

The Schalkenbach Outreach

AT the opening session of the annual conference of the HGS in St. Louis, Miss V.G. Peterson, Executive Secretary of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York, outlined some of the activities which continue to reach more and more into spheres of influence.

Miss Peterson said that in the last few years the publishing work of the Foundation has produced the following foreign language editions of George's works: *Progress and Poverty* in French, German, Hebrew, Italian and Spanish; *Protection or Free Trade?* in French and Spanish, and *The Science of Political Economy* in Spanish. These translations are being used successfully by the Henry George School in its Correspondence Course Division and class work.

Important articles such as those that have appeared in the last eighteen months in *Nation's Cities*, *Land Economics*, and *The Architectural Forum* are reprinted as they become available and provided to universities for classroom discussion. Fifteen thousand such pieces went out in 1965.

The short film "Land—and Space to Grow" produced by the Foundation five years ago is still doing yeoman service, especially in high schools. In the twelve months just ended it was shown 749 times on the screen and was used 52 times by independent television stations.

Work on a second motion picture is under way.

The Foundation is experimenting in the field of computer simulation with a view to producing a model which can be used to forecast the results of making changes in local tax systems in any area where that question arises. This is in line with methods that are being employed increasingly by government agencies. In taking the lead, the

Foundation hopes to insure that the factors vital for a favorable demonstration of land value taxation will not be ignored.

The Committee on Taxation, Resources and Economic Development, a Foundation-sponsored group, held its fifth annual academic seminar in June, at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The subject was, "The Property Tax and Economic Development." Many leading universities were represented, including Columbia, Harvard, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

An activity started by the Foundation in 1965 to interest city planners in a reform of the property tax, is making substantial progress. A meeting which Miss Peterson described as a "temperature taking" was held in St. Louis in September 1965, during the annual conference of the American Institute of Planners. That was followed by a second, larger meeting in April, in Philadelphia, during the annual convention of the American Society of Planning Officials. On this occasion Lyle Bryant, was brought from Arlington, Virginia, to discuss the progress that county made through private development as contrasted with a federally financed program. Mr. Bryant, a former college professor, has worked for the major housing agencies and the Department of Commerce since he went to Arlington.

The way the speaker's remarks "caught on" with his audience was truly encouraging, Miss Peterson said. "We need to get rid of the use of public funds as a subsidy for redevelopment. It is morally wrong," one county planner from North Carolina affirmed with emphasis. A planner from Utah whose responsibilities take in four western states deplored the fact that land in his area is assessed at from

5 to 10 percent of its market value, old buildings at around 15 percent and new ones at approximately 20 percent. "Wherever land is greatly underassessed," he declared heatedly, "it pays to buy land but it doesn't pay to develop it. And it rarely pays to rejuvenate old buildings. Let's reward people for improving their properties," he pleaded, "not go out of our way to hurt them."

Among the important and interesting points made by Mr. Bryant in reply to various questions were:

"Too many people are too much given to seeking new legislation when they encounter a problem situation instead of using their imaginations to find solutions within the framework of the legislation already on the books.

"Instead of continuing to wink at the legal requirement that properties be assessed uniformly according to their fair market value, we should begin to meet those requirements. . . .

"The big problem in private redevelopment is how to get owners of obsolete properties to sell to developers at a price low enough to make redevelopment economically feasible. This means tax reform . . ."

Miss Peterson's enthusiasm for the newly launched planners program was obvious. A third meeting* with this influential group is scheduled for August 14 in Portland, Oregon, where the American Institute of Planners will be meeting again. The topic will be "The Property Tax and Metropolitan Disunity." Arrangements are well along for a fourth in Washington, D.C. in late September. This will bring together for a full day's discussion the planners and (for the first time in this program) the assessors as well, in the Capital region.

* This meeting has taken place with gratifying results.

Our Omaha Beacon

IF we would tax the land values and not the improvements we would have the problems of the slums licked," said Mayor Sorensen of Omaha as reported in a World Herald interview.

Whenever news comes from Omaha favoring George's views we leap to the conclusion that a certain woman is somehow involved. Ada Shafer has invested a lifetime of intelligent and unremitting work in this direction, and is still sending us clippings and checking on the city fathers.

Spry and alert at 86, she was honored with a "profile" and photograph in the Omaha Herald of September 7th. This relates that she was an ardent suffragette as far back as 1908 and stayed with that cause and the League of Women Voters through succeeding years.

She has been an in-member of the

HGN family for ages, and our files contain numerous orders from her for books and pamphlets which, at her own expense, she put into the hands of various local officials on appropriate occasions when an issue was boiling up in the LVT area.

This keen attitude toward community betterment provides an example of the effective contribution that can be made by well informed, conscientious persons in modest circumstances, of any age or condition.

We have been told with emphasis that no man (or woman) is without influence, and surely Mrs. Shafer can look back on a long life of usefulness and influence. It is often said that Georgists tend to be long-lived and active; and it has proved to be the case, not only with outstanding men in the movement but with many such vital women as well.