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Four Pennsylvania Cities Raise Land Taxes

Cities across Pennsylvania, two of them for the for the first time in history, have adopted substantially higher land taxes. The new levies, enacted in last year's sessions of the legislatures,are slated to go into effect this year.

In the largest single advance since the adoption of a graded tax, City Councils in Allentown, Harrisburg, McKeesport, Pittsburgh, and Scranton all imposed higher land rates while keeping improvements constant. Allentown later reversed itself under landlord pressure.

Pittsburgh raised its land tax from 97.5 to 125.5 mils, a ratio of more than 5:1, with improvements held constant at 24.5. Scranton raised its rate to 96 mils on land, almost doubling the 2:1 ratio that had been in effect since 1925. In Allentown, the city council voted 38 mils on land to 22.5 on buildings, before succumbing to pressure from major landholders there.

McKeesport, entering the ranks of graded tax cities for the first time in history, went all the way to a rate of 90 mils on the land, and 20 on improvements, from its previous overall rate of 24. The 4.5:1 land tax ratio is the second highest in the state, exceeded only by Pittsburgh's new rate.

In the state capitol of Harrisburg, the land tax was raised from 20 mils to 55, with improvements kept constant at 16. The more than 3:1 ratio is likely to be observed closely by state legislators and other Pennsylvania officials for its effect on urban development as well as municipal revenues.

"In moving Scranton to a higher ratio, much credit must go to the report on the Pittsburgh tax, which was prepared by the Center for Local Tax Research," according to John M. Kelly of Scranton, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Schalkenbach Foundation, and a leader in the fight for property tax reform. Extensive quotes from the report appeared in the Scranton Press, and were reported in the Scranton City Council. The report was also extensively cited in testimony before the Pittsburgh City Council by Councilman William Coyne, and Dan Sullivan, who gathered the data, under the direction of the Center.

A powerful new voice in favor of the increase in the land tax was raised by Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon, a professor of Economics at Carnegie-Mellon

(continued on page 3)

Former School President Arnold Weinstein Dead at 68

Arnold A. Weinstein, former president of the Henry George School in New York, died on December 17, 1979, at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York after a long illness. He was 68.

Arnold A. Weinstein

A life-long resident of New York City, Mr. Weinstein graduated from New York University School of Law in 1933 and was admitted to the Bar a year later. He served in the National Industrial Recovery Administration's legal department (NRA, the first of the New Deal alphabet agencies) in 1935 and 36. It was here that he learned at first hand what the machinations of governmental bureaucracy can mean to individual liberty - a lesson he was to remember throughout his life.

He returned to private law practice in New York and took two courses at the School in 1937. Three years later, he was named legal counsel for the School and was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1956. He held these two posts until his death.

In 1968, he accepted the presidency of the School, and guided the institution until 1973 through a period of considerable stress and change in the education field and the social environment.

Funeral services for Mr. Weinstein were held December 19 at Frank L. Campbell Funeral Home in New York, where Lancaster M. Greene and Rabbi Sobel, of Temple Emmanuel, delivered eulogies. Mr. Weinstein is survived by his wife Connie, his two children, Dr. Steven Weinstein and Susan Schuyler, his sister, Blanche Waldman, and two grandchildren.