

SONNETS FOR MY CITY, An Essay on the Kinship of Art and Finance, by Arthur Cort Holden. Schulte Publishing Co., New York. \$8.50.

Reviewed by
Lancaster M. Greene

This book is a plea for more intelligent and equitable taxation and appraisal in accord with benefits received for payments made. In rhymes not easily forgotten, the author, a dean of architects, urges more understanding of general principles by those technicians who limit their views to their own disciplines. Both in skillful prose and poetry, he makes clear the fact that we cannot leave economics to economists.

This volume, beautifully illustrated with pen and ink sketches by the author, will help men, women and especially young people who want to play the part of good citizens and learn the way of the better city — public officials can accomplish little without effective support.

The author has written several books on architecture and has been honored

by the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He is a trained economist who believes that verse appeals to the emotions and may therefore have a wider appeal than logic in prose.

There are sonnet forms bearing such un-sonnet-like titles as "Sites," "Equitable Taxes," "Citizen Apathy" and "Intelligence in Taxation." This architect-poet calls landowners "proprietors in trust." Architects, bankers and manufacturers, he believes, must all accept their responsibility as co-operators in the processes of civilization.

Attracted to historic Gramercy Park in our city, which is especially appealing at this time of the year and dear to the hearts of all of us who ever lived in its vicinity, he wonders why more cities haven't tried to set aside similar small open spaces in residential areas. This book is a perceptive work on the snags which make New York (and any city) grow in wasteful sprawl. Its practical cadences are a delight to the ear and to the reasoning mind as well.

Civic loyalty, which in some cities is clearly felt and unified, becomes in New York more a neighborhood loyalty — for most residents cannot stretch their family affections over so vast a metropolis. The NYC Neighborhood News, a bulletin issued by The Association of Neighborhood Council of Greater New York (225 Park Avenue South), therefore performs a valuable function. Max H. Flechner, an HGN reader, working on a committee, used information from the October 1964 HGN in drafting four legislative proposals on housing for the ANC.

He proposed lowering taxes on improvements to encourage building and tax vacant land into use; taxing exemptions to stimulate urban renewal and encourage remodeling where buildings are sound; taxing exemptions to encourage construction of more non-profit, middle-income housing; and backing Congressman Donald M. Fraser's (Minn.) investment tithing to lure available capital into investments for open housing.

Mr. Flechner finds his association stimulating and worth while. "With faith, hope and perseverance, we may get there," he writes. "Together we can make tremendous progress for our common cause." Other readers may wish to study this approach and offer similar suggestions at the neighborhood level.

The annual banquet of the Henry George School, honoring the 40th anniversary of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, will be reviewed in the next issue. Among the speakers will be Professor Carl McGuire, Walt Rybeck and executives of the R.S.F.