

The **NEW** **LEAF**

"EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FOR NONE"

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Land Prices High Nationwide

Iowa Farm Land Skyrockets



LEADERS OF LEAF — Some of LEAF's officers and directors discuss plans for LEAF's expansion, at an informal outdoor meeting in San Diego's Presidio Park. From left to right: Dr. Wm. B. Truehart, Robert Tideman, Floyd Morrow, and Nicholas Lenten.

Data we have seen recently indicates land prices are increasing at a rate greatly in excess of the rate of inflation. For example, Iowa farm land has increased 84 per cent in the last 30 months (*Journal, Washington, Iowa*).

Most of the data pertains to rural land (and in many cases gives only current values, without former ones with which to compare). A case of urban land, however, is furnished by Hollywood-Burbank Airport, a suburban Los Angeles tract owned by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation (*Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 16, 1975). Lockheed has been negotiating with the City of Burbank for two years regarding a sale. An appraiser retained by the City valued the property at \$52 million, while one engaged by Lockheed valued it at \$77 million. Disregarding the relatively small value for the terminal building, paving and miscellaneous small improvements, the value per acre would be about \$94 thousand or \$150 thousand, depending on which appraisal is used.

Down Orange County way, The City of San Juan Capistrano is considering buying 136 acres of "farm" land within this very small city's limits, to preserve it for farm use. It would be leased back to farmers. The estimated price: \$4 million. A cool \$29, 412 an acre (*L.A. Times*, Sept. 4, 1975). And up in Sacramento County, near the hamlet of Yolo, the Mace ranch, consisting of 300 acres of row farming and cattle ranch land, sold recently for about \$1 million (*Sacramento Bee*, Sept. 7, 1975).

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State Sues in Alleged Land Fraud

California Attorney General Evelle J. Younger is being joined by the Kern County District Attorney in a joint suit, which alleges \$2.5 million in land frauds in connection with desert land in Kern County (*Bakersfield Californian*, Sept. 4 and 5, 1975). The matter came to light originally in June of 1974, with a buyer who paid \$5,000 for 2-1/2 acres of dry land (without water), with a market value of only \$250.

Kern County District Attorney Albert Leddy said, "Anyone living on this land--if anybody ever wanted to--would have to either dig a well or form a water district, both of which are expensive operations. This just isn't the kind of land that has a realistic potential for

any kind of commercial, industrial, or residential development. It is desert land."

Randall Abbott, senior Kern County planner, stated: "It has been used for occasional grazing of sheep by Basque shepherds. Its only use is for that purpose. There are no roads on the property nor any other means of transportation for five miles around. It is waste land pure and simple.

Apparently none of the purchasers saw the land before buying, but were talked into the purchases by high powered salesmen. Further, it is difficult for authorities to check up on every case, since many were via contracts of sale, which were not recorded by purchasers.

Common Cause Studies Tax Reform

LEAF President Dr. William Filante tells us that Common Cause has adopted "Tax Reform" as a topic for study and possible action. He recently made the first presentation to the San Francisco Common Cause group, specifically recommending removal of the improvement tax, assessment reform, and an increased levy on community-created land values.

Dr. Filante urges LEAF members who also belong to Common Cause to write immediately to Common Cause (local and national), in support of reform that will lower taxes on improvements and increase them on site values. He says: "Here's a chance to get some *others* to help us and at the *very least* win friends more easily than usual. Let's go!"

The Earth's Natural Resources

When Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill drew up the Atlantic Charter, aboard a ship at the beginning of World War II, one of the provisions was that the earth's natural resources should be made available to all people on an equal basis. Today, over thirty years later, this same objective is voiced by a U.S. representative to the U.N. Economic and Social Council (see article in right column).

We commend these goals. This is what LEAF is all about.

A classic example of monopolization of an important natural resource is that of the O.P.E.C. cartel. While we in this country cannot control directly the pricing policy of O.P.E.C., we would at least like to see the oil revenues go to defray the costs of necessary public services in underdeveloped countries where the oil is located, as well as providing funds for their more rapid development, rather than go to enrich a few sheikhs or absentee landowners.

We can, however, make our influence felt in our own country, to see that our natural resources are not monopolized, resulting in the enrichment of multi-national oil corporations and individuals fortunate enough to hold title to resources here, whether of oil, gas, coal, or thermal power. A fair annual government levy, based on a minimal estimate of the royalty value of the minerals in the ground, would discourage monopolizing such sites.

Henry George said (*Progress and Poverty*, p. 243):

It is a well provisioned ship, this on which we sail through space. If the bread and beef above decks seem to grow scarce, we but open a hatch and there is a new supply, of which before we never dreamed. And very great command over the services of others comes to those who as the hatches are opened are permitted to say, "This is mine!"

Some may disagree as to the adequacy of our "ship's" natural endowment, but we in LEAF agree wholeheartedly with the last sentence in the above quotation.



