

could not be dug until by the application of much capital a shaft had been sunk. How, therefore, was the single tax to help men to get access to coal, unless they had capital? British wealth was labour based upon foreign natural opportunities—the raw materials imported—by means of our coal supply, and was not gained by agriculture. Very little land comparatively was needed for industry, and the effect of that upon our economics was that the landlord had been dethroned from the position of sovereignty which he held in an agricultural country. The price which the landlord could command from industry for the land required was a negligible fraction of the capital employed. That was why the landlord's share of the total dividends of the country—rents, profits, salaries, wages, &c.—was only about 4·5 per cent. of the whole. The bulk of the wealth of the country was owned by capitalists, and it was not wise or just statesmanship to attempt to levy all the taxation on 4·5 per cent. of the wealth of the country. It would be folly to try, for the national and local expenditure was roughly 240 millions, and on a liberal estimate the income from land was only 90 millions. That disposed of the single tax once and for all. Mr. Neilson had not shown how wages would rise if land taxation forced more land into the market. A tax of, say, 3d. in the pound would only force a weak holder to sell, and he would part with his land at a lower price than he had intended to accept. The price would tend to be the previous price less the capitalised value of the tax, and the only result would be that while the first holder would be penalised the second would be able to continue to hold the land up from use. He admitted the revenue to the country from the transaction, but denied the social effect which the land taxers claimed would follow. A worse result might be brought about, and if they did not take care builders would reduce the size of gardens and build skyscrapers so as to have less land on which to pay tax. He agreed that a man who held land in a populous place, where people contributed to his increased revenue from the land, should be taxed on it, but that was only in accordance with the just principle which ought to govern all taxation, that the tax should be according to ability to pay. An interesting discussion followed to which Mr. Neilson and Mr. Money replied.

#### "THE BRITISH WEEKLY" ON LAND REFORM.

Extended reference is made in "Notes of the Week" in THE BRITISH WEEKLY of December 5th to Mr. Lloyd George's recent meetings in Scotland and to the land question. The following is extracted:—

He (Mr. Lloyd George at Aberdeen) proceeded to the Land question, and it was this subject which most deeply moved his audience. The cruel wrongs inflicted under the feudal system in northern Scotland were known to his hearers. Mr. Lloyd George showed that he also knew them. . . . Mr. Lloyd George, in the earlier part of his speech, very rightly indicated that the Tories had been fighting with every weapon to have an election before the benefits of the Insurance Act are distributed. But they have a stronger motive still. They dread and hate the coming Land Bill as they dread and hate nothing besides. For they know that whatever may be defended in this country, the feudal system cannot be defended. It is not possible to go before a popular audience and make out a case against Land reform. Nor is it possible to maintain the solidarity of the Conservative party in any such resistance. For example, an effective leasehold enfranchisement Act would be supported by Tories as well as by Liberals. Scotsmen cannot be deceived with arguments that the handing over of their lands to grouse and deer is beneficial to their country. The heads of the Tory party are more panic-stricken about Land Reform than about anything else, not merely because such reform will limit their power, but because they know they cannot rally their

forces in opposition. The country, and we would say Scotland in particular, has been too patient under its long suffering. But the consequences of the feudal system are now so apparent, so alarming, so menacing, that the time is ripe for radical change. Mr. Lloyd George has shown that he understands the nature and the urgency of the problem, and we may confidently hope that in due time he will submit definite proposals to the country on which the next election will be fought. If so, the result of the election is a foregone conclusion.

#### MR. LLOYD GEORGE ON THE PRESENT LAND SYSTEM.

"LET'S BURST IT."

Speaking in the Music Hall, Aberdeen, on November 29th, at a meeting arranged by the Scottish Liberal Association, Mr. Lloyd George said (according to THE TIMES of November 30th):—

The first essential condition to every social reform, every real improvement in the lot of the people, is a thorough and complete change in our land system. Search out every problem, look into these questions thoroughly, and the more thoroughly you look into them you will find that the land is at the root of most of them. Housing, wages, food, health, the development of a virile, independent, manly, Imperial race—you must have a free land system as an essential condition of these. To use a gardening phrase, our social and economic condition is root-bound by the feudal system. It has no room to develop; but its roots are breaking through. Well, let's burst it. There is plenty of land outside for the roots to strike in, to flourish and draw nourishment and bring forth fruit a hundredfold for the people who are hungering for it.

What is happening in Scotland? I have had your emigration statistics. What do I find?—a larger emigration even than in Ireland; scores of thousands every year of the most able-bodied, robust young fellows in your rural districts fleeing from their native land as if it were stricken with pestilence. Why? It is infected with the pestilence of land famine. We know the story of the Highlands—devastated and depopulated districts that used to be thronged with people who supplied the best warriors that the Empire ever sent forth to battle for it; whole tracts of it lying waste, turned over to deer and grouse. How many battalions of deer did they send to South Africa when we were at war? And if there ever should be an invasion of this land, do you think the foe is going to be scared off by flights of grouse? You want the people on the land, and they have been driven off—driven by the difficulties of obtaining access to it; by the difficulty of obtaining sites for houses on it; by sport; by conditions that make it impossible to develop the resources of the land to its full capacity. All these things are preventing the people of this country from making the best of the soil, which, after all, is the basis of all real prosperity in every country.

In land legislation one essential principle must be recognised—that the first purpose of the land of this country should be not the conferring of power and pleasure upon the favoured few, but the provision of sustenance and shelter for the multitudes who toil. The land of Scotland ought not to be used primarily for the benefit of those who visit this country when the sun is shining upon it and when its heather is in bloom. The land of Scotland ought to be used primarily by those who stick to it and love it when the winter rains and snow and tempest lash fiercely across its rugged face. These are the questions which must be searched into. This is the hour of the great inquisition of the people. They have determined to give their toil, to give their labour, to give their industry, to give their all for their native land; but they want to know that their native land shall give its best to them as well.