

WILEY

A Realty Expert on Land Value Taxation

Author(s): Will Lissner

Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Jul., 1977), pp. 273-274

Published by: Wiley

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3486007>

Accessed: 25-02-2024 23:47 +00:00

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Wiley is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*

Without a doubt White America is seeking to keep the walls of segregation substantially intact while the evolution of society and the desperation of the dispossessed is causing them to crumble. The White majority, unprepared and unwilling to accept radical structural change, is resisting and producing chaos while complaining that if there were no chaos orderly change would come (12). This is our environmental crisis!

Arkansas State University
State University, Ark. 72467

1. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 337-38.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
3. Arthur Goldberg, quoted in *The Crisis of Survival* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1970), pp. 4, 5.
4. Gary B. Nash, *The Great Fear: Race In the Mind of America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970).
5. W. D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968).
6. L. Alex Swan, "Individualism or Collectivism" (unpublished paper) presented at Oklahoma State University, February 12, 1975.
7. John W. Gardner, *Self-Renewal: The Individual and the Innovative Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 19.
8. Alan Pifer, *The Higher Education of Blacks in the United States* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1973).
9. M. Kilson, "Whither Integration?" *Civil Rights Digest*. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C., Summer, 1976.
10. F. E. Crossland, *Minority Access to College* (A Ford Foundation Report) (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).
11. Stan J. Smith, "Needed: A Ten-Fold Increase of Minority Engineering Graduates." (Address to Engineering Education Conference). Crotonville, N.Y.: July 25, 1972.
12. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 24 (1968), pp. 1-12.

A Realty Expert on Land Value Taxation

ONE OF THE AMAZING PHENOMENA in contemporary America is the number of real estate experts—appraisers, brokers, developers, etc.—who support land value taxation in lieu of the present property tax on land and improvements. A leading light among them is William W. Newcomb of Melbourne, Florida, who had a distinguished career as a journalist in New York and Chicago before he and his wife (the former Helen Bakenhus, long-time secretary to our collaborator, the late Harold S. Buttenheim, editor of the *American City*) entered real estate brokerage in Melbourne in 1955.

Out of his everyday experience, with the aid of his lifelong study of economics, an interest developed when he read Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* during his college years, Mr. Newcomb has

written an analysis of the American land system as it affects home sites which he calls *The Conspiracy Against Homeowners and Tenants* (Melbourne, Fla. 32901: Expose Books, P. O. Box 1178, \$3).

Henry George became aware of the nature and extent of land monopoly when he went to California and saw history telescoped before his eyes. Mr. Newcomb had the same experience in Melbourne. When he went there, he says, "little did I realize that a multibillion dollar man-in-space program would be created by the U. S. Government 25 miles northeast of Melbourne."

Nor did he anticipate that "the population of Melbourne would rise from 4,500 to 140,000; that land prices in the 'boondocks' would rise from \$50 an acre to \$6,000 to \$10,000 and more in the newly created suburban towns; that the price of gas station sites would rise from \$2,000 to \$125,000," he says. Mr. Newcomb goes on:

"Every time I brokered a 100, 200, 400 or 1,000 acre tract I would ask the buyer to develop it. Did he? Occasionally. But usually he was a speculator and he would sell to another speculator. So, whereas a nice three bedroom, two-bath house might be built or purchased for, say, \$20,000 in 1977 if we had land value taxation, under the unreformed property tax a family must pay \$40,000, \$50,000 and up.

"Tell me how a family with a \$10,000 a year income can service and pay off a mortgage on today's house prices and still meet the bills for the other necessities of life, food, clothing, a car, medical care, insurance premiums, recreation and savings for emergencies."

The "conspiracy" about which he writes is the American land tenure system, under which urban, suburban and rural land can be and is bought by the wealthy and held off the market for speculation because it is only taxed locally and is not taxed by the federal government. Local tax assessors "grossly undertax big owners of improved and unimproved land," and what taxes are paid are deductible from federal taxable income. "Millionaires can lavish huge sums on their various estates" while the small homeowner often is overtaxed because of the high ratio of his building value to that of the land.

Mr. Newcomb is no theorizer. He speaks from a knowledge of real estate brokerage that has carried him and his wife to the top of their second profession. His monograph is a fascinating product of a keen mind and a ripened conscience.

WILL LISSNER