

Current Topics

Education at Home and Abroad

Writing under this heading, our able contemporary *America*, in its issue of April 1, remarks: 'The address on Catholic education, delivered by Archbishop Redwood, of Wellington, New Zealand, and printed in this issue, should awaken a sympathetic interest in Catholics of the United States. The circumstances attending the struggle of our fellow-religionists in that distant land, as well as in Australia, are practically the same as those existing here.' At the recent Education Conference in Sydney, Cardinal Moran presiding, the series of resolutions which were submitted for consideration and finally adopted amid enthusiasm, were presented by His Eminence as coming from the Catholic University of America. The same resolutions were afterward taken up and endorsed by Archbishop Redwood, as fitting exactly the conditions in New Zealand. While we are ahead of our Australian and New Zealand brethren in the matter of drawing up resolutions and supplying a programme, it may be that the more youthful commonwealths will point out the course of action that will make the resolutions practical. After all, the gunmaker is not always the best marksman, and a successful struggle held up as an example and an inspiration would be a handsome return from the South Pacific for our scholastic contribution to their campaign.'

The Trend of the Times

We find interesting confirmation of the views expressed in our leading columns last week on the subject of Socialism in a recent striking utterance of the Rev. Father Robert Benson. The Catholics of the Midlands held their fifty-sixth annual reunion in Birmingham Town Hall (England) the other day, and Father Benson, as president of the reunion, delivered an address on 'Signs of the Times,' or modern tendencies in politics, science, and religion. Father Benson is known not only as an able and brilliant writer, but also as a careful and thoughtful student of affairs; and his views on social and religious questions deservedly carry very great weight. After explaining that there was no Divine revelation as to what was perfect civil government of the country or of the world, and that as Catholics they were perfectly free to prefer a monarchy, an aristocracy, a republic, or an oligarchy, Father Benson proceeded: 'Wherever they looked throughout the world they saw great movements at work. If they looked at Europe they saw underneath all views and cries of party a great wave heaving itself up beneath the troubled surface of history—a wave which, if the past meant anything, was going profoundly to transform the history of the future. . . . What seemed to him, however, to be the supreme danger of this great movement was that there was no doubt as to the kind of shape this movement was going to take in the future. It was commonly known as Socialism. He was not going to discuss the economic doctrines of Socialism, for it was most difficult to find out what Socialism was; his point was that it was very remarkable that wherever Socialism made progress religion seemed to suffer. (Hear, hear.) There had never been a revolution accomplished, on the whole, more bloodlessly than that in Portugal, nor had there ever been a revolution so respectable—(laughter)—yet it was very remarkable that practically the first act of the revolutionists, inspired by the ideals of Socialism, was to turn upon the Church of God and to drive out every religious man and every devoted woman, as far as was possible. ('Shame.') That same kind of thing was at work in France, where Liberty meant that one might do anything except be utterly true to one's own conscience; Equality that a neighbor was always equal to oneself, if not better; and Fraternity that one was not allowed to belong to a brotherhood. (Laughter.) In England they saw the same thing, but in a lesser degree; it was less logical and less consistent than the French, and, therefore, less sensational. Though there were many calling themselves Christian Socialists, they found that, on the whole, Socialists in matters of education preferred a secular system, which was a beautiful and eloquent way of saying they did not want God. Any experienced parish priest would tell them that the effect of Socialism on young Catholics was that it acted like a snare. Little by little, they gave up the Sacraments and obeying the laws of the Church, and, finally, they declared that Socialism was the kingdom of God and that religion was a falsehood invented by priests.'

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'The great mistake of Socialism was that it attempted to organise society apart from God. In other respects it was impossible to deny that the ideals of the Socialists were the very ideals of the Catholic Church. As Catholics they desired that every man should have the power of living decently and respectably, they denounced any tyranny of

the rich over the poor, or of the poor over the rich; they denounced anarchy, which was the tyranny of the individual over society, and they denounced Socialism, which was the tyranny of society over the individual. It was not with those perfectly Christian ideals of Socialism they found fault, but with the attempt to organise a world without God. Claiming that Catholics made the best citizens in the world, he defied anybody to set up merely human society and worship it, for society on the whole was very unlovable and unlikeable, and if they defied it, sooner or later they would find their image of gold had feet of clay. Unless they had a religious motive behind every action they would find their work was not honestly done, and that their lives were not honestly lived.'

The Australian Referenda

Considering the importance of the questions that were at issue, it was only natural that the recent Federal Referenda should have excited keen interest throughout Australia. In New Zealand the interest was practically confined to the press, the politicians, and the small but select circle of citizens who follow up all political questions—the man in the street knowing little more than that some sort of a referendum was in progress. Our present purpose is merely to explain the nature of the questions on which the Australian electors have just been called upon to vote, and to state some of the reasons which help to account for the now published result of the referendum—without going into the pros and cons of the subject on our own account further than to express, on broad grounds of principle, a decided preference for the affirmative side in the controversy. Broadly speaking, the two referenda proposed alterations of the Federal Constitution in the direction of enlarging and extending the powers of the Federal Parliament, and thus making it a really national Parliament. The first referendum proposed that the Federal Parliament should have power to make laws regarding: (a) the creation, dissolution, regulation, and control of corporations; (b) the wages and conditions of labor and employment in any trade, industry, or calling, and the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes, including disputes in relation to employment on or about railways the property of any State; and (c) combinations and monopolies in relation to the production, manufacture, and supply of goods or services. The second referendum proposed first to give the Federal Parliament the power to declare that any industry or business constituted a monopoly, and secondly to give that Parliament the power 'to make laws for carrying on the (aforesaid) industry or business by or under the control of the Commonwealth, and acquiring for that purpose, on just terms, any property used in connection with that industry or business.' Briefly, the first referendum dealt with the regulation of the wages and conditions of labor not only of the general body of workers but also of the State employees (railway hands, etc.) and with conciliation and arbitration legislation; the second referendum dealt with the evil of Trusts.

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The referenda were brought down by the present Labor Government of the Commonwealth; and to those who have regard for the ideals and aspirations of nationhood the arguments in favor of the affirmative seem to be overwhelmingly conclusive. The electors, however, by an absolutely unmistakable majority have decided against the referenda. According to articles in our Catholic exchanges—written before referenda day—two influences were at work to produce the result which has actually eventuated, viz., the attitude of the daily press, and the free use of the financial resources of the 'No' party. In regard to the first point the *Melbourne Tribune* says: 'It is a daily occurrence to find in the morning papers from 5 to 7 columns of reported speeches on the Liberal side, and in the midst of these a space of from one inch and a quarter to two inches devoted to a speech on the other side of the question—a space in which the position cannot even be stated, much less argued. The Labor case is represented by its opponents, not by its exponents, and a case so represented is of course very easily demolished. We are merely stating a fact, not arguing on a side, for the probabilities are that, if Labor commanded the daily papers, it would treat its opponents exactly as itself is now being treated. The chief fact in the situation is this—the Government proposals will not be lost or carried on their merits, but according to the greater or lesser influence of the daily newspapers of the Commonwealth.' And a correspondent writes to the *Catholic Press* to the same effect: 'To-day there is not one of the dailies in Sydney or Melbourne that will allow much correspondence to appear which is likely to be of any service in forwarding the case for the referenda.' This is the real new tyranny of the hour that effectively silences the voice of opposing opinion.' Regarding the second point, the *Sydney Freeman's Journal* remarks: 'It is difficult to understand the objections of once-ardent Federalists to the conferring of supreme powers on the Federal Government in distinctly national affairs. Such