

# ELECTION SUPPLEMENT TO THE NEW AGE

VOL. VI. No. 11.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 1910.

## THE ISSUES OF THE FIGHT.

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Clear the way, my lords and lackeys! you have had your day.  
Here you have your answer—England's yea against your nay.  
Long enough your House has held you: up, and clear the way!  
SWINBURNE.

### Retrospective.

SINCE the year of the great Reform Bill, when the Liberals assumed power with the largest majority ever known, the political antagonisms of the British people have been manifested at no fewer than seventeen general elections. There has been a certain swinging of the pendulum, but by no means such extended swinging as to have enabled the Tories to divide the enjoyment of the "sweets of office" equally with the Liberals. At those seventeen elections—or eighteen, if we count the Reform Bill fight itself as one—the Tories have triumphed only six times; during more than half a century, between the passing of the Reform Bill and the destruction of the first Home Rule Bill, they had but seventeen years of power. Little historical warrant exists, therefore, for the common belief in the inevitability and regularity of the sweep of the pendulum, for, although the country tends to grow weary of every Government with the lapse of time, its weariness has not always developed into a hatred fierce enough to sweep a Government away. Designating the Liberals and Tories by the colour-names of the Monte Carlo roulette-tables, we can record a run of three on red from 1832 to 1841, a run of four on red from 1857 to 1868, a run of two on red in 1880 and 1885, and a run of two on black in 1895 and 1900. The rigid pendulum theory is still further weakened by consideration of the fact that the Liberals managed to return from the country with increased majorities in 1865, 1868, and 1885. Thus it would appear that the current of political feeling, subject as it is to variability sometimes marked and sometimes almost negligible, cannot be accurately described as an alternating current.

### 1906-1909.

I have described the Liberal majority of 1832 as the largest ever known, but the figure then attained—370—was only slightly in excess of that which landed "C.B." in the Premiership in 1906. It is true that "C.B.'s" nominal majority of 354 could only be commanded on occasions when Labour and Irish Nationalism were amicably disposed, but even their opposition could only reduce his majority to 128, or, if the miners also deserted him, to 88. To all intents and purposes, the Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith Cabinets have been in a position to carry out their own sweet wills in the House of Commons without any strenuous vigilance on the part of the "whips," and it is an amusing commentary on the action of the House of Lords in inviting a dissolution that the election portents point to one great change in the position of affairs, namely, the

establishment of the Labour and Irish Parties as the depositaries of the balance of power. Quite unjustifiably the reactionaries have twitted the Government with its dependence upon Labour and Irish support; as a matter of fact, it has been independent of that support during the four years. Hitherto the Labour men and Irishmen have not been masters of the situation; the House of Lords has seen to it that they shall be in the future. Can it be that Lords Rosebery and Cromer and St. Aldwyn and Balfour of Burleigh, politicians not destitute of shrewdness, had an inkling of the fact that the destinies of the British Empire were about to hang upon the "yea" or "nay" of Mr. Henderson and Mr. Redmond? Did their long experience warn them to avoid the snare into which the more youthful Curzons and Milners tumbled in their wild resolve to risk all and damn the consequences?

### The By-elections.

From one point of view, the most interesting feature of the by-elections since 1906 has been the capture of two seats by the Labour Party and of one by an independent Socialist, but, if our purpose is to discover the relative chances of Asquith and Balfour in the coming fight, we can confine our attention to the gains secured by the Opposition. Nearly a hundred by-elections have taken place since the tidal wave of 1906, and 14 per cent. of the constituencies have undergone the card-shuffling process. What profit has that shuffling brought to the Tories? In the first place, they have captured twelve seats, four of which victories were apparently due to the diversion of votes formerly cast for the Radical to a Labour candidate. In passing, we may remind readers that the three-cornered variety of contest is not to affect this month's elections in the way in which it has affected the by-elections. In the second place, the Tories have captured two of the 1906 Liberal members, Major Leslie Renton and Lieutenant Bellairs, a natural corollary of the axiom that militarists must gravitate to the most reactionary level they can find. There have been, however, four secessions from the Tory side to the Radical side, so that the total gain to Mr. Balfour's Party stands at fourteen less four, or ten seats in the four years. If the general election reproduce for the 670 seats exactly the same proportion of Tory wins as the by-elections have shown, Mr. Balfour will return with 231 supporters, and Mr. Asquith will take office with a majority of 208, including the Labour men and the Irish. As, however, the Irish by-elections have had no effect upon the relative strength of the two big parties, we can form a more accurate estimate by leaving them out of account.

