whole New Town but also little groups of shops, and even single shops, scattered among the residential areas. The planning presents no difficulty; what is difficult is to decide the moment in time at which the shops should be built. From the point of view of the incoming residents the shops should be leased, tenanted and doing business before the first resident arrives. From the point of view of the shopkeeper he should not open until at least the majority of his prospective customers are there and clamouring for his services. The answer has to be a compromise and the unwelcome delay before the shops open is made more tolerable because of the growing use of mobile shops and self-service vans which appear within a matter of days in any area where there is an unsatisfied demand.

Next, the tenant who owns a car wants to rent a garage to keep it in. If he is earning enough money he may like to take a tenancy of a house which has a garage attached to it; otherwise he will want to rent from the Corporation a garage in one of the blocks of garages which have been built at intervals on convenient sites among the houses. His request for a garage, however, is likely to be answered

to the effect that he will be put on the waiting list and that there is no prospect of his name coming up for a period which may stretch to twelve months or more. Here again the position arises not from the Corporation's negligence but from the Treasury's caution. If the demand for garages were satisfied—and it is now running at one garage for every two houses—it might happen that a future slump in industry would reduce the demand and garages would be left untenanted. So the Corporations only succeed in adding to their garage blocks after pleading 'special circumstances' in order to obtain approval, and this they can only do at a cost greatly in excess of what they would have had to pay if the garages had been included in the original housing contract. The owners of the cars, meanwhile, park them on the roads or on the verges, damaging the grass and leading to a crop of prosecutions by the police.

Next there may be grouped together television, cinemas and public houses, all of them pulling against each other. The provision of the first and the last present no difficulty to the New Town Corporations. Buying a T.V. set is a matter for the individual and the houses which do not boast a T.V. aerial are becoming few and far between. The location and size of new public houses in each New Town is considered by a local committee on which the licensing justices are represented as well as the other appropriate interests. The Corporation then invites from firms of brewers tenders for a lease of the site and the successful firm designs, builds and manages the public house. The Corporation makes a profit on the ground-rent and the brewers appear to be doing a satisfactory trade.

Cinemas are a more thorny proposition. Some of the New Towns already have small cinemas built before the war, but they are all anxious to see a large, modern, luxury cinema, centrally placed to serve the whole of the New Town. In the early days the omens appeared to be favourable; a prospective population of 50,000 or 60,000 was enough to arouse the interest of the big cinema firms, though they were not prepared to build until the population reached the 30,000 mark. But then the cinema industry fell on evil days; T.V. cut down their audiences and taxation cut down their profits, and their policy is to reduce their commitments rather than to increase them. It remains to be seen whether time will produce more favourable conditions; meanwhile the cinemas planned in the New Towns have come to a standstill.

Not so the care of souls and the care of bodies. It is astonishing how much the Churches—Anglican, Free and Roman Catholic alike—have managed to achieve. New Churches have sprung up, financed mainly by the ecclesiastical central authorities, and extra staff, both clerical and lay, have been recruited. Most of the Churches are dual purpose buildings, church-cum-church-hall, and when services are not in progress the chancel can be shut off by sliding doors and the rest of the building used for a dozen different community purposes. The responsibility for the care of bodies rests with the National Health Organisations. The working of this complex machinery is not easy to follow but in each New Town the increase in the population has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the numbers of general practitioners, dentists, nurses, midwives and ambulances. The only complaint

often heard is that each New Town ought to have its own large general hospital instead of having to send its patients to that hospital, somewhere in the region, which provides the specialist treatment required. This will come in time but it is unreasonable to demand the immediate expenditure of a very large amount of money in order to meet an ultimate need.

And finally there is the question of community buildings. In any old-established town of 50,000 people—or even much less—one will find a hall or a hut or a room of some kind which is available for the general use of the community. It may have been given by some public-spirited donor; it may have been paid for with money collected slowly and painfully over a period of years; but there it is and it serves its purpose. What similar provision should be made, or can be made, in a New Town suddenly springing up from nothing—where a potential donor doesn't exist, and where the ordinary run of tenant who might be asked to contribute is already committed to the hilt to hire-purchase payments for this and that and t'other?

