

### "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 sacred to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—*Henry George.*

### THE MATTER OF THE REVOLUTION.

THE war is on. We are in the thick of the first engagement. A month ago the Lords made an abrupt end of the Parliament elected in 1906. By a cunningly worded and deceptive resolution they rejected the measure which embodied the main work of Parliament for the year. The resolution—"That this House is not justified in giving its consent to this Bill until it has been submitted to the judgment of the country"—was intended to serve the double purpose of rejecting the Budget, and acting as an election cry. By carrying this resolution the Lords performed an absolutely unprecedented act in British politics, and in this act they destroyed Parliament itself. Their action was deliberate, and their motives are obvious. The Lords have always had a violent dislike to this Parliament. Nor are the causes of this dislike far to seek.

For almost twenty years previous to 1906 we had Tory Parliaments, whose home and foreign policies gave money and power to those who were already wealthy and powerful. With this long run these policies, like our express trains, had attained a high speed. They were carrying the Lords and their friends into rich and profitable fields at home and abroad. In trade organisation, in education, in rates and taxes, they had taken power and money from the mass of the people, and had bestowed them on a few privileged classes. In South Africa they gave the mine-owners free and full control of the land, and with the land everything that they wished. Besides, these policies were bringing other and richer prospects into view. Protection was in sight. A few more years would give us taxes on food—even the food of unemployed and underpaid men and women, whose children were already starving and being foster-fed by the State. This was the perfection and crown of these policies, the greatest transference of power and wealth from the many to the few.

After twenty years of such experiences, after the sanguine and eager outlook on such prospects, it was a rude shock to the Lords to be confronted not only with a policy which promised or threatened to restore some of their liberties and rights to the people at home and abroad, but a policy which actually threatened to "postpone indefinitely Tariff Reform," and in doing this attacked the very foundations of their privilege, power and unjustly acquired wealth. Let there be no mistake. These years of reaction have strengthened reactionary habits just as they have kindled strong, reactionary desires.

But we have to face something even more inveterate and deep-seated than this. The valuation of land, provided for in the Budget, strikes at the ownership of land—a system which has behind it the weight and force of centuries. In this system generations of landlords have been nursed and tutored. They resist its dissolution as they resist death, because they have been taught to identify themselves and their interests with it. Early in the history of this Parliament Lord Landsdowne gave evidence that he understood the meaning of an impartial valuation of land. Speaking in the House of Lords on the Scottish Smallholders Bill on August 14th, he revealed what he cherished in ownership: "Surely," he said, "what gives reality to ownership, what makes it a valuable and precious thing to many people, is that we have hitherto associated with it the power of guiding the destinies of the estate, of superintending its development and improvement, and, above all things, the right to select the persons to be associated with the proprietor in the cultivation of the soil." That Bill provided for the intervention of the Government in this matter of selecting the persons who should cultivate the land. It was rejected. It was rejected a second time in 1908. The Scottish Land Values Bill, containing the principle of valuation, was also twice rejected. The Budget contained the same principle, and it has been rejected.

But this power or right, which the Lords prize above all as "a valuable and precious thing," is more than the right of selecting the cultivators of the soil; it is the right of rejecting them. No more pernicious and fatal power was ever exercised by a class in the community. It is pernicious and fatal only because it is in the hands of a narrow class. The broadly expressive cartoons which represent the landowners enforcing their command, "Get off the Earth," describe the essential feature of landlordism, and landlordism has been cut to the quick by the land clauses of the Budget. The valuation of land is the first step towards depriving the landowners absolutely and finally of this power. The valuation seems a little thing, but in reality it is not. The fact that some hundreds of valuers are to be sent down into the parishes of the country to declare impartially the value of all land in these parishes is the most important step that has been projected in the history of any country. No pillar of cloud by day or pillar of fire by night was ever so calculated to guide a nation to conditions where justice and righteousness may co-operate with the sun and rain and dews of heaven, as well as with the coals of the earth, in producing unbroken and unshaken prosperity. The mere existence of such a valuation will challenge and inevitably destroy every partial valuation on which the relations of landowners and land users are based. Its existence will awake and engage the interest of people who ought to have something to say in the selection and rejection of cultivators of the soil. This right of selection and rejection will rest on the broadest and safest basis available—

the opinion and judgment of a Government valuer assisted and checked by the opinion and judgment of landlords and tenants everywhere. The perfected valuation will give a basis for an absolutely prosperous industry.

