

NEWS—FOREIGN.

GREAT BRITAIN.

THE PASSING OF THE AUTOCRATIC POWER
OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

The month of August, 1911, will be recorded as one of the most important and memorable periods in the political history of Great Britain. It was on the 10th of this month that the Parliament Bill passed its third reading in the House of Lords and it was on the 8th that, receiving the Royal assent, it became a part of the constitutional law of the country. The placing of this measure upon the Statute Book marks the greatest achievement towards full political liberty in Great Britain yet accomplished. As a fighting factor in politics the House of Lords have lost their "handicap allowance" and now must toe the line at "scratch."

What the Parliament Bill really achieves may be summarised as follows: (a) That matters of Finance should be unconditionally and solely under the control of the Commons, (b) That Bills which pass the Commons in three successive sessions in Parliament, shall become law, notwithstanding the opposition of the Lords, and (c) That the duration of any one Parliament shall be limited to five years (instead of seven years).

It is interesting to trace the course of the political struggle between the Lords and the democratic forces. In 1884 John Bright outlined the Liberal policy for the abolition of the Lords' absolute veto, and in 1895, Gladstone in his last speech in the House of Commons, stated the vital necessity for the accomplishment of that policy. After the General Election of 1906, when the Liberals were returned by a majority of 132 over all other parties, the issue between the two forces, the one for Democratic Government, the other for government by the Privileged Interests, was much clearer cut, because of the destruction in December, 1906, of the Plural Voting and Education Bills. In 1907 the then Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, introduced into the House of Commons a Veto Resolution, upon similar

lines to the Parliament Bill, which was carried by a majority of 285. Taking no heed of this warning the Lords proceeded in their old way and but two months after the passing of this resolution, two Scottish Land Bills sent up by the Commons were destroyed. Again sent up by the Commons in the following year (1908) these Bills met a like fate, together with the Licensing Bill.

The crisis of the struggle was reached in November, 1909, when ignoring all Constitutional custom, which from time immemorial had assigned to the Commons absolute control over Finance, the Lords, on the advice of Lord Lansdowne, the Tory leader in that assembly, rejected the Finance Bill. It has been admitted on all sides that the Land Clauses of this Budget, providing for a valuation of all land in the Kingdom, were responsible for the action of the Lords. As Mr. Lloyd George so aptly remarked; "the ark of the covenant—the land, had been touched", and the House of Lords, making unwonted use of their powers arbitrarily refused to pass the measure. The Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, on behalf of the Government, refused to accept this latest oppression, and decided to appeal to the country. The result at the General Election of January, 1910, was that the Government was returned to power with a majority of 124 pledged to deal with the question. The Lords then took the Budget without a murmur. During March and April the Government's Veto Resolution, on which the Parliament Bill was based, was carried by large majorities, and on April 14th the Bill was introduced in the House of Commons. During the discussion on the Bill, the widely and deeply lamented death of King Edward in May put an end to all controversial politics for a time.

In June a conference between the two parties was convened to see if a settlement could not be arranged amicably, but in November it was announced that it had reached no definite agreement. Mr. Asquith thereupon decided to once more appeal to the country for an unmistakable mandate from the electors. It has since transpired that there was a conditional agreement between the King and the

Cabinet that in event of the Government securing an "adequate" (unmistakable) majority and of the Lords mutilating or rejecting the Parliament Bill, the King would consent to the creation of a sufficient number of Peers to ensure the passing of the Bill in the Lords. At the subsequent General Election in December, 1910, the Government was returned with a majority of 126. On their return to Parliamentary activities in February, 1911 the Government at once proceeded with the Parliament Bill, and it passed the final stages in the House of Commons on May 15th by a majority of 121. The Bill was discussed in the House of Lords during June and July, and on July 20th was passed, so amended that its character was totally altered. Mr. Asquith then announced that he had secured guarantees from the King for the creation of a sufficient number of Peers to ensure the passage of the Bill. On August 8th the House of Commons rejected the whole of the Lords' amendments and returned the original Bill to the House of Lords. This time the Lords were in a quandary as to their course of action. A section known as the "die-hards" or "last ditchers" were for again rejecting the Bill and "damning the consequences", to use Lord Milner's now famous expression. The majority of Tory Peers, however, resolved to abstain from voting on the Bill. The situation became quite exciting and the air in the political world during the final discussion was distinctly "electric." In consequence of the avowed intention of the "die-hards" to vote against the Bill, the final passing of the Bill was a matter for speculation right up to the announcement of the vote on the night of August 10th. A number of Union Peers voted with the Government in order to outflank the "die-hards," and the Bill was passed by a majority of 17, the figures being: 131 for, 114 against. On August 18th the King gave the Royal Assent to the measure and thus was set the seal to one of the greatest victories of Democracy of all times.