One solution advocated is to make use of the schools provided by the State. They are conveniently situated, they are well warmed and lit, and the fees charged for their use are reasonable. And yet somehow this is not a satisfactory answer. The surroundings may be agreeable and the colours gay, but a school is a school and its atmosphere does not go well with social or mildly festive occasions. There are obvious and unavoidable limitations on the hours during which they can be used and in the background is the caretaker keeping a jaundiced eye on the clock and

vigilant to prevent cigarette-ends being dropped on his polished floors.

Some Corporations have succeeded, by dint of pleading and persistence, in obtaining permission to build at their own cost full-dress community centres, with dance hall, bar, restaurant and committee rooms. A building of this kind costs about £20,000 and somebody has to find the loan charges of £1,000 a year. The income from the use of the building cannot possibly meet this charge; it may cover the cost of staffing and maintenance but can hardly do more. Corporations can and do pay the loan charges by making a small addition to the rents of all their houses. Even where centres of this kind have been built they do not always succeed in their primary purpose of full and frequent use. The population is still building up, the incoming residents are busy with their own houses and gardens, and the community centre may find itself often standing empty.

In spite of this, however, it does appear to be the most hopeful line of approach that buildings for community use should be built and financed by the Corporations. Even though they cannot be financially self-supporting the annual deficits are minutely small in comparison with the aggregate rents paid by the people who use them. They do provide a testing-ground for the innumerable forms of social activity which a New Town generates, and even if 90 per cent of these wither and die yet the 10 per cent which take root and survive are worth having.

CHAPTER XI

Public Relations

Normally constituted people like to feel that they are popular and stand well with the world and their neighbours. Members of New Town Corporations are no exception to the rule. Were it not for this natural desire they could go their ways without worrying about such considerations, for they are nominated by a Minister of the Crown and are not responsible to some electorate which must be placated if they wish to continue to hold their appointments. Few of them, however, are anxious to hold themselves aloof and austere, and they have therefore to decide on a public relations policy and on how much money—public money—they can justifiably spend in pursuit of it.

These decisions are made more difficult because in a New Town the business of public relations usually becomes entangled with other matters, not strictly relevant, falling under the general heading of 'social development'. When the adherents of any form of community activity, from Boy Scouting to bee-keeping, begin to find each other in the ranks of the New Town residents, they appeal to the Corporation for advice, or money, or accommodation, or

help of some other kind. An officer of the Corporation's staff has to deal with these requests, and to deal with them thoroughly and patiently; and in the process he is likely to find himself drawn into other byways, such as a study of statistics. Given assumed rates of population immigration and of births per 1,000, how many Boy Scouts will be looking for premises in the New Town in 1970? Finding answers to questions of this kind is only a subsidiary activity to public relations proper, and the responsibility for dealing with them is, in theory at least, not the Corporation's but the Local Authorities' who are empowered under various Acts of Parliament to spend money on such objects as community associations, sports grounds, playing fields and 'further education'. Appeals for help from the Corporation, however, have got to be handled by one of the Corporation's Departments and if the Corporation keeps a Public Relations Officer it is to his table that such requests tend to find their way.

On the question of public relations generally the Reith Committee foresaw the need for somebody to take in hand 'the projection of the New Town, with all that is implied and entailed therein', and suggested that each Corporation should appoint a Public Relations Officer to assume that responsibility. It may happen, however,—and has happened—that the projection of the New Town can be better left in other hands. If a Corporation is so fortunate as to have a Chairman who is an enthusiastic believer in New Towns in general and his own New Town in particular, has a strong personality, is a fluent and convincing speaker, and is prepared to give up a certain amount of

his time, he can 'put across' his New Town far more effectively than could any Public Relations Officer. Such Chairmen, unfortunately, are few and far between, and most of the Corporations now employ a Public Relations Officer, not always known by that title, who includes public relations proper among his duties. It may be noted in passing that a full-time junior officer is required in each New Town to look after the visitors of all nationalities who arrive in hundreds and even in thousands every year, sponsored by Government Departments, or High Commissioners, or the British Council, or professional organisations.

