

Noah D. Alper's Brief Cases

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY — WE ARE STRANGERS HERE

"You are in this world as strangers. Go north or south or east or west, and wherever you stop you will find a man to chase you away crying, 'This is mine.' And after you have gone through all the continents of the world, you will come back knowing that there is nowhere a poor bit of land where, as a matter of right, your wife can bring her firstborn, where you can rest after tilling the soil or where your children can bury your bones." (1834)

—From Sarvodaya, August 1962, an Indian publication

IF YOU THINK U.S. LAND IS HIGH, READ THIS

"Europeans and Latins Pour More Cash Into U.S. Land and Buildings," according to a headline in The Wall Street Journal of November 15th. It seems Europeans have discovered that even in the center of New York land is thirty to fifty per cent under comparable land values in many cities in Europe. This is confirmed by a correspondent in Italy, an expert observer, who wrote: Italy is now the worst example of unjust land speculation—the situation is positively frightening.

LAND FRAUDS — THEN AND NOW

From the Yazoo land frauds of Pre-Revolutionary days to those of today takes in a long stretch of years, but the cause remains the same. House & Home, in its November, 1962 issue, stated, "After years of talking about ways to curb con men who have invaded the mail-order sale of land, state and federal officials began mapping a nationwide counter-offensive."

"Their target is a mushrooming business: Land promoters reaped an estimated \$500 million last year in sales and \$10-down, \$10-a-month contracts, contends Attorney General Stanley Mosk of California. Acreage registered for sale in California has increased 30-fold in three years. Alarmed, Mosk invited officials from 29 states to San Francisco to probe the problem."

Ideas from "a clearing house to exchange information about lots-by-mail as a first step to control" came forth, also a new code for sales advertisements, but not included were the ideas of the 84-page article on Land in the August, 1960 House & Home on taxing of land values and exemption of improvements.

LAND ARTICLE READ INTO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

The Hon. Thomas B. Curtis of St. Louis, because of the provocative and important nature of the article, asked unanimous consent to have read into The Congressional Record, an editorial review by Wolfgang Langewiesche of "Land Speculation and How to Stop It," taken from the July, 1962 issue of The Reader's Digest. In his introductory remarks to "The Importance of Good Property Tax Laws," Congressman Curtis said:

"Pointing to the harmful effects of the very rapid increase in land prices in recent years, the article makes clear that ample vacant and underused land still exists close to and even inside of our cities . . .

"Prying this land loose from the speculators would have several beneficial effects. It would stimulate our economically important housing industry and help curb the spread of suburban sprawl."

We could pry this land loose, said the Congressman, referring to the article, by "taxing land more heavily than improvements on the land," and "by changing certain regulations so that the profits gained by the sale of land are treated as income rather than taxed at the lower capital gains rates, as they are today."

(Reprints of this article from the July Reader's Digest are still available from the Henry George News. Prices are 5c each, six for 25c or thirty for \$1.)