

WELLINGTON ROUNABOUT

By "Thid"

It's My Own Invention

I MET James in Chew's Lane last week, chewing gum and chuckling.

"Why?" I exclaimed. "James, my good fellow, do you realise you are chuckling and chewing at the same time? It's not very choice."

"Choice or cheeky," said James, "I'll chuckle and chew if I choose, for I've chanced on a scheme. It's about this war, you know." James stood expectantly on one leg, just like a stork in springtime, and received the invitation he evidently wanted:

What would you do about the Great War, James?

I'd pass a resolution.

What's that mean?

It means, if you see a resolution, you pass it.

How do you pass it?

It means, you go round to the left, which means you leave it, or round to the right, which means you're wrong or it's wrong, or you go under it, which means it's too big to go over, or over it, which means it's too small to notice.

And how in the name of Wellington would all that Roundabout fix the war?

A Note of Resolution

That depends what you mean by fix. Now, when I fix anything, I fix it hard. It gets so fixed nobody can shift it.

Well, if passing a resolution would fix the war you mean that you'd see that nobody could shift it?

If you're talking about meanings it's a matter of what you'd see and not what I'd see. Nevertheless, if I mean anything I'll say so.

Go on then, what would you do next?

I'd call a meeting, and it would elect a sub-committee.

What's the sub-committee for?

To pass a resolution.

Well, what next?

I'd send a note.

What would the note do.

Silly, if you send a note you send a note and the note does what it likes. You can't dictate to a note. You can dictate a note, in fact, you can dictate almost anything, but you can't dictate to a note. I will admit, of course, that you can detect a note, of despair, of hope, of surprise, or desperation — in a voice, in a smile, in a wrinkle, in a communication, in a memorandum; but dictating's different from detecting, and you can't even dictate to a note of surprise, or any of the others, although it's really the smallest thing, next, of course, to a note. That's the idea of having a note. It can't be dictated to. Dictation, that's different, too. Why, they have it in school!

What's in the note?

Always Discuss Things

Nothing, there's no room, and if there is room there's no sense in having a note, for if you've got room that's *lebensraum*, so you don't need the note. Now, if you don't need the note, there's no sense in sending it. In any case, there never was any sense in passing the resolution, now I come to think of it, because the less resolution you have the easier it is to pass it.

So there's not much sense in discussing all that?

Oh, yes there was. You must have discussion under any circumstances.

What's discussion?

It's rather awkward. Dis means pi, and pi means to drop, and when you drop a thing, especially if you drop it on your head, but sometimes otherwise, you get concussion. So discussion could easily mean concussion. So, if we must drop something, let's drop the subject. For, you see, if discussion means dropping the subject, we can talk of something more pleasant.

What happens to the subject when it's dropped?

Just exactly the same as what happens to the resolution when it's passed.

What's that?

Airing the Difficulty

Everybody hurries off and starts where he stopped.

Then it's done no good?

Oh, yes it has. It's aired the difficulty.

What's that?

Well, a difficulty, you see, gets very stuffy. Which is not a good thing. So you take it out and give it the air.

What's that?

You pass it round quickly so that as much air as possible gets at it. Did you go to school?

Yes.

Did you take physics, elementary or abstruse?

Yes.

Did you hear about friction, and its correlative, heat?

Yes.

Well, there you are?

Where am I?

Silly, if the difficulty goes quickly it creates friction, which creates heat, which heats the air which makes the air hot, which gives you hot air, which takes the stuffing out of the difficulty. Now, hot air is thinner than cold air, which gives you thin air, and the difficulty disappears into thin air. That means it's liquidated.

What's liquidated?

It's a polite name for paying half.

What's that got to do with the difficulty?

Well, if the difficulty only pays half it's not very profitable, is it?

No. . . .

And if it's not very profitable it's not worth considering, is it?

No. . . .

Well, if it's not worth considering, what's the use?

Use of what?

Use of the difficulty, silly.

No use.

Well, if it's no use, we just surmount it.

Some Definitions

You haven't told me yet what you'd really do.

First, I'd get Hitler.

What's that?

Hitler would know.

What then?

Then I'd get Capitalism.

What's that?

It's one way of saying you've got enough and don't want any more unless it's easy money. Then I'd get Socialism.

What's that?

It's one way of saying you've got too much and want to give half away. Then I'd get Communism.

What's that?

Oh, that's when you haven't got anything, not even a marriage licence. It's awful. Or so they say. Then I'd get Fascism. That's one way of saying you've

got everything, won't share, and want more. Then I'd get Democracy.

What's Democracy?

Now that's queer, no one seems to know, but I think if you got up on a box and said Down With Democracy, then you'd know, especially at the moment.

What then?

What is Imperialism?

Then I'd get Imperialism. It's got something to do with Democracy. I'm sure, because only democracies have kings or emperors and that's where the word comes from; but all I can really find out about it is that the Oxford Dictionary says it's "the extension of the British Empire where trade requires the protection of the flag."

What next?

Then I'd get Conservatism, which is Liberalism waylaid by highwaymen, and Liberalism, which is Conservatism let out of gaol, and Nationalism, which is all three, plus Patriotism, which is not enough, and I'd get Pacifism because it doesn't seem to be quite the thing at the moment, and that's fatal.

The "Osophies"

That's a big programme.

Isn't it?

What good would all that do?

It would dispose of the isms.

What then?

I'd start on the osophies.

What are osophies?

Just what they sound like; worms with granny knots in the middle.

What then?

Then I'd ask God to grow me a fig tree.

Why a fig tree?

Now, surely that's obvious?

No, I can't figure it out at all.

—And the "Ishuns"

Well, we'd have to start all over again, and we've forgotten the ishuns.

How do you mean?

Ishuns, silly, are what you put on the end when you haven't any isms or osophies.

Well, why the fig leaf?

To make up for the inhibitions.

How bad are ishuns?

Perfectly rampant.

So you're no further ahead?

Oh, yes we are.

How?

Well, if you're going you must be coming, and if you're coming you must be arriving, and if you arrive you're further, even if it's only a head further.

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Whereupon James tucked his head in his waistcoat pocket and walked off up Willis Street, muttering something about the ostrich and the League of Nations.