If it is decided to pursue a deliberate policy of fostering good public relations, the first thing to decide is to whom the campaign should be directed. There is no doubt about the answer to this question. The first, and indeed the only, essential is to persuade industrial firms to come and settle in the New Town, and they will not do so unless they are convinced that the New Town is a successful enterprise and that the Corporation is a sensible and businesslike body whose word can be trusted. Most of the negotiation and persuasion may fall to members of the Corporation and to the General Manager and Chief Estate Officer, but there is plenty of scope for the Public Relations Officer in establishing the background and ensuring that the mention of the name of his New Town to a firm does not provoke an unfavourable reaction. In the early days this is all-important; later on the firms which have established themselves in the New Town will, if they are satisfied, become the Corporation's best recruiting agents.

Another direction in which some public relations effort may usefully be directed is towards retail shopkeepers. Their case resembles that of industry in that their presence is essential to the prosperity of the New Town and the Corporation has no means of compelling them to come, but the necessity for pressure is less. The value of the potential custom of a New Town population is so great that even if it had a doubtful reputation tenants would nevertheless be found to take leases of the shops; they might drive a harder bargain and manage to escape with lower rents, but they would come. Whereas industrial firms would not come to a New Town which had a bad name; why should they, when they could just as well go elsewhere?

As well as establishing a good reputation with what might be styled 'priority clients' the Corporation will wish to put itself on good terms with the local residents, both the few who were living on the spot before the New Town began and the many who have since then arrived. To put itself on friendly terms with the former group was in the early days an almost impossible task. The prospect of a New Town on their doorstep was bound to be bitterly unwelcome both to the local farmers who would lose their land and to business men who had bought themselves houses in rural surroundings yet in easy reach of London and would lose their privacy. They had influence and they had money and they put up a determined fight. The first Designation Order signed by the Minister was challenged in the courts and taken on appeal to the House of Lords. When the battle was finally lost most of the objectors

removed elsewhere. The few shopkeepers, on the other hand, who were already established needed no pacifying, for the inflow of new residents—and new customers—came in advance of the building of new shops and brought a boom in local trade.

A different approach was needed to the new residents when the tide began to flow from London. Their first reaction to the Corporation was not unfriendly; it was the Corporation which had provided them with a new house and a new start in life. The Corporation itself was a very dim and remote body and their personal contacts were with the staff of the Corporation's Housing Manager. The New Towns have been fortunate in the quality of their staff who deal with tenants; not only do they know their business but many of them bring to their work a genuine sense of vocation—a desire to help and serve other people in their day-to-day difficulties. This work is done so quietly and unobtrusively that even the Corporations themselves may not realize its value.

What is neither quiet nor unobtrusive is the clamour of the various Tenants Associations, Residents Federations, and such like bodies which have sprung up in every New Town. The handful of people who run these organizations includes individuals actuated by a desire to help the community as a whole and improve its living conditions, but the keynote is self-advertisement. The same individuals have been in the forefront of every agitation which professes to represent New Town opinion and takes the form of letters to the Press, deputations to Parliament, and public oratory. The lack of interest in these activities shown by the residents themselves is phenomenal; the

Annual General Meeting of the Stevenage Residents Federation in 1958, held in the Town Hall and addressed by Lord Silkin, collected an audience of 30 from a population of close on 30,000; and 'mass meetings' held to protest about this or that have materialized as lonely little knots of people hardly noticed by the passers-by. All the same, however, it does happen on occasion that these bodies are taken at their face value by some unwary Corporation, or Minister, or M.P., and they are then helped to justify their existence by pointing out that it was as a result of their activities that some action was promised or some grievance was investigated. There is not much that a Public Relations Officer can do with bodies whose principal object is to focus attention on themselves.

To be on friendly terms with the Local Authority is also difficult. The Urban District Council is bound to feel that it occupies the position of a poor relation to the wealthy and powerful Development Corporation. Not only is it a poor relation but it is also the heir presumptive—a situation that under any circumstances is likely to cause friction. Their interests often pull in opposite directions, and the matters that most concern the Council—matters, that is, which affect the rates—are seldom of any great importance to the Corporation. When the two bodies meet round a table for discussion the Councillors wish to devote most of the time to matters of detail bearing on individual properties or the type of construction of new houses—matters which the Corporation properly leaves to its officers; whereas the Corporation members would prefer to dwell on the extent to which their hands are tied by control from Whitehall, a control which is outside the

Council's province. Then, too, there is the political aspect. The Corporations strive to be strictly non-political but when a Conservative Government is in power the policies which the Corporations have to carry out are bound to have a Conservative flavour and this does not make for harmony when dealing with predominantly Labour Councils. The best that is likely to be achieved is a veneer of politeness covering a great deal of back-stage squabbling.

