

suffrage" principle outlined above, and appoints its own executive.—C. W. SORENSON, York, England.

GREAT BRITAIN.

A REVIEW OF BRITISH LEGISLATION AS AFFECTING THE POSITION OF THE LORDS—AN UNSCRUPULOUS CAMPAIGN—STATESMANLIKE ATTITUDE OF JOHN REDMOND—SHREWD POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT.

It is interesting to look back over the past four years and note the changes that have taken place in the political situation in Great Britain as it affects the Land Values movement. For of all the sections which go to make up what is known as the Progressive Forces, Single Taxers, or Land Values men have undoubtedly made the greatest progress.

In Dec. 1905, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman took office and in the January following Parliament was dissolved. During January and February, a general election took place which showed that Sir Henry had won the confidence of the country, for he was returned not only by a majority of 156 over the Unionists, but by a clear majority over all parties combined. At the end of four years the strength of the Government in the House of Commons was practically unimpaired as will be seen by the figures given below. During these eventful years to the Spring of 1909 the Government passed through the House of Commons a great mass of legislation of a more or less beneficial character, but the Bill of greatest interest to Single Taxers, and most disliked by the opposition, was the Scottish Valuation Bill of 1907. This Bill was rejected by the House of Lords, but was sent back again in 1908, and was then so mutilated by these hereditary legislators as to be quite useless for the purpose for which it had been drafted. It was therefore dropped by the Government. Finding it impossible to introduce the principle of Valuation and Taxation of Land Values by legislative methods the Government undertook to do so through the Finance Bill. Hitherto the rights of the Commons to originate and determine all finan-

cial matters had been assumed. The resolution which had governed these matters since 1678 is as follows: "That all aids and supplies and aids to His Majesty in Parliament, are the sole gift of the Commons; and all Bills for the granting of such aids and supplies ought to begin with the Commons; and that it is the undoubted and sole right of the Commons to direct, limit, and appoint, in such Bills, the ends, purposes, considerations, conditions, limitations and qualifications of such grants, which ought not to be changed or altered by the House of Lords."

Here it must be explained that the reason why Finance Bills have to be referred to the Lords is, because according to an unwritten constitution, it is required that to become law "a bill must pass both Houses of Parliament and receive the assent of the Sovereign." So in the ordinary course of events last year's Budget having been passed through the Commons by a large majority it was sent in accordance with precedent to the other House, where it (naturally) received anything but a cordial welcome. Acting on the advice of Lord Milner who had urged their Lordships to reject the Bill "and damn the consequences," Lord Lansdowne's now historic resolution was carried. Thus a financial deadlock was brought about from which we have not yet escaped. In 1860 the Lords rejected the Bill which provided for the repeal of the paper duties, but the following year Lord Palmerston included the proposal in the financial scheme of the year (as Lloyd George did last year with the Valuation) and the Lords were compelled to pass what they had previously rejected. Much as they disliked the Death Duties introduced in Sir Wm. Harcourt's Finance Bill (1894) their Lordships allowed that Bill to pass, being counselled to do so in the following words by the late Lord Salisbury:—

"It is perfectly obvious that this House in point of fact has not for many years interfered by amendment with the finance of the year. The reason why this House cannot do so is that it has not the power of changing the Executive Government, and to reject a Finance Bill and leave the Executive Government in its place means to

create a deadlock from which there is no escape."

To allow the Finance Bill of 1909 to pass was too much for the Lords. They hypocritically professed that their only desire was to give the people an opportunity of expressing their opinion on the Bill. They and the Tory party hoped by forcing the Government to dissolve and make an appeal to the country that they might secure a majority at the Poll and so stave off for a time a measure which threatens to sap the very foundations of their own power and privilege. Parliament was dissolved on Jan. 15th, and an appeal made to the country by the progressive forces as to whether or not the Veto power of the House of Lords should be abolished. Of this election it can safely be said that it was the keenest political struggle of modern times. The barefaced lying, unscrupulous misrepresentation and tyranny on the part of Landlords and their agents, the Tory party and its supporters, are well nigh incredible. "Talk unemployment" was the order given to its candidates and speakers as a vote catcher, and thus "Tariff Reform means work for all" became the burden of their song. The Tories actually claimed to have given Old Age Pensions and they promised to remove the disqualification which prevents some old people who had, at some time, been in receipt of Parish relief from getting pensions, although it is well known that Lloyd George has already provided for these people becoming eligible on Jan. 1st, 1911. It was the Valuation and Land Clauses of course that prompted the Lords to take the risk of violating constitutional practice and involving the country in financial chaos, by rejecting the Budget that gave the Government its strength and saved it from utter defeat. All parties were more or less disappointed with the election result. While Liberals and Labor men expected to do much better, it is certain the Tories fully expected to get a majority.

