

The Psychoeconomics of Human Ecology A Challenge to the Behavioral Sciences

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IF HUMAN ecology pertains to the effects of the environment upon the behavior and viability of man, we can observe that society appears to be sick.

Behavioral scientists, including the social psychiatrists, can contribute to man's survival provided they direct their efforts toward the correction and prevention of those underlying destructive economic forces which contribute to society's illness and survival.

Superficial expedients such as slum clearance or the building of model cities will but ultimately intensify relative poverty, richness, and social disruption, unless there is a significant change in conventional tax systems, which are inherently responsible.

In an affluent society this potential for social disruption and self-destruction starts with the family and its child-rearing practices and attitudes. A process of manipulation of the child for the ends of others commonly begins in infancy, and extends through childhood, schooling, and into the world of business and politics, creating a "thing-centered" society.

Youth has rebelled against this manipulative society — its wastes, its hypocrisy, its wars. Youth seeks new values and directions, based upon the worthiness of human beings and the equal right and opportunity for all people to survive. Let us then involve youth with the most basic and almost forgotten "inheritance of the past"—the land, from which we spring and have our being.

Agrarian land reform is now common and has received increasing worldwide attention. However, little effort has been directed to *urban* land reform, where taxation has been viewed as a fiscal matter only, without reference to

Dr. Geoffrey W. Esty, president of the New Jersey HGS, spoke at a meeting held in East Orange on September 19th. Having toured Alaska in the summer, he spoke of the environmental abuse which civilization had caused in its senseless advance, and warned that "if man continues to destroy nature, nature will destroy him," for nature will be the victor.

This is a brief summary of an address delivered in England to a medical society.

its psychological impact on human behavior and motivation.

Can cities survive? Can the process of city decay with its social pollution be reversed? Economists, politicians and city planners responsible for the formation of laws are seldom mindful of the psychology of human behavior. As a result, tax systems tend to be negatively motivated and therefore avoided or violated, leading to further decay.

An incentive tax system motivates human response and permits the solution of ecological problems. Based on the fact that land values of sites or locations are determined by the demand of a given population, it is urged that a graded tax be placed on such community created values, whilst taxes on improvements or production, currently penalizing human effort and incentives, be untaxed.

It is strongly urged that behavioral scientists and others familiar with the importance of incentives and motivation in human affairs, should begin to involve themselves with the leadership of governments and with the concerned youth leadership as well, to counsel with them on the psychoeconomics of such taxation, welfare and aid programs as they affect human dignity, health and survival.