

For an example take a concrete case. It was solemnly announced by President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George concurring, that the war was fought for the right of self-determination for all peoples, no matter whose selfish interest is crossed. Now any man who knows anything of Sinn Fein is aware that what Sinn Fein wants is the right of self-determination for the Irish people. In other words Sinn Fein wants what we were told the war was fought for. Now, because a gang of Orangemen in one corner of Ireland do not want that, P.P. Ass. spouters and scribes shriek and foam and tell us that it is seditious and disloyal to ask the British Government to keep its pledges. Which is altogether in accordance with the reputation of the P.P. Ass. for fair play and common decency. But what about the Republic? they may say. Well, what about it? There are advocates of the Irish Republic in the British House of Commons, in the British Army, and in the British Navy, and nobody tells them they are seditious or disloyal. When a writer was prosecuted in Australia a few months ago for advocating an Irish Republic, the judge discomfited the parsons and howlers by stating that every man had a perfect right to advocate a Republic if he wished and that there was no sedition or treason in working for that end on constitutional lines. Ah, but is Sinn Fein constitutional? Sinn Fein is constitutional. It was the British Government that first broke its own laws by throwing men into gaol for nothing, and by pouring armed soldiers into peaceful houses in a mad effort to defeat a purely constitutional agitation. So much so, that not only Irish juries but English newspapers have said that every death and every drop of blood spilled in Ireland is on the head of David Lloyd George. If the stupidity and the bigotry were not so nauseating it would be amusing. In a word the case is this: our gallant parsons, our P.P. Ass. ranters, and all their men-folk and all their women-folk raved about Belgium and Poland and told us what a noble war was being waged for the noble ideals of the Allies. The noble ideals of the Allies were, as we have said, freedom of small nations, destruction of despotism, the right of a people to choose their own form of government, no matter whose selfish interests were crossed. Now the Irish people, by an eighty per cent. majority, have put this into practice, and every tin-templar and every parsonical *Damnusians domesticus* in the country sputters and curses about Sinn Fein treason and disloyalty. It is indeed sickening to think that ministers of what they call the Gospel should be so dead to all sense of decency, all sense of honor, truth, and justice, and so entirely under the domination of that immoral secret society whose whole ritual is expressed by the words, To hell with the Pope; which is as ready to curse the King as the Pope on occasion; whose loyalty is altogether a thing of selfish interest.

Parliamentary Rottenness

Those who have lived in New Zealand in election time ought to be aware that as a rule the electors are more concerned with electing a Party man than a good man. Not fitness, not integrity, not education count with the *profanum vulgus*: prejudice, and often bigotry and hatred are the grounds on which the country's legislators are chosen. The P.P. Ass. claimed that, as a result of its campaign of lying and calumny, it has secured the rejection of certain members and the election of certain others. A prominent Labor man told us that sectarian bigotry and hatred of Catholics had moved many laborers to vote against their own principles. It is no wonder that our Parliament is an incompetent, stupid business and that absence of principle and general disregard for the true welfare of the Dominion are its leading characteristics just now. The main consequences of the rot due to the Party system are thus summed up by Belloc and Chesterton, in their illuminating work on that evil of present-day England:—

1. It puts the responsibility for public affairs on men who are not fitted to bear it.

2. It defers reform in institutions and the up-taking of new weapons in defence and new methods in life at a rate progressively less than the change in the modern world around us.

3. It permits minor legislation, intensely provocative and unpopular, and therefore causative of intense friction in the public working of society.

4. It produces, through the financial corruption of that class which not only legislates but administers and judges, an increasing crop of effects, wasteful, impoverishing, or directly harmful to the community.

5. It prevents the nation as a whole from ordering matters in which an active national opinion is of first concern: to wit, defence, finance, and foreign policy.

Commenting on this indictment, the authors say:

1. The type of man who normally succeeds in obtaining office under the rules of the Party system is not fit to administer the affairs of State.

2. The effect of the system is degrading for good men, if they chance to find their way among the rest. The inbecilities which even good men utter after a course of Parliamentary training is proof of this fact.

3. There is the evil that legislation of an intensely unpopular sort passes without comment. (Thus Mr. Massey is able to issue Orders-in-Council and similar fool-stunts which seem directed exclusively towards the end of pleasing a howling gang of bigots. Conscientious objectors, whom we all know now were right from every point of view, are still punished and the community does not use the hose on the politicians).

4. The system lends itself to jobbery of every kind. (A proof of what this leads to may be had in the political protection of the profiteers during the war.)

5. The Parliamentary machine carefully excludes the discussion of really vital policies. Instead of having the matters discussed frankly and candidly, hole-and-corner methods are encouraged and third-class politicians are permitted to impose their views on the people.

Once upon a time, Carlyle asked the Duke of Wellington, whom he met near Westminster, "When will you take a regiment of soldiers down and clear out that talking-shop?" More than once during the past five years we have often asked ourselves how long the common sense of the people of this country will stand the fooling politicians whose sole achievement seems to be that they have bled New Zealand to the heart and piled up a debt that is a world's record.

MR. HOLLAND ON THE LABOR VIEW.

Mr. H. E. Holland, M.P., addressed a crowded audience in the Alexandra Hall, Wellington, last week on the Irish question. Mr. P. Hickey was in the chair.

Mr. Holland spent some considerable time in reading extracts from British and New Zealand papers, mostly news or comments on the present state of things in Ireland. Mr. Holland added many comments of his own. He explained and justified the attitude of New Zealand Labor towards the Irish question, and incidentally he told the audience that the resolution he had submitted to the House of Representatives had not been his own proposal, but the Labor Party's proposal, which had the endorsement of the whole Labor movement in New Zealand. The Labor Party favored self-determination for Ireland. He said that the Sinn Fein movement aimed at securing economic freedom for Ireland, freedom from exploitation from British capitalists. He likened the case of Ireland to that of Russia, fighting for freedom from capitalistic exploitation.

There were many persons in the audience who left no doubt as to their Sinn Fein sympathies. They applauded every reference to complete independence for Ireland, and applauded specially Mr. Holland's reading of the cable message announcing the capture of General Lucas by the Sinn Feiners.

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