

cial obligations towards those who have served in the Forces during the war. They point out that, while the war continued, the service men could not enforce their demands as their fellow-workers at home were able to do. But the country cannot be permitted to take advantage of their having deferred their claims until the war was over. Ex-service men therefore now demand that every man who served during the war shall receive as "back pay" the difference between what he actually received and the rate of 6s a day (the rate paid to the Australian troops). Further, they declare that no refusal of this claim can be tolerated so long as the people of Britain remain dispossessed of the land which is their natural inheritance, and which, if restored to them, would enable the cost of its defence to be met in full."

Report on Housing Conditions in New York

THE report of the Committee on Housing Conditions appointed by the Reconstruction Commission is before us. It presents a very striking picture of the housing shortage. But its recommendations go no further than the use of State credits to apply to housing at low rates of interest and the passage of an enabling act permitting cities to acquire and hold, or let adjoining vacant lands, and if necessary, to carry on housing. And then follows this significant statement: "This legislation would permit conservation of the increment of land values for the benefit of the community creating it."

The report shows the following points of interest: That the housing shortage extends over the entire State; that there was a growing insufficiency of housing before the war; that the only cities to carry on co-operative building on a large scale are Elmira and Lockport, though other cities are now engaging in large scale building operations; that the survey undertaken by the Committee showed that families are crowded in dark, ill-smelling apartments and are unable to find better quarters; and that the landlord "is in complete control and can raise rents at will." And then follows a picture of misery, in which in cold but unqualified language, the truth is told of the frightful condition in which many of our tenement dwellers live.

Despite the entirely unsatisfactory nature of the recommendations to meet the problem, despite the statement that "the remedy seems to lie in community-ownership and control of large tracts of land," and despite the statement that "We can never hope to solve the housing problem until we have decentralized industry and limited the size of our cities," there is much in the report that is significant and worth reproducing. We content ourselves with citing the following:

LAND

The basic reason for the congestion of our cities is the high cost of land. Only the wealthy can afford to live at such a distance from our urban centers that land is cheap. As population increases, so do land values. The man of moderate means is driven into the suburbs. The poor man is forced into smaller and smaller quarters

in the congested areas. The increased value of the land, which comes from proximity to cities, is generally sufficient to prevent a large part of the workers from escaping from the slums.

LAND VALUES. The increased values of land which result solely from the fact that individuals are crowded together are of no benefit to those who create them. This land increment, in most cases, is wasted in land speculation. If the city pays for a subway to distribute the population over a wider area the land along the subway immediately increases in value. This increment, the result of the action of the community in building a new subway, and in making use of certain parts of this new territory for residential purposes generally goes to speculators. It is charged as a part of the cost of the house, either as rent or selling price. This increased value that comes from the causes above mentioned alone is sufficient to deprive a large part of the workers of this State of the chance to get decent homes.

The extent to which the increase in the cost of land brought about by its use enters into the cost of houses, is shown by the study made of the City of Lackawanna, N. Y., by Mr. Herbert S. Swan, for the Committee on Industrial Towns. In 1899, the Lackawanna Steel Company created a new city on vacant land near Buffalo. As farm land, before its settlement, it was worth \$770,000. Prices were increased when the steel company tried to buy large tracts. The total value of the land when the town was founded in 1899, exclusive of the land used for the plant was:

	\$1,983,000.00
The city has collected special assessments for local improvements	245,000.00
	<hr/>
Total cost in 1916	\$2,228,000.00
After Lackawanna had become a city of about 14,000 population, the land value (exclusive of the plant lands) totalled	9,016,000.00
The net increment, which the people of Lackawanna have given to the lucky land owners and speculators was, therefore	6,788,000.00

The land value in Lackawanna between 1899 and 1916 had increased from \$91 per person to \$644 (the plant land being eliminated in each case). There is a difference of \$553 per person or for a family of four, \$2,212. This is the amount that might have been saved to each family if the increased value of the land had been held by the community. A good house could be built for little more than that amount before the war. But a large part of the population of Lackawanna is crowded into dingy hovels, while large areas of land remain uninhabited. In fact, living conditions were so bad there in 1916 that about 70 per cent. of the workers in the steel plant lived in Buffalo, and of 7,000 men there was a weekly labor turnover of 1,500.

To a great extent the problem of housing is a land problem. The influx of a population into a new area immediately augments the value of the land. The newcomers pay the increase in rent or cost of house. Any improvement in housing has the same results. Neighboring land goes up in cost. Further improvements are stopped by the increased costs.

MAN did not make the earth, and although he had a natural right to occupy it, he had no right to locate as his property in perpetuity any part of it; neither did the Creator of the earth open a land office from whence title deeds should issue.—THOMAS PAINE.