

## CANADIAN HOUSING: THE USUAL LAND GRAFT

At the Canadian National Conference on Housing held at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, on February 20—21, the guest speaker, Dr. Coleman Woodbury, a Chicago housing expert, advertised the Single Tax, though it wasn't on the official program. In commenting on the discussion which had taken place, he said it had surprised him that the Single Tax point of view had not been put forward—the reason was that the only Georgist present had not up to that time been able to catch the chairman's eye). The guest speaker explained that seldom was there a conference on housing matters in the United States where some Single Taxer did not present the Georgist point of view.

When the present writer did get the floor he alluded to Dr. Woodbury's remark, and said that Georgists would challenge most of the underlying assumptions of the housing movement. The basic assumption is that there always will be a section of the population un-

able to pay the economic rent, and that society through governmental action must come to the rescue.

The Canadian government has provided the machinery of coming to the rescue pretty handsomely. In the National Housing Act, 1938, provision is made for "limited dividend corporations" to whom the government will loan 90 per cent of the funds required for approved housing projects, up to the sum of \$30,000,000. It also provides for the setting up of a fund which can be drawn upon in cases where the high cost of land makes a project too expensive for low-rent housing. The landowner with land to sell for such a project can thus hold any city for ransom. Federal legislation also required that municipalities shall limit the taxation upon federally financed housing projects, thus making them contribute by tax exemptions.

The official statement of the promoters of this Canadian Housing Conference states that "25 per cent of all urban families cannot afford

as much as \$15 a month for rent, and 50 per cent cannot afford as much as \$25 for rent." It goes on to point out that present building costs indicate that it would not be possible to provide housing to rent for less than \$25. The Housing Act would not therefore benefit occupants of slums or "that half of the urban population whose housing needs are most acute." The Conference advocated therefore that there should be a rent subsidy provided by the federal authority. The promoters of the conference ignored the huge subsidies going each year in unearned increment of land values to owners of land titles in practically all Canadian cities.

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