

Hon. Edward Blake on Ireland's Financial Wrongs.

The first speech delivered by Hon. Edward Blake after his arrival in Ireland was at Drogheda, on Jan. 18, when he addressed a vast and influential assembly on the financial wrongs of the country.

The Hon. E. Blake, M.P., on coming forward to support the resolution was received with prolonged cheers. He said—Mr. Mayor, Lord Mayo, ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to be able to confirm from personal observation the character which Lord Mayo has given to you of the great Longford meeting.

Before I enter upon the general question of overtaxation I wish to make an allusion to the same topic to which Lord Mayo alluded, namely, the reference to the proposed grant of £700,000 a year which is connected with the proposal for a Local Government Bill, I had supposed, and I am disposed to hope still, that that proposal, made very suddenly towards the end of last session, was due to a recognition of the fact that the conduct of the rulers of the country would be indefensible if they persisted in maintaining the view which they up to that time had proclaimed, namely, that a grant could be made for the relief of agricultural distress throughout Great Britain of large magnitude, without considering that Ireland was entitled to a grant on the same principles in reference to the condition of her agricultural distress.

Can it be contended that while the Imperial policy is pursued with reference to the administration of Imperial funds for Britain no help is to be given to the distress in the agricultural condition of Ireland? The man who talks of absolute fiscal unity, who says we are just one country for all purposes, that you are to look on Ireland as if it was Cumberland or Wiltshire or Yorkshire, are the men who now say—'When we come to deal with this question we are helping local rates, and we will give you an equivalent grant. We consider how much you contribute to the whole Imperial revenue, and we will hand you back a proportion of that amount.'

of any country never was drawn, and that is true. But I want to know whether he denied the truth of the facts which made that painful picture? I could not find any such denial in his reply. What he said was this, that he could draw another picture, but he did not go on to do it, the lineaments of that other picture being derived from these things—increased bank deposits, better wages, larger exports of manufactures, and high prices for tenants' right.

and announced that they were to have three judges to interpret the clause of the Act of Union. Let me recommend you when you are dealing with a great constitutional instrument which expresses in a very few words the common-sense understanding of those who frame it, not to agree to hand it over to the interpretation of judges, but to say—'The two great questions entered into this compact, what is the real force and meaning of it as it commends itself to the plain man and to the sense of honour and equity and justice of the whole population?'

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