

Current Topics

The Self-Determination League

It ought not be necessary to say that the Self-Determination League was organised for the purpose of insisting that the Irish people shall have the right to choose their own form of government without any outside interference. This right is affirmed by Catholic theology; it was the basic principle of the American Declaration of Independence; it was proclaimed by the Pope during the war; it was reiterated by President Wilson; it was accepted by all the Allies. The Irish people claim only what is right, and what, during the war, their enemies confessed was right. Be it well understood that it is to support them in their fight for that right the League was formed. The League was not formed as a means of telling the Irish people what *we think* they ought to do, and those people who have any notion of that sort ought to get out of the League as soon as they can. We have heard during the past few days that certain Catholics are going around saying they have lost patience with the Irish people, and condemning de Valera for not being fool enough to accept Lloyd George's terms. They ought to remember that if they are fools it does not follow that the Irish people are obliged to be like them. Their attitude is based on ignorance and impertinence: ignorance of the true bearings of the question, and impertinence in assuming that they know better than the Irish people, clergy, and prelates what Ireland ought to accept.

Mr. Lee and Samoa

The Massey Muddlement at home is bad enough but in Samoa it is a holy terror. We have before us an article by a Samoan gentleman, written for a Sydney journal, and it tells Mr. Lee flatly that his wild assertions in defence of the administration of Samoa are not only untrue but an insult to the Samoans. The writer rubs in the tale of British breaches of faith, and of British neglect of native interests and even of native lives, and further emphasises what we published previously concerning the awful waste and inefficiency of New Zealand's representatives in the Islands. Besides the article in question we have a copy of a letter addressed to Mr. Lee by the Samoans, who tell him that while they consider meeting him would be only a waste of time, they think the British Government ought to intervene and kick out New Zealand as a rank failure. Here are a few extracts: "The Hon. E. P. Lee, Minister for External Affairs, N.Z.

"Sir,—On the occasion of your visit to Samoa we, the undersigned, wish to express our hopeless feeling with regard to the future of Samoa under New Zealand control. We recognise the futility of bringing our ideas as to the proper management of the group forward, as we have definitely decided that in future as in the past our suggestions and protests will only be ignored, although we are mostly people of from ten to forty years' experience in the Island affairs.

"We are enclosing herewith a table showing the progress made by Samoa, both in revenue and expenditure, and in the number of officials employed since 1915, and we would like to point out that since that time the population has decreased by about 25 per cent. . . . taxation has increased by over 100 per cent. for which we receive few extra necessary benefits. We need hardly advise you that the inhabitants, both European and native, are now more than ever disgusted with the state of affairs in Samoa."

The Minister is urged to do his best to stop the rot. The document ends:

"If this cannot be done we believe that you will be compelled to agree with our contention that considering the fact that it requires double the revenue and about two-and-a-half times the number of officials

to control a considerably reduced population, New Zealand's administration of Samoa has been a hopeless failure."

This suggests a nice problem: If a hundred Germans manage well 50,000 natives, how many New Zealanders can manage even badly half that number? *Answer*—Two and a half times as many.

Father Gilbert speaks for New Zealand

A letter from our friend Father Aubry, one of the best Irishmen ever born in France, brings us an account of the great Self-Determination meeting held in Trafalgar Square, London, on June 26. On the previous day a meeting at Clerkenwell had been raided by the police, and this incident instead of acting as a deterrent only brought larger and more enthusiastic crowds into the Square on the last Sunday of June. Father Gilbert, who from the first, when our supporters were few and when it was not fashionable to be a Sinn Féiner, upheld the cause in Wellington, received a most cordial welcome on being introduced to the meeting. Indeed, before they let him go he had to speak from the three platforms erected in the Square in order to reach the immense gathering. At the close of the proceedings a resolution proposed by Councillor Lee (Manchester) was adopted amid a scene of great enthusiasm. This motion protested against an alien government of force in Ireland, condemned the barbarous methods employed by that Government, demanded the withdrawal of the troops in Ireland, and the application of the principle of self-determination to Ireland. Further, it expressed admiration for the fight the people at home were making, and protested against the arrest of the president of the organisation, Councillor P. J. Kelly, as an attempt to impede the progress of a perfectly legal organisation.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. Barrington (Tyneside) and was supported by Father Gilbert (Wellington, New Zealand), Mr. McManus (Leeds), and Councillor Fox (Middlesbrough).

Alderman G. Mortimer (London) presided at No. 1 platform, at which Mr. Barry Egan (deputy Lord Mayor of Cork) was the principal speaker. Mr. Egan said that if he had anything to do with the situation created by Mr. Lloyd George's letter he would say to England: "If you are sincere you can prove your sincerity by your actions. Liberate the political prisoners, put an end to the torture and the murders, and let there be a cessation of hostilities. If you do that then you will do something to restore the shattered reputation you have gained by your miserable treatment of Ireland."

If England wanted peace, he continued, she could have it to-morrow. They in Ireland were ready for peace as they were ready to fight, but they would not tolerate any chicanery or trickery. Negotiations, if negotiations there were to be, would take place in the very near future. Ireland knew herself and knew her leaders, and they could leave it with the utmost trust to the leaders to carry on the negotiations as the Irish people would wish them to be carried on.

Speaking at No. 2 platform, Councillor Purcell (London), acting secretary of the I.S.D.L., reminded the Government that their outrages would not intimidate the Irish people in their righteous struggle for freedom.

NO COMPROMISE.

Professor Stockley, University College, Cork, said that the war which the Government was waging on the Irish people was perfectly unjustifiable, and entirely inconsistent with England's declarations in connection with the recent war. England's barbarous treatment of Ireland was bringing disgrace on the name of England throughout the world. It was causing friction in the Colonies. It was preventing an American alliance, and it was bringing English trade to a standstill.

Let England act according to her professions made during the war, and do in Ireland what had been done in the case of Belgium and Poland. Irishmen would accept no compromise over the grave of Terence MacSwiney. (Applause.)