The following figures show the strength of parties before the dissolution and now after the election:—

Before the dissolution—Liberal, 373; Labor, 46; Nationalist, 83; Unionist, 168.

After the Election—Liberal, 275; Labor,

40; Nationalist, 71; Independent Nationalist, 11; Unionist, 273.

Thus what was a Liberal majority of 76 over all other sections has become a minority of 120. But with the support of the Nationalist and Labor members there is a progressive majority of 124 which under a bold and wise policy is capable of doing good work, but only a bold policy can secure unity. Unfortunately there is a cleavage in the ranks of the Nationalist party. One fears that the 11 Independent Nationalists under the Leadership of Mr. Wm. O'Brien are less democratic than the main body which follows the Leadership of Mr. John Redmond, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his diplomatic attitude in a grave political crisis. I shall refer later to this subject. Of the various groups in the House that which stand primarily for the Taxation of Land Values has come through the fight with the greatest success. This fact was pointed out by the London Correspondent of the Yorkshire *Daily Observer*. Not only have men like Messrs. Ure, Dundas White, Wedgwood, Hemmerd, Harry Whitley, Trevelyan and many others gone back mostly by increased majorities, but solid land reformers such as Ald. Wilson Raffan (an old friend of Henry George) and Francis Nielson and H. G. Chancellor, the first two of whom stood as Liberals in three cornered fights with Labor men in opposition, have been elected for the first time. Our friend, Mr. W. R. Lester, made a good fight in Mid. Norfolk and would doubtless have won but for the power exercised by the vested interests in which, and I record it with regret, I must include that of the Established Church. I was with Mr. Lester during his contest, and in no previous election have I ever seen such low down and cowardly methods as the Landlords and some of the clergy adopted towards him. Mr. Harold Cox, one of our bitterest foes, failed ignominiously in the election. That worthy gentleman now appears to be the spoilt darling of Free Trade Unionists and Whigs, who by the way have not yet found their proper place in the political field. It was in the Midland and Southern Counties, and in the Cathedral cities where the Liberals lost ground, but there the Liberals are

already beginning to rally and strengthen their forces. Among Single Tax friends from the States who were here and went through our Campaign, taking an active part in it, were Messrs. Henry George, Jr., and Louis Post. Doubtless many of your readers will have learnt much from the News letters of these friends as to how British and Irish elections are run. The issues in the last election were such as to draw again into the fighting line many veterans long retired from active politics. One of these will be well known to old friends of the movement in America, Mr. Durant, for instance, one of the oldest and best friends of Henry George. As Mr. Durant said to me "this fight brings new life to one and makes me feel young again." Thanks to the Fels fund the *Land Values* Publication Dept. and Press Bureau have been able to turn out immense quantities of useful telling leaflets, posters and cartoons. The staff of the United Committee and the Leagues, with friends and supporters throughout the country, were busy working for progressive candidates in nearly every constituency. From all sides are coming reports of growing interest in the Land Values question, and much active support. Throughout the campaign the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and other leading Liberals spoke out with a strength and directness which inspired their followers with a firm belief that at last the question of the people v. the Lords was to be brought to a final issue. In the House of Commons on Dec. 2nd, the Prime Minister moved the following resolution:

"That the action of the House of Lords in refusing to pass into law the financial provision made by this House for the service of the year is a breach of the constitution, and a usurpation of the rights of the Commons."

The quotation given below is taken from Mr. Asquith's speech.