Another difficult question affecting public relations is the standard set by the Corporations in their domestic affairs; their offices and furniture; their cars; and what they eat and drink. If a visitor at lunch is taken to the staff canteen and given hash and rice pudding, is he favourably impressed by the Corporation's frugality, or does he feel drawn to some other Corporation where the meal began with smoked salmon and he was invited to choose between a very agreeable Hock and a more than tolerable Burgundy? When the Corporations came into being they inherited from Local Government a very definite tradition of simplicity and economy, but not all of them have withstood the temptation to copy the ways of Big Business and its expense accounts. The answer is a matter of opinion and there is no common doctrine, but to judge by outside comment a Corporation will be wise to decide that if it errs at all it will err in the direction of austerity. Dining and wining at the taxpayers' expense is an inglorious business, when all is said and done, and the people who find it impressive are seldom those whose good opinion is of much value.

These are some of the aspects of the public relations problem and some tentative conclusions as to where the

solutions may lie. One thing, however, is certain. Good public relations are best ensured not by the engagement of a public relations staff but by the courtesy and efficiency with which the Corporation's business is conducted.

CHAPTER XII

The Way Ahead

There are 15 New Towns under construction in Great Britain. The most recent, Cumbernauld, has only lately begun; the earliest ones, designated in 1946 and 1947, are nearing completion. At this stage it is possible to draw certain general conclusions and to speculate on those problems which still lie in the future.

The first question is whether it is safe to say that the New Town policy is proving successful. At the time that the New Towns Act was passed, in 1946, the policy of building New Towns with money from the Exchequer was regarded by many with grave suspicion. It was expected that the result would at best be the creation of New Towns at the cost of vast sums of public money which would have to be written off as a loss. For the first few years there was little evidence to set against these gloomy forebodings. The New Towns had to spend heavily on capital account before they saw any return on their money in the form of rents for houses, shops, or factories; and each year their balance sheets were loaded with further debts for interest charges and further expenditure on 'general development'. The people doing the

work never lost faith in success and the New Towns banner was always carried high by the Town and Country Planning Association, but the outside world remained sceptical until a very definite moment in 1954. In November of that year there appeared in the *Economist* an article entitled *Britain's Boom Towns*. The writer spoke of the New Towns not only with respect but with something approaching enthusiasm. He ended: 'Finally, the New Towns seem likely to be solvent and in some cases profitable ventures. The problem (of their eventual ownership) arises not from the Corporations' failure but from their success. It is a problem that those responsible for most of the other experiments born nine years ago would find strange and refreshing.'

Coming from such a quarter this was praise indeed. The accounts of the New Towns, published annually, began to receive more careful scrutiny. Unfortunately it is not easy to draw lessons from them and undue emphasis was placed on the annual surplus or deficit on general revenue account. Every Corporation is bound to show a deficit on revenue account for the first few years of its operations for until rents begin to come in it has no source of income, but as the years go by this annual deficit should become less until eventually the corner is turned and the deficit for the year becomes a surplus. It is, however, wrong to jump to the conclusion that the success or otherwise of any Corporation may be measured by how soon it turns the corner and how large a surplus it shows thereafter. A prudent financial policy may point in the opposite direction. To give two illustrations, a Corporation which insists on building all the factories in its area and renting

them to industrial firms will secure a large return and make a good showing on revenue account, but by doing so it forfeits the stability which is guaranteed in bad times by firms which have sunk their own capital in their factories and pay to the Corporation only a ground-rent for the land. Or again, a Corporation has to make provision for the maintenance of all the houses which it builds and rents. A house requires little money spent on it for the first few years of its life but it is prudent to set aside annually from the beginning quite substantial sums which will be required later on, and if this is done the surplus on general revenue will be correspondingly reduced. Thus a surplus on general revenue is not necessarily evidence of a sound financial policy.

No exact assessment of the financial success of the New Towns will be possible for some time to come; for the present one can only estimate the trends. One very important factor which lies hidden is the increase in values due to the Corporation's own activities. The measure of this will not become apparent until the first leases of shops and factories fall in and new lettings are being negotiated, but the present indications suggest that the rise in values will be startling. By that time, too, there will be answers to other problems not directly concerned with finance. Is a 'neighbourhood' of 10,000 persons sufficiently cohesive to engender a community feeling of its own? Will appreciable numbers of well-to-do people be willing to live in the New Towns? Is it possible or desirable to stop the growth of a New Town at the figure of population for which it was originally planned? And many others.

