

IRISH MEDIATION PLAN OUTLINED BY PLUNKETT

Constitution as Independent as Canada's, Under British Defense, With Ulster in Control of Local Affairs, is Policy Projected.

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By CARL W. ACKERMAN
London, July 22.—While in Dublin had several conversations with Sir Horace Plunkett, one of the most old and independent statesmen who, firm in the conviction that Lloyd George's home rule bill is dead, stands today as a champion of the dominion plan and an advocate of mediation. In an interesting and exclusive statement he described Ireland's two governments of today and said he had in mind "some one who belongs to your own country," as mediator between Sinn Féin Ireland and the British Government.

"It is hard," he said, "to give in a brief interview an adequate summary of the recent events in Ireland, adequate in the sense that their full significance will be made intelligible to those who are not actually living and working in the country. The best starting point is the armistice.

"At the outbreak of the war a fatal blunder had been made. Instead of seeing in that crisis a magnificent opportunity for ending the Anglo-Irish conflict, it was seized upon as an excuse for postponing its settlement. I need not enlarge upon this calamitous failure of British statesmanship and its consequences. Anything may be forgiven in such catastrophic times. Nor need I dwell upon several occasions during the war when the blunder might have been retrieved, notably when America came in and the Irish in America found themselves performing fighting on the same side as the British, but again when the armistice came and there was no longer any justification for military usurpation of the civil government in Ireland.

"No words can be found too strong in condemning the actual intensification of militaristic regime. It then became evident that British party consideration which had done so much harm in keeping Ireland out of the war, would during peace more than ever dominate England's policy in Ireland.

Failure of Government Policy

When, in December, 1918, Lloyd George appealed to the British electorate on the cry 'Hang the Kaiser' and 'Make Germany pay,' he had to have an Irish plank in his platform. Of course, Ireland also was to enjoy general contentment, and prosperity, and, perhaps, when the Kaiser is hanged and when Germany pays, we too shall have a good time all round, but we are not to have home rule or anything like it.

"Of all British failures in Ireland none has been so complete as that of the present government's policy. Indeed the completeness of its failure in its one redeeming quality. It will gradually bring British public opinion to bear upon Parliament, for just look at the present situation.

"We have now in Ireland two governments, a de jure government exercising its functions through an army of occupation and a de facto government which has the greater force of the people's will at its back. Sinn Féin has its parliament, its civil and criminal courts, holding that the presence of a British army constitutes a state of war. It has also its courts-martial.

"Naturally there is continuous conflict between these two governments. Each issues its daily official reports. The facts upon which both sides are agreed seem to show that the tide of battle is going steadily against the British forces and in favor of the Irish republic.

Partition of Ireland.

"The miniature civil war which broke out in Derry last week, should make even this government pause. The essence of their Irish policy dictated to them by Sir Edward Carson and his friends, is the partition of Ireland. Upon frankly sectarian lines the bill created for the first time in history a northern Ireland, and a southern Ireland. They are so called because it would not look well to call them Protestant and Roman Catholic, but if you look on the map you will observe that the most northern county in Ireland, Donegal, is to be gerrymandered into southern Ireland now.

"The municipal area of Derry happens to be bounded on the east by northern Ireland. Derry with its population almost equally divided in religion and politics, might have gone into either Ireland. The home rulers had the better claim, as its government has a Sinn Féin majority at the present time. Sir Edward Carson did not see his way to any further scrapping of the covenant that was involved in assigning three Ulster counties to southern Ireland, so he retains Derry.

"From what I have said, you will see that this civil war is bound to be the scene of conflict between the two Irelands. Indeed, it is the only spot where one or other Ireland is not so preponderant as to preclude sustained conflict between them. You will observe that Irish supporters of the two nations theory are here further from their British base while upholders of Irish nationality and Irish unity are in immediate contact with one of the most virile parts of nationalist Ireland. The lesson of Derry is one while he who runs may read.

"The chief importance of the railway trouble is its bearing upon the political situation in England. Here you have Irish workers refusing to earn wages by carrying material

which may be used for making war not only upon their own fellow countrymen, but also upon Russians with whose cause they sympathize. It is true that in the case of Poland they have come to an agreement with the government. What they may do in Ireland we do not yet know, but at the time of the hunger strike in Mount Joy prison, they took action which enabled Irish labor to rout Dublin Castle, horse, foot and dragons. But the government must know that they are treading on very dangerous ground. The anomaly, I may add, the gross impartiality of treatment of southern Ireland must lead to searchings of the heart among some of our military rulers, who not so long ago were threatening to resign their commissions rather than risk being ordered to fire upon the irregular forces under the command of the provisional government of northern Ireland.

Independent Constitution Urged.

"The whole situation is so full of dangers that the only sane plan is to scrap the present policy and call upon Irish people, North and South alike, to elect a constituent assembly or constitutional convention representative of the whole of Ireland and to empower that body to adopt any constitution they like within the empire.

"By the form 'within the empire' I understand you mean that Irish people should be permitted to adopt a constitution as practically as independent as that of Canada," I asked.

"Yes, practically as independent, but there would have to be an agreement in regard to military and naval affairs, which is not required in the case of distant dominions. An overwhelming majority in these islands and not an inconsiderable minority in Ireland are firmly convinced their defenses must be under a single central authority, which would obviously have to be predominantly British and personally provided. It was made perfectly clear that no outside interference with the civil government of Ireland should be possible. I see no difficulty about this limitation, nor would any one, once a friendly settlement had been arrived at. But the matter is too long and complicated to deal with now."

Has American Mediator in Mind.

I asked Sir Horace how, under what he calls "dominion plan," he gets over the Ulster difficulty.

"Exactly as similar difficulties have been got over in Canada, South Africa and in Australia. The rest of Ireland would willingly concede at the outset, complete control of local affairs by Ulster, part of Ulster or any other homogeneous area that wanted it. But these and all other questions can only be hopefully approached by

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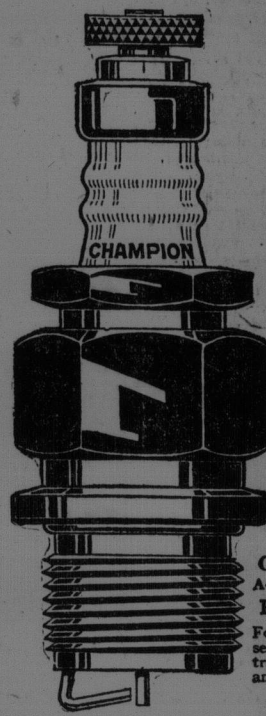
Irishmen in friendly conference in Ireland.

"Would either extreme listen to such a counsel of moderation?" I asked. "Perhaps not at the moment, although I am convinced any genuine offer—the present bill is the reverse of a genuine offer—to meet the wishes of the great majority of Irish people would be met by a response so generous that it would be difficult for that one-fifth of Irish people for whom alone coalition government seems to have any regard to continue its intransigence. Possibly some mediator of international repute may be found to initiate negotiations. I have in mind one who belongs to your country."

THE GREAT IMPERSONATION
By E. Phillips Oppenheim
Starts on Page 11.



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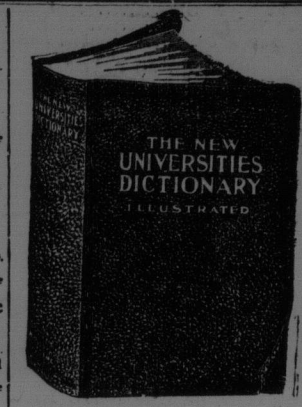
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