

building sites, and, by increasing their cost, leave the problem of securing dwellings just where it is now.

A Wise Move by the Russian Soviet

GRATIFYING evidence that the present rulers of Russia are sincerely desirous of improving the economic condition of the people within its boundaries is afforded by the reports of official action taken to provide for the settlement upon farm lands of the Jewish population. A recent statement issued by Vice-President Smidovitch of the Federation of Soviet Republics, sets forth the comprehensive plans desired to settle on the land at least 100,000 Jews now residing in cities and towns in the Ukraine and Crimea regions. Under the old regime the severe restrictions imposed upon the movements of the Jewish people, and the limitation of their acquisition of land, forced most of them into the cities, where they became traders, or small manufacturers. When, after the revolution of 1917, all forms of business activity were made a government monopoly, the result was great hardship to many thousands who had no way to get a livelihood, and were largely supported by foreign charity. While some of the restrictions on private business have been relaxed, it is not believed that there will ever be a return to pre-revolution conditions, since the government intends to remain the chief factor in all industry and business, and will rely upon the co-operative Associations as its principal distributive agency.

Foreseeing that provision for the large and growing number of Jewish inhabitants to get employment must be made in other directions, a special department has been organized for the purpose of facilitating the settlement on the land of all those willing to engage in some field of agriculture. A careful survey has been made of all the available fertile lands, with due regard to their proximity to the centres in which the Jewish population is chiefly located, and arrangements will be made for colonization both by groups of families, and by individual settlers. The government will provide allotment of areas according to the particular kind of crops, fruits, etc., for which the land is most suitable, and will furnish needful assistance in the shape of building materials, implements and stock. It will also arrange for the sale, through the co-operatives, of the farmers' products, and for the purchase of needed merchandise.

Recognizing the necessity for security of tenure of the farms to be occupied by the new settlers, in order to encourage industry in making permanent improvements, such as buildings, drains, orchards, etc., the government will give an assurance that so long as the easy terms governing the acquisition of the land are complied with, it shall remain in the possession of the occupier, thus establishing what is practically "private possession," if not

absolutely private ownership, of the farms. For the first three years the settlers are to be exempt from all taxation, and the future tax which will be calculated on the relative productivity of each allotment, is expected to be very light. With these conditions it should seem certain that the idle Jews of Russia will soon be self-employed and self-supporting.

When is a Land Deal Not Gambling?

"FORTUNES, large and small, made in brief periods in Greater Cleveland real estate, demonstrate that right here at home there is a condition which equals that in Florida," writes James G. Monnett, Jr., real estate editor of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. To support his claim he gives details of a small transaction involving a lot 95x140 feet; and then says:

On an investment of \$15,000 Mr. Conrad will receive in rent in ten years \$28,750. Then, if Mr. Kaplan exercises his option to purchase, Mr. Conrad will receive \$75,000 more—a total of \$103,750 in a decade on an investment of \$15,000! Or suppose the fee is not purchased. Over the ninety-nine-year period Mr. Conrad and his heirs will receive \$426,750 in rents and still will own the land. And the tenant pays the tax."

Another case is given as follows:

"The property on Euclid avenue, just east of E. 13th street, now occupied by the new Woolworth building, was purchased through Mr. Laronge for less than \$100,000 and resold for \$250,000. The Woolworth company acquired it for about \$450,000—all inside four years."

Custom is so strong that Mr. Monnett sees nothing immoral or unsocial in a system which enables private citizens, through luck or astuteness, to absorb such unearned fortunes. He is a real estate reporter—not a moralist. Perhaps, if he ever thinks of that phase of the matter at all, he laughs good-naturedly, and lightly refers to the professional guardians of public morals. He asserts, however, that such transactions in Cleveland do not constitute gambling, and, somehow, are different from similar transactions in Florida. It does not seem convincing. To one not engaged in land speculation, there appears to be no essential difference. In both cases, the public suffers loss; in each, industry is handicapped.

Our Position

WITH respect to monopolies, other than the monopoly of land, we hold that where free competition becomes impossible, as in telegraphs, railroads, water and gas supplies, etc., such business becomes a proper social function, which should be controlled and managed for the whole people concerned, through their proper government, local, state, or national, as may be.—HENRY GEORGE.