

the mint to run off a few score million centime pieces and then sent out its economic-control police to issue orders for prosecution each time they found a baguette weighing over 250 grams or priced at more than fifty-eight centimes.

The Christian Science Monitor, August 29 comments: "In this harsh governmental reaction lies a clue to the tyrannical effect of statistics. In the French cost of living index, based on 259 articles in private budgets, bread is important. The government

jealously guards its control of the weight, form and prices of bread because changes would affect almost every element of the control it believes it has over the French economy—basic minimum wages, countless wage agreements, credit policies, general prices, and total output."

If Britain joins the Common Market, this is the sort of approach with which our own policies will have to be harmonised. At present, our government is at least free to concoct its own nonsense.

think that the convenient "residential" zoning of the parcel in question somehow reduces its market value.



But that pesky sale price may make you think otherwise.

And that brings us to the big truth, the whole truth, the truth untold that should have been spelled out clearly if the public hearing had really been a hearing of, by and for the public. Residential property taxes in Southfield have been increased 27 per cent in order to allow reduction of taxes on already under-assessed, speculative land.

I leave you with these quotations from an article about property tax assessments in the June 1 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*:—

"Millions of property owners are hit with excessive tax bills, while others get off easy."

"Speculators enjoy heavy subsidies in the form of low assessments on underdeveloped land."

"The last thing the local political power structure would want is a competent assessor who would put the influential landowners' assessments where they should be."

He's One too Many Anyway

IN his regular "Gargoyle" column in the September issue of *The Ecologist*, Wayne Davis puts forward his suggested programme for population control: "We should have a marketable licence for babies. Each girl, upon maturity, would receive certificates allowing her to produce two children. She should have the children or sell her certificates to someone who wanted more than two. Not only would this control the population but it would solve the poverty problem as well. With the certificates for the rich to buy, they would have more children and become poorer, while the poor would have fewer and become rich."

Southfield's Property Tax Insult and Injury

With a change of Mayor and assessor, Southfield has reverted to the policy of underassessing land which throws an increased burden on buildings and improvements. The following is from an article by John Povlitz in the Southfield News June 18.

THE TRUTH was told a week ago at Southfield's packed and perspiring public tax hearing—the event designed for the public to hear all the scam about the city's 1.27 property tax equalization factor. But not the whole truth.

Not all of the people understood what they were and were not being told. So they should have been thundering mad, but weren't in every case. What they were being told was what gathered officialdom wanted them to hear.

It's difficult to select from among the assembled officials, elected and appointed, a clear-cut champion of half-truth.

But a tall trophy for tall tales should in all fairness be awarded to Mayor Norman Feder, whose performance included not only a championship exhibition of gross contradiction, but in addition a major league explanation of how two and two don't really equal four. The mayor proclaimed his innocence of involvement with assessments and resulting tax increases. "All I do is appoint the city assessor," declared His Honour, implying that the all-powerful assessor must be the culprit, if you're looking for one.

That was in one breath. In a later one, the Hon. Mr. Feder assured the audience that "I have ordered the

assessor" to re-examine his assessing work. Now, you see, the assessor is just a political hack after all.

The Mayor spun his favourite synthetic yarn about how much you might be willing to sell your house for. The point to Feder's Fable is that you as a homeowner aren't paying as much property tax as you ought, despite the 27 per cent increase dumped in your lap by His Honour and his assessor. Multiply your assessment by two (the assessment is supposed to be 50 per cent of the market value), and would you honestly be willing to sell your house for that? The mayor's punch line is that he doubts you would. But you may be eager to divide by two and escape with that if he keeps boosting your taxes. He's careful, naturally, not to ask the same question in regard to the numerous large parcels of land on which assessments have been reduced.

Perhaps the most flagrant example among many of the mayor's untold tales is that 15-acre chunk sold to Detroit Edison Co. for \$71,600 per acre (market value), and assessed at \$4,000 per acre. Multiply \$4,000 by two, per the mayor's instructions, and do you honestly think that \$8,000 per acre equals \$71,600 per acre? Mayor Feder would like you to suppose so—as he would like you to