

Resolutions in Oregon

ERICK HANSCH of Portland, Oregon, editor of Taxpayers Digest, presented to the County Democratic convention a resolution to have the Legislative Tax Study Committee explore land value taxation. It was passed at the county level and he is now heading for the state convention.

The resolution states that whereas the property tax system in Oregon constitutes a steadily increasing burden, landlords who improve their property are punished by increased taxes. Therefore it is recommended that the Oregon State Legislative Assembly initiate a study of the so-called "New Zealand System" of assessment, with taxes levied only on the land assessed at its highest and best use value. Under improvement of valuable land is discouraged, while full utilization of the land's potential is encouraged.

In support of the resolution Mr. Hansch lists documented evidence from various reports and leading magazines which bring the problem into focus. Quoting U. S. Senator Paul H. Douglas, he states, "land values are not dependent on high or low wages, because land is already existing. Increases in land values are increases in the ability to command wealth produced

by individuals or corporations."

"Land prices are bound to rise with an increasing population and increasing per capita consumption," states Mr. Hansch. With a heavier tax on land values, this rise in prices can be inhibited or prevented, depending on the degree of taxation. While it is felt that a reform of the property tax is extremely important, it is also true that the property tax properly handled and prudently administered, is still the best means of support for local government. Its potential has not been exhausted, and the indicated reform should make it possible to rely further on it for sound local government."

A resolution was submitted to two precinct committees suggesting "a decent, practical and pervasive land reform program" in Viet Nam "to secure for the people of these United States not only a tactical but also a moral victory in Southeast Asia."

He quotes in support figures varying from 50 to 70 percent as the amount of rent paid by tenants renting farm land in Taiwan and suggests the same may apply in South Viet Nam. The resolution lost by a vote of 35 to 19, but he "made 18 converts."

ALL the capital and labor on the face of the earth cannot produce an ounce of wealth without access to the land and its bounty. Therefore, the minority who hold title to the valuable site and resource lands, without adequate return to society for the privilege, can and do (though obscurely) dictate the terms on which the tax-confused majority live. This is not freedom. It is economic slavery—the inequity that breeds communism and is wrecking Western civilization.

The reason that slumlords and holders of needed idle land sites have to be placated by government tax-provided subsidies before private industry can undertake the risks of redevelopment and expansion, is because they are smart enough to do exactly what our inequitable assessment and upside-down tax policy deliberately encourages them to do — hold on for excessive speculative prices — and this is going on all over our country.

— Ethel Stannard