In England, Wales, and Scotland, the by-elections were seventy-four, and the Tory gains therein must still be counted as ten. That proportion of wins extended to the 567 non-Irish constituencies would give Mr. Balfour 235 supporters, and Mr. Asquith's majority would be exactly 200. If we credit Tariffites with about sixty additional gains as a reward for vast expenditure of cash and lavish promises of work for the workless, we can finally forecast a Radical coalition majority of between 80 and 100.

### The Radical Programme.

There have been many general elections in the past when the issues were complicated and obscure; the historian of the future will be able to say that the general election of 1910 was fought out upon issues that were small in number and clearly defined. Mr. Asquith has asked the people to indicate their views on the following main issues:—The absolute control of the House of Commons over finance, the maintenance of Free Trade, and the limitation of the legislative veto of the House of Lords. If he has his way, electors will vote strictly in accordance with their opinions upon those questions, and the result of the election, if favourable to his party, will be declared by him to have settled those problems. He will doubtless apply the term "mandate" to the decision in so far as those three matters are concerned, and we are entitled to regard other issues as subordinate. He cannot, therefore, claim in the future that the election was fought out on Welsh Disestablishment, Education, or Home Rule; he cannot say that the electors, by sending him back to office, have authorised him to bring in another Licensing Bill, nor can he quote the result as an endorsement of his hostility to woman suffrage. At the same time, many voters are likely to be influenced by his references at the Albert Hall on December 10 to his programme of future bills. THE NEW AGE has repeatedly protested against the theory that a Government can possibly obtain mandates in a wholesale fashion from such a source as a general election, and has maintained, on the other hand, that it is a Government's duty to introduce social reforms whenever it can, without stopping to consider whether such reforms have been in the minds of the electors at the country's pollings. In any case, we are in a position to look forward to one measure of social reform as the outcome of a Radical victory. Taxes on the accumulations of the rich are to be used, not only for pensions for the old people, but also as a help to the workman when he is confronted with the evils of sickness or unemployment. This measure, known under the abbreviated title of "unemployed insurance," constitutes part of what Mr. Asquith has foreshadowed as the second chapter of his new volume of social legislation.

### The Tory Programme.

The Tories, in their turn, have attempted to pose the issues of the election in a simple form. They are asking the people to signify by their votes that they approve of the action of the House of Lords with regard to the Finance Bill, that they regard that bill as iniquitous, and that they desire the introduction of Tariff Reform. The Tories are understood to promise to reform the Poor Law, and a section of the party has endeavoured on the eve of the elections to draft a programme of land reform, consisting mainly of the encouragement of peasant proprietorship. We have no reason to believe that Mr. F. E. Smith speaks with the authority of a leader, but we note in passing that he has recently laid it down that an overwhelming case can be made out for the municipal taxation of undeveloped land in urban areas. He thinks it unreasonable that land should be assessed to the rates at its agricultural value and that the purchaser should, nevertheless, have to pay, not 25, but 250, or even 500 years' purchase for it. This dictum of the Tory platform orator may be taken to signify that the landowners in the big towns regard it inevitable that their unused land will be taxed, and believe it to be the wisest policy to get the tax levied by the local

authority, so that the proceeds may be spent locally, and come back to benefit them in a way that State-collected taxes would not.

### The Labour Programme.

Finally, we have the election programme of the Labour Party. As in the case of the two older parties, this is summed up in a few words, for an election programme must be short to catch the eye of the voter, although in the background there may be a well-defined programme large enough to fill a sixteen-page pamphlet. Seeing that the text of the Labour Party's manifesto appears on another page, it is only necessary here to call attention to the fact that it puts first and foremost the vital question of the future rulers of the country. Are the peers or the people to decide what taxes are to be paid, by whom they are to be paid, and for what purpose they are to be paid? As a brief summary of the legislative measures for which it will work, the Labour Party specifies the "right to work" proposal, the breaking up of the Poor Law, the extension of old age pensions, and the sweeping away of restrictions on the franchise. The Fabian Society, which is a constituent part of the Labour Party, has also issued a manifesto (reprinted elsewhere in this issue), in which it urges its members to do their utmost to ensure the election of duly-accredited Labour and Socialist candidates, and in constituencies not possessing such candidates to cast their votes with the primary aim of defeating the pretensions of the House of Lords. It is clear that the Fabians think that all the proposals put forward in their tracts will be lost sight of if the country's attention is to be focussed for years to come on a struggle between the two Houses of Parliament. "Finish off the Lords first, and then back to business," is the Fabian executive's advice to the British elector.

