

Current Topics

British Fair Play

We invite those dear Jingoists who used to tell us in the *Otago Times* and in similarly enlightened organs of the "Propaganda" that Ireland has no reason to complain of British rule, to consider the efforts made to hinder the development of Irish trade. According to an American exchange, the Moore McCormack Steamship Line, running between Dublin and New York, have been subjected to gross annoyance and discourtesy by the British officials. Civilised people will find it hard to believe that taxes and dues, payable to Liverpool, are charged boats that never touch that port, but go straight to Dublin. Another feather in the cap of the champion of small nations!

Bolshevism

Panic dire reigns in London. Lloyd George had to admit that the Russian people beat his troops out of the field. Mr. Bullitt's revelations threw yet more light on the unspeakable Welshman's treachery towards Russia. English officers are letting the truth come out slowly. Books like Frank Anstey's are drawing aside the veil and manifesting to the world what provocation the English gave the Russian people whom they first encouraged. Now, it looks as if a swift and terrible retribution were approaching. The Russian armies are advancing southwards with astonishing speed, and the road to India is threatened. What will happen if the campaign succeeds in rousing the long-suffering Indian people is too dreadful to contemplate. It ought to be remembered, however, that for much of this the English Government is responsible. Lloyd George had his chance of making terms with the Bolsheviki, and lost it because he was afraid of a few wealthy rascals at home who might put him out of power. Instead of taking the opportunity when it came and helping to establish a sound popular government in Russia, he went on lying to the English people and pouring troops and munitions into Russia, in the interests of the capitalists. The blame is now to be laid at his door, and it is time that the British people asked themselves how long more they are to be misled and fooled by a corrupt plutocracy. Another big war may break out within a year or two. And it surely is a question of importance for the Dominions to consider whether they are to be thrown into a struggle again, simply because a few bunglers in London are tolerated in office. The democracy has certainly been fooled long enough. The war that was to free small nations and end secret treaties has riveted tighter the fetters on Ireland, Egypt, and India, and apparently put the British democracy under the heel of a man whose word nobody can believe. When is the Empire to be governed for the people and by the people, instead of by plutocrats and for plutocrats?

Railway Crossing

Last week's papers conveyed to readers throughout the Dominion the news of two more accidents at railway crossings: The entire community ought to have no difficulty in recognising that human life is a sacred thing, and the fact that the press—which, sad to say, is supposed to be a reflex of the public mind—commented strongly on the matter, shows in some fashion that the public would at least feel ashamed if no protest were made. And having made a protest, the New Zealand public, just as indifferently as it lay down under the outrageous passing of a Conscription Act without consulting the wishes of the people concerned, will go on as before until our State railways kill some other unfortunate victims. Then, again, there will be another protest, and later more people will be killed. Now, what concerns us is the impudence of one of our dailies, which said that, as the matter of safeguarding human lives in this respect was very expensive, we ought to make the best of the *status quo*. That statement shows not only a callous indifference for human

life, a truly Prussian ignorance of the value of life to individuals and to the community, but a contemptible spirit of acquiescence in the New Zealand Muddlement. To erect gates at the most dangerous crossings may be an expensive undertaking, but it is a necessary one; and it is high time that the people took it in hand to see that their paid servants, the politicians, did their duty in the matter. It is time—and high time—that the democracy of the Dominion should awake to the fact that they are not the prey of the Government, but that the Government is the servant of the people, and that when it ceases to be so, it ought to be kicked out of office. We have had too much crawling subservience to dictatorship; we have been too blind to the faults of a gang that cannot even run a railway decently. A private company that made a muddle of its railways on such a gigantic scale as the Government did last year would not be tolerated for 24 hours; and a Government that did as ours did would not last in any other country but poor New Zealand. Too expensive forsooth! Was it too expensive to send Messrs Massey and Ward Home for two tours during the war? Did they achieve anything commensurate with the saving of one human life? Was it too expensive to plunge the country into a Referendum agitation in the midst of a war, just because a number of noisy bigots wanted to enforce slavery on their fellows? Was the sending Home of men who were absolutely unfit for military service too expensive? Is taxation framed to fall heavy on the poor and light on the profiteer too expensive? Expense or no expense, it is time that the Government be brought to its senses and the lives of the people protected as they are in civilised countries. After the repeated warnings of similar accidents in the past, it is impossible to excuse those in power, and it is hardly straining facts to say that they are accessories to manslaughter. We suppose they do not care; but it is time that they should be made to care. It is time that the people insisted on being governed for the people, and that they who can find money to finance a wowsy Referendum ought to be made find it to protect the lives of the men and women and children of the Dominion. Possibly we are so inured to loss of life now that the sense of humanity is dead within us as a people; possibly, we who did not protest against Conscription and against the brutal treatment of men like Mark Briggs, have lost all sense of compassion for the wronged and the suffering. If so, we have got the Government we deserve, and we shall probably go on reading of more lives lost in Mosgiel, in Palmerston North, in Ashurst, and wherever else there is a bad crossing for which a supine and worthless administration will not build gates.

Sargeant Sheridan Again

If we said that the outrages committed in Ireland were done by the express orders of Mr. George and the fool-general French (chiefly famous as the defamer of a dead officer), our remarks would be received with incredulity by some people. Others, who know what English justice is, would probably agree with us. As a matter of fact, we have no real evidence for saying anything of the kind, but we have a hundred times more to justify us in saying so than the hireling press of the Empire, from Dunedin to Belfast, has for attributing the outrages to Sinn Fein. We do know that the English Government has paid politicians for the manufacture of crime. We do know that the same Government protected Sargeant Sheridan when he was exposed as a tool of the Tory-Orange gang. We also know that the Government deliberately "faked" German Sinn Fein plots that set the world rocking with laughter at the stupidity of Lloyd George and Shortt and Long. Moreover, it has been again and again demonstrated that the word of honor of a British statesman is worthless, and that tearing up scraps of paper and swallowing pledges is a favorite pastime of the Welsh contemptible. And knowing all these things, we may—if not actually warranted in making an assertion—suggest that the robberies and raids of which we hear so much are the work of the