

"OUR POLICY."

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—Henry George.

THE COMING OF THE NEW LIBERALISM.

The Debate on the Address is the recognised occasion for discussions on social and economic questions, but the circumstances of the political situation gave a special significance to the amendments recently brought before the House. In other days it was known that the Amendments disposed of, parties would proceed to legislate and oppose on conventional lines regarding questions that have been the subject of controversy amongst practical politicians for generations past. But a change has come, for this line of retreat is in process of being cut off, and the "academic" questions of other days are to be the real issues of the near future.

Take first the Liberal Party. Here are members returned on such issues as the maintenance of Free Trade, the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords, Welsh Disestablishment, the Scottish Smallholder's Bill, Home Rule for Ireland. The mandate that returned them has been fulfilled; they are as actors when the curtain has fallen for the last time on a play that has ceased to attract. There sit the Irish, their role too fulfilled, and eagerly awaiting the call to another stage—there is the Labour Party bound to the wheels of the party machine.

Such is the condition of the coalition forces. And over against them sit the Unionist Party, whose very appellation is a sarcasm. Here are members returned on an issue their leaders have strangled and bid them disown, representatives of the rotten boroughs, of the Tory-controlled University seats, the rejected of scores of constituencies, and who will return no more when rotten boroughs, University representation and plural voting disappear with franchise reform. A party without a faith, and only kept together by hunger for office.

Into this assembly the Labour Party introduced an amendment for the establishment of a minimum wage and the nationalisation of land, railways, and mines. A pious resolution piously urged. The mover, Mr. Snowden, proclaimed himself to be above all else a "Constitutionalist." Parliament must act, or the toilers would proceed to work out their own salvation—a sop at least must be thrown to Cerberus. The conventional statement that wealth accumulates whilst men decay was produced; the minimum wage was declared to be "a temporary palliative"; the root of the evil was proclaimed to be the "monopoly of the essentials of life," with the private ownership of land as the root evil; the blessed word nationalisation was mentioned, and there the matter was left. Nothing could have better suited the disposition of the House. Nothing practical, nothing immediate was suggested, nothing to cause privilege a tremor, or to indicate that labour was knocking at the gate with demands that must be met. So Whigs, Tories, and Fabians could bless, and leader-writers and Parliamentary correspondents rehash ancient platitudes.

For after prolonged labour, splendid achievements in the sphere of political emancipation, the House of Commons, as at present constituted and in its present mood, is not to be looked to for heroic measures of economic reform. But so long as the realities of the situation are recognised there is much cause for encouragement. The clamorous voices of promoters of sectional causes are silent with satisfaction, and this is the appointed time for the people to hear the new evangel of economic emancipation. These are days for the formulation of a practical policy of economic reform that will strike at the roots of privilege.

Such being the situation, cause for encouragement is to be found in the speech made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the debate on the amendment to the Address moved by Mr. Hayes Fisher on the rating question. The mover demanded that the Government should fulfil its pledges to readjust the relationship between local and Imperial taxation, and produce its proposals for the rating of land values if it had a solution

in that direction. Mr. Lloyd George in reply urged the need for full consideration of the problem, and insisted that it must be dealt with in a far-reaching manner. The most significant part of his speech was that in which he showed how progress is "penalised" by the rating of improvements, which he concluded in the following words (Hansard, p. 139):—

I am perfectly certain it is worth the while of the House of Commons to consider whether there is not some system which at any rate does not directly discourage a man from spending his capital upon improving his property.

A great advance is denoted by the fact that Mr. Lloyd George realises the need for the remission of unjust taxation. In pursuit of that line of thought he is far better occupied than in the hurried promotion of a land campaign on a hotch-potch programme of trumpery palliatives. Significance also attaches to the fact that Mr. Lloyd George in a few words indicated that he is not going to sit at the feet of Mr. Chiozza Money and accept from him the nostrum of a local income tax. The circumstances of the intervention of Mr. Money in the debates on local taxation and nationalisation indicate that he is to be regarded as the spokesman of the group that is manoeuvring to side-track land value taxation. Land purchase and a local income tax form the basis of their policy, and Mr. Money has been retained to present the imposture with an assumption of omniscience. But the Chancellor's dismissal of the local income tax in the debate and the reply of the Prime Minister to the Labour deputation, indicate that these reactionary proposals are outside Liberal policy.

So taking all the circumstances of the political situation into consideration, it is clear that the movement for the taxation of land values has before it an open field, that the Government will do little more than mark time until under the Parliament Act the great measures now hung up are placed upon the Statute Book, and that it is to the next Parliament with the land valuation completed that we

must look for a measure of economic emancipation. It is none too soon to take in hand the work that must be done to assure that democratic constituencies in the next Parliament shall not be represented by Liberals who oppose the new Liberalism. They must be urged to realise that "new occasions teach new duties," and that if they grow weary in well-doing repose should be sought elsewhere than on Liberal benches. This view can only be brought to their notice by their constituents, and it is to the constituencies that the need for this awakening should be presented, and that in the near future. It might be well for the United Committee to consider the advisability of concentration in this work of assuring that Liberal representation shall more correctly reflect Liberal sentiment. It is a flagrant shame that Scottish constituencies which should provide the vanguard of the land value taxation movement send the most virulent of its opponents to Westminster. With payment of members and the coming transference of official election expenses to the Treasury, democratic representation is now a possibility. It is difficult to believe that a concentration of forces for awhile on Scotland and a systematic campaign in the closed preserves of moneyed Whiggism would not have satisfactory results, and encourage the adoption of similar propagandist work in English and Welsh industrial constituencies.

Two popular demands now transcend all others—one for economic reform to improve the wage-status of the workers, the other for the relief of industry from rating burdens coupled with a readjustment of the relations between Imperial and local finance. To meet these allied demands the taxation of land values holds the field outside Parliament, with the support of the democratic rank and file. To-day is not too soon to prepare for a morrow when the House of Commons shall be brought to realise that the people only value political freedom as an instrument for their emancipation from economic servitude.

R. L. O.