### Labour and Socialist Candidates.

In the old days for every workman who stood for Parliament there were fifty landlord candidates and fifty employers to keep him company. Those days are gone for ever; the disparity in numbers gets less glaring with every election. First of all, the miners, who set a fine example in organisation to the other trades, are now contesting 26 seats, with a good prospect of winning two-thirds of them. The Independent Labour Party has 14 candidates in the field, and there are 38 others standing under the auspices of the Labour Party, making the total muster of the Labour Party candidates 78. Most of the Labour M.P.'s will retain their seats without difficulty; even the Tory Press admits their local popularity. In a few cases the fight will be tough, notably in one of the Wolverhampton divisions, where Mr. T. F. Richards, with a majority of only 168 last time, is trying to ward off the attack of a wealthy capitalist. The Social Democratic Party is concentrating its energies on a dozen candidatures, of which the most interesting is Mr. Hyndman's at Burnley. His poll in 1906 was 4,932, as against 5,288 for the Radical and 4,964 for the Tory, Mr. Maddison's majority being thus 324 over the Tory. That 324 Burnley voters have by now drifted away from Mr. Maddison is very probable. Has the Tory got them or have they been converted to Socialism since 1906?

### Other Candidates.

Amongst the various interests represented by the 1,400 candidates, the largest section is that of the employers, including directors of railways and other companies. Next come lawyers, nearly a hundred. Military officers—an interminable array of colonels and majors—number 86. Science is almost unrepresented, save in one department—medicine; there are 24 doctors before the constituencies. Literature is represented by Mr. Belloc, Sir Gilbert Parker, and one or two others, whilst journalism puts a fairly strong contingent in the field, headed by "Tay Pay." There are 224 candidates who belong to motoring organisations, a fact that leads one to hope that the Government's plans for setting the unemployed on to schemes for the improvement of the main roads will receive warm encouragement.

### Supporting Women Suffrage.

Information is being collected by the Women Suffrage Societies as to the opinions held by candidates. Out of thirty-nine London candidates whose replies had been received up to Saturday last, twenty-nine declared themselves in favour of the extension of the franchise to women, and nineteen of the twenty-nine stated that they were advocating that reform in their election addresses. Five replies were ambiguous, and five showed frank hostility. Taking the country as a whole, the proportion of favourable replies is not up to the London standard; a rough calculation shows that out of 260 replies received 100 are from supporters of "votes for women," whilst 100 are doubtful and 60 antagonistic. A moment's reflection will convince the student of these figures that they are subject to one particular kind of discount, for the candidates who have delayed their replies are probably less friendly to the cause than those whose courtesy or courage has prompted immediate confessions of faith.

### Questions for Candidates.

Many societies besides those concerned with the franchise are, of course, catechising candidates. Antivivisectionists and other sections of humanitarians are busy, and will learn once more that professions of friendliness before the contest afford no guarantee of legislative achievement after it. Teetotal organisers are still more active than the humanitarians; their "questions" have been sufficiently drastic to scare the unhappy recipients, and not a few candidates who have pledged themselves to further interference with the little vices and bad habits of the people are about to lose their seats through that particular temerity. The most aggressive of the Puritan candidates are, of course, the Nonconformists, who number about 180, as far as the information as yet ascertained shows. Questions for candidates have also been issued by the National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law. The questions deal with the following subjects:—The unemployed, children of school age, the sick and infirm, the mentally defective, and the aged. Of the twenty-seven questions the most important is one in general terms, which asks the would-be M.P. if he favours the idea that the State should get to work to prevent the occurrence of destitution and not merely relieve it when it has occurred, and thus that the work must be undertaken not by any Poor Law or "Destitution" Authority, whatever its designation—seeing that this can never intervene until destitution has occurred—but by the various preventive authorities already in existence. The strongest supporters of this National Committee are, of course, the seventeen candidates belonging to the Fabian Society, of whom twelve are standing under the auspices of the Labour Party, whilst five are Radicals.

