

A CONDEMNATION OF LANDLORDISM FROM RUSSIA.

An advertisement, occupying the whole front page of the TIMES Financial Supplement of May 20th, of the St. Petersburg Land and Mortgage Company, Limited, provides a striking object lesson of the workings of land monopoly. It forms the most complete exposure of the evils of private landowning that could be written. The callous manner in which the overcrowding of the people within the City and the consequent high death-rate are quoted to show the security of speculators' money invested in St. Petersburg land, provides a stronger appeal for the abolition of landlordism than a bookful of theoretical arguments. There could be no more convincing illustration of how the growing needs and expenditure of population enhance the value of land to the advantage of landowners who pay nothing and do nothing that is responsible for the increase; of how high prices for land, and land withholding, the result of monopoly, cause overcrowding and misery to the people. We feel compelled to quote at some length from this advertisement:—

The Growth of St. Petersburg.

Following the well-ordered and far-seeing plans originally laid down St. Petersburg has steadily grown and risen in size, wealth, and importance to a foremost place among the cities of the world, so that it now ranks sixth, being preceded only by London, New York, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. In rate of growth St. Petersburg is first, its development in the period following the Crimean War showing a higher average increase per cent. of population than any other capital, as shown by the following statistics:

Year.	Population.
1860	506,000
1870	680,000
1880	905,000
1890	1,034,000
1900	1,439,000
1910	1,907,000

In the last decade it will be noted that St. Petersburg has increased by nearly half-a-million, despite the occurrence during that period of the Russo-Japanese War and the internal troubles which followed. Continuing only to grow at the same rate as in the last half-century, St. Petersburg will have in 1920 a population of 2,600,000, and by 1930 no fewer than 3,400,000 inhabitants. That is to say, that in 20 years the city will have to provide residence for an additional million and a half inhabitants.

The Housing Problem.

Yet with the great and continuous increase of population the area of St. Petersburg has not been increased in anything like adequate proportion. In fact, during the last three-quarters of a century the territorial extension of the city has been trivial. In 1825, when the population of St. Petersburg was only 430,000, the area of the city was 27 square miles. To-day with the population increased to 1,907,000 the area of St. Petersburg is only 30 square miles—an increase of three square miles in area as against one of 500 per cent. in population.

The result is, as anyone can see, a tremendous rise in the value of land and consequently of rents and the value of houses. Inhabitants in St. Petersburg live—to use a well-worn phrase—as closely packed as sardines in a tin. The average number of residents per house in St. Petersburg is no less than 52. Even in Berlin, overgrown though it is, the number of residents per house is only 48. In the Russian capital the average number of residents in each flat is eight; in Paris it is only three. In Berlin 12 per cent. of the housing accommodation consists of one room, tenanted by an average number of six persons. In St. Petersburg the percentage is 38. Again the average rent for such accommodation—one room—in Berlin is £11 10s. (288 francs) per annum and in St. Petersburg similar accommodation costs £16 10s. (413 francs) a year.

Value of Land.

These figures indicate not only the growth of the population of St. Petersburg, but also the rising value of land through the increasing demand for building sites. To put the matter succinctly, the city has grown—as it was and is bound to grow—without a corresponding development or provision of its accommodation for the increasing popula-

tion. The results of this are seen not only in heavy rentals, but also in the high rate of mortality in St. Petersburg as the result of overcrowding.

In every direction around the city where sites have been opened up for building, there has been an instant demand, so much so that values of the land have increased fourfold. But the extension of St. Petersburg has natural limitations. How it is built on a group of islands the accompanying map illustrates better than any description. Inland the land is low-lying marsh, and incapable of use for building or residence. The only possible extension of St. Petersburg is seaward—the latest and a striking example of the natural law that all cities grow towards the West.

St. Petersburg's West End.

A great scheme is now being carried out for the development of the extreme western portion of the island of Vassilevski-Ostrov, one of the islands on which St. Petersburg, like New York and other world cities, are built. For reasons already stated the growth of St. Petersburg to the East is impracticable. The area acquired and now being adapted for building sites by the St. Petersburg Land and Mortgage Company consists of 2,600,000 square metres (638 acres), and is situate within 1½ miles of the Nicolai Bridge over the Great Neva, close to which are the Stock Exchange, the University of St. Petersburg, and Government buildings facing the Winter Palace of the Tsar and the Grand Admiralty Quay. It is thus in close proximity to the centre of the capital. The estate is bounded by the sea and river and on other sides by lands belonging to the city and a few private individuals, and streets and buildings already extend to the boundary of the company's property.

