

Federal Control of Local Schools

by BESSIE BEACH TRUEHART

TH**ERE** is a tumult of discussion anent federal control of local school policies. Local schools are supposed to be, in principle and tradition, under the jurisdiction of local school boards.

What right has the federal government to dictate educational policies? That's an easy one to answer—the right of the piper who plays the tune, to collect his fee of domination! And why will the local schools submit to this domination? That's another easy one. Dr. Bernard E. Donovan, Superintendent of New York Schools, stated, on October 28, "We don't want federal control, but we do want federal money."

Education, traditionally, is primarily a local obligation. Are local communities willing to shirk this obligation, for the sake of deriving support from federal government—even though the money for this support comes, indirectly, from federal taxation of their own citizens? But the excuse is, "it is the federal government which has the taxing power and the distribution of its proceeds. We, locally, cannot carry the burden of our expanding school need." In other words, we will sell our birthright of educational independence for the mess of pottage of a government hand-out!

But let it be considered—there is one source of taxation which the federal government does not control: local

land value taxes. Again we have the excuse, "but they are a mere pittance, not nearly enough for the purpose!"

We have spread the tax base so thin, and over such a wide area, that indeed the amount available for our schools is pitifully inadequate. In a recent campaign in San Diego, California, a special appeal was made to the teachers, who were seeking a raise of salaries. The point was made that a tax on land values, rather than other means being proposed, would afford ample financing for the desired raise. They tentatively acknowledged the principle involved but argued, in effect, that "it's too long drawn out a proposition, and besides, it's not the principle we are concerned with, but the raise right now!" And they did not support the tax reform at the polls.

In these campaigns in California, and elsewhere, the sword of truth is being struck against the false bases of taxation. Is greed (or ignorance?) mightier than the sword? Will citizens sacrifice even their own children to the Moloch of false taxation which permits speculation in land but deprives them of the funds for local education?

Let us be charitable and ascribe this atrocity to ignorance rather than to greed. That assumption indicates the need for wider spread of the knowledge the Henry George School has to offer. More power to that great educational movement!

City assessors in Grand Rapids reviewed their records, charts and photographs and won praise from their guests, Mayor James Clarkson and his deputy assessor from Southfield, Michigan.

"Land value is a city's greatest source of revenue," Mayor Clarkson said. "A city can attract industry by use of the land value assessment program, because an industry does not have to pay a premium on its inventory (personal property) and its ability to produce." He described himself at a meeting of the Municipal League as "a politician putting into practical use some of the ideas of the classical economists such as Henry George." He said a one percent depreciation is allowed each year and a 3 percent obsolescence depreciation on a new building is permitted the first year. People who improve their properties are therefore not penalized, he said.