

Appendix II.

reaction in public sentiment, which was undoubtedly caused by the punishments inflicted, ought to be allowed to settle. Your petitioners feel that another execution so long after will arouse popular feeling and prevent the quiet acceptance of the new measure for the government of Ireland. Whatever gratitude this measure might evoke will be countered by another act of severity, and the new Government will have new difficulties to face for which it is in no way responsible.

5. Inexcusable as Roger Casement's actions in this matter may be, it must be remembered that he has performed great services to the Empire and humanity by his work in the Congo and Putumayo. His life has been spent serving the country in fever-stricken regions in West Africa and Brazil, where his health was permanently impaired. Returning to Ireland sick and broken with disease after long years of exile, he found a state of affairs existing two or three years ago which might easily distract his mind and upset his judgment.

6. Your petitioners do not wish to draw any comparisons which might seem invidious, but they venture to express the belief that if clemency were shown it could be justified by abundant precedent.

7. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the extreme penalty of death may not be inflicted upon Roger Casement.

To the RIGHT HONOURABLE H. H. ASQUITH, K.C., M.P., Prime Minister.

Sir,—We, the undersigned, beg leave to place before you certain considerations affecting the case of Roger David Casement, now under sentence of death for high treason. Our object is to show reason why the sentence of the Court should not be executed.

We will not occupy your time with matters as well known to you as to ourselves, and on which your judgment cannot be challenged, such, for example, as the conspicuous public services of the condemned man and so forth. We address ourselves solely to points on which you may desire information as to the state of public opinion.

We assume that the penalty for high treason is peculiar in criminal law inasmuch as it depends for its sanction not on the general principle of the sacredness of law, but on its effect on the public peace. The conclusion is arrived at in every case by balancing the deterrent effect of carrying out the sentence against the conciliatory effect of remitting it. Recent events in South Africa have accustomed the public to this view. We therefore need trouble you with no apology for treating the decision as one of expediency only.

In our opinion, Casement had not, up to the time of his trial, any serious hold on the Irish people. His Nationalist writings were circulated in America, not in Ireland. His political projects, being those of an educated diplomatist, were too technical to be understood by such groups as the Republican Brotherhood and the irreconcilable section of Sinn Féin. We are confident that if during your recent visit to Ireland you inquired what Casement was driving at you did not receive a single well-informed reply. You certainly did not find him a national hero; and we venture to assume that you do not wish him to become a national hero.

There is, however, one infallible way in which that can be done; and that way is to hang him. His trial and sentence have already raised his status in Nationalist Ireland;