The immediate problem which has to be solved is what

should happen to a New Town when it is finished. The function of the Corporation, as proposed by the Reith Committee and confirmed by the New Towns Act, is to create the New Town. The New Towns Act empowered the Minister, as soon as that purpose had been substantially achieved, to provide for the winding up of the Corporation and the transfer of the undertaking to the local authority. That moment is now approaching and the Government has already said that they do not intend to transfer the Corporation's assets to the local authority, but to set up some kind of agency which will take them over and administer them.

This decision has set the cat among the pigeons. On the one hand the local authorities claim that it is a breach of an undertaking and that they are completely competent to take over the administration and management of the New Towns. On the other hand the Government can argue, and argue with some force, that a District Council is not qualified to assume responsibility for an asset of a present value of over fifty million pounds and a potential value very much higher; that it is undesirable that any local authority should become the landlord of the whole body of tenants by whom the authority is elected; and that the Treasury, having provided the lion's share of the money invested, is entitled to the lion's share of any profit unexpectedly accruing. It seems that a compromise answer might be found in transferring the bulk of the assets to the proposed agency; and giving the local authorities generous financial terms when they take over, as they must do sooner or later, the various engineering services such as water, sewerage and highways which the

Corporations have built simply and solely because the work had to be done and nobody else was in a position to do it.

If the immediate problem is how to wind up the New Towns now under construction, the next problem is whether more New Towns should be built, and if so where, and when, and by whom? This is a question which concerns not London alone, but Manchester and Birmingham and the other great industrial centres. It is difficult to believe that no more New Towns will materialize; the crux of the question is who will find the capital. A New Town built under the New Towns Act obtains its capital requirements from the Exchequer. Is it necessary to continue to make Treasury money available now that the New Towns need no longer be regarded as experimental? Why should not cities such as London, or Manchester, or Birmingham, provide their own finance, helped out by such grants towards housing and allied purposes as the Government makes available to other local authorities? There is no doubt about the technical and administrative ability of their staffs to undertake the executive work, but there would be some risk of the issues becoming bedevilled by political considerations.

Both these questions—what is to happen to the first series of New Towns and whether more New Towns should be built—are beginning to call for early answers. A dispassionate review might well be undertaken by some independent body. When the Reith Committee made its study, fourteen years ago, of how the New Towns policy might best be implemented, the data on which they had to work were meagre indeed and amounted to little more

than the case histories of Letchworth and Welwyn. Since then the lapse of time has provided a mass of invaluable material, and as well as the statistics there is available the evidence of people who have the New Town problems at their fingertips as a result of their experience as Chairmen and General Managers of New Town Corporations. Such a survey might also include the working of the New Towns Act of 1946. That the Act has produced results is beyond dispute but nobody who has been intimately concerned in its administration would deny the weaknesses in the machinery which it set up. There is plenty of scope for some body such as the Reith Committee to pick up where the Reith Committee left off, to examine the progress which has been made so far and to suggest the lines on which further progress might proceed.

The time will come when the New Towns will cease to be new, when the Corporations and their staffs will disappear, when the ring-fences which enclose their operations will be pulled down, and when they take their places on their own merits and stand on their own feet. They will soon forget the years of their infancy, but there will still be alive many of the people who planned them before the first sod was turned or the first house built, who struggled against many obstacles to bring their dreams to fruition, who watched the first bus run and the first school open, and who will always feel it a privilege to have played a part in an enterprise which has brought so much happiness to so many people.

