

LONDON'S POLITICAL WEEKLIES NOT PAYING PROPOSITIONS BUT WIELD AN INFLUENCE

(By Clifford Sharp in New York Herald Tribune).

To any one who knows the political life of London the news of the amalgamation this month of "The New Statesman" and "The Nation" is exceedingly interesting. Neither is a paper of Great Circulation. Recently "The New Statesman" was selling about 11,000 copies a week and "The Nation" rather more than half that number; but their political importance bore no relation whatever to these comparatively insignificant figures. The latter represented fairly closely the attitude of those Liberals who follow Mr. Lloyd George—that is to say the great bulk of the Liberal party—the former represented, though much less definitely, the right wing of the Labor party. The fusion of the two is an old project blocked hitherto by Liberal Labor rivalry. Its accomplishment marks the passing of a definite milestone in the inevitable progress of Liberal-Labor co-operation.

Weekly Review

The six-penny weekly reviews (of "Politics and Literature") hold in England a very special position, hallowed by tradition and constantly reinforced by fresh ability. They have no real equivalent in any other country. The New York "Nation" and "New Republic" approach them closely in style and format, but suffer, in any comparison, from two main disabilities. One I suppose is the distance between New York and Washington and the other is the lack of that tradition of importance and public responsibility which the English weekly established long ago and still follows. A London weekly with a circulation of only four figures may find itself quitted with deserved respect all over the world.

As a matter of fact this respect has nearly always been justified. The six-penny weeklies of London reflect very accurately on the whole what the various sections of the English government class are thinking, and that fact is very well understood all over Europe. Yet, actually, they are not party organs. They are all substantially as well as nominally independent. The great conservative weekly "The Spectator" (circulation about 20,000) under the forty-year editorship of the late Mr. St. Loe Strachey constantly took an independent line, always, for example, stanchly opposing the creation of any trade tariffs whatsoever. The radical "Nation," under the late Mr. H. W. Massingham, never in any instance kowtowed to the Liberal party whips. It was Liberal but primarily it was Massingham. As for "The New Statesman" it has never owned allegiance to any party and although the present Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, has for some years owned a

substantial block of its shares, it has never hesitated to criticize the policy of the Labor party, either, in or out of office, and his never held any direct or systematic communication with any of the Labor party leaders.

Has Drawback

This characteristic intellectual independence has its drawbacks and its advantages. The main drawbacks is that nine of the London weekly reviews, except "The Spectator" has even (in the present century at any rate), been able to pay its way. They have all had to be subsidized to a greater or less extent; yet never, as far as my knowledge goes, do the subsidizers seek to influence editorial policy. Their independence is no mere form of words, it is an almost sacred tradition. A few months ago the editor of "The Saturday Review" a review that was famous and powerful thirty odd years ago, when Frank Harris was its editor and Bernard Shaw its musical critic—was ordered by his proprietors to support a certain policy of Imperial Free Trade in which he did not believe. He resigned rather than obey and in so doing was supported by almost the whole press of Great Britain. His staff left with him and within one week they founded a new review ("The Week-end Review"), which almost instantly became one of the most lively and widely read reviews in England. What happened to the derelict "Saturday Review," left without editor or staff, I do not know.

I relate that incident because it is a thing that might easily happen on any of the leading English reviews. Their independence in their creed and the source of all the real influence that they wield. Lord Beaverbrook once complained to me, in days now long past, that in spite of the great circulation of his newspapers, they seemed to have no political influence at all. That he understood that quite clearly was a substantial tribute to his real journalistic ability. He has lately found a way of giving his papers a certain factitious influence through his sustained campaigns against Mr. Baldwin's leadership of the Conservative party. But the fact remains that it is the small independent papers that really count in England—partly because they usually have more brains and writing ability behind them than any popular newspaper, partly because of their patent disinterestedness in relation to public questions, but above all, because they are read almost religiously, both by the higher executive civil service and my other journalists. A leading article in "The New Statesman," for example, often reappears, suitably paraphrased, of course, and without acknowledgement, in fifty daily or weekly newspapers throughout England. On such a review one

writes with the definite knowledge, not that one's words will be read by two or three million people, but that they will be read by certain statesmen, certain editors, certain heads of civil departments—all of whom count.

Occasionally in England a daily paper attains a similar position. Twenty years ago, for example, a London evening paper, "The Westminster Gazette," under the extraordinarily able editorship of Mr. J. A. Spender, was easily the most influential paper in England, and perhaps even in all Europe. eYt I believe its circulation never exceeded 30,000 against the 1,500,000 or 1,800,000 of "The Daily Mail." "The Manchester Guardian" again, under Mr. Scott has for more than a generation exerted an influence out of all proportion to its comparatively small circulation. You will find "The Manchester Guardian" and "The New Statesman" and "The Nation" kept on file in every Foreign Office in Europe, along with "The London Times." And very Likely you will find there no other English newspapers at all.

