

THE A. T. FORERUNNER.

"NOT GREATER WEALTH, BUT SIMPLER PLEASURES."

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SPECIAL DEMONSTRATION SUPPLEMENT.

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A LEICESTER GARDEN SUBURB.

The importance of the housing conditions of the people of our large towns is increasingly recognised, and every experiment towards better housing which is successfully carried out gives added hope to those who seek a solution to the problem.

It is not claimed that our Co-partnership Tenants Societies solve the whole problem, but their promoters firmly believe that they clearly show how the houses of a considerable part of our town population might be improved, the worker's lives be made brighter and happier by more direct contact with natural surroundings, their social sympathies expanded by wise direction into useful channels, and by good environments, their characters developed to make them independent, thoughtful, and useful citizens.

The following pages contain an account of our Society—its aims, objects and methods, illustrated to show the progress made.

The Society was formed and rules drawn up and registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, in November, 1902, by a group of workers engaged at a Co-partnership Boot Factory, as a result of an article which appeared in the Productive Federation Year Book from the pen of Mr. Henry Vivian. This described the system put into practice by the Ealing Tenants, Ltd, claiming its methods to be essentially co-operative in their character. "Many workmen," stated Mr. Vivian, "find it extremely risky, as well as expensive, to try and buy the house they live in on the usual individualistic plan. To deal with expense first:

one plot of land will cost more in proportion than fifty or a hundred plots. The legal expenses, the survey fees, and the building of the house cost more proportionately. The interest to be paid, and the legal charges in connection with the borrowing of the margin which a workman usually requires to enable him to build, are also proportionately heavy, this because everything is necessarily done on a retail basis, with obviously retail expenses.

By association, the tenant owner can get everything done on wholesale terms, thus effecting a large saving.

Then in regard to the risk. Large numbers of the best class of workmen have no certainty of employment in one place. This often means that after a man has partly bought his house by a very expensive

method, he is burdened with the expense of finding a tenant, and collecting the rent of one house or of selling his interest at something below what he has given for it.

Many reformers with these facts before them, conclude that the only other alternative is municipal building, because there is gained in this way the economy of wholesale dealing, and relief

for the workman-tenant of risks. This reasoning, however, ignores the very important and responsible part that individual interest—using the term in its best sense—plays in the management and use of house property, with the educational value to the individual and the community in enlisting the same. In short, what we want is wholesale economy and retail responsibility."

The cogent reasoning contained in that article, of which the foregoing is a brief summary, along with the faith inspired by our knowledge of the enthusiasm and work of Mr. Vivian for Labor Co-partnership schemes, had the effect of stimulating us to consider whether we could not emulate the Ealing Tenants by establishing a similar society at Leicester. Meetings were called, discussions ensued, and finally Mr. Vivian invited to come down to Leicester and expound his



THE ESTATE, LOOKING SOUTH-WEST.

scheme to us, with the result that a Society was registered as the Leicester Anchor Tenants Ltd.

Ideals do not fulfil themselves—it was now needful to take steps to obtain the necessary capital. A secretary was appointed to obtain weekly subscriptions of small sums from the workmen, the first year's result being a share capital of £200. The second year this reached the sum of £339. The third year interest in the scheme began to wane a little, waverers lost faith through their ambition not being fulfilled as rapidly as they desired, with the result that at the end of 1905 the share capital stood at only £317. The year 1906, ended with capital still further reduced to £277. However, 1907 must ever be looked to as the turning point in the history of the society. Two things helped towards its success: (1) Four years of patient plodding had been a testing time, eliminating the waverers, leaving a smaller band, more determined than ever to persevere and overcome all preliminary difficulties. (2) The encouragement received from the Hon. Secretary of the Housing Council, Miss Sybella Gurney. The

Close enough proximity to the town to link up the advantages of country life.

Inexpensive land for securing spacious gardens surrounding each dwelling.

Reasonable stipulations for the controlling and laying out of the estate, preserving its natural beauties, as far as possible, and limiting the number of houses to the acre to prevent overcrowding.

In this respect one of the rules of the society debars the erection of more than ten houses per acre; and, in fact, the observant visitor will be surprised to find there is an average of only seven dwellings to the acre.

The Demonstration.

The demonstration organized by the "Anchor Tenants Ltd" took place on July 1st 1911, the objects being a mutual hand-shake on the completion of the first development of the estate and the further



writer well remembers attending one of the meetings of the Council in London, when after the meeting, Miss Gurney took him on one side and asked how things were going down at Leicester, and when we were going to look out for an estate, promising at any time desired to invest £100 in share capital. The confidence thus shown in our ultimate success stimulated us to such efforts that at the end of year 1907 our capital was increased to £1500, and we had entered into a contract to purchase, on favorable terms, the estate situated at Humberstone from Captain Burns Hartopp.