New South Wales:

One Step Forward; One Step Back

The City of Sydney, Australia, is the largest city in the world (over two million) to raise all its municipal revenue from taxes on land values only. But up till now, water and sewage (represented by the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board) has been paid for by a levy on both land and buildings. Now comes word (*Good Government*, Sydney, June, 1975) that, beginning in July, the Board has switched to a system of taxing land values only. This is the step forward.

In addition, the State of New South Wales has a tax on land holdings, which falls harder on substantial ones. This, together with Sydney's city land tax, has resulted in private redevelopment of the city's older downtown section, without government bulldozer methods. Now comes news that the State is adopting a regressive tax structure, with the rate cut in half for holdings over \$20,000. This is the backward step.

Nevertheless, for the first time, all property taxes in Sydney are on land only.

Historical Quotation

"There are a thousand men hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root."

—Henry David Thoreau

U.N. Representative Favors Fair Natural Resource Distribution

Clarence Clyde Ferguson, U.S. representative to the U.N. Economic and Social Council, said recently before the U.N. Committee on Natural Resources in Tokyo:

"The increasing recognition of the interdependence, not just of states--but of people--should be perceived not as an impediment but as an opportunity to better the human condition.

"Our hope is that in this meeting, this Committee can break yet another link in the chain of narrow self-interest regarding the natural resource endowment of our planet.

"We trust that this Committee in its work may progress toward that condition in which every human being--without regard to considerations of nationality or ideology--is entitled to fair and not disproportionate share of our earth's natural endowment."

Senator Rodda Continues Land Value Tax Support

In a recent letter to Wilbur E. Pereira, Los Angeles LEAF member, California State Senator Albert S. Rodda of Sacramento, himself a LEAF Advisory Board member, said:

"I will continue to push for land value taxation. I am having a constitutional amendment drafted for that objective."

Leaders Get Around

Earl Hanson, of Cedar City, Utah, recently arranged for a preliminary organizational planning meeting for LEAF in Salt Lake City. Then, while on vacation in the midwest during the summer, he got his sister, Ruth Pearson, to arrange a meeting in Minneapolis, at which John Burger, of Boron, California, spoke on LEAF, and LEAF literature was distributed.



Land Prices High Nationwide

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Over in Hawaii, a court battle is shaping up over the State's desire to condemn a few hundred acres around Yokohama Bay, owned by the McCandless Estate heirs, for use as a park. The owners are demanding \$1 million. Hawaii is a state of great concentrations of land ownership. The area under question traces back to the Great Mehele of 1848, when lands were divided among Hawaiian royalty and others. (*Honolulu Advertiser*, Aug. 22, 1975.) The area in question is rocky, and not as desirable for construction as an adjacent area of beach sand, owned by the government.

Joseph M. Sousa, Jr., State parks administrator, said that the State has deposited \$1.9 million with the court for acquisition of 600 or 700 acres, which includes (but is not limited to) that owned by the McCandless estate. Referring to the fact that the State owns the most desirable sites, he said, "Anybody who owned that sandy beach would be a millionaire" (*Honolulu Star Bulletin*, Aug. 21, 1975).

Data such as the above are welcomed by the NEW LEAF. Worthwhile research can be done by LEAF chapters in their own area.

WHAT LEAF IS: A Brief History

When LEAF was conceived and dedicated in San Diego's historic Presidio Park on July 4, 1974, with signing by the founders of a Declaration of Further Independence, an action organization was projected. LEAF was committed to the principle of establishing equality of opportunity and justice in man's relationship to land, including all natural resources. The method to accomplish this: public collection of the economic rent of land.

LEAF was further dedicated to the principles of democracy, with the founding meeting of members held on December 28, 1974. At this meeting bylaws were adopted. Soon thereafter balloting by mail was held for a national Board of Directors. The Board has elected national officers, meets at least once quarterly, and has designated an executive committee of its members to carry on the day to day business. LEAF's democratic structure was completed with the national membership conference this summer.

Booby Traps in One Easy Lesson

by Robert Tideman

LEAF's goal is to make progress toward more equal enjoyment of nature's gifts and more private enjoyment of the work of our own hands. This is a tough assignment, with traps for the unwary. Here are three of them:

Trap No. 1. "It's impossible!" Soothing thought! If nothing can be done, nothing need be done, so let us be merry. Our children and grandchildren may burn, but "it won't be our fault."

Trap No. 2. "It's easy! The platform is so right, so true. Hoist the standard, unfurl the flag. Fire Fabian. Lay siege to the citadel of privilege!"

Trap No. 2 leads by a chill tunnel into Trap No. 1.

Trap No. 3. This trap is U-shaped. You start forward and end up going backward. You fight for income taxes, property transfer taxes, land-use controls. These measures don't open access to land, they trample freedom, but they're easier to put over. Once you get past that second turn in the trap, you get a lot of help from the privileged interests.

