

March/April 1984

### LVT Bill

For the past year and a half, the Incentive Tax League of Long Island has been educating state legislators on the benefits of land value taxation. These efforts are beginning to pay off!

New York State Senator Owen Johnson recently announced the introduction of legislation designed to direct the Temporary State Commission on the Real Property Tax to study and report on the possible utilization of a two-rate property tax system.

The bill calls for the commission's existing staff to conduct the study, thereby carrying no price tag -- strong incentive for passage. The subsequent report is to be delivered no later than March 31, 1985.

Johnson referred to preliminary studies conducted by the Center for Local Tax Research in various parts of New York.

"These early studies, along with the data available from the Pennsylvania experience, indicate many reasons why the Real Property Tax Commission should be required to conduct an in-depth study of the possible applications of incentive taxation by some communities in New York State"

The bill (S.7222) reads in part: "The legislature finds that a two-rate system of real property taxation presents possibilities of a more equitable distribution of the real property tax burden as well as a more productive utilization of the real property of the state, particularly in urban areas."

It is co-sponsored by State Senators Berman, Bernstein, Connor, Farley, Flynn, Jefferson, Knorr, Levy, Marchi, Perry, Pisani, Trunzo and Tully.

The Assembly version of the bill (A.8508) was introduced by members Feldman, Hochbrueckner and Harenberg and received the bi-partisan support of six other members.

The Seante bill has been referred to the Finance Committee: the Assembly model to its Committee on Real Property Taxation.

### Religious Leaders

Several months ago, the New York School embarked upon a program of establishing a dialogue with religious leaders. (George's ethical message is especially germane to the active social involvement of various denominations.) As a result of its initial success, we on Long Island, are embarking upon a similar program. Coordinator Al Fink will contact those religious leaders, who, after our mailing, are desirous of learning more about the Georgist philosophy. What better place to discuss ethics than from the pulpit?

### Seminars

Eighteen seminars on "You and the Property Tax" have been held in various Adult Education Programs in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. This marks the second year that seminars have been added to our regular classes of "Progress and Poverty".

# THE NEWSday

THE LONG ISLAND NEWS-PAPER • SUNDAY, MAY 14, 1984 • 30 CENTS • SUFFOLK COUNTY

## Assessing property taxes

The Center for Local Tax Research, the people who think land should be taxed more than buildings, have found that a huge majority of the people who live in Riverhead would get lower property tax bills if the center's system was enacted.

A report released last year on Southold included similar findings for homeowners in that town.

The Riverhead survey showed that 86.2 per cent of Riverhead school district homeowners would pay less in taxes than they do under the present system and 93.3 per cent of Wading River school district homeowners would pay less.

The system, which is based on the theories of the late social scientist Henry George, is called "site value taxation." Advocates of the system claim it is a fairer system of raising revenue, especially for highly taxed Long Island homeowners.

The first rule of real estate is, "location, location, location," but the present system of taxation does not always reflect differences among locations. Local assessors calculate a home's property tax bill according to a house's size, style and amenities. The location of the house doesn't count for much. Indeed, a parcel of vacant land — no matter where it is or how many acres it covers — pays virtually no real estate taxes on Long Island.

Although it has been enacted in a few communities in Pennsylvania, site value taxation has never been treated very seriously in New York because it encourages owners of vacant land to develop the acreage. And most elected officials are worried about how to hang on to open space on the island, not how to build it up. — Amanda Harris

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Two-hour sessions, especially on a topic as crucial as taxes, seems to have much appeal. More seminars will be planned for the forthcoming year.

If your school district wishes to offer "You and the Property Tax", please let us know.

#### Town Surveys

Last November the Center for Local Tax Research began a series of surveys in Suffolk County. Following up its exhaustive study of Nassau County, the Center directed its initial energies towards the Town of Southold, finding that 87% of homeowners would gain if a shift occurred from building to land. Public relations was excellent, receiving front page coverage in its two leading newspapers: the Suffolk Times and Suffolk Life. Subsequent surveys are planned for the town of Islip; Riverhead just having been completed. Benefits to homeowners, in Riverhead, are once again significant.

#### Georgist National Conference

Reservations are being accepted for the 1984 Annual Georgist Conference of North America. How fortunate we are on Long Island that it will be held several hours from home, in New York's Hudson Valley. Situated on 550 acres the Holiday Hills Conference Center in Pawling has complete facilities at reasonable rates.

The conference will run from Thursday, July 26th to Sunday July 29th. Room and board are \$50.00 a day but for complete information write to: Council of Georgist Organizations, 5 East 44th Street, New York, N. Y. 10017.

#### All Day Seminar

On January 6th, an all day seminar was held at the Plainview - Old Bethpage Public Library. Over twenty Georgists attended, learning more about such vital issues as the \$200 billion deficit, deregulation, imports and exports and an over-view of the Georgist message. Speakers included Al Fink, Harris Davis, Dave Norflus and Stan Rubenstein.

Because of its success another all-day Saturday seminar is being planned for either May or early June. The program is in its embryonic stage but you will be notified once we have specific details.

If we can be of any service, please write or call us.

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