"The House of Commons would, in the judgment of His Majesty's Government, be unworthy of its past, and the traditions of which it is the custodian and trustee, if it allowed another day to pass without making it clear that it does not mean to brook the gravest indignity, and I would

add the most arrogant usurpation, to which for more than two centuries it has been asked to submit."

In the Albert Hall speech on Dec. 10th Mr. Asquith said:

"We shall not continue in office, and we shall not assume office unless we can secure the safeguards which experience shows to be necessary."

Speaking at the National Liberal Club on Dec. 3rd, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"I would not remain a member of a Liberal Cabinet for one hour unless I knew that that Cabinet had determined not to hold office after the next General election unless full powers are accorded to it which will enable it to place on the Statute Book a measure which will insure that the House of Commons in future can carry Liberal and progressive measures in the course of a single Parliament."

On Monday Feb. 21st, the Parliamentary Session commenced. The reading of the King's Speech and the subsequent statement made by the Prime Minister produced something like consternation in the ranks of the Liberal party, those who composed it feeling that they had been bamboozled. Being present in the House on that occasion as a spectator I was struck by two things, first, the depression on the one hand of those whose disappointment left them hopeless, and on the other hand, by the militant resentment of those in whom the disappointment had aroused the fighting instinct. Matters looked so serious that another appeal to the country and that immediately seemed to be the only possible outcome.

The King's speech contained a proposal for amending the Constitution of the House of Lords—a something for which the Government had received no mandate. This looked like burking the issue, for it was on the question of the abolition of the Veto power that the election had been won; and further in his statement in support of the King's Speech the Premier used these disquieting words:

"I tell the House quite frankly," said Mr. Asquith, "that I have received no such guarantees, and that I have asked for no such guarantees. In my judgment it is

the duty of statesmen and of responsible politicians in this country as long as possible and as far as possible to keep the name of the Sovereign and the prerogatives of the Crown outside the domain of party politics. If the occasion should arise I should not hesitate to tender such advice to the Crown as in the circumstances the exigencies of the situation appear to warrant in the public interests. But to ask in advance for a blank authority for an indefinite exercise of the Royal prerogative in regard to a measure which has never been submitted to or approved by the House of Commons is a thing which, in my judgment, no constitutional statesman can properly make, and it is a concession which the Sovereign cannot be expected to grant."

After a week of uncertainty, bringing us to Feb. 27th, Mr. John Redmond entered the arena as previously mentioned, and the following quotation will give your readers some idea of the statesmanship manner in which he handled the position:

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

"We will support the Government on one condition, and that is that they carry out what we believed to be the policy of the Government and the pledge of the Government. The Government had a mandate for the abolition of the veto, but not for the reform of the House of Lords. There has been no mention of a referendum. I am glad of it. A referendum would mean the indefinite putting off of the curtailing of the powers of the Lords. (Loud Opposition cheers.) If the right hon. gentleman does not follow out the letter and the spirit of the pledges which he gave there is nothing but disaster ahead. Unless I hear further from the right hon. gentleman on the two points—the guarantees to be asked for from the Throne and the suspension of the Budget meanwhile—my friends and I will vote against the motion."

Following Mr. Redmond's "intervention" it was resolved to proceed by way of resolutions to be moved simultaneously in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, affirming firstly the total conclusion of the Peers from Finance and secondly, the restriction of their Veto power on the

lines proposed by Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, namely, within the life of a single Parliament. A third resolution will lay down the lines of a Bill to be introduced next year with a view of substituting a democratic for an hereditary Second Chamber.

Further, "confidence thus set up was strengthened by the Chancellor's deliberate statement that the Government did not intend to 'plough the sands,' and would not continue in office unless they could insure that their proposals would not only go through the House of Commons, but pass into law. 'The Government,' he added, 'will absolutely stake its existence upon the advice it will give the Sovereign, if ever it become necessary to do so.' Mr. Lloyd George pleaded for a spirit of unity and comradeship in a cause in which Irish and British democracy were equally concerned."

