

OBSERVATION POINT



'Land Value' Taxation The Answer?

By Philip H. Power

Frequently I have criticized the entire concept of the property tax—mainly because it has little relation to ability to pay—and suggested that it be scrapped in favor of an income tax.

Meanwhile, however, it looks as though we'll have to put up with the property tax. That being

the fact of life, it's good to learn that some efforts are being made to administer it properly.

It was with pleasure, then, to read Westland Observer Editor Leonard Poger's account of a badly-needed change being ordered by the young, new mayor, Gene McKinney.

IT SEEMS that some property near the Westland Shopping Center hasn't been assessed since 1957, which is eight years before the shopping center opened. Some parcels are being assessed as low as \$700 per acre.

This is the kind of assessing procedure that is an inherent

danger of the property tax. Mayor McKinney decided that such an assessment is "ridiculously low" and opined that more property in the area is worth more like \$10,000 an acre.

True, True.

But getting a fair assessment wasn't all that Gene McKinney had in mind, not by a long shot.

It also seems that the Westland assessor, Manuel Lentine Jr., has been taking a look at what Southfield has done with assessments.

In the property assessing business, Southfield isn't just another city. It has done some of what is called "land value" taxation.

The theory is this: You don't tax land on the basis of its present use; you tax it on the basis of its potential value.

THUS, A CHUNK of potentially valuable property may be sitting idle. As long as it's idle or in a light use such as farming, it's not yielding a lot of revenue. So if

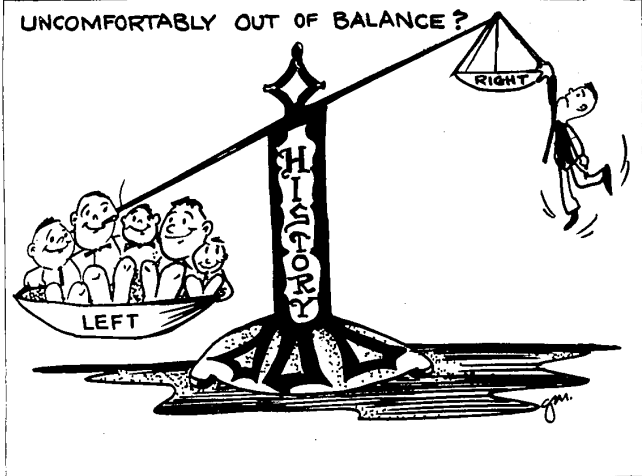
you hike the assessment (and thus the taxes) on the land, the owner must either develop it or sell it to someone who will develop it.

And so you can use the property tax as something more than a means of getting revenue for the city and school district. You use it as a tool to spur development in a city.

This theory of property taxation has some flaws. It doesn't tax honest-to-goodness ability to pay, but potential ability. In this regard, it's inferior to an income tax.

But as long as we have to put up with some form of property tax, it's good to see municipal progressives like Westland's Gene McKinney trying to administer it fairly and encourage some high-yield development.

Some days, even a stop-gap measure looks pretty good.



Tim Richard writes

Need Both Sides Of Issues

A month or so ago, I noted that Schoolcraft College's committee to drum up high class lecturers seemed to be headed in one direction -- left -- with an occasional hard-nosed conservative thrown in, and no one from the business area or with a moderate Republican outlook in the listings.

Well, it seems that a fellow in Ann Arbor has been making similar gram-

blings about a few departments at the University of Michigan.

He is Stephen J. Tonsor, associate professor of history, and he accuses some of his colleagues of "bigotry" against certain political and religious viewpoints.

Now, "bigotry" is a little too strong a word in my book, but the good professor seems to have a point when he sees academic departments overloaded with one political point of view.

PROF. TONSOR DESCRIBES himself as "the only running dog of capitalism in the history department." He adds that many departments in their recruiting show a strong tendency toward "like-mindedness, homogeneity and conformity."

"How many professors to the right of Earl Warren (retired chief justice) do we have on this faculty?" he asks.

"To my colleagues in my own department—where identifiable Republicans number one or possibly two out of 30—I ask whether or not historical study at Michigan might not be improved by some diversification of viewpoint."