The Parliament Act is a measure of vital and lasting importance, not so much for what it accomplishes as for what it makes possible of accomplishment. All the House of Lords can now do with Democratic

measures is to delay their progress, and it is admitted by many progressive minds that this is not an undesirable thing, as it obviates the possibility of hasty, ill-considered legislation.

Having secured this measure of political liberty the path is now open for the people of Britain to secure substantial reforms and real measures of economic liberty. They now have the opportunity of dealing with land monopoly, the cause of poverty and unemployment. Signs are not wanting that they will not neglect their opportunities and in the near future we may expect the passing of a substantial measure of land reform.

THE STRIKES.

During the months of July and August a wave of intense industrial unrest swept over Great Britain. From one end of the kingdom to the other, day by day, came the news of strikes, and threats of strikes. It would have been a gigantic task to have followed all the details and incidents. It is sufficient to say that there was scarcely a town unaffected, or a trade exempt.

In the majority of cases the workers have been successful in securing increases of pay or easier conditions of labor. It is a great pity that such dearly won concessions will not be permanently retained. For under our present land system the workers cannot prevent the inexorable rise of rent. Until we change this system it is into rent that all or any advantages secured for labor must be translated. For a time, perhaps, the workers will enjoy the advantages they have secured, but it is inevitable that the power of landlordism, unless destroyed, will impoverish them in the future as it has in the past.

The most important feature of this period of unrest has been the revelation in the newspapers, day by day, of the low wages and hard conditions to which the great mass of the workers are subject. It will be impossible now for any serious person to deny that labor in this country is underpaid and overworked. The injustice of the prevailing distribution of wealth has been manifested in a strikingly vivid and convincing manner. That this will do much good there can be no doubt. In

reporting the origin and progress of the various disputes the newspapers have been obliged to state the case from all positions. Some of the facts that stand out above all others are that the women workers of Bermondsey (little worse off, if any, than the majority of women workers) are condemned to a life of endless toil, working 60 hours per week for miserable pittance of from 5 to 10 shillings per week; the average wages of engineers' laborers are from 15 to 17 shillings per week; there are 100,000 railway workers who get less than 21 shillings per week, and out of 700,000 railway employees only 11% get more than 30 shillings per week. And so we go could on. One long, pitiful tale of hopeless grinding poverty and oppression.

THE GLASGOW CONFERENCE.

The latest and most successful conference to promote the Taxation of land Values yet held in any country assembled in Glasgow, September 9th to 12th. Convened under the joint auspices of the United Committee and the Scottish League for the taxation of land values, the conference was attended by about 600 delegates from over 200 town and parish councils and other organized bodies. Among the many leading councils sending delegates were the Glasgow, Dublin, Paisley, Salford and Swansea Town Councils. The conference proper was held in the Glasgow National Exhibition and occupied two days, the 11th and 12th of September, but functions were carried out by the members and friends of the Land Values Leagues on the 9th and 10th. The first of these, held in the Charing Cross Halls, Glasgow, on Saturday evening the 9th, was a social gathering of the faithful, at which Mr. John Paul and his newly-wedded bride were the guests of the evening. A most enjoyable and successful evening was spent during which, on behalf of a great number of Single Taxers, presents of a fine timepiece and a cheque were presented to Mr. Paul, in celebration of his marriage, and as a mark of the esteem and love which he has won from Single Taxers the world over by his self-sacrificing devotion to the cause, his wonderful abilities and his charming personality.

On Sunday the 10th a Henry George Commemoration meeting was held in the afternoon at the Charing Cross Halls. It was a most successful meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Alex. MacKendrick, President of the Scottish League. The chairman delivered a masterly address, which will later be published, and many fine speeches were delivered by prominent Single Taxers.

