

The Importance of One

THE Public Interest Research Group in Washington, D.C. (Nader), a barometer reflecting rising awareness, lists an ever-increasing number of tax action groups. Their fourth Property Tax Newsletter gives detailed information on "basic principles of the assessment process" in three steps: first determine fair market value of property, next determine the assessed or taxable value, and finally apply the tax rate and determine the amount of tax. Methods for determining value are explained, and sample work sheets are included.

Long before this group was organized in Washington, various Henry George enthusiasts were doing what came naturally. One of these was David Bell of Monticello, New York. Having read *Progress and Poverty* "over and over" he began an individual tax reform campaign a year ago which demonstrates again the power of one person. He started by writing articles for the Republican Watchman, a newspaper which circulates in Sullivan County and four surrounding counties. The subject was the familiar single tax theory followed by an extended statement on what is wrong with present tax policies. He made the emphatic assertion that property taxes could be reduced without levying any new taxes and that property could be improved without fear of paying higher real estate taxes.

In each of these articles Mr. Bell is featured as a real estate broker and motel owner who is "a student of Henry George, the eloquent exponent of the single tax theory whose writing in the last quarter of the 19th century led people to wonder if our tax system wasn't as irrational as painful." Mr. Bell pointed out how the present tax system abets poor housing and urban decay, and how a three-times-as-heavy tax on land in Southfield, Michigan, actually benefited the homeowners when the tax was taken off improvements.

Early last year, because of the interest aroused locally, he was requested to give lectures at the Monticello High School. By a natural progression of events, and encouraged by responses from his efforts, Mr. Bell became chairman of a newly formed committee to Abolish Property Taxes Unfair to Real Estate (CAPTURE). In a booklet which he distributes to rural and urban homeowners he invites volunteers to join him in pushing for this land reform.

Starting with no other impetus than an intensive exposure to *Progress and Poverty*, the classic exposition by Henry George, David Bell has become "a light and a power" in his community in the one year during which he has spoken out. Others should and do take heart knowing that with right thinking and right expression there is no rea-

son to withhold the patriotic service each can lend to his country once he has become well grounded in principles .

Startling figures this month show that as the taxes on vacant land were reduced in Southfield by the present city administration, the building figures dropped 50 percent and land "grows scarce and scarcer." This is swift and dramatic vindication of the plan instituted by Mayor Clarkson and Assessor Gwartney which made Southfield rich and famous. S. James Clarkson, now a county judge, stands out as one who boldly taught and fought for an application of George's principles at a time when it was believed by older proponents that any mention of George meant political death.

Canberra In Crisis

A book by Frank Brennan has been published in Australia and will soon be available here through the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. The author is a lawyer in the Attorney General's department, and *Canberra in Crisis* gives a history of the planned capital city of Australia and its unique land tenure system. Mr. Brennan, according to a critical review in the Canberra Times, is a "disciple" who wants to revive Henry George.

Originally the reappraisements were set at 20-year intervals and it was at the close of the second of these long periods that officials made the discovery that some owners of residences, now old age pensioners, could be faced with land rentals as high as \$7 a week. Did this blow the leasehold system? Readers who have been searching for the total story on Australia's far-out capital will welcome this book when it reaches the U.S.

A "tomorrow obsessed" architect, Moshe Safdie, in a book entitled *Beyond Habitat*, repeatedly stresses the tax structure as the culprit impeding the environment. He says, "an environmental bill of rights" should include increased taxes to discourage vacant land and open parking lots.

Gifts For New York Headquarters

Phyllis Post, noted artist and writer, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Johnson Post and grand-daughter of Louis F. Post, has honored the Henry George School with significant gifts. A study in profile of Louis F. Post gives an indication of the strength and character for which he is remembered. Even more prized is a portrait of Henry George by Charles Johnson Post, whose celebrated paintings are now in the U.S. Library of Congress. This portrait will adorn the trustees' room in the HGS in New York. The school library gratefully acknowledges the gift of three bound sets of *The Standard* for 1891 and 1892, and a rare edition of Louis F. Post's syllabus of *Progress and Poverty*.

The Los Angeles HGS last year began making a direct appeal to high school students and about 300 completed the basic program. Many are continuing with advanced work this year and some 250 are pursuing the study. A history course of special interest is being given in Hollywood by John Wiggins and Harry Pollard. It emphasizes the effect of economic pressures on the country.