APPENDIX

HOUSING IN THE NEW TOWNS

	Completed at 31 December 1958 (from date of designation)			Completed during 1959 (est.)		
	Dev. Corp.	L.A.	Others	Dev. Corp.	L.A.	Others
LONDON RING						
Basildon	7,021	944	378	979	39	58
Bracknell	3,332	116	152	593	137	none
Crawley	9,566	733	1,454	634	30	28
Harlow	11,252	684	210	858	9	70
Hatfield	2,319	901	39	102	22	31
Hemel Hempstead	7,737	1,199	392	741	6	225
Stevenage	7,596	559	136	1,100	4	39
Welwyn G.C.	3,508	1,083	180	250	20	21
OTHERS						
Corby	2,801	1,906	119	399	2	28
Cwmbran	3,386	1,241	365	450	52	67
Newton Aycliffe	3,118	none	16	81	none	none
Peterlee	3,100	none	none	220	none	2
SCOTLAND						
East Kilbride	6,019	10	41	1,000	6	none
Glenrothes	2,261	312	11	374	none	2
Cumbernauld	137	none	none	204	none	none
Total	73,153	9,688	3,493	7,985	327	571

TO DECEMBER 1959

	Total completed at 31 December 1959 (est.)			Under construction 31 December 1959 (est.)			To be completed 1960 (est.)		
	Dev. Corp.	L.A.	Others	Dev. Corp.	L.A.	Others	Dev. Corp.	L.A.	Others
Basildon	8,000	983	436	1,750	48	31	1,300	48	30
Bracknell	3,925	253	152	906	47	none	561	47	none
Crawley	10,200	763	1,482	504	27	135	514	51	135
Harlow	12,110	693	280	1,380	10	51	1,190	41	124
Hatfield	2,421	923	70	382	17	20	356	30	15
Hemel Hempstead	8,478	1,205	617	1,180	174	160	1,054	100	225
Stevenage	8,696	563	175	1,000	64	49	1,000	64	91
Welwyn G.C.	3,758	1,103	201	672	none	8	616	none	6
Corby	3,200	1,908	147	512	none	22	500	50	30
Cwmbran	3,836	1,293	432	450	31	44	370	64	58
Newton Aycliffe	3,199	none	16	292	none	2	355	none	10
Peterlee	3,320	none	2	565	none	10	540	25	10
East Kilbride	7,019	16	41	1,100	4	none	1,000	4	none
Glenrothes	2,635	312	13	383	none	3	450	none	10
Cumbernauld	341	none	none	599	none	none	500	none	none
Total	81,138	10,015	4,064	11,675	422	535	10,306	524	744

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IN NEW TOWNS

	<i>Before Designation</i>		
	<i>No. of occupiers</i>	<i>No. of employees</i>	<i>Size (sq. ft.)</i>
LONDON RING			
Basildon	20	not known	not known
Bracknell	7	179	48,250
Crawley	17	1,300 ¹	160,000
Harlow	6	333	not known
Hatfield	8 ³	1,500	100,000
Hemel Hempstead	36	6,200	not known
Stevenage	5	2,600	371,000
Welwyn G.C.	69	8,000	1,994,600
OTHERS			
Corby ²	none	none	none
Cwmbran	30	17,000 ⁵	4,380,830
Newton Aycliffe	none	none	none
Peterlee	none	none	none
SCOTLAND			
East Kilbride	3	380	155,000
Glenrothes	4	1,683	750,000
Cumbernauld	3	71	151,000
Total	208	39,246	—

¹ Now doubled to 2,700.² Stewarts and Lloyds steelworks now employing 11,100 persons (not all resident in Corby) adjoins the designated area.³ Not including the de Havilland Group and other factories just outside designated area.⁴ Includes DSIR Research Laboratories.⁵ Now 17,850.

TO DECEMBER 1959

<i>New Factories Completed by December 1959 (est.)</i>			<i>Under Construction 31 December 1959 (est.)</i>	
<i>No. of occupiers</i>	<i>No. of employees</i>	<i>Size (sq. ft.)</i>	<i>No. of units</i>	<i>Size (sq. ft.)</i>
59	6,705	1,512,678	5	296,375
24	5,137	942,497	4	115,602
71	9,794	2,258,415	6	61,600
79	11,723	2,293,284	3	69,784
15	551	136,320	1	6,000
42 + 9 extns.	6,300	1,533,912	1	26,000
29 ⁴	9,000	1,851,930	2 + 4 extns.	163,361
44	3,885	1,457,387	2	16,080
15	1,305	242,148	1 (extn.)	16,000
1	73	18,670	none	none
none	none	none	none	none
3	780	143,470	1	80,000
24 ⁴	5,730	1,428,000	4	219,100
5	1,482	110,514	5	15,000
1	1,150	330,000	none	none
412 + 9 extns.	63,615	14,259,225	34 + 5 extns.	1,084,902

NEW OFFICES :

Ten towns have provided about 430,000 sq. ft. of office space for about 220 firms with about 3,000 employees. Another 400,000 sq. ft. is under construction.

