

A Sigh for Southfield Homeowners

Southfield, Michigan homeowners have had a three-year reprieve from onerous taxes, and while they happily improved their homes and gardens without increased taxes on the improvements, their city leaped into national prominence and sparkled with the names of new important companies who built offices there, attracted by an adaptation of the land value tax principle.

This story, under the heading of Creative Taxation, has been told too often to repeat, and its progenitors, James Clarkson and Ted Gwartney, have changed their roles somewhat.

Now the three-year reprieve is over and homeowners suddenly begin to understand why the principle was so important, what it portended, and why it had to be fought for so long by their then mayor, Jim Clarkson.

The new assessor has raised assessments on homes, calling it an equalization factor, while lowering assessments on vacant land—a move which speculators will be quick to notice.

Among many transfers was a sale of 15 acres of non-residential property to Detroit Edison. This made headlines in *The Southfield Sun*, when, after being assessed at approximately \$59,411 in early 1970, it was sold five days later for \$1.075 million. A long report by Mary Dean Camsie told taxpayers they were rooked by this net profit of \$1 million on "reduced" land.

A representative of the assessing department said, "we don't want to hurt business." So the homeowners will again be making up the difference while reductions of from 5 to 15 percent are being made on vacant land assessments, as the face and figure of Michigan's fastest growing little city change rapidly.

But the awakening has come, taxpayers are uniting in a battle over the new assessments. They also want to have utilities taxed, stating that Michigan Bell Telephone Company and Detroit Edison own "the best property in the city."



Last Conference Call

The Hon. S. James Clarkson, former mayor of Southfield, Michigan, now a county judge, familiarly welcomed in Georgist circles as Jim, will be a guest speaker at the Calgary conference banquet on July 12th. Canada will be represented by a celebrated humorist, W. O. Mitchell, and by the Hon. Fred Colborne, Minister of Municipal Affairs for the Province of Alberta.

A few accommodations remain at the Palliser Hotel, 133 Ninth Avenue S.W. 1, Calgary 2, Alberta. The rates (July 7 to 12 only) are \$14, \$16.50 and \$18.50 for single rooms—\$18, \$20.50 and \$22.50 for double rooms. In writing for a last minute reservation please include your check for a one-day deposit. Your genial hosts will be Director James W. Ramsay and members of the School of Economic Science.