

# SIGNED ARTICLES

*In introducing a feature of this character, the promoters of FAIR PLAY desire to show their genuineness of purpose to the public. The columns under this heading are thrown open to the public, and although the Editor may not in all cases agree with the writer, an opportunity is hereby offered for a fair expression of opinion from an outer source, even though it be an direct contradiction to the policy pursued by the journal.*

## THE CANDIDATURE OF SIR ROBERT STOUT FOR WELLINGTON.

As FAIR PLAY has bravely opened a portion of its space to outsiders for the expression of opinion on public matters and persons, although such opinions may be in opposition to the policy of the paper, I venture the following expression of my views on the subject heading this article.

No doubt some people would have been better pleased if Sir Robert Stout had gone out to South America with Young Australia, or to South Africa to deal with the Matabeles, instead of coming to Wellington to be returned as one of its representatives at the approaching elections. It is interesting to see what straits his opponents are driven to in trying to discover something that will "take" against him. Not being able to find any political "jobs" or "log-rolling" against him, his religious views are raked up for special treatment. Be what he may in religion, he is certainly a man whom all New Zealanders should feel proud of, and Wellington consider an honour to have as its leading representative, for he is incomparably above any who have yet represented this city in Parliament. As a speaker, a writer, or a statesman, any country would be benefited by him. It is only in accordance with "the eternal fitness of things" that the most accomplished man in New Zealand should represent the capital city of the colony. In Australia and England, as well as in this country, Sir Robert is rightly considered to be one of the most capable men we have, and one to whom we must look for some of the best future legislation, as well as to the members of the present Government.

Surely the day has gone by when a man is to be ostracised and condemned in public life because he is not orthodox in religion. What if Sir Robert is an Agnostic? Is not the present Home Secretary for Ireland, John Morley, one? Was not the late Premier, the lamented and universally respected Mr. Ballance, one? Surely, FAIR PLAY, the latest product of New Zealand journalism, is not going to attempt to establish religious tests for candidates to Parliament? If so, I am afraid it will have to be consistent, and condemn many more good and useful men, besides

Sir Robert Stout, to political oblivion. If not, why does it refer to his freethought? His religious opinions are his own, and it is not likely he will pass an Act compelling FAIR PLAY or anybody else to accept them, or be responsible to God for them.

All FAIR PLAY or the public have to be concerned about is his *political views* and conduct. Whether he goes to church, or ascends Mount Victoria, or walks in the Botanical Gardens, or goes for a sail in the harbour on a Sunday, is his own choice. Even his living with a clergyman ought not to be condemned by a Christian. How could he be in better company? And if he be so easily influenced and altered in his views as stated in "Personal Items," FAIR PLAY should rejoice at seeing the Agnostic being converted by his Reverend host, especially as the Freethinker is so free as to attend church. If he positively refused to go to any religious service, or to listen to anything on religion, then there would be some excuse for criticism. But, even then, it would be no concern of the electors. The questions with them should be—Is he the most suitable man to poli-



MR. ROBERT WHITE.

tically advocate our views in Parliament? Does the programme he has put forward in his addresses meet our approval? If yes to all of these questions, they should support and vote for him.

So far as I can see, the Opposition are without a policy. They have nothing in the way of progressive legislation to place before the electors. Their only cry is, "Down with the Government." Sensible men will ask, What then? Shall we revert back to the old state of things of four or five years?—large deficits, little work, and people leaving the country.

We must either go forward with Sir Robert Stout and the present Government, or fall backward with the Opposition. The whole civilised world will be watching the result of the coming elections. New Zealand has distinguished itself by giving women their natural

rights; in this respect it stands in the front of other nations. If it returns Conservatives to power, the women, like poor Mother Eve, will be blamed for it. So, I would urge upon the voters of Wellington not to be misled by any side issues or religious prejudices. If Sir Robert has written the word God with a small g, or People with a large p, it will be time enough to consider it when he puts up for a *bishopric*. At present it is *de facto*. During the next five or six weeks there will be fought the most determined political battle yet experienced in this country. The result will influence the destiny of New Zealand for many years to come. It is to be hoped that the capital will set a truly glorious example by returning the men who will continue this grand work of the last three years. The work of taxing vast estates to compel their owners to cultivate or sell them; of settling small farmers on the land; encouraging village settlements; further controlling the drink traffic; inaugurating a State Bank; State pensions, and regaining some control in the management of railways; step by step to limit the power of monopoly, and increase the influence of the State in the production and distribution of wealth. May we not hope that in New Zealand the ideal of the poet, J.C. Prince, will be realised:—

"Ere long the patriots' hope, the poet's  
Small change to sweet reality below;  
And man, the slave of ignorance and strife,  
Waken to a birth of intellectual life."

*Robert White*

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