Land Values in St. Petersburg.

Already the Company has erected two large blocks of flats on the land. These are now in process of completion, one containing approximately 550 rooms divided into 60 flats which will yield a rental of about £6,000 per annum on a capital outlay of £60,000. But the policy of the Company is not itself to erect buildings, but to sell or lease sites. The congestion in the housing arrangements of St. Petersburg make every available site a subject of competition between builders, as will be seen later.

Increase in Values.

Considering the rise in price of land in St. Petersburg during the last fourteen years (*i.e.*, from 1896 to 1910) it will be found that in some localities the value of lands increased from £1 to upwards of £20 (10 to 200 roubles) per 4·40 sq. metres, but in any case the average increase has been of at least 300 per cent. though the lands had not been developed and improved upon the same scale as that on which the Company is treating its property. Already the Company has sold 36,416 metres of its land in its present undeveloped state for £42,483 (at the rate of 10·98 roubles=£1 3s. 4d.) per sq. metre, the purchasers undertaking to erect approved houses at an agreed rate of construction during the next two years. At even higher rates the Company has received offers for the land fronting the River Neva.

The area available for development is	2,600,000 sq. m.
From which it is proposed to set aside	
for streets and squares	600,000 ..

Leaving available for sale 2,000,000 sq. m. which at our valuation of 11 roubles per square metre represents a value of 22 million roubles.

The property of the Company . . . faces the sea and therefore enjoys purer air than any other part of St. Petersburg. Again the property is the only land near the City available and suitable for the erection of better-class residences. An interesting fact . . . is that land along the main street of the adjacent island of Petersburg Side has within the last four years increased in value from £1 15s. (say 17 roubles) to £6 (say 60 roubles) per square metre.

The Importance of Accessibility.

The relation of building lands for residential purposes greatly depends on their accessibility from the main centre of the town of which they are a suburb, this being dependent not only on the means of mechanical traction but on the provision of streets running from the centre to the outskirts. The Company's property, as shown on the map, is only about a mile and a half from the Nicolai Bridge,

and is therefore situated in close proximity to the chief centre of the capital.

Within the last few months the Duma has approved the proposal for a great monumental bridge, which will connect the square of the Winter Palace with the Island of Vassilevski, on which the Company's property is situated. The construction of the bridge, which will be the largest and most magnificent in St. Petersburg, has been entrusted to a company from Moscow. The construction works, according to contract, must be completed in August, 1913, and the expenses for the bridge alone have been estimated to amount to about 12 million francs.

Over this splendid bridge a great and flowing stream of traffic will enter the Island of Vassilevski, and the Company's property will accordingly receive the benefit which sure and rapid communication always bestows on property.

Communication.

The electric train lines running across some less important bridges which already connect the Island of Vassilevski with other parts of the capital extend already up to a few hundred yards from the limits of the property.

As soon as the streets which the Company will build across the estate are completed the Company will obtain from the Electric Cars Company the extension of the line, thus affording rapid and frequent access from and to the business centre of the Russian capital. The first buildings erected by the Company are even now only a thousand yards from the horse tramway. Lines on the accompanying map show the present course of the electric trams and of the horse trams. The company keenly recognises the importance of linking its new residential area with the city by easy methods of travel. This must be forcibly recognised from the point of view of increasing the traffic by the Tramway Company, and failing that recognition the establishment of a motor-omnibus service by the St. Petersburg Land and Mortgage Company would meet every traffic need of its tenants. Motor-omnibus services are already very popular and much in use in St. Petersburg.

The Growing Prosperity of St. Petersburg.

In Russia as in other countries the increasing trend of the population is to the towns and the employment in the various industries and manufactories there. This in Russia, as elsewhere, is the result of the release of labour from agriculture, owing to the improved methods and labour-saving implements employed. Reference has already been made to the great increase of the population of St. Petersburg during recent years, and it is significant of the development of the city that its municipal budget has increased threefold during the last 18 years. Its manufactures and industries are steadily growing, and to-day more than ever it is becoming the vital centre of the Russian Empire.

