

CATHOLIC FEDERATION

SECOND PAN-SOUTHLAND GATHERING

ATTENDANCE OF 7000 PEOPLE.

INCLEMENT WEATHER EXPERIENCED.

(From our own correspondent.)

The Invercargill committee of the Catholic Federation, aided by the country committees all over Southland, had been at work for five or six weeks preparing to make the second annual meeting of the Federation in Southland a greater gathering than the first. The train arrangements were as perfect as could be; special trains were run from all the country towns, three specials leaving Invercargill for Riverton. The arrangements on the grounds were made by the Riverton committee—tents erected, and grounds prepared for the different sports. Every detail had been attended to, and all things were in apple-pie order. Only one matter—not under the control of the committees—was in doubt. That was the weather, and it failed. The morning broke over Invercargill murky and lowering, and as time wore on the fog grew into drizzle, and the drizzle increased to heavy rain, which fell as the last train was due to leave the town. Still, the people came along hoping the weather would clear up. The country specials carried large freights, especially the Gore, Winton, and Nightcaps trains, as rain did not fall in these districts in the early morning.

Solemn High Mass.

At the hour for the procession heavy rain fell at Riverton, hence the procession and religious ceremonies of the morning were interfered with. The High Mass was celebrated in More's Hall, a couple of thousand people being able to find standing room in the large hall, porches, and side entrances. The Rev. Father Woods was celebrant, the Rev. Fathers Morkane and E. Lynch being deacon and subdeacon respectively, and Rev. Father Murphy master of ceremonies. The choir of St. Mary's, aided by members of the country choirs—all under the direction of Mr. H. S. Searle, sang the choral parts of the Mass. The Hibernians and the Children of Mary in their regalia of green, blue, and white, formed a guard of honor around the extemporised altar.

At the conclusion of Mass, Father Murphy addressed the people on the objects and aims of the Catholic Federation, dwelling particularly on what might be accomplished by it in the matter of spreading sound ideas as to Christian education, supporting Catholic schools, and upholding Catholic educational principles and agencies. Father Murphy spoke with energy and feeling, and so impressed his large audience.

At 12 o'clock the rain ceased, and the crowd adjourned to the public park for luncheon. Here things soon turned out all right. The tents and the pine trees all round afforded sufficient shelter until the sun broke through the clouds warmly and brightly towards 1 o'clock. After that all things went as merrily as a marriage bell.

The Speeches.

A platform had been erected for the speakers. At 1.30 o'clock the bell rang, and the crowd gathered round. On the platform the members of the committees, the Southland clergy, and visiting speakers took their places. After a few remarks of welcome to the visitors to Riverton, and congratulation on the energy and determination which had brought together so large a crowd—between 6000 and 7000 people—on so unfavorable a morning, Rev. Father Murphy (president of the meeting) introduced Mr. Poppelwell to the audience.

Mr. Poppelwell congratulated the Catholics of Southland on their presence there that day in such large numbers. They evidently recognised the aims of the Federation and the good it had done and would do. It was an organisation that had come to stay, and that was fraught with great possibilities. During the past

year much of the Federation's work was of a defensive kind, being directed against the so-called Bible-in-Schools party. Under the direction of Bishop Cleary the Federation had defeated a clique, whose scheme implied still further burdens and annoyances for the Catholic people, and indeed, for others in this country. The Federation had succeeded in so amending the Education Act that our young people, clever enough to win scholarships, could receive their education, not in State schools, but in our Catholic secondary schools, provided the Minister of Education approved. That was an advance, as it placed our Catholic secondary schools on an equality with the State secondary schools. There were many other activities and necessities to which the Federation had turned its hand. Immigrants were met at the great ports, situations were provided for them under safeguards as to their religion and morals, and waifs and strays were gathered in and sent to Catholic institutions. The Federation kept under observation public libraries and also bookshops in the interests of a clean and pure literature, and watched against the circulation of fresh calumnies and stale bigotries in the public newspapers. The Catholic Federation stood for high ideals and true patriotism. It was a movement yet in its infancy, yet in a state of formation, yet feeling its way and finding out its work and learning how to accomplish it. As this great confederation of the Catholics of this country became known, all just and decent men of every party and class would recognise its utility in promoting the common interests of this Dominion, and would be glad to see it prosper. Only bigots, whose minds were dwarfed and twisted by a wretched, antiquated sectarianism, would look with suspicion on it. In Southland great activity and harmony, he could testify, were shown in the parish organisations, and he hoped this energy and harmony would be rivalled in the other provinces of New Zealand.

Mr. Girling-Butcher said this was one of the proudest days of his life. He was delighted to stand before this immense gathering of the members and adherents of the Catholic Federation of Southland. He had been all over Southland some time ago. He understood something of the unity, charity, religion, and patriotism of its clergy; something of the activity, harmony, and fine spirit of its young men and women, and something of the organising zeal of those young men who singled themselves out from the general mass by taking up the work of secretaries, treasurers, and committeemen. The fine physique of the young people before him showed they had come of a good stock, and that something worthy, something bold, aspiring, and self-denying may be expected from this southern people. There was a stirring refrain of Thomas Davis's: 'The West's awake! The West's awake!' But this great Pan-Southland gathering and the solidity of the parish organisations of which it is the obvious outcome showed that the 'South's awake! the South's awake!' and it is awake in the interests of the greatest of all causes—the cause of the grand old Catholic Church. What prouder thing could any man say than 'I am a Catholic, and I am ready to give my best energies to my great mother, the Catholic Church.' The speaker was glad to be able to say that every branch of their new Federation had been a success. He referred to the Bible-in-Schools propaganda and to the success gained by the Catholic side. He referred also to the successes achieved by the immigration department and the employment bureau. They had approached the Education Department, and had been successful in amending the Education Act. The Federation had also been the means of suppressing, throughout the Dominion, a good deal of objectionable literature. In conclusion, he congratulated the Catholics of Southland on the grand way in which they had rallied to the standard of the Catholic Federation, and he declared they were an example to the rest of New Zealand.

Mr. J. Shepherd spoke, as one of the oldest residents of the province of Southland, of the exhilarating pleasure it was to him to see this great gathering of our Catholic people. He remembered the day when, 50 years ago, there was no priest, no church, no school,