

THE AMERICAN COMMISSION ON CONDITIONS IN IRELAND

INTERIM REPORT

(Continued from last week.)

CHAPTER VII.

Political Aspect of the Imperial British Policy in Ireland

British Administration in Ireland.—In spite of this campaign of murder, arson, terror, and destruction, the Imperial British forces would appear to have failed to preserve British rule in Ireland. Mr. J. L. Fawsitt, Consul-General of the Irish Republic to the United States, quoted Earl Grey as saying that British government of any sort in Ireland was "non-existent," and Mr. Paul J. Furnas read the report of a committee from the Society of Friends in England estimating that the Imperial British Government had "ceased to function over at least 80 per cent. of Ireland." Lord Mayor Donal O'Callaghan, of Cork, testified that it has become almost impossible for the British to collect taxes; and the statement of Commissioner Morgan, of Thurles, that British civil authority had lapsed generally was supported by numerous witnesses.

British Courts in Disuse.—It would appear that the British courts are for the most part empty even of judges; 550 magistrates were said to have resigned office. Lord Mayor O'Callaghan reported such resignations in Cork. Mrs. Michael Mohan in Queenstown, and Commissioner Morgan again in Thurles. In Thurles, said Mr. Morgan, the Government courts were practically falling into disuse altogether by reason of the fact that the people were refusing to go into them. The petty court had quit sitting, and the court house had fallen into dilapidation. People "absolutely refused" to obey a summons, and it was increasingly difficult for the Imperial British Government to secure Irish citizens for jury service.

Lord Mayor O'Callaghan read a report, composed by the Republican Municipality of Cork, on acts committed by the Imperial British forces between 10 p.m. and 3 a.m. during one month, the month of November, 1920. The list includes:

"Two hundred and sixty arrests. Upwards of fifty attempted arrests. Four publicly placarded threats to the citizens of Cork. Hundreds of general outrages. Fifteen trains held up. Upwards of 200 curfew arrests. Four Sinn Fein clubs burned to the ground. One million pounds' damage by fire. Seven men shot dead. Upwards of twelve men dangerously wounded by shots. Attempted assassinations of upwards of ten men. Upwards of 500 houses of private citizens forcibly entered and searched. Much indiscriminate shooting."

The primary duty of a Government to its people, the duty of preserving order and guaranteeing to citizens security of life and property, would seem to us not to be fulfilled by the Imperial British Government of to-day in Ireland. We have had no testimony, except a report by Judge Bodkin, which would lead us to the conclusion that British officials in Ireland to-day are serving any function useful to the Irish people. Instead, they seem to us to be engaged in destruction of Irish social and economic life. In other words, the evidence would seem to show that the campaign of the British forces in Ireland so far has failed to re-establish British authority in Ireland.

The Irish Republic

The Imperial British forces would seem to us likewise to have failed to destroy the civil administration set up by the Irish Republic. Mr. Denis Morgan, of Thurles, Miss Mary McSweeney, of Cork, Mr. Francis Hackett, of New York, and others gave evidences of the intensity of the British campaign against independent Irish political life. This campaign has been unrelenting since the election in December, 1918, which gave popular sanction to the Irish Republic. Ex-Constable Crowley testified that public meetings had been prohibited in his district since March, 1919, and Lord Mayor O'Callaghan submitted proof that every Republican organisation in Cork had been at-

tacked at least once before the great fire in which all of them were burned. In addition, there would appear to have been a continuous war against Republicans in office. We have already discussed the evidence proving that Imperial British forces slew for no discoverable reason other than Republicanism citizens and officials of the Irish Republic. Mr. Morgan's house in Thurles, together with the houses of four other men, was signalled out for attack during the raid by the Imperial British forces upon the town presumably because these five were Republican members of the Council. The Lord Mayors of Cork, MacCurtain, McSweeney, and O'Callaghan, are the most conspicuous instances according to the testimony of men persecuted in public office. Lord Mayor O'Callaghan was witness by his own experience and by that of his Commissioners to the difficulties encountered—such as arrests, threats, shots, and perpetual shadowing by Imperial "police"—while attempting to perform public duties. An affidavit by Seamus MacGearailt, chairman of the Queenstown Urban Council, was placed in evidence showing that he had not been able for six months to approach his own house, much less attend to his official responsibilities. The Imperial British forces would seem to us to be intensively engaged in thwarting the efforts of the duly elected Irish officials to administer the civil government in Ireland.

Failure of the Imperial British Policy in Ireland

In spite of these difficulties and with the Imperial British Government ceaselessly attempting to terrorise the people and to paralyse the social and economic life of the country the Irish Republican Government appears, in the light of voluminous and consistent testimony, to be definitely holding its own and establishing its right to be considered the only working government in Ireland outside the region around Belfast. Witnesses to its strength were numerous and unequivocal before the Commission, including among their number impartial observers from the outside as well as partisan observers from within. The Women's International League of England reported through a visiting committee, "although members of the [Republican] Government are proscribed, their courts illegal, and their revenues forfeit, one can truly say that without them Ireland would be given over to sheer anarchy. The Government had the enthusiastic support of the enormous majority of the population. To a degree never witnessed before by any of the women, it is possible to say that Dail Eireann governs with the consent of the people." The English Friends were convinced that "if the English garrison and armed police were to withdraw, the Sinn Fein government could and would run the country, and that at present order and safety are only found in districts from which the English military and police have been withdrawn." One witness, Mr. Clarke, firmly denied that the spirit of the Irish people had been broken by the Imperial British terror. There were practically no informers amongst them, and there was seldom or never any refusal to meet obligations. Lord Mayor O'Callaghan had "never heard of one case where there has been refusal by anybody to pay their rates on the ground that the bodies [urban and county councils] are Republican." A loan floated by Dail Eireann, according to Consul-General Fawsitt, has been over-subscribed by one-half. On the whole, testified Miss Ruth Russell, of Chicago, "I think there is possibly the greatest unanimity there that has ever existed in any country of the world."

Percentage of Allegiance.—Estimates before the Commission of the percentage of Irish population which is favorable to the Republican Government either by act of ballot or in state of mind varied a good deal, but all were high. Mr. Daniel J. Broderick, an American visitor in Ireland, thought that ninety-nine per cent. of the 100,000 people in Cork were for the Republic. Mr. Morgan, of Thurles, said that in the election of January, 1920, about ninety per cent. of the Urban Councils over Ireland as a whole went Republican. Mr. Francis Hackett, citing figures which he considered "absolutely trustworthy and very closely analysed," claimed that the Sinn Fein party secured 71.9 per cent. of the 699 seats in the County Councils. With the seats secured by Labor, which in the main is sympathetic, the total Republican strength was at least eighty per cent. The most conservative estimate of the popular allegiance, eighty per cent., was made by