

## QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT

### GRANTS IN AID OF LOCAL RATES

Mr. HURD (on October 25th) asked the Prime Minister whether he is aware of the burden imposed upon the community by the heavy and progressive increase of local rates, especially for national services; and what steps the Government are taking to enact this session an equitable basis of division of local expenditure between the national and local exchequers in accordance with the Government's intention as explained to this House on July 17th, 1919?

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN: In the course of the last few years the Government have dealt with the grants for education and police on the lines recommended by the Departmental Committee of 1914, and provision was made in the Budget of this year for instituting a comprehensive system of grants for roads. In addition, since the Committee reported, large new grants have been introduced for several public health services, and the State has come to the assistance of local authorities on housing and land settlement to an extent never contemplated by the Committee. Apart from a possible consolidation of the numerous public health grants, the only considerable reforms proposed by the Committee in regard to grants for semi-national services, which have not been carried out, relate to the Poor-law service, and (as the hon. Member is aware) this matter is now engaging the attention of my right hon. Friend. The financial result of all these changes is that although the total amount raised by rates in England and Wales has approximately doubled since 1913-14, the Government grants in aid of local taxation services have trebled, and this over a period in which national taxation has increased sixfold. In view of these figures I can hold out little prospect of our being able (when we come to deal with the remaining questions of local taxation reform) to do much more in the way of relief of rates than to attempt an equitable re-adjustment of the existing Government subventions.

### LAND VALUES DUTIES (REPAYMENTS)

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN, in reply to Mr. A. Parkinson, stated on October 27th that up to October 16th last, the total repaid in respect of Land Values Duties under Section 57 of the Finance Act, 1920, amounted to £228,591. Income Tax is not deducted from the sums so refunded; nor is interest paid by the Government in respect of Land Values Duties which are being repaid.

### LAND REGISTRATION

Mr. RAFFAN asked (on November 1st) the Attorney-General whether, in view of the experience gained in connection with the Land Registry for the County of London, he will consider the desirability of extending a similar scheme to the whole country?

Sir G. HEWART: The Government have kept the Land Registry for the County of London under observation for many years, and in view of its great practical success they are, I understand, persuaded of the desirability of extending compulsory registration of title to the whole of England and Wales at the earliest possible moment. They are now prepared, if called on by county councils, in exercise of the powers conferred on them by the existing Land Transfer Acts, and subject to necessary administrative arrangements, to make orders establishing compulsory registration of title to any county or number of counties applying for it; and the Lord Chancellor's Real Property Bill contains provisions for accelerating such extension by dispensing with the necessity of applications by county councils and substituting a more systematic mode of procedure.

### "NOT AT PRESENT!"

Major BARNES asked (on November 4th) the Prime Minister whether, in view of the fact that the taxation of land values has been abandoned for the purpose of Imperial revenue, the Government will introduce a Bill for the rating of land values, so reducing the burden of local taxation?

The PRIME MINISTER: I cannot give any undertaking in regard to this matter at the present time.

### NO RATING COMMISSION

Mr. ORMSBY-GORE (on November 4th) asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the aggravation of the present anomalies in the incidence of local rates caused by the general though widely-varying increases in local rates, he will appoint forthwith a Royal Commission to examine and make recommendations regarding the relation of Imperial to local taxation

and expenditure, the basis of assessment, incidence, and method of collection of local taxation, the redress as far as possible of inequalities of burden between areas of low and high rateable value, and other matters cognate thereto.

The PRIME MINISTER: The Government are fully alive to the importance of the matter to which my hon. Friend refers. In view of the inquiries by the Royal Commission and Departmental Committee on Local Taxation, the latter of whom reported in 1914, I do not think there would be any advantage in the appointment of a further Royal Commission as suggested.

### MUNICIPAL DEBTS

Mr. MYERS asked (on November 10th) the Minister of Health if he will state the outstanding debt of the local authorities of England and Wales for the year ending March 31st, 1915, with the total sum paid upon interest charges thereon, with the corresponding figures for the last complete financial year in respect of which the returns are available?

Dr. ADDISON: At the end of the financial year, 1914-15, the total of the gross outstanding loan debts of the local authorities in England and Wales was £570,770,000. The total amount of interest paid by them during that year in respect of their loan debt was £19,220,000. The corresponding totals for the year 1917-18 were £550,520,000 and £20,100,000.

## LAND VALUE RATING

AND THE

## ABOLITION OF RATES ON BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS.

By A. W. MADSEN, B.Sc.

### CONTENTS.

- I. Explanation of Land Value Rating; Description and Condemnation of Present Rating System.
  - II. A Reply to Objections—Separation of Land Value; The Cost of Separate Valuation; Payment of Land Value Rate, Lessors and Lessees; Why the Rate cannot be shifted; The Municipal Agitation; Valuation and Rating in America; Alleged failure in Canada; The Sufficiency of Land Value.
  - III. The Example of the Dominions—Practical Progress in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, West Australia, New Zealand, Transvaal, Cape Province, Western Canada and Ontario.
  - IV. The Experience of Sydney, N.S.W.—Benefits of Land Value Rating, proved by official figures. Expansion of Sydney. Increase of £54,000,000 in value of Improvements in ten years. Tributes of Lord Mayor and Town Clerk. Mayors and Aldermen of Suburbs bear witness.
- Appendix I.—Table showing Land and Improvement Values, Area, Population and Rate Revenue in New York, Detroit, Boston, Cleveland, Pittsburg, Toronto, Winnipeg, Houston, Johannesburg, Wellington, N.Z., Christchurch, N.Z., Brisbane and Sydney.
- Appendix II.—Reprint of Report of City Treasurer of Birmingham on Land Value Rating in Sydney, N.S.W.

*A Pamphlet for the Student, the Speaker and the Writer. A concise, complete and up-to-date statement on the Rating of Land Values and the progress of the movement in the British Colonies.*

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