### The New Ministry.

Just as sheep will rush through a gap made in a hedge by one of their number, so the unconvinced element in the electorate may pass over in a body to the reactionary side as the result of a few Radical disasters in the first polls. Disregarding the possibility of such a catastrophe and assuming that another Asquith Ministry will be formed with a majority at its back about 250 less than last time, what changes are we to expect in the *personnel* of that Ministry? Mr. Gladstone and Lord Aberdeen are going out, to be followed, let us hope, by Lord Wolverhampton, whose services of late have not been of a nature to warrant his retention in office. Lord Morley is well over seventy, and must be contemplating withdrawal to the study; he might there find time to write his reminiscences of high politics and modern literature. Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Haldane will return to their present offices, and for some of the others there will be a redistribution of seats. In the outer Ministry promotion of some kind is believed to await Dr. Macnamara and Mr. C. E. Hobhouse, whilst Mr. F. D. Acland, the Financial Secretary to the War Office, is likely to be one of the slain in the coming contest. Sir Henry

Norman is provided for; his work for the Budget has earned for him the new post of Assistant Postmaster-General. One or two vacancies will have to be filled in the less important posts, as their holders are moved up, and Mr. Montagu, who has been the Premier's private secretary, is mentioned as a possible addition.

### For the First Session.

Within a few days of the assembling of Parliament the Budget will be sent to the Lords and passed by them, the Commons almost simultaneously having under its consideration the steps to be taken to suppress all future interference with finance on the part of the Upper House. Obviously the chief political problem then remaining will be that of the legislative veto of the Lords, and it is to be devoutly hoped that the House of Commons will at least stick out for the limiting of the veto to one Parliament only, if it cannot see its way to anything more drastic. Insurance against unemployment is to be the principal measure of social reform brought forward. Our Welsh friends will clamour for their Disestablishment Bill, but the Government may expect to lose by-elections promptly if it wastes valuable time over the religious squabbles of the Principality. Whatever may be the grievances of the Welsh Nonconformists, the fact remains that the working classes of this country consider their own economic grievances as more important. They are not about to vote Radical for the sake of the beautiful eyes of the Dissenters of Wales, and they will expect the first legislation of the new Parliament to be concerned with the interests of the masses generally, and not with the interests of a section.

### Education and Licensing.

Equally true is it that the vast majority of the nation have no desire that our legislators should fritter away their energies on Education Bills and Licensing Bills of the type of those introduced since 1906. Far and away the best point about those Bills was the fact that they failed to get upon the statute-book, and cannot, therefore, bring the Tories back into power, as would have happened if the House of Lords had had the astuteness to let the country experience their unworkable absurdities and coercive restrictions. In connection with one of those measures, the Radicals ought to understand by now that the country is quite prepared to see the arrogance of the monopolist brewers curbed, but that it expects its own interests as consumers of beer to be remembered. The proposal, for instance, that a British citizen should be compelled to walk six miles on a Sunday morning as the qualification for drinking a half-pint of beer could only be dealt with by turning the Government out or getting the beer in overnight.

### What we Want.

Forecasting the future, it is only too obvious that we have to distinguish between what we want and what we shall get. On the social side, we want the Right to Work Bill, the removal of the pauper disqualification from the claims to Old Age Pensions, the extension of the pensions to veterans of sixty-five, and the wider establishment of the minimum wage on the lines of the Trade Boards Act of last year. We want more Eight Hours Day legislation. We want the abolition of the poor law system as it exists to-day and the adoption of scientific methods of treating the causes that produce poverty. On the political side, Payment of Members is now more urgently called for than before the House of Lords' decision in the Osborne case. As for the Reform Bill promised by Mr. Asquith, its chances are likely to be rendered six years more remote by the coming election, for it is only on the eve of another election that Mr. Asquith's promise will fall due to be kept. There remains the question of future taxation—taxation after the present Budget. That question need not be discussed here; before the 1910 Budget is introduced in April next, THE NEW AGE will draft a People's Budget and endeavour to give its readers some justification for its belief that the country is prepared to demand, amongst other things, a breakfast-table free from taxed food.