THE Government deserves the utmost credit for the manner in which it has pressed this principle towards legislative expression. The Lords have rejected the Budget. It is a splendid testimony to the Government's work. There is nothing in the spirit of this proceeding which is novel or strange to the Lords. The rejection of budgets is the business of their lives. The Budget is simply an honest, moderate and reasonable proposal on the part of the Government to further the development of the country, to encourage industry, to enrich the nation. The budgets framed every year by ten thousand people who wish to lease or purchase land are of exactly the same nature, but thousands of these budgets are rejected every year by the Lords, and enterprises which would prove of universal benefit are cast aside like the Budget, and families or business companies are shattered like Parliament. Once again a Government has got into close and certain touch with the people. The rejection of the Budget is a blow at freedom and progress on a national scale, but helpless individuals have suffered a million such blows from the same hands. All that is necessary is that the Government should identify its position clearly and unmistakably with the position of the people whose reasonable proposals have been vetoed and rejected ten thousand times, who have been browbeaten, insulted and hounded from the places where they played the part of men and women. "I remember poor little cottars in Ireland thrown out by hundreds and thousands on the bleak wayside, out of hovels they had built with their own hands, flung out ruthlessly by cruel landlords. What did the Peers do? They stood by and cheered and hounded on. I remember hundreds of Welsh farmers thrown out of the homes of their fathers. Why? Because they obeyed the dictates of their consciences." These words spoken by Mr. Lloyd George at Cardiff on December 21st will find an echo in every British breast, convicting and putting to shame even the most infatuated lord who cherishes the system which made such things possible, and firing every Liberal to end that system. This is the issue at stake. There is no larger issue than the very lives of the people. Let us rejoice that the untold humiliation and oppression which have been heaped on millions of patient and helpless individuals have at last fallen on the nation. "None have gone about to break Parliaments," said Sir John Elliot in 1629, "but in the end Parliaments have broken them." The end of the struggle with Charles Stuart proved terribly enough the truth of this statement. It will be so again. The Lords have clung with the infatuation of the Stuarts to their vicious claim, and they will share the fate of the Stuarts.

J. O.

## GARDEN CITIES.

We have received the following letter from Mr. Godfrey R. Benson, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Garden Cities and Town-Planning Association:—

108, Eaton Square, S.W.

To the Editor of LAND VALUES.

SIR,—

In your issue of November, 1909, you write, "The Garden City Association have been raising obstacles to the Budget since its introduction." I am sure that you must have made this statement under a misapprehension. The action of the Garden Cities and Town-Planning Association (formerly the Garden City Association) in regard to the Budget has consisted solely in private representations to Mr. Lloyd George which he has welcomed and has received with sympathetic and most careful consideration. The only amendments to the Budget which have been pressed by the Association have been proposed and carried by Mr. Lloyd George himself. I am quite aware that on a point of more immediate concern to their Company the Directors of First Garden City, Limited, have asked for other amendments without the same success. Our Association has not thought it right either to hamper or to render itself responsible for their action in regard to a particular point of great difficulty upon which they have almost unique practical experience. I am not, therefore, concerned either to dispute or to defend the opinion upon this point which they have since expressed. As an unpartisan Association we can express no opinion on the Budget as a whole. We are bound, however, to acknowledge that our own representations have been received with the utmost consideration, and we are entitled to repudiate most emphatically the charge that we "have been raising obstacles to the Budget since its introduction."

Yours truly,

GODFREY R. BENSON.

An answer to Mr. Benson's letter is contained in the memorandum issued by the Secretary (Mr. Harold Craske) of the First Garden City, Limited, to his shareholders, dated October 15th, 1909. The following is a quotation from the memorandum:—

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,—

VERY URGENT.

THE BUDGET AND FIRST GARDEN CITY

I am instructed to call your serious attention to the effect which the Land Clauses of the Budget, as at present drawn, will have upon First Garden City Ltd.

This Company is, of course, non-political, and different members of its Board are of different opinions as to the taxation of site values and the unearned increment of land. They, however, unanimously agree that the Budget as at present drawn will tax First Garden City Ltd. (and indeed many other land developers) very heavily, not on unearned increment but upon the results of its own work and expenditure. This is, of course, a distinct violation of the declarations which have been repeatedly made on behalf of the Government.

The net result will be that the Budget will tax the Company, as nearly as it can be calculated, to the extent of about £8,000 during the next five years; this will, it is feared, make it extremely unlikely that the Company can show any profit whatever during those years.