

Front Page "Tax-Slum" News

WHAT has been old news to WHGN readers for a long time is becoming increasingly "hot" news for leading metropolitan newspapers, and it is refreshing to find the tax story so well reported in papers from coast to coast. The New York Times on November 22nd, suggested in a front page article that "Cities use taxes to fight slums," and stated that "Site valuation based on the highest potential of land is found to succeed," based on a report in the Journal of Housing.

The Oregonian used this as an editorial on November 25th, and on November 27th the St. Louis Post-Dispatch did the same, giving figures on Missouri redevelopments and adding, "If St. Louis needs further legal aids to push slum clearance, now is the time to prepare the case for the 1961 Missouri Legislature."

The Wall Street Journal in New York, Labor Newspaper in Washington, Harry Golden's Charlotte (N.C.) Observer, and no doubt many others that did not come to our attention, have helped to focus attention on the slum clearance story. At the heart of each is the term "site valuation" as used in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and South Africa. The figures which have impressed housing and redevelopment officials seem to be those introduced by H. Bronson Cowan in his *Municipal Improvement and Finance* available from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation at \$3 a copy.

The new angle on this story is that National Association of Housing and

Redevelopment officials report in their Journal of [public] Housing, that "Chicago will begin revaluing slum properties based on the great profits they bring in," valuations to be increased by as much as 63 per cent. "The use of tax laws to help prevent and clear slums is being resorted to more and more in cities throughout the world," the article states, and examples given were Boston, Kansas City and New York.

New York exempts real estate taxes on new improvements to old properties for twelve years and permits fast amortization. Kansas City has controlled profits while giving tax abatement for urban redevelopment. For the first ten years after building, taxes on redevelopment are based on assessed value of the site before improvement. Boston has a special tax arrangement for redeveloping 30 acres of Back Bay real estate.

Montreal also is struggling with development problems and the strain of absorbing 1,200,000 new people in the next twenty years. Students of the Henry George School wrote letters to the editor of The Montreal Star. These were promptly published and a reprint is available on request with the compliments of The Henry George News. The letters could be useful as models for the many students and instructors who, we hope, will now turn to this important "hobby" of writing to the newspapers.

A reprint of the slum-clearance reports from Providence and St. Louis is also available and gives details on the Boston redevelopment plan.

There will be an election of prominent Americans to the Hall of Fame in 1960. Henry George ought to be nominated. Will you help get him elected? Write for application forms to: Hall of Fame Executive Office, 53 Washington Square South, New York, N. Y.