

how every prospect of obtaining any peaceable settlement, consistent with reason and honour, which is the true (but faintly perceived) interest of the country at large, has been frustrated in consequence of the bidding for the votes of a small but energetic and unscrupulous local section. Observe, again, in Canada, the fate towards which the Commercial Union question is moving. The interests of the manufacturing and commercial classes seem to them to lie upon one side; the agricultural class are being persuaded that their interests lie upon the other side. The astute politicians in possession of the Government are waiting to see for which view the largest or most determined mass of voters is likely to declare itself. The responsible Opposition leaders exhibit nearly equal caution, notwithstanding that their more youthful followers show their usual impatience to take up a new cry, since it may, by possibility, lead to that most desirable of alterations—the change of their party from a party in opposition to a party in power.

The more thoughtful people in these countries have too long contented themselves with quietly satirising the blind unreasonableness of party spirit, or with privately and helplessly deploring the growing tendency towards demagogism. The universal degradation of public life is proceeding with a momentum that ought to be alarming.

Let the reader review the reckless tergiversations of both of the two old English parties during the past ten years, particularly over the Irish question; let him again recall how nearly a party conspiracy had recently delivered over the government of the great city of New York to the hands of Communists; let him also observe what bids party organs and conventions are even now making for any and every unsocial alliance that will carry votes in its train;—will he not pronounce that there is cause for very practical disquietude? Has not the time come when moralising ought to be replaced by action?

Public demoralisation must at last throw a shadow down into the private life of the people. The unfaithful trustee is becoming a frequent figure in modern society. Can we say that he is not to some extent a product of the conspicuous cynicism of political life; or of the still greater cynicism with which the public accepts, rather than tolerates, the habitual breach of the most momentous trusts? Shall the spectacle of demagogism be displayed openly, continually, and successfully, and shall it have no educating effect on the principles of the growing youth of a nation?

How, therefore, can the thought of the community be more usefully employed than in devising means to diminish the corrupt duplicity of politicians? Surely it is at least becoming vitally necessary to rescue legislation touching the important industrial interests of the country from such insincere meddling.

Reformations not infrequently take the form of revivals or restorations. It seems to me that by turning at this moment to our past history we can derive from it both wisdom and hope.

It will be found that the duplicity of our politicians corresponds to a defect in our institutions which did not always exist.

The processes of legislation are distinguishable by analysis into two consecutive parts or degrees. There is, first, the stage of deliberation: the sifting of the matter, by investigation and critical discussion, leading at length to its approval or condemnation. After this comes the enacting stage, when the conclusions arrived at are given the force of law.

Now it is obvious that of these two stages of legislation, the former, under modern free governments (where authority is only the minister of public opinion), is really the more substantial, if not the conclusive part of the process. To place this preliminary stage, in the case of class legislation, beyond the reach of the political parties would be a great gain. If the deliberative function could be wrested from Parliament, the merely formal power of legislation would be left a comparatively harmless possession. Now, that a virtual division of those functions can be effected in the legislative machinery is not a matter of theory. It is one of the most conspicuous facts of early English constitutional history. For a long time after the origination of English Parliaments, they were, as far as legislation was concerned, no more than deliberating and advisory bodies. Parliament only petitioned for new laws: the power of actually enacting them was entirely optional with the Crown. The tradition of that original procedure has been preserved by Parliamentary usage to this day. Turn to a current volume of the Statutes of Canada and we shall find it declared at the head of every chapter, that "*Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts,*" as follows.

This form is now of course a mere fiction, corresponding to that twin fiction which represents the Crown as the seat of executive power. Parliament now enacts, and a Committee of Parliament called the Ministry carries the laws into effect.

But in the continuance of the form the evidence remains that for a great series of years the practical legislation of the country was carried on (and carried on with fair success), with the deliberative function vested on the one hand in Parliament, and the enacting power on the other hand reserved to the King. In respect of their function, therefore, the Industrial Parliaments I have proposed would not be an innovation but a restoration. Voluntary representative assemblies constituted for deliberative purposes only would reoccupy a place similar to that formerly held by the House of Commons, before it had absorbed the formal enacting power as the transferee of the prerogatives which anciently belonged to the King.

But if it must be admitted that there is precedent for the institution of a representative body for deliberation merely, does any basis exist in modern times making its revival possible, if it should be thought to be beneficial? Can we establish a representation substantially distinct from the existing political assemblies? Can an independent constituency be found? Here again our English history comes to our assistance. In their constitution as well as in their function the ancient Commons assemblies offer a

model: following which a modern Industrial Parliament may again be reconstructed.

