

Good Citizenship — County Level

ROBERT E. ALLEN, JR., formerly director of the Washington, D.C. extension, sent An Open Letter to the Calvert Independent, all of which was printed, extending to more than 300 lines of type. The letter was addressed To The Farmers, Business Men and Mothers of Calvert County, and it was signed "The Physiocrat." It discussed such things as increased cigarette taxes, taxes on fishing, state aid to pupils and increased salaries for county officials.

On the matter of state aid, he wrote, "I would like to remind you that there is no such thing as something for nothing in this life. The state must take it from you (or your children through inflationary measures) before it can aid you and in the process there must be a financial loss covering the wages of the bureaucrats."

Stating that Calvert county has not recognized the wealth of its natural resources and economic rent, he pointed out that the taxes on barns and houses have "stifled business communities that expand haphazardly while depressing established land values and raising new land values at the cost of increased government expenses and services in the extension of public utilities."

Affirming stoutly that he for one opposed "taking from each according to ability"—a thought coming directly from the Communist Manifesto, he continued, "an indiscriminate tax on site values would let homebuilders offer better homes for less money. It would reduce taxes on good homes by increasing the taxes on land not used to its fullest economic advantage. It would cut heavily the cost of highway extension by cutting the land costs for the right of way—costs that have recently become nationally scandalous.

"It would protect, without legislation, the farmers who want to farm instead of speculate. Above all, it would aid their competitive advantage. It would also correct, without legislation, the sprawl of trailer homes over sites that are surely capable of something better and far more desirable."

He concluded by stating that he would oppose the increase in salaries until more capable men and women were available, and until legislation was sought "to levy a higher tax on the site values of my home while reducing the taxes on the home itself."

Asserting that nature would cooperate with the farmer if he was left free in every other respect, he continued his reasoning: "where taxes on site values make it economically unwise to farm tobacco they will likewise make additional farm land available to the efficient farmer. The marginal farmer will seek employment in the new county industries as it should be."

Walter Rybeck of the Dayton Daily News emphasized in his address at the annual banquet of the Henry George School in New York last May, the fact that newspaper editors welcome letters expressing the views of their readers on current problems. This statement seems to be well supported by the publication of Mr. Allen's letter, which deals objectively and logically with specific local issues. We quoted only the parts dealing with land value taxation, but this was actually introduced as a secondary theme. The confidence of the readers was captured at once by focusing on three burning issues affecting county voters, especially farmers and fishermen. From there it was a simple and natural transition to expose the role of confiscatory taxation as the guilty but unsuspected villain.