He went on to comment on the shortage of non-Keynesians in the economics department and Catholics in many departments, and the tendency to recruit faculty from Ivy League schools.

His colleagues, stung, replied predictably. Oh, we're recruiting from places other than the Ivy League. We don't go around asking people's religion or politics.

Yet few even tried to argue with his basic point. That academic departments do get loaded down with persons of a single political point of view.

MAYBE IT'S DELIBERATE, as Prof. Tonsor suggests, but I suspect it's largely accidental. In the real world, opposites do not attract. A man with one point of view feels more comfortable with others of that same point of view. He hires on at a place where he feels comfortable, that's all.

Moreover, while we are pointing the finger at the University of Michigan, let us not forget other fields of endeavor.

Are there many NDC types in the business school? Is there anything except a New Deal Democrat in a position of influence in the UAW? How many humanitarians at General Motors?

How many bank presidents are Keynesian economists? How many realtors are honest-to-goodness believers in civil rights and open housing?

NEVERTHELESS, POLITICAL homogeneity in a history department is somewhat more worrisome than in other institutions. Why? Because history is written by history department members of college faculties, that's why.

Do you ever get into those discussions about which presidents or current politicians "will go down in history?"

I recall vividly a young history instructor at a state university shortly after John Kennedy's inaugural. The guy was absolutely 100 per cent, thoroughly, unshakably convinced that "history" would give JFK superior marks as a president. Eisenhower to him was a crud. He is right—because he now writes history.

Imagine, if you dare, a 50-member history department with 49 members like that guy. What view of the world will your kids have?

R.T. Thompson writes

Juniors Deserve Pat For Achievements

This is the week when Junior Achievers throughout the nation are being saluted for their achievements, and no week could have been more appropos to pay tribute to teenagers in the communities covered by the Observer Newspapers group.

The affair actually started Saturday when teenagers representing 40 companies presented a two-day sales exposition in the Westland Mall, displaying and selling products they had made in the non-profit educational program.

More than 7,500 Junior Achievers representing 26 centers in southeastern Michigan will step into the limelight during the week long celebration which concludes Saturday.

THIS AREA HAS HAD a total of 80,700 participants in the program since it started in 1949. During the past year, there were 7,200 youngsters in the program, representing 351 companies with 931 advisers.

There were 28,000 stockholders in the various companies and they shared in a total of \$230,000 products sold during the 1969 program.

Figures like these have made southeastern Michigan's the largest JA program in the world.

But the Junior Achievement program isn't the only one in which teens from the area have gained considerable acclaim.

THE OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS doff their hats today to the 11 youths from the area who are named in a story in the sports section as winners of college scholarships under the Chick Evans Scholarship Foundation.

Additional honors are heaped on teenagers with the announcement that Craig Mutch, brilliant football star from Redford Township's Thurston High, has been named to the All-American squad of Scholastic magazine.

And all of this attention is focused on youngsters in Overland at the same time.

THE 11 EVANS SCHOLARSHIP winners are youths who have caddied at private golf courses in the northwest Detroit suburban sector. They must rank in the upper 25% of their graduating class, must show a need for financial assistance and then must pass a competitive test to win one of the \$3,500 awards.

Snowmobile Crackdown

After a rash of snowmobile accidents and violations of private property, the Gaylord City Council, in the northern part of Michigan's lower peninsula, has adopted several ordinances in a crackdown move.

Only licensed drivers will be allowed to operate snowmobiles in Gaylord. (State law makes no such requirement, and as a result a tremendous number of snowmobile accidents involve children of age 15 and under.)

Only certain designated portions of city streets will be open to snowmobiles. Snowmobiles will be required to stop at all intersections and yield the right of way, not only to autos but to pedestrians.

Snowmobiles will be prohibited from entering private property without the oral consent of the owner.

Good.

TIM RICHARD

DISSENT

View points expressed in DISSENT do not necessarily reflect those of Observer Newspapers Inc., but are presented in the belief that publication of all segments of thought on a public issue is a prerequisite to understanding and progress.

By James E. McCarthy
4418 Clare Blvd.
Plymouth

I read both the Livonia Observer and the Plymouth Mail because my office is in Livonia and my home is in Plymouth. Needless to say, I enjoy both newspapers.