The first Parliamentary assemblies, not in England only but throughout Europe, were simple meetings of deputies of the different classes or *estates* in the country, summoned by the Crown chiefly to agree on the part of their respective constituents to special assessments being made upon the different classes of subjects for extraordinary expenses of state. The same meetings were naturally made use of for the purpose of discussing measures required for their common welfare. The divisions of classes in those early times were few and simple. On the one hand were the merchants and handicraftsmen, forming the population of the chartered boroughs. On the other were the agricultural yeomanry. Above and apart from all stood the great landowners—the military nobility and the endowed clergy. To each of these classes the King issued separate writs; to the nobility personally; to the yeomanry and the burghers through the sheriffs. In the early writs are found injunctions to the Sheriffs to see that the representatives from these class constituencies should be persons of the like rank and calling. Thus the membership of those ancient representative assemblies stood not for numbers and localities, but for classes and interests. They were in constitution really Industrial Parliaments.

Events seem to have been silently preparing the way for the restoration of a similar institution.

Nothing it appears to me would be more feasible than for the different class interests (severally organised as they now are in all English-speaking countries), to join in a series of great representative conferences for the preliminary debate in a non-political form of any question which, like the Irish land disputes, may involve diverse class interests. On this side of the water an assembly might perhaps be first convened for the solution of questions like that of continental Commercial Union, on the one hand, or of a more universal Commercial Union between all English-speaking countries on the other; both of which may really be reduced to a thorough enquiry into the true virtues and the proper limitations (as now developed by practical experience), of a moderate protective policy. Vexed questions between labour and capital and the like would naturally come before such a forum. In these mutual conferences evidence would be brought to the true facts bearing on inter-class difficulties, fallacies would be exploded and misrepresentations corrected. There all parties might probably finally settle down to business-like conclusions based on knowledge, and on reason and justice, these being after all the mutual interest as well as the common desire of all honest men. A clearing house would be established where practical experience and opinions would be compared and balances struck.

None, I think, would be better pleased than the politicians themselves by the revival of assemblies founded upon such principles, and for such purposes, as an addition to our modern institutions. Could anything relieve the mind of a leader of the Government more than to find it possible to relegate every movement touching class interests, and likely to arouse class jealousies, to await the discussions of an independent assembly for whose deliberations no party was responsible, and whose conclusions would nevertheless indubitably represent the collective judgment of the country? The reluctance of the party leaders in Canada to touch the Commercial Union question is evidence that there is no anxiety on the part of the politicians that practical industrial class issues should become mixed up with the party fortunes. Such perplexities are not courted by politicians. They do not love the ordeal of picking their way blindfold over a series of burning questions. But the system leaves them no choice. At a general election the same body of constituents chooses (often by one and the same act and in the same persons) its representative for legislative purposes and a representative through whom the support or condemnation of the Ministry is to be pronounced. The fate of every general election is the result of a balance of popularity. A good Administration may be defeated if its action upon some legislative question has been offensive to some section of a constituency. On the other hand, a universally condemned Administration may maintain itself by a prudent alliance with some popular legislative policy. The people have no opportunity of casting a clear, distinct vote. They cannot give expression to their legislative wishes, independently of their judgment on the acts of an Administration.

Confusion between executive and legislative functions has been condemned by the best thinkers upon constitutional law, beginning with Montesquieu. The British experiment, resulting in the corruption and inefficiency of modern political life, confirms the wisdom of the older theory. The one-sided development, which in the long struggle between Crown and people our institutions have undergone hitherto, is responsible for the unsatisfactory treatment of so large a part of modern legislation. As a result of that struggle the existing constitution in "free" countries is a system under which the parties (in or out of Parliament), under one or another of a series of legal fictions, are at once the legislators for the country and its governors. The description given in sarcasm of the two principal parties found in every country as the "party of the ins" and the "party of the outs," is literally and necessarily true. The control of the Administration is regarded as the greater business of Parliament. The possession of the Government is consequently the chief party objective. It presents itself as a conspicuous and continuing goal of contention, offering tangible victories and holding forth a prospect of substantial rewards.

Hence the great national parties tend to develop into two great permanent corporations existing for these purposes. Their names, Liberal or Conservative, Republican or Democrat, do not indicate any particular principles. They are merely the continuing corporate names under which they maintain a perpetual corporate personality throughout the most complete changes of membership, leadership, and even of ostensible principles. Such parties, as Sir Henry Maine has pointed out, are an irrepressible growth from human nature.