

Scrofani Asks: "Who Owns the Land and Minerals?"

Robert Scrofani, Director of the San Francisco school, has assembled a 25-page booklet, "Who Owns the Land and Minerals? What Difference Does It Make?" based on a 1,800 page report by the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force.

The report points out that "despite the land and mineral wealth of Appalachia, the region's local governments remain poor. Part of the reason lies in the failure of the property tax system to tax the region's wealth adequately and equitably". Equitable tax administration in Appalachia would generate \$8 million in Eastern Kentucky alone and a total of \$16.5 million more a year in the 80-county study area.

The report, described as the most detailed survey ever of monopoly and absentee land ownership in Appalachia, was prepared by a group of scholars and volunteer researchers who found that only 1% of the local resident population owns tracts larger than 250 acres, holdings that make up 10% of the 80-county area.

The Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force conducted the two year study which was financed by a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, a coalition of the Federal and 13 state governments located in Washington, DC.

The summary of the report examines the enormous land holdings of such concerns as the Pocohantas-Kentucky Corporation, a subsidiary of the Norfolk and Western Railway that is described in the report as the "largest landowner in Eastern Kentucky". According to the report, "corporate entities own at least 4,340,142 coal-rich acres of Central Appalachia". Other landowners holding more than 100,000 acres include U.S. Steel, Georgia Pacific, and Bowater Corp. of London.

Urban Workshop Celebrates Tenth Year

Students from eighteen High Schools in the New York City metropolitan area participated in the Tenth Annual Urban Workshop at the Henry George School on May 21.

The program focused on economic problems of the Metropolitan Region. The morning session was devoted to a panel comprised of Presidents of manufacturing firms who spoke of the difficulties and advantages of conducting a business in New York. Representatives included Charles George, President of Lee Myles Auto Parts Corp., and Rita Paleschuck, President of Flair Manufacturing.

During the afternoon session, Philip Finkelstein, HGS Director and Dr. Albert Alexander, Executive Director of the New York City Council of Economic Education, co-sponsor of the workshop, discussed key economic problems of the region, such as energy, air and water pollution, transportation and land use. Fryda L. Ossias showed a filmstrip on land use.

Lower Homeowners' Taxes

from page 1

The average real property tax on one or two family dwellings will be less than the current tax under two alternatives—a tax only on the full value of the land or a tax on the combined full value of the land and the current assessment on the improvement. For one family homes, taxes will average lower in 62 of the 70 school districts examined under the first alternative and lower in 60 under the second. Under the homestead exemption alternative, the burden for homeowners, on average, is less than under a full value property tax, but greater than either the other alternatives.

The options selected are all within the range of legislative possibility and, it is believed, constitutional and judicial standards. All of the policy options examined would have a higher claim to legitimacy than the current assessment practice which has been under broad attack by taxpayers, the courts, state and local governments, and almost all observers and scholars, the report states.