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The Week in Review.

The Shackles of Feudalism.

AFTER the customary ejection of a few suffragettes, Mr. Lloyd George addressed a crowded meeting at Woodford on the benefits of the National Insurance Act. In the course of his speech he said that the great task before British democracy was to free the country from the shackles of feudalism. He described the Insurance Act as a beginning, but only a beginning. The Chancellor did not say exactly what the next step was to be, but rumour has it that he contemplates legislation on the lines of his namesake, Henry George. The Insurance Act was on its introduction hailed with approval by both Unionists and Liberals. The main objections since have been against certain details. With the principles of the measure both parties are still in agreement. But it is felt that as it stands the Act only touches the fringe of poverty and makes little or no provision for the very poor. One may pardon the phrase "shackles of feudalism" as being only a piece of rhetoric, but a little more detail as to what is to be done in the future would have been welcome.

The Distribution and Creation of Wealth.

The danger of so much of what passes for progressive legislation in these days lies in the fact that it is founded on a misconception as to the true relation of capital to labour. It is urged again and again that you can do away with poverty by the simple process of taking from the rich and giving to the poor. At best any relief brought about by this method can only be of a temporary nature. To set class against class may pain notoriety and even popularity, but it can never bring about industrial peace. Nor can wealth be created by any redistribution of existing wealth. Poverty can only be cured by the creation of more wealth. This can best be done by bringing about a better understanding between employers and employees. The real statesman is he who can best devise a way to bring this about. Insurance Acts and Budgets can never go to the root of the matter. They can alleviate but cannot cure the unrest of labour.

Education and Labour.

Mr. H. G. Wells and Lord Robert Cecil are both agreed that labour as a purely wage-earning class, without a more direct partnership in the conduct and results of business, will disappear. What is to take its place? To answer this it is necessary that we should clearly grasp the meaning of the labour movement. Popular education has altered the whole mentality of the working classes and given them higher aims. It has also given the worker a new sense of dignity. In New Zealand, at any rate, the employer and employee are on the same level in most cases in the matter of education. The worker no longer feels that he is the inferior of his employer in this respect. He has also ceased to feel any sense of obligation. The worker gives his work in return for a wage, and he feels no more indebted to his employer than he does to his butcher or baker for giving meat or bread in exchange for the cash equivalent of labour. The employer has ceased to be a superior being.

The Aim of Industry.

This ought to bring about a greater sense of co-operation between capital and labour. In all essential respects the workers have become the social equals of their masters. The worker speaks as good English, is as well read, has as good manners as the employer. Sometimes he is the superior in this respect. It has thus become possible to introduce a new spirit into industrial questions, and the employer can be the real friend of the worker and inculcate a spirit of esprit de corps. They are both united in a cause higher than themselves, namely, supplying the wants of the world and increasing the sum total of human happiness and wealth. Industry is not the mere accumulation of wealth, but it is the union of mankind in the attempt to provide cheaply and efficiently for the wants of mankind. This is one of the noblest occupations in which men can be engaged. The highest productive energy is only to be derived from a spirit which realises the essential dignity of all work that adds to the comfort and happiness of the community.

Co-partnership.

Mutual enmity between class and class means economic waste and lessens the wealth of the world. Mere legislation can never infuse a right spirit. Ethics cannot be divorced from economics. This is the truth which Ruskin saw long ago in fashions of genius which gave him a deeper insight than the classical economists into the springs of human activity. It is abundantly plain that no mere adjustment of wages or hours of work can permanently satisfy the aspirations of labour. Some form of co-operation is demanded, either the compulsory collectivism of Socialism or voluntary co-partnership. The former means revolution, the latter means progress. The difficulties of co-partnership are difficulties of detail, and both wisdom and business ability are needed to devise some means of overcoming difficulties that are far from being insuperable. The benefits of co-partnership have been proved beyond question. It has bridged the fatal separation between employer and employee, it has established community of interest, and it has added dignity to labour. On these lines the "shackles of feudalism" may be shaken off, but if Mr. Lloyd George means by this somewhat ambiguous phrase that he is merely intending to devise further means for enriching the poor by despoiling the rich, then there is reason to fear that he may intensify and not reduce class antagonism, and by so doing impair industrial efficiency and thus lessen output and diminish the actual wealth of the country.

