

representatives to the next National Conference on the taxation of land values, and as a large ratepayer in many Scottish municipalities use its influence with the local authorities to force Parliament into changing the law.

To Delay Land Reform.

At a council meeting of the Central and Associated Chambers of Agriculture, held in London on November 4th, the following resolution was proposed:—

In view of the recent speeches of various members of His Majesty's Government, this Council is of opinion that before any such sweeping changes as are therein indicated are made, a Royal Commission should be appointed forthwith to inquire and consider what changes, if any, are required in the best interests of all classes concerned in agriculture.

Mr. Trustram Eve suggested to add the words: "And it is hoped that the Royal Commission would forthwith appoint commissioners to sit locally in counties and to report as quickly as possible." Thus amended the resolution was carried.

Lord Lansdowne in his speech at Brighton on November 18th, referred favourably to the proposal.

This desire on the part of landlords and their friends for investigation is rather belated. Now that the land campaign has really commenced much will be made of the proposal for a Royal Commission, but who during the long years before this ever pressed for such a thing. The object is quite clear. It is to waste time, for such bodies are always leisurely, not to say dilatory; and it is to water down the land policy, weak though it already is, for Royal Commissions are seldom radical. But the idea has come to the landlords too late, it is beyond their power to keep land reform in obscurity.

Deer Forests for Sale.

The offer of the Duke of Sutherland to sell to the Government 200,000 acres of his estates in the north of Scotland at £2 per acre, afterwards amended to 22s. 6d. per acre with an alternative offer of a further 200,000 acres at 25s. (salmon fishing and buildings being reserved), has raised by contrast the importance of the rating question and has recalled some of the blackest chapters of Highland history. The offer was welcomed by the Conservative Press as a reply to Mr. Lloyd George's aspersions at Bedford and Swindon and as a challenge to prove by acceptance whether or not the Highlands could be repopled with a "race of robust men." These gibes were quickly silenced. The rate books were consulted and wide publicity was given to the rateable value at which Scottish deer forests are assessed. Mr. P. Wilson Raffan M.P., pointed out in the DAILY NEWS and LEADER of 30th October that the 3½ million acres of deer forests in the northern counties of Scotland are entered in the valuation roll at 9d. per acre, and if that is a just valuation then the selling price (at twenty years' purchase) ought to be 15s. per acre. Sir W. Schlich, Professor of Forestry at Oxford, writing to the TIMES of November 4th, stated that the Duke had 396,173 acres of deer forests in Sutherland, yielding a rental of £13,555, or 8½d. per acre. Not more than 40,000 acres are suitable for afforestation and the rest of the land is not worth more than 1d. to 3d. per acre a year, if that. It

follows that 160,000 acres of the deer forest offered to the Government, so far from being worth 22s. 6d. an acre, are not at the outside, even at 30 years' purchase, worth more than 7s. an acre. The Duke will have to try again. If his offers had been accepted he would have gained a splendid bargain. All he has done is to focus attention on the difference between the rateable value of, and the price demanded for, his estates. We only wish the same public attention was devoted to similar anomalies in most purchases of land whether for public or private purposes, where although the area of land is not so large the price paid is often a hundredfold more exorbitant when compared with previous rateable value.

The Highland Clearances.

Numerous articles have appeared in the Press recalling the Sutherland evictions, and thus again the Duke, who had ventured to attack Mr. Lloyd George for his references to settled historical facts, precipitated a discussion which only served the cause of land reform. The DAILY CHRONICLE of 31st October reviewed the story as follows:—

As the young Duke of Sutherland has ventured to discredit the accepted historic facts concerning his ancestors, and their acquisition of Highland property by a series of evictions, he ought to be grateful for any introduction to literature that will help him to get at the truth.

OUR OLD NOBILITY, gives a faithful summary gathered from reliable historians and contemporary writings. Professor Alfred Russel Wallace again, in LAND NATIONALISATION (Social Science Series, 1s.), quotes contemporary evidence; while Mr. Thomas Johnston in OUR NOBLE FAMILIES goes over similar ground.

Further, we have the impartial writings of General Stuart, Professor Blackie, Professor Alfred Russel Wallace, Hugh Miller, Donald McLeod (an eye-witness) and others, against whom the duke chooses to quote the writings of James Loch, one of the notorious factors of his ancestors, who wrote, probably "to order," a plausible, whitewashing account of the "improvements" made by the Sutherland-Leveson-Gowers in the first half of the last century.

This same James Loch, by the way, was the agent who ordered the evicted toilers—when they "re-settled" on the barren coast lands and snatched a wretched existence from the sea by nightly toil—to help in building, by day, stone houses that were to become the property of their rich landlord.

We take the liberty at this stage of quoting from the introduction to a ballad written by Mr. Feltham Burghley, of London, and published in 1860:—

The clearance was effected before the creation of the Dukedom of Sutherland. That dignity only followed about the year 1833, on the immense wealth, and consequent importance accruing to the Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford, from their successful application of what some writers call "chresmatisticks" to the county of Sutherland; by which, between the years 1811 and 1820, 15,000 inhabitants, comprising about 3,000 families, were burned out, and driven from the interior of the county to a strip of land on the western coast, where they received about two-thirds of an acre each, or

6,000 acres in all, in exchange for 794,000 acres of good land of which they were deprived.

A fearful error in national policy, not to say crime, was committed by sundry people. Sheriff M'Kid says, in his judicial report of the trial, that such an array of crime has "seldom disgraced the criminal records of a country." They (the Sutherland family) have derived the emolument of it, and the dignities that followed hard upon the wealth.