A SONG OF LIFE.

Live out the fullest life you can;
Be fearless, frank and free;
Do justice to your fellow-man
Wherever you may be.

Live with a purpose clear and true;
Strive on with all your might;
However hard it seems to you
Be just and do the right.

Live like the heroes of the past
Who deem'd it nought to die,
Who stood unflinching to the last
And scorned to live a lie.

Live through the darkest hours of fate
With uncomplaining voice;
Relieve the burden, lift the weight
And make the sad rejoice.

Live not within some scented glen,
Nor hide yourself away;
Seek out the busy haunts of men
And struggle through the day.

Live out the fullest life you can,
Your talent freely give;
It is the highest hope of man
That you should truly live.

—DOUGLAS P. BOATMAN.

LAND AND NATIVE RIGHTS IN OUR AFRICAN CROWN COLONIES.

A small but influential committee has recently been formed by members of the Land Values Group in the House of Commons to deal with the question of land and native rights in our African Crown Colonies. The following members comprise the Committee: Sir W. P. Byles, Mr. Noel Buxton, Mr. Philip Morrell, Ald. P. W. Raffan, and Mr. Josiah C. Wedgwood. They issued the following letter on the question to members of the Land Values Group, and on May 15th a meeting was held in the House of Commons, at which it was decided to approach the Government, and ask for a Committee to go into the matter and make recommendations, on the lines applicable to Northern Nigeria, for the other Colonies:—

White Paper 68,—Land in Crown Colonies and Protectorates,—printed and circulated on 19th March, 1912, contains some very important matter to which we should like to draw your attention.

The African Colonies over which the House of Commons has direct jurisdiction are Gambia, Sierra Leone (Colony and Protectorate), Gold Coast, Northern Territories, Southern Nigeria, Northern Nigeria, British East Africa, Uganda, Nyassaland. In the three last there are some white settlers; the others are purely native at present.

It is generally agreed that the conception of private property in land is alien to native ideas, but the White Paper shows that while recognising this in some Colonies the Government does not do so in others, and is dealing with the same land question on different lines in different places. The differences are likely to cause administrative confusion; and in those places where absolute private property in land receives recognition its introduction must be followed by such enslavement of the natives as has been seen in the Congo. At one end of the scale is the Sierra Leone Protectorate, where the chiefs are considered to be the owners of natives' land and have almost untrammelled powers in alienating it; and here the Government hold no land in trust for the people. At the other extreme is Northern Nigeria, where the chiefs are rent collectors for the Government at fixed salaries, and the Government is owner or trustee for the natives of the whole country.

The White Paper gives:—

- (A) The area of each Colony in square miles.
- (B) The area of which the freehold or perpetual lease is regarded as vested in private persons, chiefs or corporations.
- (C) The area held of the Crown on terminable lease.
- (D) The area in which the Government do not recognise any private person, chief, or corporation, as having either a freehold or leasehold interest.

The following table shows at a glance the wide differences in the recognition of the chiefs as landlords:—

Colony.	Land in Square Miles.		
	Private.	Leased from the State.*	Public.
Gambia	1	0	4,003
Sierra Leone Colony ..	206	0	309
" " Protectorate ..	31,109	0	0
Gold Coast	24,165	0	34
" " (Northern Terr.)	No Figures, probably as in Gold Coast.		
South Nigeria	1	0	79,879
North Nigeria	0	0	260,700
British East Africa .. .	1,020†	7,011‡	237,791
Uganda	9,752	148	92,428
Nyassaland	5,938†	63‡	33,801

* i.e., leased at a fixed rent for more than seven years.

† Owned by whites.

‡ Leased to whites.

It will be seen that in the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Uganda we treat the chiefs as landlords. This was so in Nyassaland also till the Protectorate was declared. It was before this that the chiefs had alienated nearly 6,000 square miles to whites. It is well known that in Swaziland the King alienated the whole country to whites several times over, and the same process of rapid alienation is going on now on the Gold Coast. The rubber industry, the soap industry, the mining industry, have all great inducement to secure their raw materials by getting concessions in these