

MacDonald Calms Rebels in Labour Party, but Young Liberals Threaten Trouble

by Walter G. Fuller (*Special Correspondent of The Eagle*)

London April 23 — The Easter weekend is a great holiday time for Englishmen. From Maundy Thursday evening till the following Tuesday morning shops and offices all over the country are closed tight and everybody from office boy to boss does his best to forget all about business. Schools close, college students take a vacation and the honorable members scatter themselves all over the landscape.

In the midst of all this holiday-making, poor Ramsay MacDonald alone must keep his nose to the grindstone. For this is the time that the Independent Labour Party has chosen for its annual conference and since the I.L.P. is the fighting arm of the Labour Party, and the thinking head as well, it must be kept in order and in good humor.

Rank and File Restive

There have been rumors flying around that the rank and file of the I.L.P. were getting restive, that their bright hopes for the dawn of the Socialist millennium, with the advent of the Labour Government had been rudely shattered, and we all know what an unpleasant change can come over some people when they are disappointed.

This change of temper on the part of influential sections of the I.L.P. has been making itself felt lately in a very real and practical way — in short, as Mr Micawber would say, funds have been hard to raise. Contributions to the Labour Party chest have not been coming in well of late. Local organizers have reported considerable difficulty in stirring up enthusiasm in the local branches of the I.L.P.

The leaders of the party were quick to sense the trouble ahead, so they impressed on the Prime Minister that whatever the demands of his high office might be, and even if he did want to write a polite letter to M. Poincaré, or to Signor Mussolini, or to any other foreign potentate, he must postpone that diversion and come to York to the I.L.P. conference and face the music.

MacDonald's Charm all Potent

Well, Ramsay MacDonald has gone to York and spoken and conquered. He has, of course, faced far more hostile audiences than the one that awaited him on Easter Monday in the old Minster City. The Prime Minister has a winning way with him and he seems to have exercised all his quality of what Barrie calls "char-r-r-m," with the result that the young men in the I.L.P. have been silenced for the time being, and MacDonald has the consciousness of having spent the Easter holidays very profitably for his party.

The stories that are going about telling of the decline and fall of the Liberal Party are "bunk". There are no other words for them. Apart from the vexed problem of leadership, which for personal reasons cannot be dragged out into the open and settled honestly in the way most men desire, the Liberals are a fairly happy crew. Feelings would be hurt by a frank discussion of Asquith's merits and demerits as a leader. It would be such bad taste; it would be embarrassing.

Young Liberals Humiliated

In consequence a vigorous group of young Liberals, able, keen, eager new men, full of talent, are stultified and humiliated day after day in the business of the House. They are treated with a hostility based on jealousy by the Labour members. They are unable to speak in debates because they cannot "catch the Speaker's eye" — in other words they cannot get their names placed high enough up on the lists which are handed every day to the Speaker, from which he chooses speakers in the order in which they names appear on these lists.

Moreover, the Labour party organizers in the country do not hesitate to attack these same Liberal members in their own constituencies, conveniently forgetting the awkward fact that it is by the voices of these members in the House, day after day, that the Labour Party is kept in office.

Near End of Their Patience

But these Liberal members are now at the end of their patience. A few days ago at a Liberal party meeting there was some very plain speaking and the Liberals of the left Wing said very clearly that the time had come for a change. Henceforth, they were going to play the game off their own bat and insisted on being allowed to take a more effective part in the debates in the House and, at the same time, look out for themselves more actively and

attack their Labour opponents more aggressively in the own constituencies.

All this seems to indicate that the coming session of Parliament will be even more entertaining than the last, and American visitors to London, if everything else fails, may be sure of a good show, with plenty of human interest in it, every day except Saturday and Sunday, in the House of Commons, Westminster.

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