

# Noah D. Alper's Brief Cases

## NO PARKING METERS!

The St. Louis Housing Authority has apparently for four years considered buying up and tearing down a "going" laundry to provide half an acre of parking space for 69 cars, at an eventual cost of \$16,500 per car space. The GAO suggested this amount of money might better be spent on 40 additional housing units, since \$16,500 per car space was a bit steep, and the parking lot was perhaps not necessary.

This routine transaction was brought to light in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat where it was noted that the tab would be picked up by the federal treasury, which, after all, means that it comes from the pockets of taxpayers.

With parking space so scarce here there may be a push to open a new frontier on the moon, where, at present costs, the price per parking space would be only a few billions of dollars, also payable by the federal treasury, alias the taxpayers.

## "BETTER SHAPE UP"

"There has been far too little creative thinking about taxes below the federal level," states a Life editorial entitled, "State Government Better Shape Up." It is a hopeful straw in the wind when increasing references are found to land value taxation's function in the restructuring of the community. "The property tax system, financial pillar of local government," states the editorial, "is a notorious boondoggle; under-assessment of land not only allows revenue to slither away, but wrecks havoc with land use planning."

"Since the (Toronto) subway was built the neighborhood around the station has experienced a small construction boom and land values have skyrocketed. A 100 square foot plot purchased in 1947 for \$22,000 sold 10 years later for \$257,000." Any comment?

## TAX LAWS AND FINE ARCHITECTURE

In an interview for the U. S. News and World Report, the famed architect Edward Durell Stone was asked if he thought tax laws could be revised so as to reward beautiful architecture.

"Yes," he said. "As matters now stand, putting more money into beautiful design merely raises the valuation and the tax bill. This has to be changed. And I think also that buildings with aesthetic merit which are clearly obsolete should get tax relief to encourage renovation instead of demolition. The tax bill should be tempered when money is spent modernizing a fine building."

## COMMUNISTS BLAME THE LANDLORDS

In a report from "Inside the Viet Cong" Stanley Karnow noted in a St. Louis Post-Dispatch series, that in the flooded plain of Reeds near the Cambodian border, few of the 6,000 inhabitants had pro-communist sympathies, but nearly all were indebted to absentee landlords and therefore had a grievance.

"The peasants merely wanted their rents reduced," he wrote. "Beyond that they asked to be left alone. But the communist agents' goal was to turn that elementary feeling into a political dynamic. Thus they preached that only revolution would solve the land problem. As long as the government existed, they contended that landlordism would come to 'collect rents, levy taxes and draft young men into the army.'"

It sounds like the old story of land monopoly. The solution is not to be found in overturning governments but in collecting for public use the earned rent of land which exists by reason of labor and the provision of capital.