

THE FINANCE OF FREEDOM

(By M. QUINN, in the *Catholic Bulletin*.)

When is a Nation not a Nation? When it is a Party. When is a Nation a Party? When it is content with representation in an Imperial Parliament.

The absurdest, most self-contradictory idea of an unthinking, advertisement-swallowing age is that of a National Party. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing, any more than a square circle, or a partial whole. Whatever is a nation is not a party, and whatever is a party cannot be a nation. No organic whole can be a part, and no organic part can be a whole. That is the biological law for all but the very lowest forms of life.

There is no Sinn Fein Party. *Uc* are Sinn Fein. We are ourselves. We are the Irish Nation.

We Irish have never voluntarily had any representatives in the Parliament of the British Empire. We have never consented to the sin of empire. We will neither *be* slaves, nor *have* slaves, nor *connive* at the enslavement of others. We have in the past, under the compulsion of cruel necessity, despatched accredited ambassadors to the victor's capital to win back our freedom for us—to argue with him, to expostulate with him, to convince him of his hideous sin, to cajole him into the path of virtue by any fair and honorable means that lay in their power—just as Moses and Aaron were despatched by the Israelites to the court of Pharaoh. The only demand we have ever commissioned them to make on our behalf was: "Let our people go! Set our people free!" That was the cry of the Irish heart throughout the whole age of bondage; and sufficient humiliation it was to the Irish nation that it should ever have to sue for liberty, the natural birthright of man, at the threshold of one so morally degraded as to will to be a slave-owner!

Moses and Aaron bowed to the necessity of obeying Pharaoh, but never acknowledged his right to rule them. Neither they nor their people were content to be "Egyptians"—though very likely they were officially referred to as such—or to form an Israelitish Party in the Egyptian State. They preferred freedom with possible hunger in the desert to Pharaoh with his fleshpots.

We abhor the very name of Irish Party. Sinn Fein is the Irish Nation, which it stands for as the pronoun stands for the noun.

There is in fact no Irish Party in the British Empire, and there never has been, no matter what politicians have airily assumed or journalists ignorantly prated of. Calling a thing so does not make it so. "Johnny, how many legs has a cow, calling its tail a leg?" "Five, sir." "No, my son; only four. *Calling* its tail a leg does not *make* it one." Advertisement cannot alter facts, however it may affect beliefs. The British political advertisement is a mere pomp of the devil, to be renounced with himself and all his works, an empty bubble, iridescent with corruption, to be flattened to its pristine scum by the dry touch of truth.

There are uninstructed minds amongst us who are still under the spell of the British advertisement. In their hearts they would be free: but in the British school (advertised as the Irish National) their lips have been taught to lisp: "Freedom for Ireland is not practically possible, is not business. England pays Ireland's way, and keeps it even with its creditors, and Ireland would collapse financially if British assistance were withdrawn. Irish finance is inextricably locked up in the British financial system." This is the lie they have been got to believe, simply by force of having it dinned into their ears.

Now, in contrariety to this statement of the English advertising agents, freedom for Ireland means freedom also from penury, while political connection with England means that Ireland shall always be kept purposely on the brink of national bankruptcy. We make plenty of money; but under our evil condition as a subject race whatever we save is, with ruthless cum-

ning, robbed from us in the name of Empire. On our release from that satanic net and restoration to the liberty of the children of God we shall realise the greatness of our national wealth with a feeling of surprise. We shall find then that nothing will be easier than to construct a national budget of revenue and expenditure that will not only give us whatever material advantages that accrue to us at present, but that will do so at the cost of an incomparably lighter burden of taxation, and without robbing us automatically of all hopes of accumulating future wealth. The only problem that need give anxiety to our statesmen will be how to avoid inflicting pain while healing the wounds caused by our long period of misgovernment: a wound must cause more pain when being got to heal than it did when allowed to gangrene.

The accounts of Irish revenue and expenditure furnished each year by the British Treasury show very clearly that Ireland is at present raising almost three times as much revenue as would be required for the government of the Irish people as a free and independent nation, and they also, when thrown into suitable shape, demonstrate the ease and convenience with which a free and independent Ireland could appropriate its money to its wants without any violent dislocation of its existing machinery of civil government.

The money spent last year by the British Government in Ireland is stated by the British Treasury in its latest White Paper, for the year ended March 31, 1917, in very disorderly fashion as follows:—(a) Civil List and Miscellaneous Charges, £131,000; (b) Payments to Local Taxation Accounts, etc., £1,484,000; (c) Voted, £9,085,000; (d) Customs, Excise, and Inland Revenue, £308,000; (e) Post Office Services, £1,678,000; Total, £12,686,000.

The uninformative heading "Voted" is divided into Classes I. to VII. None of these Classes bears any defined sub-title, and the items included in each often belong logically to quite different Departments of government. But they could be described roughly as follows:—Class I., Public Works (£281,500); II., Government Departments (£647,500); III., Law and Police (£2,695,000); IV., Education, Science, and Art (£2,291,500); V., Diplomatic, etc., Imperial Services (*nil*); VI., Charities, etc. (£295,000); VII., Palliation of Poverty, Illhealth, and Overwork—the results of misgovernment—£2,874,500; Total, £9,085,000.

Sorting out all the items of account in rational fashion, they may be assigned to the various departments of a properly constituted, free Irish Government as follows:—

1. Ministry of Finance.—Portion of "Agricultural Grant" assigned to District and County charges (local taxation accounts), £411,000; other Payments to Local Taxation Accounts (excepting Relief of Poor Rate, £473,495), £559,505; Irish Land Commission, £696,000; Ireland Development Grant, £185,000; Congested Districts Board, £169,500; Local Government Board, £110,000; Superannuation Allowances, £88,000; Collection of Inland Revenue, £77,000; Stationery and Printing, £54,500; Smaller items, £171,000; Total, £2,521,505.

2. Ministry of Commerce and Communications.—Post Office Services, £1,678,000; Collection of Customs and Excise, £231,000; Half of Amount assigned to late Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, £71,500; Smaller items, £78,500; Total, £2,059,000.

3. Ministry of Produce and Manufacture.—Half of Amount assigned to late Department of Agriculture, etc., £71,500; Assigned to late Ministry of Labor, £40,500; Total, £112,000.

4. Ministry of Public Works.—Public Works and Buildings in Ireland, £178,000; Office of Public Works, £41,000; Surveys of the U.K., £20,000; Public Buildings (Great Britain), £500; Total, £239,500.

5. Ministry of Justice and Public Morals.—Supreme Court, etc., £106,500; Judges' Salaries, £98,000; Judges' Pensions, £13,500; County Court Officers, etc., £97,500; Criminal Prosecutions, etc., £51,500; Miscellaneous, £500; Total, £367,500.

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