

numerous categories of citizens from the franchise was a contradiction of the principles of equity and reasonable state policy. At the same time it was recognized that the proposed assembly would comprise a considerable portion of the social forces of the Empire and serve as the center of a social movement, which would tend to secure political liberty and regular national representation. Therefore it was considered desirable that in the event of the carrying out of the Boulogne or a similar project the delegates of the zemstvos and municipalities should participate in the assembly to the greatest possible extent, with the object of forming a compact group and to obtain a guarantee of individual and public liberties. Numerous resolutions embodying the foregoing criticisms were adopted unanimously, as were also resolutions complaining of excessive administrative and police control of elections and insisting that publicity be given to the proceedings of the proposed assembly which should be in direct relations with the Emperor without interference from the council of the Empire.

Although the newspapers of the Empire had been strictly forbidden even to mention the congress, the *Slovo* of St. Petersburg, printed a long dispatch on the 20th giving a detailed report of the proceedings.

British Politics.

Preparatory to the general parliamentary elections, which cannot be much longer deferred, Mr. Balfour, the British prime minister of Great Britain and leader of the Conservative party, has introduced a new element into British politics (p. 121) by proposing a redistribution of parliamentary seats, or, as we should say in this country, a new apportionment. But the redistribution is not proposed upon any general basis of population as would be necessary in this country. The Opposition charge that its purpose is to lessen the representation of Ireland, which sends Opposition members, and to increase the aggregate Conservative representation in England. In this manner it is suspected that the Conservatives hope to save themselves from the defeat which it is believed they must encounter at the general elections on the present parliamentary distribution. Under the plan proposed by Mr. Balfour, Irish representation would be reduced by 21 members, on the ground that Ireland's population has fallen off;

whereas plural voting, University representation, and other historic inequalities would be preserved in England. The Irish view of the scheme as stated by T. P. O'Connor is reported as follows:

It is founded on no principle whatever, except to diminish Irish representation. A limit is arbitrarily fixed for counties, so as not to interfere with English counties, and for boroughs so that about twenty-five English boroughs, noted as hotbeds for corruption and represented mainly by Unionists, just escape extinction. For this trick, the meanest and shabbiest ever attempted to be perpetrated by England against Ireland, to be essayed by a moribund ministry and an utterly discredited leader like Balfour, makes its audacity almost inconceivable. The bitterest part of it is that Ireland's decline in population, of which Balfour is taking advantage, is the direct result of the Union and the British parliament's atrocious dealings with Ireland. Under the Act of Union the Parliament of England guaranteed Ireland 103 members in the British Parliament "forever," and if Ireland now got representation according to her population in 1800 she would have 103 members, while, when the reform bill of 1858 was introduced, she would, if the same basis had been taken, have 261 members. When in the 1858 debates the Irish members demanded an increase of Irish representatives the British ministry refused on the plea that the Act of Union guaranteeing Ireland 103 was really a treaty which could not be abrogated without the consent of both parties. Yet now, when owing to England's infamous rule, the opportunity presents itself of reducing Irish representation by adopting a population basis, it is jumped at by the British ministry despite the emphatic protests of the other party to the treaty.

The ministerial scheme evoked an adverse ruling from the Speaker on the 18th. John Redmond had asserted the right of the House to act upon the redistribution resolutions in detail, whereas Mr. Balfour insisted that they be voted upon as a whole. The Speaker sustained Mr. Redmond. Under this ruling the Irish members would have been able, so the dispatches have it, to prolong the session into the winter, and Mr. Balfour withdrew the resolutions.

The result of an important bye-election which came off on the 29th of June, being in harmony with the results of most of these elections recently, further indicates the direction of the political trend in Great Britain. It was for the constituency of East Finsbury,

which is a part of London and has been strongly Conservative. At the preceding election the Conservative majority was 347. This is now turned into a Liberal majority of 768. The circumstances are significant. J. Allen Baker, the Liberal candidate, who had been defeated by 347 at the general elections, which occurred during the Boer war (vol. viii, p. 441), was again the Liberal candidate; the Conservative candidate, Mr. Cohen, was widely respected for his philanthropy and derived no little strength no doubt from his family relationship with the Rothschilds. The lines were sharply drawn between the progressive and the reactionary policies which in Great Britain as in this country are in conflict, and the municipal issues of London were evidently uppermost in the public mind. Regarding this fact the *Manchester Guardian* of the 30th said: "Mr. Baker's connection with the London County Council supplies some explanation of the new tendency of opinion. Mr. Cohen found it necessary to remind the electors on his placards that they were not voting in a municipal election. Londoners seem to be realizing at last that social reform requires a sympathetic Parliament behind a progressive County Council." Mr. Baker is a pronounced supporter of the progressive policy advocated by the leader of the Liberal party, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who described it in a recent speech in these terms: "Let the value of land be assessed independently of the buildings upon it, and upon such valuation let such contribution be made to those public services which create the value. What is our rating system? It is a tax upon industry and labor, upon enterprise, upon improvement; it is a tax which is the direct cause of much of the suffering and overcrowding in the towns. And remember that overcrowding is not a symptom only, but a cause of poverty, because it demoralizes its victims and forces them to find relief in excesses. By throwing the rates on site values, communities which created these values will be set free—free in the sense that they can expand, free to direct their own destinies." In other words, Mr. Baker is what would be known in this country as a single taxer.