The estate purchased consists of forty eight acres situated to the east of the old-world village of Humberstone, where are found, along with those natural advantages of good altitude, restful and picturesque scenery and good subsoil, the conditions which contribute to healthfulness, comfort, and convenience of home life, such as—

A supply of pure water and gas mains.

Low rates and freedom from tithe and land tax,

arousing of public interest in the work and aims of the society. The co-operative spirit shown in the organizing of this affair in which so many of the residents gave their energies is typical of the means by which this society has attained its present success. A large number of interested people availed themselves of the invitations sent them, and it is doubtful if any went away dissatisfied, on the other hand the satisfaction of some has materialized since in increased investments with the Society.

The first part of the afternoon was spent by the visitors in admiring the beauties of the Estate, a number of houses being thrown open for inspection, and on every hand were heard expressions in appreciation of the healthy situation, the well planned houses, the pretty gardens, the picturesque surroundings.

After tea an open-air meeting was held in the Avenue, under the presidency of Colonel Yate, M.P. Mr. Henry Vivian was the principal speaker. On the platform were also Mr. Charles Bennion, Councillor W. Bates, Dr. C. Killick Millard, (Medical Officer of health for Leicester.) The Rev. F. L. Donaldson, Mr. Amos Mann, Mr. J. T. Taylor, Mr. E. T. Groome, and Mr. J. S. Wilford, Secretary.

Ald. T. Windley, J.P., Ald. J. Chaplin, J.P., Miss Clephan, Mr. J. Leeson, Mr. Geo. Somerville, Mr. A. H. Baddeley, Mr. G. Gristwood, Mr. G. W. Moore, Mr. Edwin Crew, and others were present. Apologies for absence were sent by the Mayor of Leicester, Mr. Ramsey MacDonald, M.P., Sir. Edward Wood, and others.

COL. YATE'S SPEECH.

Col. Yate said he considered it a compliment that he should have been invited to take the chair at that gathering. It was not the first time that he had been there. He was there some two years before—long before he was honoured by being chosen as their representative—as a private individual, and as one who came as the result of a desire to take an interest in everything that appertained to the comfort, the happiness, and the welfare of the British working man. (Applause.) He went over it all, he looked at the estimates, and at the way they were working. He had been a practical administrator all his life and was, therefore, able to understand the work they were doing. It seemed to him that they were working on sound business lines. (Hear, hear.) That afternoon he had seen the result, and was delighted with it. (Applause.) The progress during the last two years had been wonderful, and he and the others on the platform rejoiced to see it. This great question of the housing of the working classes was one of the most urgent social reforms of the present day. (Applause.)

“Look at these houses,” he exclaimed, “these acres, and everything here, and contrast them with one of the back streets in Leicester or West Humberstone. Look at the monotony of the one, and the beauty and joyfulness of the other! Nothing delights me more than to think that this great social reform is one that is receiving encouragement from the highest and the lowest in the land.” (Applause.)

There was nothing more encouraging than the official report

towns of Britain, the United States, and Germany, had been able to draw continuously upon fresh supplies of robust life from the rural districts, they would have decayed and died. He did not think it was necessary that towns should be so built that people could not be healthy in them, and he believed it was possible to have highly organised industry coupled with a healthy life. (Applause.) There was a richness and an education that came of the association of one man with another, and of one family with another, that could not be got in isolation in rural districts. They wanted so to organise town life that intellectual alertness and physical robustness would go side by side. (Applause.) From this time forward the law ought to make aggregations of people in unhealthy conditions practically impossible. (Hear, hear.)

A SOUND COMMERCIAL IDEA.

It was one thing to preach better housing, added Mr. Vivian, but it was of far more value to be able to point to an actual example, such as the Humberstone Garden Suburb. Co-partnership suburbs were not the hobbies of millionaires; they had got beyond that, and had become a sound commercial idea, in which the ordinary man might take up shares and anticipate a moderate return on his capital. The movement now had over £2,000,000 worth of property, and had been able to meet its obligations from the start. The tenants possessed what he termed “house-pride,” and outside investors might rest assured that their conduct, compared with the conduct of average tenants, was



which was presented at the annual meeting in March. It was a sound document, showing how well the whole system was managed.

The Garden Suburb was being run on sound commercial lines. His desire in life was to do something to help the working-man, and he could not do better than by helping him to have a decent house in the country, where he could bring up his family in health and comfort, which could not be got in a town. He wanted to see such work carried out all round Leicester.

MR. VIVIAN AND “A NATION OF LEANERS.”

