

## CO-OPERATORS AND THE LAND MONOPOLY

### The Shieldhall Factory Site

A correspondent has written us for particulars of the prices paid by the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society for the site at Shieldhall, Govan, and its extensions. It was a typical example of the power of land monopoly to squeeze industry. We put it on record again with acknowledgments to Mr Alexander Campbell of Shieldhall who gave the facts in his letter to the *Scottish Co-operator* of October, 1923.—EDITOR, *Land & Liberty*.

The Scottish Wholesale Co-operative Society became the freehold owners of the original 12 acres of land at Shieldhall in 1887 at a cost of £6,000, or £500 per acre; and time has fully proved that had the selling landlord asked £50,000 for this 12 acre site, he would have had only to have waited something like 28 years longer to have realized it. There having been no tax on his idle land, he could have held it idle and waited, just as many landlords have waited and are still waiting; but in such a case the busy hive of thousands of men, women and girls who work so methodically and industriously at Shieldhall would have been throttled and crushed at the outset, and those operatives who produce so much for themselves and for their fellow countrymen would have been pressed hard for a living or buried in slumdom, or dispersed to distant lands.

It all depended on the mood and inclination of one man, the landowner. In this instance he said "yes," and progress, even with the deadweight, marched on; but if he had said "no," then progress, to a greater extent than can possibly be computed, must have come to a standstill. A landowner of one acre and a half adjoining the south side of Shieldhall *did* say "no" to the co-operators. That is, the price demanded was so high that labour and capital could not then consider it, and the land lay absolutely idle for a period of over 20 years. The landlord lost nothing. Other landlords, acting similarly, lost nothing. It was the people—the labouring people—who lost, and who were forced to leave their country because of want of land at anything but fabulous prices.

The Shieldhall landlord gained. His land rose in value every year, every month, every week, every day. There were no tax-papers served on him. The co-operators over the wall paid the taxes, and for no other reason than that they were working. They were fined for daring to make suits of clothes to keep our bodies warm, boots for our feet, and furniture for our houses; but the landlord who did nothing better than standing idly in the way, hindering good work and taking what didn't belong to him, was clapped on the back, petted, pampered, and spoilt. There was nothing to grumble about from the landlord's point of view. He had no work, no risk, no worry, no fear. He simply had to wait.

The co-operators at last having made a little capital and being pressed for elbow-room, bought in 1914 his  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land; but not at the rate of £500 per acre. They paid over £2,000 for it. He had a good reason for congratulating himself, yet he must have been either in sore need of the money or had glaringly miscalculated as to the rapid rise in land values taking place at the time. His haul from the landlord's point of view was good; but had he waited and higgled a little longer he might, as the following will show, have more than doubled it.

About a year later, in 1915, immediately to the west of the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres plot, the Wholesale purchased another additional piece of land consisting of a little

over three acres. The extent, according to a report in the *Scottish Co-operator* of 12th December, 1915, was 14,690 square yards, and the price paid was £16,500 which is at the rate of £5,500 per acre, or for the three acres nearly three times the price that was paid for the twelve acres that were purchased first, twenty-eight years before, showing a land value rise in said period, in this instance, of 1,100 per cent. Truly a thought-provoking rise.

Co-operators having gone through this experience at the hands of landlordism, one would think their energies would be wholly bent towards the smashing of the age-long monopoly. We maintain that the institution of private property in land is the foe-in-chief of the workers, and that capitalism and all the other "isms" are but mere weapons in the hands of this merciless bandit. Let us get together and go to the cause of our troubles. Let us restore the natural elements to their rightful owners, the people, and the best method of land restoration, all things considered, that the wit of man has so far conceived is—the Taxation of Land Values.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL.

### THE SMETHWICK MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Councillor John Bush, who stood as Labour candidate for the Soho Ward (Smethwick) and was returned writes to the Editor of *Land & Liberty* :—

"You will be pleased to know that in my recent municipal contest, I made the Taxation of Land Values my principal plank. As a result of this I was successful in raising the Labour poll from 786 to 916, and the majority from 11 to 146, proving to every one concerned that Land Value rating is the only effective reply to Tory 'rating reform.'

"In addition Sir Oswald Mosley, M.P., stated that he wholeheartedly agreed with the Taxation of Land Values, and suggested that the proceeds of such taxation could be used to finance better housing. I intend to press this question on every possible occasion, and shall be glad of any assistance you can give me in specimen resolutions passed by local authorities."

---

### MADAME ANTONIO ALBENDIN

Many Georgeists besides those who were privileged to make her personal acquaintance at the three Conferences at Ronda, Oxford and Copenhagen will learn with deep regret of the passing on of Maria Garcia, the wife of our Spanish colleague Antonio Albendin. His bereavement occurred at Cadiz on 16th November after the patient had suffered some months of painful illness which followed a period of grave undefined anxiety. Madame Albendin for a quarter of a century of happy married life has given her husband all the aid possible, travelling with him to foreign countries, and at home submitting to the rapid transfers to unpleasant stations which Parliamentary Government in Spain imposed on her husband, a Civil Servant, as a penalty for progressive convictions, which fell heavily on her home-loving nature.

She did all she could to help, and our colleague is not alone in pride in her memory when the thought of the last sad months will have been softened. Our friend, the gracious hostess at Ronda and the merry guest at Oxford and Copenhagen, leaves no children. To Antonio Albendin all his co-workers in the Henry George movement send their deep sympathy.

M. J. S.

---