

The Search For Justice

by JAMES CLARKSON

A portion of the address made at the conference banquet.

MORE economic attention has recently been brought to bear on the land question than ever before in the history of this country, from mayors, professors, study committees and economists. For eight years as mayor of Southfield, Michigan, serving as a member of the Resolutions Committee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and on special committees for the National League of Cities, I have constantly called for greater study. The U.S. Conference of Mayors completed such a study pursuant to a resolution I introduced.

What has been the result? The County of Oakland in which Southfield is located has updated land values, Westland has instituted a reappraisal, and many other cities are investigating the feasibility of implementing land value taxation.

An article in the June first U.S. News & World Report recommended that local communities should raise assessments to match rising land values. Jack Woerpel in the Detroit News has repeatedly spoken out on the question of the property tax using Southfield as an example of more emphasis on land values than building values. Senator Douglas's National Commission on Urban Problems requested testimony from me along with others, regarding the importance of land value taxation in the search for a solution to the troubles of the cities and nation.

According to the Southfield News the city is faced with a 27 percent increase in taxation since my successor took office a year ago. No wonder the two newspapers reported protests over the increase, and threats from the Taxpayers' League. This incident was not overlooked by the U.S. News & World Report, where it was observed that

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

The renaissance in land value taxation has advanced to such a magnitude that I have no hesitation in admitting my allegiance to Henry George, whose precepts I follow.

We must admit however that the far greater weight of discussion in the field of economics has been directed towards elixirs advanced by Lord Keynes and Galbraith, and more recently by Louis Ortho Kelso. Of the latter the June 29th issue of Time magazine states, "instead of saying that labor is exploited, Kelso says that capital is exploited. It's Marx stood on its head."

Kelso, author of *The Capitalist Manifesto*, states that 5 percent of the population owns the capital, securities, land and tools that produce about 90 percent of the wealth. In his latest book, *Two-Factor Theory: The Economics of Reality*, he says that one of his most potent arguments is historical; that until the close of the frontier even the poorest laborer could acquire capital virtually free in the form of land; and that opportunity motivated the building of the most powerful economy on earth. "Now that free land is gone," he contends, "the U.S. seems to have forgotten that property is the only power capable of protecting the individual's political freedoms and rights."

Kelso proposes a kind of homestead act that would make stock rather than

land available to people who lack the cash or credit to buy it. When that nostrum fails the only solution left *must be* land value taxation.

I note with interest in this same Time magazine article that earlier this year Alberta began a formal study of Kelso's entire doctrine, and that this great province has been known as Canada's historic haven for economic experimenters. Maybe now is the time for our illustrious James Ramsey of The School of Economic Science in Calgary to add to the list of existing practices the study of land value taxation.

The presence of the Honorable Fred Colborne here tonight assures us that Canada has her eyes open to better ways for financing government than

by wage and price controls and income taxation. States south of the border could learn a lesson from Canada's Land Titles Act. I would describe Southfield as one drop of the intellectual and experimental rain now falling on the world, which is creating such a storm that no longer can the economic agnostics refuse to reckon with the validity of the arguments of Henry George.

We must join with all persons in a campaign to elucidate the validity of George's solution. I chose long ago to fight on the side of those who are dedicating their lives to a great adventure—the crusade for justice. This is our challenge. Let us advance and consolidate together.

LTU Film Proves Popular

NEWS from Miss V. G. Peterson of the Robert Shalkenbach Foundation, is always anticipated keenly at annual HGS gatherings. With obvious pleasure she began this year's report by quoting a well known educator. "We who are interested in Henry George," this distinguished professor said recently, "need no longer apologize for our beliefs. George is well respected now in the academic community."

Miss Peterson and succeeding speakers on "What's Going on in the Georgist World," were introduced by George Collins of Philadelphia.

Among the highlights of Miss Peterson's talk were the efforts of the Foundation to create a better climate for George's ideas in universities. As part of this program, now some eight years old, groups of academicians are brought together each June at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, to discuss problems relating to land value taxation. Four books have been published as the result of these con-

ferences, by the University of Wisconsin Press. Undoubtedly as a by-product of this activity, an increasing number of college students are now applying for information and literature to be used in classroom assignments.

The American Journal of Economics and Sociology, an academic quarterly sponsored by the Foundation and edited by Will Lissner, is rounding out its twenty-ninth year of continuous publication. Quoted by a number of reporting services, the Journal is subscribed to by most libraries in the United States. It has paid subscribers in 21 foreign countries, including Russia.

Great enthusiasm has attended the presentation of the Foundation's newest award-winning film, "One Way to Better Cities," in which various authorities advocate property-tax reform. Now being shown on an average of four times a week, the picture made its debut on television in July over Station WDAV, Scranton, Pennsylv-

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