Mr. Henry Vivian also spoke of the progress he could see on all hands. In the long run, he said, a nation could only hold its own in the struggle of nations by having healthy, robust individuals. Everything sprang from the individual. They ought to avoid creating a nation of “leaners,” who were always leaning against something instead of standing on their own feet, and had no driving force within them. The more a man relied on external forces, the less help would he be to the nation. The great value of garden suburb schemes was that, while they utilised to the full the power of organization, the health and economy that came from association, they at the same time appealed to an individual’s love of home and garden. They had not made the thing a success by suppressing individuality, but by drawing it out and organising it for the common good. One of the most striking indictments of the modern town was that, from the physical point of view, it had not been able to generate its own life. Unless the big industrial

worth something in the coin of the realm. The movement was worth helping on, not only because it was excellent from the social point of view, but also because it was safe investment. The attractiveness of the estates was shown by the fact that out of 2,000 houses not a dozen were empty. (Applause.) Of all the attractions that the movement had, there were none so great as the observation of the effect upon the women and children of living in garden suburbs. Garden suburbs had a striking effect upon the physique of the people, and were therefore important from the point of view of providing soldiers for the battlefield and men for the workshop. A man born in the slums, who grew up in bestial surroundings, had not the desire or the strength to struggle for anything better, and one of the great needs of the day was a desire for something better on the part of the downtrodden section of the community. It was gratifying, he observed in conclusion, that they had a platform in social reforms on which they could forget party. (Applause.)

The Rev. F. L. Donaldson moved a vote of thanks to Colonel Yate and Mr. Vivian, and referred to the thousands and thousands of “degenerates” who could not form a society like the Humberstone Garden Suburb. For these he hoped for state aid. The movement had already passed through the capitalistic and the co-operative stage, and the municipal stage would come in the future. He considered that garden suburbs would eradicate consumption, not by attacking it when it was there, but by rearing children who could never have it. (Applause.)

Mr. Amos Mann seconded, and the proposition was carried with applause.

The welfare of the children of the Estate is one of the Societies greatest aims. Work of a recreative educational character is continually being carried on. It is recognized on every hand that what is so difficult to accomplish in this generation in regard to the co-operative spirit in social and business life is already half a fact for the next, through the purifying influences brought to bear on the minds of children. An instance of this was shown, after the termination of the meeting, in an excellent display of dumb-bell exercises given by the children under the leadership of two lady residents; this, interspersed with creditable singing, completed the official programme.

COMMENTS FROM THE PRESS.

The remarkable measure of success achieved by the local movement in the direction of co-partnership housing was demonstrated on Saturday by the tour of inspection of the Humberstone Garden Suburb Estate. The affair was essentially non-political, and for the

add to his efficiency if he is able to spend his leisure time away from smoke and grime, amid rural surroundings, and a purer atmosphere. At Humberstone one sees an example of practical self-help, and one can only hope that other garden suburbs on similar lines will spring up all over the country.

"Leicester Evening Mail."

The following scraps of conversation were overheard as the crowd passed round the Estate on July 1st:—

"There's a lot more houses than there were when I saw it last, if they keep on building they'll soon have"——"seven rooms and a bath in the kitchen for 7/6 is all right, as good as you'd get"——"on the children's playground where"——"we could get week-end accommodation for"——"raspberries on that lot of canes as big as"——"Scraptoft



moment two men of such widely differing opinions as Colonel Yate, M.P., and Mr. Hy. Vivian found themselves on the same platform. One does not wonder that there should be a demand for houses in the suburbs. The wonder rather is that men and women should have been so long content to exist in the stuffy courts and back streets of large towns. We imagine that once a man is induced to go out into the suburbs, where he is permitted breathing space and his garden is not confined to the limits of a back yard, he requires no persuasion to remain there. We look upon the co-partnership system as going a long way in the direction of solving the housing problem, and our hope is that it will receive every encouragement both from the authorities—both municipal and national—and from the people in whose interests the movement was begun.

"Leicester Daily Mercury."

Gratifying progress is being made in Leicester's "Garden Suburb" at Humberstone. The demonstration on Saturday was sufficient evidence of this, and should serve to draw public attention to a movement which deserves support. The conditions of life in large towns are the reverse of desirable for the average worker, and it must

Church and wood look very picturesque across the valley"——"and red tiled roofing adds to the effect of"——"the distance to the car in the winter when"——"the youngsters are going to do musical drill on"——"that flower bed is laid out very nice"——

Just then the band struck up a lively tune and further conversation was lost.

The Society is pleased to acknowledge its indebtedness to the following newspapers for their reports of the Demonstration:—

"The Leicester Daily Post," "The Leicester Daily Mercury," "The Leicester Evening Mail," "The Leicester Advertiser," "The Midland Free Press," and "Lloyd's News."