

Adapting Use of Land

MAN AND LAND IN THE UNITED STATES, by Marion Clawson, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1964. 180 pages. \$4.50.

Reviewed by DOROTHY SARA

In simple, nontechnical language, this book traces the history of the evolution of land use in the United States from the arrival of the first settlers to the present day. The author tells, in short (almost synopsis) form about the purchases of lands from foreign governments, and how, as the country grew larger in its land holdings, man has used the land under the laws and conditions established by other men. He discusses the kind of land tenure system (laws and customs) that a people create and use, dependent in great part upon their natural environment; for instance, in an arid climate they are likely to have different laws relating to use of water, than they will have in a humid climate.

The author, Marion Clawson, is Director of the Land Use and Management Program, Resources for the Future. This is a nonprofit research and educational institution financed by the Ford Foundation. He was formerly on the staff of the Bureau of Agricultural economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and has to his credit many other affiliations in land management programs. His book shows interest in the use of land in forest, farm and urban areas; it discusses federal land uses and grants. But the book does not go into depth regarding land speculation or the economics of land value taxation. Actually the author sees no need for appraisal and study of this facet of land and the way man uses it; he says, "Those of us who believe in democracy also believe that private ownership of land is essential

to a democracy. Land titles are one of the things we take for granted in the United States." These statements, of course, are subject to question by those who have made a study of land value taxation.

In a readable manner the book tells of the progression from feudalism to colonialism, and the way in which the latter led to settlement patterns in the various sections of this country. Several charts and drawings help to substantiate the author's writing which seems to be directed more to stimulating the interest of the young student in school than to the adult whose interest lies beyond the mere chronological history of land settlement and man's adaptation to the growth of the land areas.

In discussing the problem of slum areas, Mr. Clawson is most sympathetic to the low-income and racial groups who are the chief victims, and he raises questions as to why urban renewal programs are not eliminating slums. But he does not seem to recognize the basic reason for slums nor does he offer any solution; he merely questions.

The book goes into a comparison between the development of land ownership and use in the United States and in Latin America, showing the sharp contrasts existing in the two continents. The author states that land reform is a burning issue in Latin America, while in our country he finds that "... we are indeed fortunate ..." in our system of land ownership and land use, and he does not recognize or state any need for reform here.

In the last chapter, Mr. Clawson summarizes the various policies and issues applicable to the various types of lands: urban, parks, recreation and open space, agriculture, forest, highways — and raises questions as to the

ways such lands could be used. He does not lead the reader to any conclusions or solutions, and the very last sentence states, "They nearly all demand public action of some kind, and public action means public decisions." Yet he does not in any way show how such action and decisions might be

achieved, and the book would have served a better purpose if, in addition to a history of land acquisition and its uses, the author had also included a bibliography to guide the reader who might be interested in a further study of the land and its part in the economic picture of our country.

History and You

FROM Balboa in the Canal Zone, John A. Morales writes to comment favorably on the report of the conference in HGN but notes an impression of a "dispersal of effort," and wonders if the movement might not benefit from concentrating in one direction. Observing that it is difficult to sell ideas abroad when they have failed at home, he suggests that Pennsylvania is a springboard, and says, "because of the tremendous amount of footwork done by the Erie Land Tax Association, it would seem they should have our moral, physical and financial help in order to bring about the 'breakthrough' we would all like to see."

Mr. Morales has put into words a situation which is so important that immediate action is needed. The Erie Association must now take its case to the people. The executive director, Wylie Young, is daily calling on residents to show them how much they would save under LVT. In most cases the information is welcomed, but there is a big problem. Money. With all expenditures trimmed to the bone, at

least \$250 a month is needed to keep the program going. Newspaper advertisements should appear regularly to back up the personal calls. A few spots on TV would also be useful.

These ELTA people have carried a very hard fight through the initial stages. Nobody thought it would be easy. It would be a heartbreak to stop with success so near.

Just as a town in England found itself famous because a startling LVT survey was made there, so Erie may be the U.S. city to gain international fame as the proving ground for initiating LVT here. Most homeowners don't know how much they would benefit, and well-entrenched "specialists" hope they never find out.

How many readers will quickly pledge \$5 a month for one year to the Erie Land Tax Association, 2217 Peninsula Drive, Erie, Pennsylvania? Lesser amounts are welcome too. And why not add a word of encouragement when you send your check. Georgism needs your money, but it also needs your faith.

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Russel Conklin, former director of the Henry George School in Great Falls, Montana, has been elected to the office of County Auditor. He was mayor of Great Falls a few years ago, and later representative to the Montana State Legislature. Mr. Conklin is an attorney and certified public accountant by profession.