

I THE GROWTH OF BUTTERWORTH

1. The importance of Butterworth as an urban centre

Butterworth is rapidly becoming an important urban centre in Peninsular Malaysia. The rapid industrialization taking place within and just outside the city limits, the opening of its military airport to civilian traffic, and the extension of its harbour facilities for ocean going vessels have all served to encourage further urban development. The considerably increased frequency of the car ferry service to Penang island (since 1975) is further evidence of the growing economic importance of the region and has led to a certain suburbanization of Butterworth in relation to Georgetown, where possibilities of areal extension are limited by lack of space on the mountainous island of Penang.

Unavoidably industrialization, increased business activities and a growing population have also generated severe pressures on urban land. The present paper is addressed to this problem and reports on the results of our study on urban landownership in Butterworth.

The research programme of which this study is a part, analyses the changing patterns of urban landownership throughout Peninsular Malaysia in a long-term perspective and aims at providing basic information for regional and urban planning (Evers, Goh, Ratnam 1975). The case of Butterworth is particularly important as it is one of the few cases in Malaysia where the rapid urban development of a small town is primarily due to modern industrialization. The findings of this study might therefore, at an early date, draw the attention of urban planners and policy makers to the forthcoming problems of urban development in other urban areas. The emphasis of our study will be on the social factors in this process. We shall be concerned with people rather than markets, with decisions of landowners rather than blind economic forces. The distribution of urban land among members of different ethnic groups and between different categories of owners, like private individuals, companies, religious bodies, and government agencies, will be looked into and the