The Lords began by rejecting the Budget and are now, strange to say, vehemently demanding it. But the Chancellor of the Exchequer is too old a bird to be caught by chaff, and startled the opposition on the 10th inst. by a smart manoeuvre; he merely requested from the House of Commons supplies for six weeks instead of for six months, so that should the Government find it necessary to resign, the Tories could not count upon supplies furnished by their predecessors. The adoption of this uncompromising attitude has added greatly to the Government's prestige in the eyes of its followers.

The Chancellor himself said: "We do not think it expedient to invite the House of Commons at this stage to arm the executive with funds that would make it practically independent of the House of Commons, as far as funds are concerned, for more than that very crucial period in its history."

It is only fair to Mr. Asquith to say that one hears it confidently asserted that he has had much strong opposition to contend with in the Cabinet; and that when the history of recent Cabinet Councils and negotiations becomes public property it will be found that the Prime Minister was one of the four or five men in the Cabinet who stood out for a strong policy in deal-

ing with the political situation. The cutting off of supplies is said to be Mr. Asquith's own suggestion.

Probably one of the most reliable indications of what the Government's programme is likely to be, may be seen in the London letter of the *Yorkshire Daily Observer* of today (March 15th), and with this I conclude:

THE MINISTERIAL PROGRAMME.

The Opposition raiders upon Treasury bench secrets were easily baffled today in their endeavors to elicit details of the proposed procedure and to ascertain in advance the full resources of the Government. The Prime Minister very properly refused to say more than he has said several times already—that after the veto resolutions have been sent to the Lords the House of Commons will be asked to give a summary assent to the Budget before any adjournment for the spring recess. The intention of the Government to obtain this assent of the House of Commons to the Budget is, he indicated, not contingent upon anything that may happen to the veto resolutions in the House of Lords. The statement merely repeats what was already, to any careful reader of the Prime Minister's earlier statements, the plain import of them. The programme thus indicated, however, does not necessarily imply that the Budget, after ratification by the Commons, will be immediately sent to the Lords independently of any action of theirs in the matter of the veto. The House, I understand, may pass a bill through all its stages and still retain it if they think fit within their own control. There is no automatic submission of a completed bill to the Upper House. Beyond this point the secret of the intentions of the Government rests with themselves, but there are those who find in the Prime Minister's good-humoured repulse of his questioners some ground for believing that the cards he holds are stronger than is generally understood. There is no actual authority for the statement, but it is regarded by some as not impossible that the Budget—as being in virtue of the lapse of the financial year already an accomplished fact—may receive the ratification of the Crown even though

assurances in the matter of the veto should be withheld.—F. SKIRROW, London, Eng.

WORK OF THE FELS COMMISSION.

A meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Fels Commission was held in New York City in the latter part of February, Mr. Hall acting as moderator. There were present Messrs. Post, Murphy, George, Steffens, Fels, Miller, Ingersoll, Lewis, and Dr. Mary Hussey. Matters of interest to the movement were discussed, among which were the proposed Antwerp conference. Mr. Ingersoll was appointed as a committee of which Mr. John J. Murphy is to be one, for the purpose of using the machinery of the American Single Tax League for the purpose of raising money for the work of the Fels Commission to duplicate the offer of Mr. Fels. It ought to be said that the members of the Commission are disappointed at the fact that only 1441 contributors to the Fund have yet materialized.

A great work remains to be done, and funds are sorely needed. Letters have been sent out three times to the 20,000 names on the list with the result as given in a recent issue of the *REVIEW*. This seems to the Commission a very inadequate response to the call. Part of the work that is being done is before our readers. The Oregon situation is promising well, and fuller reports will follow in due time. This work is in the hands of Mr. U'Ren. In addition to the work in Oregon and Rhode Island, where a campaign is on to secure local option in taxation, it is selecting the literature that will soon be prepared and printed. The Commission has arranged with W. G. Eggleston, who is a well equipped newspaper man, and a Single Taxer of long standing, for the organization of a militant and comprehensive publicity bureau, which shall be located in the city of New York. Besides this the *Public* and the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW* are being aided.

Of course, there is bound to be a difference of opinion as to what the Commission should or should not do. Its opinion that that work is most important that will secure the Single Tax in one state is well