The conference proper opened in the concert hall of the Scottish National Exhibition on Monday morning the 11th. Ex-Bailie Peter Burt, of Glasgow, occupied the Chair, and the opening speech was made by the Lord Advocate, the Rt. Hon. Alex. Ure, K. C., M. P., who moved a resolution to the effect that in view of the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to the valuation of land, apart from improvements, being the necessary basis for the reform of local taxation, they urge the Government to hasten the completion of the Budget Valuation and make it public, so that at the earliest possible moment the rating authorities of the country might be granted the power they had demanded of adopting land values as the standard of local rating. Following a fine speech by the Lord Advocate, Dr. Dundas White, M. P., seconded in a masterly address. A "watering down" amendment put forward by a delegate was defeated and the resolution carried. A second resolution endorsing the Land and Taxation Memorial signed by 173 M. P.'s recently presented to the Government and urging an early Budget tax on all land values was moved by Mr. J. C. Wedgwood, M. P. During the discussion of this resolution much dissatisfaction was evinced at the delay in the completion of the Budget valuation, and Mr. R. L. Outhwaite moved an addition "urging the Government to levy a Budget tax on all land values forthwith on the owner's valuation." After a long discussion the conference was adjourned to the following day.

On Tuesday the 12th the conference was resumed, with Mr. Alex. McKendrick in the Chair. Mr. Outhwaite withdrew his amendment of the previous day in order to submit a further resolution, and the second resolution was then passed unanimously.

Mr. Outhwaite then moved his new resolution which voiced the concern of the conference at the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the valuation would not be completed until 1914, and urged the Land Value Group in the House of Commons to press for the expedition of the valuation, and pledged the conference to resist strenuously any attempt to readjust the relations of Imperial and Local Finance on any other than a land value basis, and expressing the opinion that if the Budget valuation could not be hurried, other measures should be adopted. Seconded by Mr. C. E. Price M. P., the resolution was carried unanimously.

The last resolution, moved by Mr. Joseph Fels, seconded by Mr. P. W. Raffan M. P., expressed the conviction of the conference that bad housing, unemployment, and other social evils were directly traceable to land monopoly and demanded the exemption of all improvements from taxation and the substitution of a direct tax on all land values. A modifying amendment was defeated by a large majority and the resolution carried.

The conference was attended by delegates from all parts of the United Kingdom, and from Canada, United States, Australia, Norway, France and Sweden. It was remarkable for the earnest and determined attitude of the delegates and showed that phenomenal progress has been made by the movement in Great Britain. It will in all probability have far reaching and influential results, among which we may see a strong revival of the agitation among the municipalities for powers to rate on land values. One feature of the conference was the clear and convincing speeches delivered by those who addressed the conference, prominent among them that of Mr. Joseph Fels, and the informing discussions that took place.—F. SKIRROW.

LONDON, ENGLAND.

TAXING land values will break the corner in land, and force land into use. In that way the opportunities to produce wealth will greatly increase and wages rise.—*Progress*, Melbourne, Aus.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN NOTES.

The League intends doing special work in the direction of emphasizing the Free Trade aspect of the Single Tax movement. There is a great outcry here about the increased cost of living. As a result of this increase in the prices of commodities, the workers are demanding increased rates of pay for their services. In consequence of this, there has been many industrial disturbances and strikes, which have dislocated trade and industry. The present is therefore a very favorable time to show the workers that all artificial means of raising wages are bound to fail. The increase in wages can only add to the cost of production, and this increase is transferred to the consumer every time. At present the duties on the necessities of life average nearly 30 per cent., and only by the removal of those duties can conditions be bettered. The workers in the Sugar Industry are now out on strike for higher pay. The Colonial Sugar Refining Co. has practically a monopoly of the Australian market and are protected by a duty of £6 per ton. Despite this fact, the workers in the cane field have miserable conditions. Because they have refused any longer to be slaves, the Company has advanced the price of sugar another £1 per ton. They are now getting £22 per ton, whereas under free trade conditions, Java sugar could be sold here for £15 per ton. A bounty is also paid on all sugar grown by white labor; and this year £579,000 will be paid in this direction. There are 216,000 tons of sugar consumed here yearly, so that the position is as follows:

£6 Duty on 216,000 Tons.....	£1,296,000
Increase £1 per Ton.....	216,000
Bounty paid.....	579,000
	£2,091,000

or equivalent to approximately 8s. per head—man, woman, and child—in the Commonwealth each year, paid for sugar over and above what should be a fair price. The Company further exports sugar to South Africa, and sells it there for £13 a ton. Is it any wonder that the Federal Attorney General threatens to repeal the