

Imperial Germany

many a large number of educated people, who ought to play a leading part in party life, still adopt an attitude of indifference, if not of dislike towards politics. Very clever men often assert with a certain pride that they understand nothing and wish to know nothing of politics. The ignorance which prevails in regard to the most elementary matters of government is often astounding.

Those times are past when it was of no concern to the welfare of the State whether the nation did or did not understand the laws under which it lived. Legislation no longer lies exclusively in the hands of specially trained and experienced officials; Parliament co-operates in the task. But the work of the factions is even now carried out much as the work of the officials alone used to be formerly: to the accompaniment of a complete lack of understanding and judgment on the part of large sections of the community. In connection with economic questions, it is true groups that are interested in agriculture, commerce and industry display a certain amount of activity, as do associations formed for special purposes when matters connected with these special purposes are in question; for the most part, however, the dictum of the Members of Parliament is accepted quite passively by the limited understanding of the common herd. But, as soon as the tangible effects are felt, bitter criticism is heard, which, however, is limited to the individual case and does not result in any stimulation of political understanding.