

an advanced rent on the increased value caused by the creation of the improvement for which it has already paid.

It is one of the deplorable reflections upon the stupidity of much of our public thinking that this obvious fact has had, so far, practically no influence upon our municipal practice.

It should be axiomatic that there can be no increase in value of anything, without a corresponding decrease in value of all other things, and that when a thing so increasing in value is the fundamental requisite of life, increases in value of that thing should be regarded as a public misfortune, and repressed in every legitimate way. If, because of any permanent depreciation of the fertility of our prairies, the cost of food were to be permanently advanced, it would be looked upon by all as an undoubted misfortune, not helping the farmer, because while the price of his produce might increase, the output would diminish so that in the long run he got no more for his labor. And yet the public mind has not grasped the fact that what is true of wheat is, in a much greater measure true of land because, while human ingenuity can be depended upon to find some means of supplying nature's niggardliness in most aspects, it cannot increase the supply of land.

It is not the wealth of the rich that oppresses the poor; it is their own poverty. Why need any one care how much another has, if he himself has enough.

The Single Tax would set no arbitrary limit to fortunes, recognising that when access to industrial opportunity is open to all, the lower millstone is taken from the mill "that grinds the faces of the poor."

The Single Tax may be regarded as altruistic or egoistic, as one happens to view it. It would substantially benefit every citizen who possesses real property on which improvements are worth more than the site value. This must be true of nine-tenths of even the propertied class in every community.

*THE HOUSE OF LORDS CANNOT BLOCK THE WAY.

(For the Review.)

By "BUDGET RADICAL."

Mr. Frank Appleby's contribution to your Autumn number on the position of our question in Great Britain shows that, like only too many other Radicals, he has failed to grasp the key to the whole political situation in this country—the fact that, while the House of Lords can mutilate or reject

*This article, crowded out of previous numbers, is none the less timely now, and owing to its importance is given a prominent place in this issue as representing the opinions of quite a numerically and intellectually important group of our comrades in Great Britain. The writer who contributes this vigorous criticism of the policy of the Liberals to this issue of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW, and who for the present prefers to remain *incognito*, is a well known contributor to the pages of the *Westminster Review*, and is a staunch radical and Single Taxer.

all other Liberal measures, it cannot mutilate and dare not reject a Liberal Budget. Witness the impotence of their lordships in face of the Death Duties Budget of 1894, in which Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Asquith's Liberal predecessor as Chancellor of the Exchequer, made a beginning of taxing the landlords.

Ever since 1407, when the House of Commons wrested from Henry IV. "the power of the purse," the Lords have had no right to interfere in regard to matters of finance. This principle was re-affirmed by the House of Commons in 1678 by the following resolution (9, House of Commons Journals, 509):—

"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 any 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.*"

This, as Lord Halsbury (Lord Chancellor in the late Tory Government) admitted, April 2nd, 1897, has been the law of Parliament ever since. As the Metropolitan (London) Radical Federation stated in their Manifesto issued in October, 1897, "The fact is, that the House of Lords can neither initiate *nor alter* a Money Bill. If they have any power at all in the matter, it is only that of total rejection. But this is a power which they have seldom ventured to exercise, and which is, moreover, bitterly resented by the House of Commons.

"When the Lords rejected the Paper Duties Bill of 1860, thus destroying the balance of the Budget for the year, the Commons declared that the power of the Lords to reject Bills relating to taxation was: 'justly regarded by this House with peculiar jealousy, as affecting the right of the Commons to grant the supplies, and to provide ways and means for the service of the year. That to guard for the future against an undue exercise of that power by the Lords, and to secure to the Commons their rightful control over taxation and supply, *this House has in its own hands the power so to impose and remit taxes, and to frame Bills of supply, that the right of the Commons as to the matter, manner, measure, and time may be maintained inviolate.*'—House of Commons Journals, vol. cxv. p. 360.

"Every Queen's (King's) Speech, every Finance Bill, bears witness in so many words to the fact that it is the business of the *Commons* House to impose, vary, or remit taxation. The Lords cannot, and dare not, *alter* a Budget. They dare not *reject* a Budget, for that would mean bringing the whole business of the country to a standstill."

As a matter of fact the Lords were quickly forced to pass the Paper Duties (Repeal) Bill; and in any case the Representative Chamber has but to sit tight and refuse to grant any supplies whatever to bring the "House of Hereditary Wreckers" to its knees.

It is clear, therefore, that Mr. Appleby is wrong when he states that "it was in the upper House that the fatal blow was delivered to the Scottish

Land Valuation Bill," and that he is also wrong when he assumes that it is necessary first to deal with the House of Lords. "When 'the man in the street' has recognized the importance of the land question," he says, "he will compel some Government to deal with the House of Lords." I would rather say that "when 'the man in the street' has recognized that the Lords are powerless as against financial reform he will compel the Government to deal with the land question in such fashion that the House of Landlords cannot block the way."

