

## A Sigh for Cities

**A CITY DESTROYING ITSELF: An Angry View of New York, by Richard J. Whalen. William Morrow & Co., New York, 1965. Paper, 95c.**

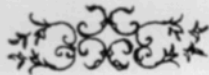
"Angry" is the word for this book which relates in sorrow as well as anger, the things that are happening to New York — and to other cities as well. Bleak monsters of office buildings, soulless housing projects, strangling traffic, poisoned air, a city remorselessly defaced by "urban renewal" — these are some of the things Mr. Whalen laments.

Perhaps the author is a little *too* angry, for he seems to lash out at almost everything that is happening. I can agree with him when he waxes indignant about the Pan Am hulk of a building clogging mid-town; but why shed tears over that huge barn, the old Pennsylvania Station? He wants nice buildings in key areas; why not admit that Huntington Hartford's museum helps fill the bill, instead of grumbling that it "has not notably graced the area"?

Jane Jacobs has also written an angry book, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which is cited by Mr. Whalen. Federal urban renewal plans, she pointed out, are almost a guarantee that a city will go from bad to worse. What then is the remedy? Mr. Whalen is not very specific. He thinks New Yorkers should care more about their city and complains that "New York has the look of a place that has been abandoned, physically and psychologically, by those citizens who might bring about its rescue."

But isn't *that* the problem? *Why* have people who could do something fled from the city? It must be because the city was no longer worthwhile, because it cost too much to live there and was not giving enough satisfaction. And this brings us to the "number one problem — the high cost of land." Mr. Whalen only touches briefly on it. Unless it is solved, not only New York, but the places where the middle and upper-middle groups have fled, will also go downhill.

—R. C.



A new Georgist publication, *The Rating Bulletin*, is being issued by the New Zealand Unimproved Value Rating Association, P.O. Box 951, Wellington. This recently re-named association has limited its objective to promotion of rating on unimproved value, believing that this plan of local taxation will benefit both the local body using it and the country at large, and will make desirable local reforms easier to attain.

This New Zealand equivalent of land value taxation makes improvements on land a tax free investment, and "tends to make unprofitable keeping land unused or under-used" . . . giving a municipality or county "a built-in stimulus to progress and a deterrent to stagnation." The publication includes specific and detailed tax data for several localities, and is a practical aid in local reform.

From New Era College in Kenya comes a student monthly edited by Kul Bhushan, with refreshing glimpses of student life. For instance, a letter signed "College Girls," states, "A few weeks ago a boy tried to hold one of the girl's hands. When questioned by a staff member he denied the fact. Was it not rude? Was it not that he hid the truth?"

How would it be if we imported some of Kenya's decorum for American colleges?

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