Original Articles

THE PROBLEM OF HOUSING OUR WORKING PEOPLE

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It is apparent that in any question of housing or providing men with a dwelling, especially in a climate like that of Canada, the land on which such habitation is located becomes a necessary factor. It is further apparent that whenever land in relation to population becomes limited, it has a value wholly different from that over which nomadic tribes roam, or where it has been so abundant that governments, upon the condition of occupation and cultivation, grant homesteads of 160 acres, or, as in Alberta, double this amount. Being however limited, it is spoken of as a *natural monopoly*, and immediately assumes an ethical importance when it raises the question of whether or not every human being has a right to such an amount of it as will provide a subsistence for him, provided he will cultivate it or give it his labor. Probably there is no economic question which, owing to the hitherto illimitable areas of uncultivated land, has received so little attention until recent years by the people of this continent as that of the essential qualities inherent in land ownership. As unoccupied land or those vast areas, which served only as a hunting ground of savages, had no value, so it has been where the growth of population in a country, and especially in towns, has concentrated that its essential character of a natural monopoly becomes apparent. That it has not, however, changed in essence, but takes on a value only through human energy applied to production either directly to the land or by industries, which utilize the materials produced from land, is apparent, and the amount of this value determines whether or not it is an unearned increment according as the occupiers of the land are producers of wealth or the fortunate holders of land, which through accident of location has been favorable for the establishment of a town community. When