

New Progressive Liberal Party in Britain Seen as Outcome of Labour's Defeat

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

London, October 31 — Well, so far as the British public is concerned the general election is all over — except for the shouting of the Conservatives, the recriminations of the Labourites, and the lamentations of the Liberals. The public as a whole, party loyalties apart (which, by the way, are wearing pretty thin in these post-war days), is greeting with unalloyed cheerfulness the prospect which the overwhelming Conservative victory gives us of being rid for three or four years at least of political crises, electioneering tactics and the whole business and paraphernalia of general elections.

Chief Causes of Landslide

If I were asked to say what in my view were the chief causes of the phenomena that mark the general election of 1924 — the Conservative landslide, the disappearance of the Liberal Party, and the sudden burst of hostility to Labour among the lower middle class voters, especially among the women — I should answer:

1. British hostility to the foreigner, which was being exploited for all it was worth by the Conservative press and the politicians in their opposition to Ramsay MacDonald's Russian treaty.

2. The success of the Labour and Conservative parties' propaganda, which took the line that the voter's choice lay between two extremes — that this was not time for middle-of-the-road Liberalism; either you were for Bolshevism and for handing the British Empire, lock, stock and barrel over to the Soviet Government, or you were for "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the King." For that reason the calm and judicial appeal of the Liberty party for making a treaty with Russia, but refusing a loan, fell on deaf ears.

3. Lastly, a multitude of middle-class voters put their marks against the Labour party in the polling booths because of a deep-seated sense of disappointment and anger at the failure of MacDonald's government to "deliver the

goods." A new Jerusalem had been promised "in England's green and pleasant land," and where was it?

Long Conservative Tenure Seen

Those, I believe, are the three chief factors that moved the popular mind to think and act as it did on Election Day, with the result that whatever happens short of a collision of this old Earth with another planet, the Conservatives under Standley Baldwin are in office and in power for the next three or four years at least. The Labour party under Ramsay MacDonald will be a weak and ineffective but noisy opposition for that period. As for the Liberals — well, they simply do not exist as a political factor in the new Parliament.

What will happen? Who can say? At first glance it looks as though we have chosen a government that will give us stability, tranquility and prosperity. That is what the Conservatives have promised us. They boast that they have no panaceas to cure bad trade and unemployment and high taxes, but they say that by abstaining from Socialistic experiments and from freak legislation they will create so favourable a condition for business to go ahead in this country that all our present-day discontents will be cured, and that in three years we shall be basking in the sunshine of pre-war prosperity. We shall see.

Grave Problems to Face

Meantime, there are some grave problems at home and abroad that require immediate attention. Ireland is in the limelight again with the question of the Ulster boundary. The Tory diehards are not easy people to manage in any matter connected with Ireland, and Mr Baldwin will have his hands full right from the start.

Then there is India. The news that is coming through is serious enough to force its way onto the front page of the newspapers. Again, Mr Baldwin and his friends are not a set of very patient or reasonable men when it comes to

considering the demands of India for self-government. The new Conservative Minister for India is likely to be far less tolerant of what is called "Indian unrest" than either of his Labour or Liberal predecessors.

Russia Another Legacy

And there is, of course, Russia. That is another of Ramsay MacDonald's legacies that the new Conservative Government will have to face at once. The present relationship between the two countries cannot continue indefinitely. Something will have to be done, and the British electorate has decided that whatever it is they would rather have Stanley Baldwin do it than Ramsay MacDonald.

In all this state of mess and muddle the Liberals profess to see their chance. It will not come for two or three years yet. For that period at least they are, as a party, doomed to wander in the wilderness. Much will happen in those years. The leaders of today will have gone; new men will come to the forefront. Political issues will change. Party alignments will be made afresh. Many observers today are saying that the Conservative victory will have its reaction in the rise of a militant, class-war,

revolutionary political party of the Left. That this in its turn will lead to the creation of an extremist Right Wing party of Constitutionalists. And that in between will arise a new Progressive Liberal party.

New Party Already in the Making

Certainly we already have the makings of this new formation. Winston Churchill, a keen, far-sighted politician if ever there was one, is doing his bit to shape things that way. He is now the leader of a little group of Constitutionalists. As things are at present it looks very much as if Mr Wheatley, the Minister of Health in MacDonald's Cabinet, is ready to create and to lead a Left Wing party of Reds. The Middle party will be composed of moderate Labour men, Liberals and Progressive Conservatives.

These things will not, of course, come to pass yet awhile, but the signs of the times seems to point to their inevitability. Certainly the general election of 1924 is the last at which we shall see Conservatives, Liberals and Labour as we know them today lined up in battle array.

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