However I believe the readers in Livonia are short-changed by not having the benefit of "The Strangler" column. Last week was a vital case in point. Mr. Edgar offered the first viable solution to the school problem, to wit: make the schools competitive.

As one of the attorneys who fought the School Board on the half-day sessions, I have been trying to arrive at some solution to the school situation. Presently there is no accounting to the people, and I believe that it is mandatory to both the school and the people that such an account exist.

Edgar's solution to make each school competitive with one another appears to have the greatest merit. I would like to see this proposed solution explored in the newspaper, as well as in public forum. I believe your newspaper would perform a vital service to all people in Overland if this proposition were thoroughly debated.

As an individual, I do not have the resources to undertake such a monumental task, but I do request that Edgar's article appear in your other newspapers so that you may receive feedback on this issue.

IN SEVERAL EARLIER issues in the Plymouth Mail, Edgar touched upon another vital issue relative to the schools, namely, whether or not senior citizens should be expected to pay operating costs of the schools. I believe this issue should also be debated so that the people can arrive at a consensus.

As to who would bear the greatest burden on such a proposal, I would gladly pick up my fair share of the load. I do not believe that senior citizens should bear the operating costs of the schools, although I do believe that they should participate in the building program.

I wish to return to the original premise of my letter concerning a competitive school system. The advocates of parochialism have maintained that the present school system does not offer a viable alternative to education and that a private school system is the only method to achieve quality education.

The opponents of parochialism have countered that quality education can only be achieved by marshaling all the funds into one single public school system. Both the pros and cons of parochialism appear to miss the main thrust of this issue, which is what do the people do if the children are not receiving quality education?

IT APPEARS TO ME that if there were truly a competitive situation for each public school, their arguments for parochialism would vanish since the people would have a method to have clear-cut accountability. Where the children are receiving quality education, the parents would be clamoring for their children to attend such a school.

It would be a clear mandate to the Board of Education that a problem exists in their other schools, and it would not be swept under the rug.

I request that you print the aforementioned articles in your other papers and give the people a chance to react. In my own sampling, which is limited to a few of my non-parochial clients, I find that they all expressed great joy with Mr. Edgar's style and thought-provoking ideas injected in his columns.

Therefore, I request that you review the possibility of expanding his column in all your newspapers.

I sent a copy of this to Mr. Edgar for two reasons: (a) So that I might give Mr. Edgar an opportunity to correct any misstatements. (b) To say thank you to a very wonderful writer who has given me great joy for a number of years.

By Dennis Pajot

A Mom Presents Views On Boys In Hockey

By Mrs. Violet Dempsey
1832 Curtis
Detroit 19, Michigan

Re: The recent story in which hockey for boys was discussed.

I have had three boys playing hockey for nearly six years. Their season began October 25, 1969 and will end March 21, 1970. There are 21 scheduled league games and (except for holidays) two one-hour practice sessions per week.

With an occasional out-of-town game and two or three tournaments, this could amount to 80 hours of hockey, or even more in the 21 weeks.

Our three sons average 10 hours sleep per night, are in excellent health, played for two little league baseball teams in succession, bowl occasionally, serve as altar boys in church and would be proud to show you their report cards.

If they were in danger of collapsing

Editorial & Opinion

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Sense And Nonsense

A candidate for the Livonia City Council, Thomas J. Trygier, of 14662 Berwick, made no bones about the type of councilman he'd be if the good citizens sought fit to put him in office this year.

Upon filing, Trygier insisted he'd be a 24-hour a day councilman. "If you have any problems," Trygier said, "contact me by mail, phone or in person."

It'll have to be by mail or in person. Trygier has an unlisted telephone number.

There may be some comfort in Trygier's omission. In this age of flagrant campaign promises, maybe two out of three isn't too bad.

There's an over-supply of teachers, say the placement bureaus of the state colleges where teachers are trained. Michigan is loaded with teachers, and beginners will have to compete for jobs rather than take their pick.

Now we'll see if the law of supply and demand still holds. If teachers this fall again bargain for 10 or 12 per cent pay boosts -- and get 'em -- we'll know there's something wrong with the laws of economics.