Do Not Pay

Yet neither "The New Statesman" nor "The Nation" has ever paid its way. I doubt whether, even now that they have joined forces, they will be able to escape the necessity of subsidization. But they and their contemporaries will live. The Sunday papers are taking away much of their advertisement revenue, but nothing of their influence or of their place in English political life. They represent pretty adequately the best brains of the parties to which they are loosely attached, and even the foreign observer, if he keeps an eye on them all—or, say on the leading three of them—may be pretty sure that he knows everything he need know of what is in the minds of Great Britain's leading statesmen. The combined "New Statesman-Nation" will not reflect the actual views either of Mr. MacDonald or of Mr. Lloyd George on this question or that. But if its new editor knows his business it will certainly reflect the mental atmosphere in which those statesmen are making their decisions and will give practically all of the material upon which those decisions are based. The weekly reviews of London are par excellence the organs of the English governing class and their read independence is the foundation of their authority. That apparent paradox does not seem to find practical illustration in any other country in the world. But Printing House Square in London is less than one mile from Whitehall, whereas the New York newspaper offices are two or three hundred miles from the White House. Perhaps that is part of the reason. In London it is so much easier to dine with a statesman and then to write—as independently as you please—but knowing exactly what he is talking about.

COSTS \$180,000 TO BROADCAST LATIN

New York, Feb. 16—You folks who slithered through your high school latin found yourself missing out on \$180,000 worth of broadcast.

You heard, of course, his holiness Pope Pius XI, but even though you got A-plus in latin, it is unlikely you had more than a vague idea of what he said.

Yet more than 1000 skilled technicians and artists, and the facilities of 150 broadcasting stations brought the papal words to American houses. The facilities themselves had a physical value of more than \$35,000,000.

Aside from the technical army, the services of announcers were needed at every broadcasting station in the networks, and "talent" stood by in all studios to guard against the emergency of wire trouble or re-transmission difficulties.

The \$180,000 includes the cost of several weeks of experiment by the broadcasting companies, the National Broadcasting Company alone estimating that \$40,000 was spent in this manner. Expense entailed on the other side of the Atlantic is not included in the estimate, which is based on figures of the National and Columbia broadcasting systems

Our "How it Began" item for today: The saying, "It's a poor rule that won't work both ways," comes from the fact that the numbers are revers-



Week, Feabruary 7th.—14th, 1931

The outstanding event of this week was the Wolf Cub food and handicraft sale, held on Saturday, the 14th., at the Harvey Studio, by kind permission of Mr. F. T. Pridham. This was held with a view to raising sufficient funds for each Pack to buy a dining tent for use, with the parent Scout Troops, at the District Camps. Unfortunately, dreadful weather and the usual, and unavoidable counter-attractions somewhat queer-ed our pitch. Good foodstuffs were plentiful provided by three City packs: 2nd., 4th., and 7th. Frederic-tions. Excellent handicraft exhibits were shown by the Cathedral, and St. Paul's packs, particularly conspicuous being the work of the 7ths., which included a work-basket on a stand, a good raffis needle-case, bound loose-leaf notebooks, a blotting-pad, and a clever painting. The Cathedral contributed well-made toys, the Devons, a good coat-hanger. Several uniformed Cubs were in attendance, and did their work very ably. Mrs. W. B. Lemont and Miss H. J. Babbitt gave invaluable assistance at the counter. The thanks of all concerned are due to those who so kindly provided the excellent food-items, while the handicrafts, although few in number, showed great promise. It is regrettable that some of our City District packs have not yet realized the meaning of the slogan District Collaboration. The staff of the Harvey Studio gave generous and timely assistance.

No session of the Akela Course was held last week, the next, and 5th. session, being planned for Monday, February 16th., at the Cathedral Hall.

Fredericton Junction pack met on Friday, the Cub Commissioner assisting. There was a good attendance.

The following Wolf Cub League Basketball games have been played during the past week:

On Monday at the St. Paul's Gym the Brunswick Street Baptist Explorers defeated 7th. Frederictons, 9—0. Teams as in previous games. Referees: George E. Foster (Explorers), John Watson (7th. Frederic-tions).

On Tuesday, at St. Dunstan's Gym 4th. Frederictons defeated 2nd. Frederictons, 6—5.

4th. Frederictons: I. Swift (c); J. Swift (f); B. Duffy (f); Shepherd (d); F. McLaughlin (d); McLennan, Wilby (sps).

2nd. Frederictons: D. Logan (c); D. Lingley (f); W. Clark (f); C. Vail (d); R. Brewer (d).

Referees: M. Doherty (4th. F'ton) and Wm. Lingley (2nd. F'ton).

On Saturday an exhibition game was played at the Dawson Y Gym Marysville, between the Marysville pack and the 4th. Frederictons, Marysville winning 10—3.

Teams were as follows:—

Marysville: A. Tait (c); White (f); Peterson (f); Macpherson (d); Thorpe (d); L. Macpherson (sp).

4th. Fredericton: A. Owen (c); Thompson (f); O'Leary (f); Duffy (d).

Referees: Douglas Macpherson (Marysville) and M. Doherty (4th. F'tons).

BOY SCOUT NEWS

Fredericton Junction, Friday.

After the Cub Pack meeting, the Boy Scout Troop met, under Scoutmaster Brownrigg and Assistant Scoutmaster Harry MacCracken. The Cub Commissioner attended by invitation. This Troop has made remarkable progress. Four full Patrols were present, the total attendance being 23 boys. These are getting uniforms quickly, and the red and blue neckerchieves look exceedingly well. Great credit is due to both leaders for this splendid showing, particularly to Mr. MacCracken for ably carrying on during the recent indisposition of his Chief.

ROBT PUGH,

District Wolf Cub Commissioner.

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