PROGRESS OF NEW TOWNS

Name	Corporation Appointed	Designated Area (acres) ¹	Population		
			Original	Proposed	At 31 Dec. 1959 (est.)
			000's	000's	000's
LONDON RING					
Basildon	Feb. 1949	7,818	25	100 ⁸	52
Bracknell	Oct. 1949	1,870	5.1	25	17.7
Crawley	Feb. 1947	6,047	4.5	56 ³	51.2
Harlow	May 1947	6,395	4.5	80	48.7
Hatfield	June 1948	2,340	8.5	25	18
Hemel Hempstead	Mar. 1947	5,910	21	60	51
Stevenage	Dec. 1946	6,100	7	60	38
Welwyn G.C.	June 1948	4,317	18.5	50	32
OTHERS					
Corby	May 1950	2,696	16.7	40 ²	33.5
Cwmbran	Nov. 1949	3,160	12	35 ⁸	28
Newton Aycliffe	July 1947	880	.6	20	10.5
Peterlee	Nov. 1948	2,350	.9	30	10.5
SCOTLAND					
East Kilbride	Aug. 1947	10,250	2.4	50 ¹⁰	27
Glenrothes	Oct. 1948	5,730	1.1	30 ⁵	11
Cumbernauld	Feb. 1956	4,150	3	50	4
Total		70,013	130.8	711	433.1

¹ In some cases the area includes part of a green belt, not to be built on.

² Target population. Ultimate 55,000.

³ This will reach 70,000 by natural expansion in 1980.

⁴ Includes Crawley Technical College.

⁵ First phase.

⁶ A number of shops existing before designation are no longer trading.

TO DECEMBER 1959

Shops	Schools			Estimated Capital Expenditure by Development Corporation						
	No. of original traders	New Shops completed 31 Dec. 1959 (est.)	No. before designation	New Schools completed 31 Dec. 1959 (est.)	Under construction 31 Dec. 1959 (est.)	Housing since designation to 31 Dec. 1959	Total (inc. housing) to 31 Dec. 1959			
(In brackets: sq. ft. of floor area)	(In brackets: number of school places)			£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's			
294	143	(129,000)	7	(2,600)	14	(7,060)	1	(560)	18,350	28,370
85	60	(113,699)	4	(1,260)	8	(4,200)	2	(480)	7,447	13,374
145	263	(346,565)	8	(840)	22	(13,930) ⁴	2	(1,200)	18,000	31,000
90 ⁶	234	(368,397)	5	(815)	16	(10,680)*	2	(1,360)*	21,450	36,290
104	99	(97,432)	4	(1,500)	9	(3,510)	1	(500)	4,500	6,900
368	266	(309,292)	11	(3,520)	19 + 3 extns.	(7,740)	3	(1,440)	17,400	28,100
140	216	(337,123)	4 ⁷	(780)	22	(9,180)	2	(920)	16,020	30,080
51	49	(98,920)	5	(2,040)	11	(4,060)	1	(600)	6,600	13,500
111	157	(224,919)	7	(2,940)	10 + 1 extn.	(3,330)	1	(480)	6,200	8,100
155	32	(20,143)	6	(2,269)	10	(3,970)	1	(600)	6,674	9,913
none	54	(66,992)	none	5	(1,850)	2	(520)	5,480	7,292	
1	44	(32,650)	none	7	(2,420)	none	5,726	8,218		
40	76	(76,600)	1	(400)	7	(5,140)	2	(1,360)	14,066	18,564
3	32	(29,994)	1	(200)	4	(2,525)	2	(840)	4,456	6,331
13	1	(800)	3	(515)	1	(320)	2	(1,150)	870	1,510
1,600	1,726	(2,252,526)	66	(19,679)	165 & 3 extns.	(12,010)	24	(12,010)	153,229	247,542
						(79,915)				

⁷ One of these has since closed.

⁸ Ultimate population figure has been increased.

⁹ Under discussion.

¹⁰ With natural expansion to 65,000-70,000.

* Excluding the Harlow College of Further Education, the first stage of which is completed and the second under construction.

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