LEAF branches in California are aware of these traps. We do not aim to run campaigns, we aim to win them. We do not aim to capture the very citadel of privilege, we aim to advance upon it. But we advance forward, not backward. Three branches, Orange, Santa Cruz, and Sacramento,

Continued next column

are working on assessment reform. All they seek is that their assessors shall obey the law and end the illegal underassessment of idle and under-used land. When they reach their goal, homeowners and businessmen will pay less in taxes, land speculators more.

The San Francisco branch aims to replace the half-cent transit sales tax with an assessment on land. When they reach their goal, mothers buying shoes for their little children will no longer pay reverse welfare to further enrich the wealthy who hold land near transit stations.

The Marin Branch aims to see the Larkspur Ferry financed by a benefit district assessment rather than increased bridge tolls and bus fares. When they reach their goal, commuters who go to work every day will no longer subsidize the idle who stay home and live off their land value increments.

You can help! Join LEAF now. Your children will thank you.

HAVE YOU MOVED?

If you have moved recently, please drop a line with your new address to LEAF's national headquarters. This will assure your receiving mailings promptly.

How to Join

It's simple, just check the membership level you desire and fill in the form below. Send it to LEAF's national headquarters or turn it in to your local branch.

Membership Form

You can count on me as a LEAF member at the level checked below:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular ... \$15 Yearly | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend of LEAF |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining (\$5. monthly) | <input type="checkbox"/> Contribution \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$60. Yearly | <input type="checkbox"/> Check Enclosed <input type="checkbox"/> Bill Me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing (\$10 monthly) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$120. Yearly | |

Name: _____ Branch: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

BRANCH NEWS

Branches Continue Making Impact

Chicago

Chicago announces temporary officers: Bob Jene, President; Sam Venturella, Secretary; and Bill Ran-ky, Treasurer. A couple of new members are Attilio Forte and Mina Olson.

Sam Venturella reports that he has sent LEAF literature to James W. Rayfield, Planning Director at Carbondale, Illinois, who is circulating it among his staff, with the possibility of organizing a LEAF branch there.

Orange County

The Steering Committee of the Orange County branch of LEAF voted on August 9 at their meeting in Santa Ana, to ask the Board of Supervisors to permit Orange County citizens to question candidates for the position of Assessor.

The September meeting was held on September 14, at Republic Savings and Loan Association. Good press coverage resulted, with the meeting being listed in the *Santa Ana Register* as "a citizen's group urging fair property tax assessments." One news release quoted Margil Wadley and Janet Terry, listed as "co-ordinators of LEAF," as saying, "Homeowners are still paying for the under-assessment of downtown land, of vacant properties and slums."

Sacramento

National Coordinator Robert Tideman is speaking at a dinner meeting of the Sacramento branch of LEAF on October 13.

The branch is focusing on assessment practices, pinpointing under-assessments of vacant and slum land, which result in higher tax rates for homeowners.

San Diego

The San Diego branch of LEAF co-sponsored, together with the Social Responsibility Committee of the Unitarian Church, a "town hall" type meeting at the Church on Sept. 14, at which the candidates for Mayor spoke, and were quizzed by the audience.

The two leading contenders, incumbent Mayor Pete Wilson and City Councilman Lee Hubbard engaged in a spirited debate. Wilson, who was reelected by a substantial majority, expressed his approval, in response to a question put by a LEAF member, of financing rapid transit facilities in part by the increased location values resulting therefrom. Wilson answered "yes" to another question put by a LEAF member: would not increased taxes on land values, coupled with decreased taxes on improvements, tend to encourage private redevelopment of close-in, urban residential land?

A major campaign issue was controlled residential growth in close-in urban areas, favored by Wilson, versus developing additional outlying areas such as the projected North City West, favored by Hubbard. In the event North City West is developed, however, it is likely that a special district will be formed to pay for all capital improvements by a levy on land values only. LEAF Board Chairman and San Diego City Councilman Floyd Morrow got the landholders in the area to request this type of financing from the City Council.

San Francisco

Research has convinced the steering committee that the Mills Act,

which provides for land taxes to finance capital improvements, is not a suitable vehicle for attaining their goal: to repeal the half cent transit sales tax and replace it with a land value tax.

Pending further research, the tentative plan of the branch is to seek an enabling act from the State Legislature, permitting a tax on land for operating expenses. This would permit removing either the general property tax, the sales tax, or both.

Preliminary studies show that if the Bay Area Rapid Transit District were to levy a land tax for operating expenses rather than its present general property tax or sales tax, most homeowners, tenants, working people, and business men would bear lower taxes. Higher taxes would be borne, of course, by those holding idle and under-improved land.

Santa Cruz

The Santa Cruz branch is in the final state of an assessment survey, which will be presented to the Board of Supervisors, the Board of Equalization, the County Grand Jury, and the Governor's office, as well as appropriate legislative committees. The leader, Bob Colonna, reports that the Governor's office sent a letter promising cooperation on future action, based on the results of the survey.

Another interest is the abuse of California's open space code. The Williamson Act, in particular, is held to be a tax dodge for land speculators. Colonna reports that the County is willing to work with the branch on developing more stringent criteria for applicants for open space tax benefits.

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