Suffragette Tactics.

We have received a large number of clippings from English newspapers dealing with the subject of women's franchise, and the sender has added a note to say that it is no wonder that windows are smashed when so many inequities are going on, and are encouraged by the opponents of votes for women. The logic of the note is not apparent. Many of the extracts draw attention to undoubted evils, such as the white slave traffic and the underpaid labour of women, and suggestions are made that these evils might be remedied by extending the franchise to women. Let us grant for the moment that the contention is true, and that the votes of wo-

men would remedy some existing evils. How is a just cause assisted by illegal methods? The clergy might argue that the cause of religion was a just cause. Would they assist the furtherance of their cause by smashing the windows of unoffending tradespeople? St. Paul believed that the spread of the gospel was a great cause, and one making for the amelioration of mankind. Would he have bettered his cause by violently assaulting his opponents? Surely the contrary is the case. The better the cause the less need for resort to acts of violence. The maxim of the Old Bailey was that it was only when you had no case that you ought to abuse the attorney for the other side.

The Law and the Cause.

It is those who have the most sympathy with the cause of women's franchise who most regret the tactics pursued by the suffragettes. The window smashing incidents and the assaults on members of Parliament have put back the cause several degrees. The plain logic of the case is that no political views can be made an excuse for committing an offence against the law when that offence has no bearing on the said political views. For instance: Many people think that prohibition makes for national righteousness. Are they, therefore, justified in breaking the windows of a jeweller's shop in order to draw attention to their views on the liquor question? If so, there is nothing to prevent a man committing a burglary in order to draw attention to his views on compulsory vaccination. The two things stand on all fours. At the time of the Reform Bill the Bristol mob looted the houses of private citizens to call attention to the injustice of the electoral system. They burnt several houses and destroyed a large amount of property. Yet, when the ringleaders were hanged, people felt that they had been justly punished for offences against the law. In no civilised country could the government of the country be carried on for a moment if it was conceded that political views excused crimes of every description.

Prison Treatment of Women.

For look at it in this light. The suffragettes have, in many instances, houses of their own. Would they like their windows smashed and their persons assaulted by people who held strong views on vegetarianism, or the evacuation of the Mediterranean, or even Home Rule?

If not, why do they smash the windows of other people? The window smashers were punished for the willful destruction of property, not for any political views. Some of the extracts forwarded deal with the question of the treatment of the suffragettes in prison. This is a different matter. If the accounts are true, it certainly seems that there was undue severity shown in some cases. People imprisoned for breaking windows ought to be treated on exactly the same footing, whether they believe in women's suffrage or not. Their belief or disbelief in any political question ought not to affect their treatment in gaol. If it is true that they are subjected to extra punishment on account of their views on the franchise, then the matter ought to be looked into. The law exists for the protection of life and property, not for the punishment of those who hold certain views on different political questions.

Mackenzie Ministry Defeated.

Narrowly escaping disaster at the polls last November and averting defeat by a bare vote or two in Parliament during the short session in February, the Liberal administration, with a practically untried Cabinet, came to grief last week. The downfall was not altogether unexpected. The two dominating parties were of even numerical strength, and the situation, without anticipating defections from either side, was controlled by the Independent and Labour members. It was a matter of common gossip, however, that the distribution of portfolios by the Hon. T. Mackenzie had caused deep disappointment and some dissension in the ranks of the Liberal following, and that as a result, the continuous administration was certain of a reverse. The predictions in this direction were fulfilled. The Hon. J. A. Millar, Mr. Vernon Reed, and Mr. E. H. Clarke, elected as Government supporters, ranged themselves on the side of the Opposition, along with the two Independents, Messrs. J. G. Coates and T. W. Rhodes. The Hon. Roderick McKenzie, ex-Minister for Public Works, who made a bitter attack on the Government during the closing scenes, refrained from recording his vote. Thus an Administration that has been continuously in power for some twenty-two years and has been successively led by the late Hon. John Ballance, and Hon. Richard Seddon, by Sir William Hall-Jones, Sir Joseph Ward, and the Hon. T. Mackenzie, has at last toppled and been succeeded by Mr. Massey and his supporters.

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