The fatal blow to the Scottish Land Valuation Bill was dealt in the house of its friends, was dealt, in fact, by its own parents and sponsors, by the inclusion in the Bill of Section 4 of Clause I., which expressly forbids rating or taxation on land values to be ascertained under the Bill. This the Solicitor General for Scotland, Mr. Alex. Ure, K.C., M.P., practically admitted in his speech at Winchburg on December 17 last. "The bill," he said, "is a Valuation Bill pure and simple. It does not deal with rating at all. It expressly forbids all rating. *If it had contained a single provision for rating the Bill would have been law at this Moment. The Peers would have had no right to throw it out.*"

Why, then, sir, the plain man would ask, was there no provision for rating in the Bill? Why did it "expressly forbid rating"? It was, to say the very least, a grave oversight; and this oversight ought to be remedied in the forthcoming session, when the Government should pass into law Land-Valuation-and-Rating Bills for England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. It is a curious fact that, as a rule, Ireland is left entirely out of account in considering the rating and taxation of land values, that no valuation Bill has been promised for Ireland, though, as a matter of fact, the rating and taxation of land values constitute the only true and effective remedy for the ills of that distressed country.

Mr. Ure's statement absolutely justifies my criticism of the Scottish Land Valuation Bill in the "Westminster Review" "Notes and Comments," August, 1907, page 217—"The Scottish Land Valuation Bill is to be passed this session," but Clause I., Section 4, of that Bill—"Until Parliament otherwise determines, no person shall be liable to be taxed or rated in respect of the entry prescribed by this Act"—is distinctly disquieting to the lay mind, and looks like a bad example of the art of 'How not to do it.' It suggests, in the first place, the possibility and the desirability of inserting in its stead a short clause empowering local bodies to rate land values when they please and to what extent they please as soon as those values have been ascertained; and, in the second place, one cannot but view with suspicion the insertion of words which expressly deprive the Valuation Bill of the character of a taxation Bill, and would seem to lay it open to attack by the House of Landlords."

To make such a mistake once is bad enough in all conscience. To make it a second time would be unpardonable, and I am urging our people over here to take determined steps to see to it that it does not occur again. As I said in the "Notes and Comments" already referred to, "Unless the Gov-

ernment make up for lost time in regard to this matter, unless before they again appeal to the country they are able to show a good record of achievement in respect of financial reforms which are at the same time great industrial and great social reforms, they may well find when too late, not merely that they have failed to secure a mandate against the Lord's veto, but that they have succeeded in betraying the country into the hands of the socialists and the Tariff Reformers."

It is clear that the Government ought this year to make their Bills both Valuation *and* Rating Bills, so that the Peers will have no right to throw them out. But, even if the Peers, greatly daring, should stretch their prerogatives so far as to throw out the Valuation-and-Rating Bill, which is hardly conceivable, the Government would still have another string to their bow, for they could carry out the valuation of the land administratively, and include the taxation of land values in the Budget; and the Peers, happily, are as powerless to interfere with the administration as they are to interfere with the Budget. Self-Government for the Transvaal and the Orange River Colonies, to which the Lords would never have given their consent, was given administratively, and the Lords had no voice in the matter.

Were the old Land Tax of 4/ in the £ levied, as Richard Cobden demonstrated more than sixty years ago it ought to be levied, on the true yearly value of the land, instead of upon the values of 1692 even then under-assessed, it would yield some £50,000,000, in place of the paltry £750,000 it now realizes; and here we have the basis for:

A REAL LIVE LIBERAL BUDGET.

(1) Levy the 4/- Land Tax on the values of to-day, and proportion the £50,000,000 so raised as under:—	
(2) Payment of Members and of Election Expenses.....	£1,000,000
(3) Repeal of All Taxes on Food.....	13,000,000
(4) Old Age Pensions.....	26,000,000
(5) Reduce Income Tax, Tobacco Duties, etc.....	9,250,000
Present yield of Land Tax..	750,000
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Total.....	£50,000,000

Such a tax on land values, moreover, as the experience of our Colonies has amply demonstrated, would force into use the millions of acres now held idle in the country districts, and would also open up for building of houses, mills, factories, shops, warehouses, etc., the millions of square yards of land held idle in our great centres of population and of trade and industry, and would thus solve the unemployed, the sweating, and the housing problems.

Let the Government but carry out such great financial, industrial, and social reforms as these *which they can carry in spite of the House of Lords*, and, then, having done what they can do if they will, they can with confidence appeal to the people to give them a mandate to make the Peers as powerless in regard to all other reforms as their lordships now are in respect of these financial reforms.