

POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE UNITED  
KINGDOM.

MR. THOMAS CURRAN, late member for Sligo in the Imperial Parliament, was recently in Adelaide on his return to Sydney. Whilst in the South Australian capital Mr. Curran was interviewed by the representative of a local paper. In the course of the interview he said:—

There is no doubt the Salisbury Government will get a big majority, but they cannot go back to Parliament as the same Ministry, however. There will have to be an extensive and important reconstruction. Intellectually, the present Government is the weakest that has been in power for very many years. Salisbury, Hicks-Beach, Balfour, and Chamberlain are the only really strong men in it, and the three first-named formed a trio which had prevented Chamberlain from plunging the country into most terrible trouble. But for Lord Salisbury's strong hand Chamberlain would have had us at war with Germany and France, and he is generally distrusted, not merely by the Irish and Liberal parties, but by his own colleagues as well. He is not a political force to be reckoned with in any election outside Birmingham, and he is never asked by his party to support a candidate, as Balfour so frequently is.

You see that Mr. Goschen is to retire?

'Oh, yes, we all knew that in the lobby 12 months ago. The fact is that he has not been well for a long time, and the work of his department has been too much for him. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach will probably go to the Lords also, though possibly not till after the meeting of Parliament. After Mr. Balfour he is the most influential member of his party in the Commons, but he is not physically strong, and so he will take a rest from active political life. It is not yet known who will succeed him as Chancellor of the Exchequer; it is hardly likely to be one of the present members of the Government, as there does not seem to be any one of them with sufficient financial ability. Probably some outsider will come in. There will no doubt be other changes, too, and whatever they are they can hardly weaken the Government—it is full of mediocre or worse than mediocre politicians. For instance, Mr. Chamberlain's friends had to be provided for, and a poor lot they are. There is Jesse Collings, the man who made famous the phrase "three acres and a cow"; Powell Williams, who is a nonentity; and young Austin Chamberlain, who is personally much liked, but who has no political brains. Then in the Cabinet are half a dozen men who have no claim to Cabinet rank on the score of ability. Amongst them are the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, who only obtained and retains his position by family influence; the president of the Local Government Board, Mr. Chaplin; the president of the Board of Trade, Mr. Ritchie; the First Commissioner of Works, Mr. Akers-Douglas; and president of the Board of Agriculture, Mr. Long. None of these ought to be in the Cabinet, and probably some will have to go.'

As to the war, there is an agitation against the War Office and its methods, is there not?

'Oh, yes; and it is a very influential one. There is going to be big trouble there presently. A Commission is certain to be appointed, and the general opinion is that Lord Lansdowne will come out of it very badly. It is an open secret that if Lord Wolsley's recommendations had been adopted instead of being contemptuously thrust aside by the War Minister, as they were, our reverses in the early part of the Boer War would probably never have occurred, and the people feel very sore about it. It is looked upon as almost certain that Lord Lansdowne will have to retire from the War Office, especially as Lord Roberts is to be appointed Commander-in-Chief. Had he been in Wolsley's place he would almost certainly have resigned if his counsels had been rejected, and the people would have insisted on his being listened to.

Now, as to Home Rule, Mr. Curran; that is the one great thing the Irish members are hoping for. Do they think they will get it?

'Not yet, but it will come. No great and just cause like that was ever lost if properly fought for. I was sorry to see by the cables that Mr. Herbert Gladstone has been saying the cause must sleep for a while. His father would never have admitted that while he remained in active politics. He could not have lived in public life, and not continued to advocate the cause of justice to Ireland. He knows too well that the reform that was worth having was worth fighting for, and must come at last, in spite of all checks and discouragements. It will, however, require another Parnell to gain it.

As to the war and the coming settlement?

'There is only one possible settlement. That is for the South African States to be formed into a Federation similar to that of Australia, with a Governor-General at Capetown and Lieutenant-Governors for Natal, the Transvaal Colony, and the Orange River Colony.'

With self-government and the full franchise, do you mean?

'Certainly; I do not think anyone would dream of refusing the franchise. It is the only possible way of settling a grave difficulty.' Mr. Curran went on to talk of a work which he apparently has very much at heart—international arbitration. He belongs to a body called the 'Union Inter-Parlementaire,' which is a gathering of members of nearly every Parliament in the world, formed for the purpose of promoting peace and international arbitration. He has just been attending a gathering of this body at Paris. It consists of about 700 members of different Parliaments, and meets at the various capitals of Europe. He states that it is doing splendid work and it was partly owing to the influence of the organisation that the Czar of Russia promoted the famous Peace Conference at The Hague. Mr. Curran intends to stay in Australia for about two years. He is here on purely private business, and when it is completed he hopes to go back to England and to re-enter Parliament.

