

Canadian Lands

HERE appears in the April number of *Nature Magazine* the following advertisement:

CANADA LANDS SEIZED AND SOLD FOR TAXES

- \$27 buys small island
- \$67 buys 50 acres, travelled road
- \$108 buys 20 acres lake front
- \$171 buys half mile river front
- \$256 buys 67 acres lake front

(Here follows descriptive matter, suggestions, etc., including news at this is the 21st Annual List just issued in a twenty-page booklet containing the above and many other choice properties.)

There is nothing to indicate whether a government agency or private individuals are handling these properties since the advertisement is signed Tax Sales Service with a Toronto address, but I do not fear fraud since the *Nature Magazine* is a highly respectable publication.

Among the suggestions as to the use of such properties, such as fishing and hunting camps and summer cottage sites, there appears this:

"Now is the time to invest in Canada's minerals, forests and farms." Canada has been suffering from the depression just as we have and doubt there are many on relief there just as there are here. We are led to ask why the former owners could not manage to pay the taxes on these lands and so hold on to the investment that we are asked to consider. Surely it would seem as if 50 acres of land on a travelled road would enable a man to make a living and pay his taxes, even if they were as high as \$67 a year. When we know that lands are not sold for one year's delinquency in taxes, nor for two, but more likely for five years' non-payment, and that the tax sale price includes back taxes with interest and costs we can see that the taxes must have been very low, perhaps \$5.00 per year or ten cents an acre. Surely anyone so lacking in ambition as to neglect the opportunities presented by ownership of 50 acres of land, probably with forest and minerals, is deserving of no pity and should be removed from the guardianship of so large a tract of what is really the property of all men.

Such a proposition as that a living could not be made on such a piece of land as any one of the above properties, and with enough to care to take care of taxes and provide for the future, is untenable. And those in charge of the tax sales know the possibilities and so advise purchasers to "invest in Canada's minerals, forests and farms." There is but one logical conclusion in regard to the former owners. They did not live on the lands. In fact they did not buy them for that purpose. They probably live in the centers of industry far removed from these properties. Probably they have never seen them, having seen a similar advertisement in the past they bought "to get" in Canada's resources, which means that they invested in the right to charge those who would use Canada's resources to supply men's wants the highest price possible. But those who would delve to the earth for copper, iron, and other valuable and useful ores, who would convert forests into lumber and wood pulp, or coax food crops from the soil of virgin countries, are not looking to pay the highest prices, especially since the price paid for permission to use the land is in addition to the labor and capital that must be expended in production. And they shop around for the cheapest price for the best land available. This means that only those well fixed financially can afford to keep paying taxes year after year on land that provides no revenue for only such can afford to wait until finally some one is compelled by circumstances to meet their demands. Thus little by little with a few hard earned dollars buy land only to lose it later because of inability to afford the luxury of throwing money or wealth away which is just what they do when they pay taxes on unproductive land.—JOHN LUXTON

Questing for News

STROLLING around town in quest of real news, I happened into the meeting of the Citizen's Housing Council at the Town Club, called for the purpose of discussing proposed amendments to the State Constitutional Convention.

The suggestions were that the state have the power to make loans and grants to housing authorities and guarantee their bonds.

Local government empowered to aid as well as to make loans to housing authorities with exemption of self-liquidating projects from constitutional debt limitation.

To permit the acquisition of large areas of land for housing purposes, and to provide for excess condemnation. Another suggestion was to exclude from valuation of condemned property increments in value due to a reclamation programme.

William J. Schieffelin, chairman of the Citizen's Union, and one of the most prominent men in New York City, the first speaker, said, "if you want to know how to solve the housing problem, read 'Progress and Poverty.'" There was very slight applause, only three hands were clapped, and then he followed it up by saying that the book was written by Henry George in 1879 and was just as true as if it were written today.

He read a letter which was sent to Mayor La Guardia, signed T. J. McHenry, who outlined for his Honor a method by which low cost housing could be provided. Mr. Schieffelin said, "here is an illustration that Mayor La Guardia stands with Henry George." Someone, however, said that Mr. George is dead and the Mayor favored the proposals of the conference that the Constitution be amended to permit the city to provide low cost housing, and assessments made up by those citizens who could be forced to pay the difference through a sales tax, an occupancy tax, and any sort of nuisance taxes that the public will stand for. The difference between La Guardia and George lies in the fact that George was an economist and not an opportunist.—STROLLING REPORTER.

Miscellany

FREEDOM OF ACCESS TO NATURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Do not the facts here set out indicate that there is no need for colonies for any of the European countries or Japan? Each country has ample natural resources to supply its own needs directly from its own soil or by exchanging its products for those of other countries. They do not really need foreign land and the amount of benefit their entire peoples would get in trade, through the mere fact of their owning colonies, is negligible. In every one of those countries, as well as in the Have countries, the home market could be developed enormously, if the people were set free to work for themselves without having to pay heavy rents to their land monopolists.

No one of the Have or Have-not countries has as yet shown any sign of willingness to tackle its own internal problem of land monopoly.