

How To Scare an Assessor

JOHAN NAGY of Chula Vista, representing the Statewide Homeowners Association of which he is president, was introduced by Loral Swofford, St. Louis Director. He held the audience in rapt attention, for he brought to the conference the flavor of Southern California — attractiveness, skill and humor. The homeowner program evolved out of the wisdom and generosity of Sidney Evans of San Diego, and its dramatic beginnings have been recorded in the HGN through the years. It continues, as demonstrated by Mr. Nagy and Henry B. Cramer, as a perpetual memorial to the beloved Sidney Evans. Both are on the editorial board of the California Homeowner. Mr. Nagy very generously used his candid camera to snap the pictures in this issue.

In his captivating talk he said he is often asked if what he is proposing is the single tax. To this he may simply reply, "what is it?" When this goes unanswered he sometimes explains, "as I recall, Henry George proposed taxing property at 100 percent of valuation. If that's it, I'm not advocating the single tax. What I'm advocating is to take the tax off personal property and buildings so that California can compete with other states for business. No other industrial state taxes personal property as California does. We are showing homeowners and businesses how they can pay less property taxes without paying more of any other taxes, by taking the tax off improvements and personal property and putting it on land only."

Everybody pays property taxes, Mr. Nagy explained. Tenants pay them in their rents. It can be shown that homeowners would pay less towards a given amount through property taxes than they would through the sales tax. For every billion dollars collected in sales taxes the business community

loses the sale of hundreds of \$25,000 homes, \$800 TV sets, \$3,000 automobiles and other consumer goods, which is sorely needed in the economy, while the same amount collected in property taxes does not remove it from the economy. "It is our belief," he stated, "that what is good for the homeowner is good for the economy."

Mr. Nagy reviewed briefly the San Diego County assessment survey which revealed assessments as low as one percent on vacant land, and stated that homeowners were generally assessed at 25 percent (See HGN, April 1968).

The main portion of his talk was devoted to the Alameda County (East San Francisco Bay) assessment survey of 18,290 parcels sold in the previous assessment year. The data, compiled by researchers, was fed into a computer program which made all the necessary calculations automatically. Assessments were found to be as low as four-tenths of one percent. This survey was made at the request of a state senator from Alameda County and the results were revealed by him at a press conference in Oakland.

"The print-out for homeowners only shows their mean or average to be 19.3 percent of market value, or more than two and a half times that of vacant land," said Mr. Nagy. "It is obvious then that for every \$500 in taxes paid by a homeowner, only \$200 is being paid by landowners with like market values. The tragedy is that while these bad assessments remain, homeowners will be carrying an unfair share of the tax burden. The fact that another assessor may go to jail is of very little consolation."

The Homeowner president indicated that many more such surveys are needed and will be forthcoming as soon as educational funds are available.