

The attitude of the working classes of the United Kingdom would in itself have been a warning to anybody less blinded than the Northcliffe writers. Those who desired to Prussianize England forgot too readily the growth of democracy, the power that had come to the masses of the people to determine how the country should be governed. The evidence is clear enough that if conscription had been adopted earlier the whole labor organization of the Kingdom would have resisted it. If the various labor unions had ordered a general strike what would have been the position of the nation? There would have been a condition of industrial paralysis that would have been fatal to all military preparation. Even in the presence of a great crisis the attitude of the working classes gave much cause for anxiety to those who were responsible for the administration of public affairs. Fortunately for the country, for the Empire, and for the great cause for which the Empire stands in this war, the Government was not in the hands of men who could be stampeded by the attacks of the Northcliffe press. It was the firm attitude of Mr. Asquith and his colleagues against premature conscription that kept the masses of the people in the right mood, and enabled the Empire to present a solid front to the enemy. Mr. Asquith and his colleagues accept a measure of conscription now when they are satisfied that the voluntary system has done all that it can, and when they are able, because of their past resistance to the conscription movement, to carry with them the sympathy and support of the labor organizations, without whose co-operation Britain to-day would be paralyzed.

The Northcliffe press and the Toronto News to the contrary notwithstanding, it is the British Coalition Cabinet, under Mr. Asquith's leadership, whose statesmanship has been vindicated by what has happened on the question of conscription. Never has the patriotism and skill of the British Prime Minister been better exemplified than by the manner in which he has dealt with this important subject. Sir John Willison's views of Mr. Asquith are as amusing and reliable as his biographies, past and present, of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

A Patronage Evil

THE many evils arising from the treatment of public expenditures as party patronage have lately been the subject of much comment in and out of Parliament. Sir George Foster, in particular, gave utterance to sentiments worthy of adoption by his colleagues and by other Governments. There is a widespread desire among men of all shades of politics that the evils of patronage should be prevented, or at least minimized as much as possible. To some extent, so long as the party system remains—and no better system has yet been devised—some manifestation of what is called patronage is unavoidable. Wherever there is authority there must almost necessarily be on the part of the governing body the liberty and the obligation to exercise some measure of discretion in the discharge of its duty, and in the exercise of that discretion it is to be expected that there will be occasions when preference will be given by the authorities to their own friends and supporters. In the case of appointments to the Civil Service patronage can be largely, perhaps wholly, abolished by the establishing of a system of competitive examination. The late Government at Ottawa

went a long way in this direction by adopting a reform measure under which appointments to the "inside service"—the service in the departments at Ottawa—are made after competitive examination, in which all candidates have an equal chance. Efforts are occasionally made to evade this Act, and to obtain appropriations out of which payment may be made to persons appointed in the old-time patronage fashion. But in the main the Act has served its purpose. Both Ministers and members of Parliament have been relieved of much undesirable pressure by the law thus established. An extension of this system to some of the principal branches of the outside service—the service throughout the country—is much to be desired. In the chief cities there should not be much difficulty in applying the reformed system. In this way one very considerable evil of the patronage system, the appointment of incompetent persons for party reasons, would be removed.

There is another form of the patronage evil which, perhaps, is harder to deal with. It is the use of the promise of public works as a means of influencing constituencies. There are in every community persons of easy political virtue who want to be on the winning side, sometimes for the expectation of personal advantage, more frequently, perhaps, for the purpose of securing some public expenditures in their vicinity. Compared with these the intense partisan is the better citizen, for while he may be mistaken he is taking a much higher ground than the one who is destitute of political convictions, and willing, for local or selfish reasons, to support whichever party has control of the patronage. Human nature being what it is, we must not expect that this type of citizenship will cease to exist. But there might well be a pretty general agreement that the type should not be encouraged by any party, and that temptations should not be held out by men in authority to induce electors to base their judgment and their votes on such considerations. It is bad enough that appeals to such interests are made in the strife of Dominion elections. It is worse when the public works of the Dominion are used as corrupting influences in the elections for the Provincial Legislatures.

In one Province a general election is now on. In several others elections are likely to be held during the present year. It will be well if Ministers of the Dominion who are not in sympathy with these debasing influences keep a watchful eye on what is being said and done in the Provincial contests, in relation to Dominion public works. In an Eastern Province the other day a party meeting was held for the nomination of candidates for the Local Legislature. A speaker, an ex-member of the Dominion Parliament and again a candidate for the Federal House, in asking the electors to support the candidates chosen, was not content to discuss Provincial affairs, but told the electors that he could promise them that the candidates nominated would have the cordial support of the Dominion authorities in the obtaining of railways and other public works for the "noble county." There could be no mistake as to the character of this appeal. It was a flagrant attempt by one in close relation to the Ottawa Government, and claiming to have a right to speak for them, to use the public works of the Dominion as a corrupting influence in a Provincial election contest. There are surely men in the Cabinet at Ottawa who will not be willing to allow appeals of this kind to be made to the electors in the Provincial contests now pending.

Ireland

PREMIER Asquith's trip to Dublin to personally look into the Irish situation is just the kind of action which would be expected of him. Wherever there is serious trouble in connection with the administration of public affairs, Mr. Asquith is found at the front, bravely facing all the difficulties and bringing to bear on the situation his remarkable powers for overcoming them. Stern measures were rendered necessary by the extraordinary revolt in Ireland, and stern measures may yet be required. But with Mr. Asquith on the ground and in close touch with the military authorities, it is safe to say that moderation will be combined with firmness, and severe punishment administered only where occasion demand it.

Lord Wimborne's resignation of the office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was probably regarded by him as a necessary consequence of the retirement of Mr. Birrell, Chief Secretary, and Sir Matthew Nathan, the Under-Secretary of State. The political side of the office of Lord Lieutenant is not its strongest one. It is to the Chief Secretary that the people mainly look for the shaping of Irish policy. But in Ireland the Lord Lieutenant is supposed to be the exponent of that policy, and therefore the fates of the Chief Secretary and his representative in Dublin are interwoven. Lord Wimborne has held the office of Lord Lieutenant for a short time only, and until the recent outbreak seemed to discharge his duties satisfactorily.

President Wilson's Rejoinder

IT is not surprising that a measure of derision is offered by some writers in the press on the rejoinder of the United States Government to the German reply to the ultimatum respecting the submarine warfare upon non-combatants. Another note! How much longer will the President content himself with writing notes? Nevertheless a calm examination of the situation seems to justify the President's action. It is true that the last German note was of a procrastinating, evasive and offensive character. Yet it contained something that purported to be an assent to the American demand for an assurance that the German submarine policy be changed. It was not the clear and frank statement which the Government of the United States had a right to expect. It could not be regarded as a satisfactory document. But there was just enough in it to enable the Germans to pretend that they were meeting the American demand. Therefore the American authorities could hardly be expected to immediately break off diplomatic relations. What the American Government have said is practically this: "Your last note is not a satisfactory assurance that you will comply with our request. We decline to accept conditional assurances. We decline to discuss with you our relations with Great Britain or any other of the belligerent nations. We resent your attempt to meddle in our relations with other countries. We are by no means sure that you really meant your note to be an engagement to abandon your piratical work. But since you seem to wish us to do so we will assume that that is what you meant. We will, for the time, take you at your word. But we will keep a watchful eye upon you to see whether events will prove that you are really adopting a different course." Under all the circumstances the present attitude of Mr. Wilson is a reasonable one. We must be content, as Mr. Asquith often says, to "wait and see."