

Tax Equity

To the Editor:

In the process of running as the Democratic candidate for the office of Board of Tax Review in Southbury, I was asked to supply some information on my understanding of the problem in that office.

I have offered my qualification by stating that the reason for a Board of Tax Review is that our assessors do not understand tax equity and therefore assess arbitrarily and capriciously; that's why the present need for our Board of Tax Review. Accordingly, if elected, I would try to remedy valid claims by abiding by the current requirements of our law — and more compassionately. But the solution to this problem is elsewhere, as expressed by Henry George, the noted American economist and social philosopher, whose ideas have been endorsed recently, and repeatedly this year, in a few New York Times editorials.

The solution is to tax the value of land more and tax improvements less.

In a recent (October 1983) article in "Taxation With Representation" newsletter, a periodical concerned with inequity in taxation in our society, it reported an annual public opinion poll by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, stating that, if faced with higher taxes, U.S. taxpayers would rather pay higher sales taxes than higher federal, state, or local income taxes. Evidently they haven't heard of Henry George's proposal as the most logical alternative, as appeared in the New York Times editorial of September 26, 1983, entitled "To Spend Tax Incentives Wisely," viz.,

"The best way to encourage useful development is to reduce the tax rate on all improvements, while correspondingly raising the taxes on their locational value — on land." (Flash! In today's New York Times the editorial repeats this statement.) Here is your equity. There's no guess work (and no more need apparently for an assessor!). One judges the value of the land only. And you discourage land speculation, viz., at the present time we are keeping land out of use because land is taxed so low. The remedy will bring more land into the free market place for benefit to the community. It opens up more land for productivity, not for idleness and speculation. It would promote a viable economic democracy if applied universally; it would be one of the most revolutionary and equitable ways to promote the good life.

Contrary to what the current First Selectman Harmon Andrews stated recently in a debate at Southbury Town Hall, there is not a surfeit of land in Southbury — there is plenty of it available for further economic development — if land was taxed more and improvements less. The more building, the more it would add to the coffers of Southbury — and the more economic and tax equity for all.

Very truly yours,
Max H. Flechner
683B Heritage Village
Southbury, Ct. 06488
October 24, 1983

10/28/83

Newtown
Bee
(Ct.)

2-3701

10/30/83

Dear Bob-

Sorry I can't be in NY C
on 11/5 - I have a conflict in
occasion. Re enclosed - if they
want me to run for office, they
should know my philosophy - right?
Sincerely, Max