## Fabian Election Manifesto.

The Executive Committee think it unnecessary to issue any lengthy election manifesto. It desires chiefly to warn Fabians against underrating the importance of the issue raised by the action of the House of Lords. It may justly be claimed by the Socialists that they have steadily refused to be misled by idle talk about what is and what is not constitutional, and have recognised that the only real constitution is the sum of the powers that are effectively exercised in the country. If the House of Lords boldly refuses supply and compels a dissolution, and the country, at the election, supports the House of Lords, that support will make the action of the Lords constitutional in spite of all paper denunciations by the defeated party. Until the labourers began, in 1885, to be accorded the vote, no newspaper or party in England questioned the permanency of our representative institutions or the supremacy of the House of Commons. Since that date the Unionist and Tariff Reform Press has been creeping steadily towards a reopening of the question; and since the last general election and the appearance in the House of a growing Labour Party, the advocacy of a return to oligarchy and autocratic government has become quite frank and fashionable. A movement towards "As you were before 1832" is now in full swing; and the action of the Lords in rejecting the Budget is really a feeler to find out how far it is safe to break back in that direction. If the move succeeds—if there is not an unmistakable rally to the defence of democracy and popular representative government—the reaction will be so emboldened that Socialism may presently be swept out of mind by the need for defending, not only the franchise gained in 1867 and 1885, but even the common liberties won in 1688 by the Whig revolution. The present democratic grievance of the exclusion from the franchise of all women and one-third of all the men, against which we protested in our Tract No. 14, "The New Reform Bill," will be forgotten in the presence of the threatened transfer of Parliamentary power from the popularly elected House of Commons to a House of Lords, in which even the old hereditary element will be swamped by the successful adventurers of modern capitalism.

It is therefore actually more important to Socialists than to the Liberals themselves that this election should be an overwhelming defeat for the House of Lords. All the other issues are false issues. For instance, there is no logical connection between the taxation of land values and Free Trade, nor between Tariff Reform and the exemption from adequate taxation of rent and other unearned incomes. But the issue between democratic government by the Commons and the oligarchical government of the Lords, as the centre of the State power, is a true issue, straight and unmistakable. No sane person could be in favour of both.

Our conclusion is that the paramount duty of every member is to work hard for the defeat of the claim now set up by the Peers and for the rejection of every candidate who supports that claim. Where a duly accredited Labour or Socialist candidate is in the field we should, of course, do our utmost to ensure his election. Where no such candidate is standing, the elector should cast his vote with the primary aim of defeating the pretensions of the House of Lords. In short, what we have everywhere to do is to VOTE AGAINST THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

## Labour Party Manifesto.

A General Election has been forced upon the country by the action of the House of Lords rejecting the Budget.

The great question you are asked to decide is whether the Peers or the People are to rule this country.

Each session since the last General Election, important Bills, upon which the House of Commons had spent much time, have been mutilated or destroyed by the House of Lords, an irresponsible body which represents nothing but its own class interests. Not content with this, they now claim the right to decide what taxes shall be paid, upon whom they shall be levied, and for what purpose they shall be spent. They also claim to dictate the date at which Parliament shall be dissolved.

The time has come to put an end to their power to override the will of the Commons.

The country has allowed landowners to pocket millions of pounds every year in the shape of unearned increment, and yet they object to pay a small tax upon what, in justice, should belong to the State. They wish at all costs to preserve their power to plunder the people.

The Labour Party welcomes this opportunity to prove that the feudal age is past and that the people are no longer willing to live on the sufferance of the Lords.

The issues you have to decide are simple. Our present system of land ownership has devastated our countryside, has imposed heavy burdens upon our industries, has cramped the development of our towns, and has crippled capital and impoverished labour.

### THE LORDS MUST GO.

At this crisis the Labour Party merits your support. It comes with great achievements and with a determination to do much more.

In 1906 it pledged itself to restore to Trade Unions the same liberty as capital enjoyed during trade disputes. That pledge has been fulfilled. It pledged itself to insist upon Old-Age Pensions. That pledge has been fulfilled. It pledged itself to help drastic Housing Reform. That pledge has been fulfilled. It pledged itself to work for the relief of the burdens on persons of small or moderate means by the taxation of unearned incomes and land values. That pledge has been fulfilled.

It pledged itself to pay special attention to the unemployed, and to compel any and every Government to contribute to the solution of this problem. That pledge has been fulfilled.

The experience of the last four years has demonstrated the value of the Labour Party acting on independent lines. There still remain many problems to be solved.

The right to work has still to be won, but is now well within the range of practical politics.

The Poor Law must be broken up and pauperism abolished.

Old Age Pensions must be extended and increased on their present non-contributory basis.

Restrictions upon the franchise (including the sex bar) must be swept away.

The working and middle classes are still overburdened with rates and taxes.

All these problems will demand the attention of an active, determined, and independent party, drawn from the people and in touch with the people. The Labour Party, therefore, appeals to you to renew your confidence in it, to add to its ranks, and increase its power.

The land for the people!

Down with privilege!

The wealth for the wealth producers!

Up with the people!