NOTES FROM THE HOUSE.

PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT.

(From our special correspondent.)

The debate on the Crown Tenants' Rebate of Rent Bill was resumed on Monday and carried on with vigor for some time. The Minister for Lands, in replying to the opponents of the measure, said they were so miserably selfish that they could not see the advantage that would accrue to settlement by a reduction in rent and by the reaction in cities. He urged the House to go into committee on the Bill and endeavor to make a good Bill of it.

The second reading was carried by 39 to 20.

In the evening the Premier moved to recommit the Land for Settlements Consolidation Bill for the purpose of inserting a clause similar to the one proposed to be inserted in the Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Bill vesting in land boards discretion to make a rebate of rent.

The motion was carried on the voices, and consideration of the measure in committee took up the remainder of the sitting.

On Tuesday Mr. Stevens brought down the report of the North Island Main Trunk Railway Committee, who expressed themselves in favor of the central route, for the following reasons:—The distance was shorter, the grades were easier, the line would pass nearly through the centre of the island, and the country was good on both sides for nearly the whole distance.

Later on it was decided by 35 votes to 27 to disagree with the amendment made by the Council in the Private Industrial Schools Inspection Bill whereby all Government grants would cease at the end of 12 months, and managers were appointed to confer with representatives of the Upper House in the matter.

In the evening amendments were brought down by the Governor's message reducing the number of additional members of the House under the Representation Bill from 10 to six. Mr. Seddon explained that originally he proposed 10 on the assumption that the population of the Colony had increased to 800,000, but he found from a memo by the registrar that the population was only 763,500.

The debate on the Representation Bill took place on Wednesday afternoon.

The Premier explained that when he proposed to make the increase in the number of members ten, instead of six as originally proposed, he was under a misapprehension as to the population of the Colony. By making the increase six it brought the quota to about the same number as at present—namely, 10,000—and made the total number of the House 80.

After a short discussion the amendments were agreed to.

The Manawatu Railway Purchasing Bill was taken in committee and passed.

The House went into committee on the Public Revenues Bill, a measure introduced for the purpose of simplifying matters between the Treasurer and the Audit Department, and also for extending the amount of the unauthorised expenditure from £100,000 to £150,000.

The measure was under discussion until the early hours of Thursday morning, when it was reported and read a third time.

On Wednesday the Council decided not to insist on the amendment to the Private Industrial Schools Inspection Bill, and consequently these institutions will get grants as heretofore, subject, however, to the conditions contained in the measure.

On Thursday afternoon several measures were advanced stages.

In the evening Mr. Seddon moved that a committee be set up to inquire into the question of federating with the Commonwealth of Australia. He said he did not intend to enter into a discussion of federation, but merely wished to gain information for the guidance of the House. He could express an opinion on the subject, but would prefer to have more information before doing so to guide him in a matter of such serious moment to the Colony. So many subjects required to be gone into fully before committing himself for or against that it was better to refrain at present.

Captain Russell agreed to the motion and terms in which it was couched. The question of federation affected the Colony so much that it was necessary to be careful in coming to a decision in the matter. The question of alien labor was one of the most important matters connected with the subject. He believed that such labor would some time dominate Northern Australia. He hoped the appointment of commissioners would be such as would command the confidence of the Colony.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. Seddon, speaking on the report of the Joint Defence Committee, said the time was opportune for adopting a complete scheme. Recent events had aroused a spirit of Imperialism, and now that the Colony had been aroused to its state of insecurity, the occasion was a favorable one for carrying out any scheme of defence. Harbor defences were necessary in the main ports, and the necessary military forces would have to be raised to support them. With such a people as we had in this Colony there was no necessity for a standing army. The experience of our men in South Africa showed how quickly the men of the Colony could adapt themselves to military work. Although at its inception the scheme would entail large expenditure, it would gradually decrease, and the result would be that we would have a large reserve force of drilled men in case of necessity. He stated that harbor defence, manufacture of ammunition, and acquisition of field batteries were proposed. As to the staff, it was thought that it could be obtained from amongst the contingents who had served in South Africa. The necessity for organisation and equipment in case of emergency was pointed out in the formation of the Imperial reserve force. He believed the Colony would have the assistance of the Imperial authorities. Rifle clubs and cadet corps would be encouraged. There was now a necessity for