

In his reply Mr. Adamson said he was giving his attention to the economic possibilities of the situation.

He did not think that Dr. Maclean was right in suggesting that the reason why that was done was because of the numerous strikes that had taken place in the industrial parts of the country. The failure of industry generally, arising out of all that had taken place in the world during the last ten years was the thing which was responsible in the main for the sons and daughters of the crofters in the Highlands and Islands being unable to earn so much money and send as much help to their parents as formerly. If they had had strikes it was because of the revolt of the working classes against living under impossible economic conditions. While he was not fond of strikes as an individual, he wanted to say quite frankly that that was all that was left for that section of the community who failed to get their fair share of the wealth that they were producing by the energy applied to industry, and it was to other causes Dr. Maclean would have to look for a reason for the conditions existing in the Highlands and Islands.

And so the talk goes on. The cultivators of the soil are penalized by rates and taxes. This is admitted; but let us talk of strikes and the condition arising out of all that has happened during the past ten years, and so on. When will these interviewers and ministers rid themselves of their prejudices and preconceived ideas, get down to the land question and stay there till the problem staring them in the face is first settled? The plain question here is one of tribute paid to the non-producer and the confiscation by taxation of the fruits of industry. There is distress all round in town and country alike, and the remedy is to be found in a simple alteration in our taxing system. The man at the margin of cultivation is robbed of his legitimate earnings now as he was ten years ago, and it is that robbery that is the root cause of the trouble. The Islanders have a hard enough struggle, so have other workers, to make ends meet, and our land and rating systems are to blame.

Municipal Apathy.—At a meeting of the Glasgow City Council 21st February a scheme, in the preliminary stage, was discussed for the purchase of 50 acres of ground on the Blythswood Estate for the purpose of an electricity generating station at a price of £1,000 an acre. At the same meeting a city improvement scheme was discussed, the cost to be something like £1,500,000. Bailie Rosslyn Mitchell remarked that some years ago the cost was estimated at about £347,000.

The ever-increasing land value accounts for the difference. What is the contribution to rates in these properties? An up-to-date Land Valuation Department would prove a source of education and enlightenment to the over-burdened ratepayer. Meanwhile he is being bled white, and his elected persons seem at a loss to know what to do to stop the process. In former days the Glasgow City Council knew how to agitate for the fundamental reform and make some impression at the seat of legislation. Why cannot similar action be taken at this time when the question again emerges and when some real advance can be made?

The Sway of Landlordism.—In an informing article on Reconstruction in the New Year Supplement of the GLASGOW HERALD, Sir Drummond Drummond-Fraser comments: "Hungary is not an industrial country like Austria, but an agricultural country, under the sway of landlordism, which restricts the producing power of the land." There are a lot of "Hungarys" in the purely agricultural districts of Great Britain, but we suppose it is comforting to some minds to spot the "sway of landlordism" in some far distant land. It was revealed at Oxford last August that Taxation of Land Values in Hungary as a cure for the "sway" was about as popular there with landed interest as it is with the fraternity in this land of the free and enlightened.

"THE CRY OF THE HUMAN SARDINE"

By A. G. Gardiner

(Reprinted, with acknowledgments, from an article in JOHN BULL, the editor of which explains: "The land monopoly which has exploited the necessities of the people for its own selfish interest must be destroyed, says our contributor in this article, before the Housing problem can be solved. Good homes make good citizens, and bad homes make criminals, wastrels and invalids.")

There is another aspect of the matter which I hope will not be neglected by Mr. MacDonald. One of the main causes of the infamous housing conditions that prevail has been the land monopoly. That monopoly continues, and unless it is boldly dealt with it will add enormously to the difficulty of the task.

Why have the slums of the great towns grown up? Why do we see in the streets of the great industrial towns rows of unsightly back-to-back houses, without air, light or garden space, with common privies, and lacking all the amenities of a healthy and civilized life? Why are forty and fifty and more families crammed on to an acre of space?

It is not because the people like to live like sardines in a box. It is not because it is good for them to live like sardines in a box. It is not because there is not plenty of land, or because the workman dislikes gardens. He loves gardens as much as anybody, and needs them more than anybody. A garden is the most healing and civilizing thing in life. It is because the land monopoly has exploited the necessities of the people for its own selfish interest.

I am not a Socialist, but I hold that the great monopolies which the labour and sweat of the people make valuable, ought not to be the instrument by which private exploiters can strangle the life of the people, condemn them to live in back-to-back houses and drive them into revolutionary propaganda. If new houses are to be built cheaply and with sufficient space for children to grow up like flowers in the garden instead of like rats in a cellar, the devastating power of landlordism must be lifted.

Why should the fact that I (or you) happen to have been left a piece of land that a railway, or a road which the public has built at their own cost has made infinitely valuable, be able to squeeze any plunder I choose out of the necessities of the public? I have seen a town grow up around a factory, and the landowner growing rich by the energies of the people and the enterprise of the employer. He had done nothing, contributed nothing. He just sat idly by, doling out his land at his own price, holding it up here, releasing it there as his own interests alone dictated.

What justice is there in a system which makes it possible for one man, by the accident of heredity, to exercise a "hold-up" over the whole community, to skim the cream of the wealth the public creates, to make it impossible for the poor to have decent houses to live in or their children gardens to play in? The wealth which the activities of the public create belongs to the public.

The Government must not let this great building enterprise be strangled by the exactions of the landlords. It must take the land it needs, not at a fancy price, but at a fair price, and it must appropriate the land values to the service of the public which creates them.

The City of London Lands Committee have let in Blomfield Street and New Broad Street, at £4,000 for the first year and half the amount in the second year, a site which formerly only produced £40 a year. The original lease was granted 80 years ago to the London Missionary Society, when the district was undeveloped for business purposes. With the development of London Wall and Finsbury Circus for business purposes the property in Blomfield Street and New Broad Street is now rented more in keeping with the district.—*The STAR*, 6th December.