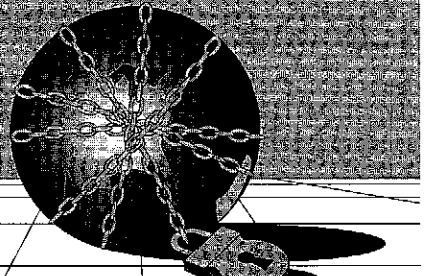


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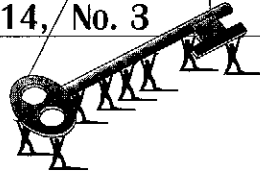
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PHILADELPHIA TAX SHIFT RALLY

by Alanna Hartzok, Scotland, PA

Put to the vote: as many are of the opinion that a public tax upon the land ought to be raised to defray the public charge, say "yea" ... Carried in the affirmative, none dissenting. (Philadelphia's first tax law, January 30, 1693.

It's back to the future as land value taxers muster in the City of Brotherly Love, birthplace of American democracy and of Henry George. Philadelphia is a tax shift plum ready to be plucked and plans and strategies are underway from the grassroots to the top brass. Organizations preparing to lead the brigade include the City Controllers Office, the Center for the Study of Economics and the Pennsylvania Fair Tax Coalition.

Bruno Moser assumed duties last October as Economist and Assistant City Controller. He was hired specifically to work on land value tax research and analysis. The Land Value Tax fits smoothly in with the Blight Removal Program pushed forward by Mayor John Street.

They now push forward to clean-up up to 600 vacant lots all over the city, but lack a vision what to do afterwards or how to recap the benefits. So the Controller's Office tries to show that LVT is a viable way to go.

"The Controller's office is doing a thorough analysis of the tax structure of Philadelphia," says Moser. "We are having

an econometric model developed to measure the affects of different taxes imposed in Philly. We are specifically looking at land value tax as a way to cut other taxes and encourage the redevelopment of the city."

With more than 50,000 deteriorated and boarded up buildings and tens of thousands homeless or poorly housed, Philadelphia has harnessed the tax horse backwards for decades. A high wage tax combined with a flat-rate property tax with too-low land assessments compared to buildings has chased thousands of workers out to the surrounding suburbs while land speculators moved in.

"In the upcoming report we will look at assessment issues which will become more pressing as we move towards LVT," says Moser. "We will have to do more accurate and frequent assessments."

Standing by with the expertise to assist the Controller's office and the city in the move towards LVT is the Center for the Study of Economics, a non-profit consulting firm with more than two decades of expertise in advising municipalities on land value taxation. With Joshua Vincent at its helm, the CSE office recently moved from Columbia, Maryland to downtown Philadelphia where it is poised to be of top notch assistance to the city.

"Our opportunity in Philadelphia is to have a major city shift taxes off of buildings, wages and productive activities, all onto land values, and since the city budget includes school funding as well, this is definitely where the action is for us," was Vincent's reply when asked the reasons for the relocation of CSE. (continued on page 2)

WHO OWNS AMERICA? - III

by Gilbert Halverson, Madison, WI

Common Ground USA was present at the Who Owns America? - III Conference in Madison, Wisconsin June 6-9, 2001. The focus of this years conference was Minority Land and Community Security. The event was hosted by the Land Tenure Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The participants were well versed on ownership patterns, legal theory, history and land use. Some were even familiar with the concept of LVT. However, the focus tended to be rural and third world. There were presentations by black farmers, American Indians, and Hispanic advocates.

Their message was one of unjust taking of land many years ago and also frustration in gaining back land today through legitimate means. The message of the conference was fair access to land is an important part of democracy and economic security in the minority community.

Many copies of the March-April 2001 GroundSwell issue with Dr. Mason Gaffney's and Artie Yeatman's articles were distributed by Halverson as were other Land Value Tax materials. We will never know which seeds we plant will grow to be mighty oaks.