

# WELSH NATIONALISM:

WHAT IT STANDS FOR.

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## THE REMEDY

THE remainder of this book will be very short. Ostensibly it will contain the remedy for the state of things diagnosed in the first part. Actually it will be merely the emphasising of what that diagnosis should have made abundantly clear. For it was the kind of diagnosis that necessarily indicates the treatment. *As Wales has been ruined from without, so it can only be restored from within.* It is on the basis of her historic nationhood alone that Wales can rebuild her national life. Let not the people of South Wales delude themselves that the English Government is concerned to rebuild a "special area." A "special area" has no claim to be regarded as an end in itself. Transference, an occasional factory or so (to keep up the illusion of hope), a few crumbs off the rearmament table, the anodyne of social service (as necessary, under the present system as morphia for acute pain) this is all that any "special area" has any right to ask for. For the unit is the country, and no area has any right to hinder the economic development of the country as a whole for its sake. "Economic considerations must in the main determine the location of industry. No decision can be come to without balancing all the factors, including the respective merits of old-established and new industrial districts." Those are the calm words of Sir Malcolm Stewart, and they mean that no claims on the score of sympathy, humanitarianism, or respect for tradition and history can

outweigh economic considerations. And those economic considerations, under the present system, will be the considerations that appeal to *English* capitalism. The unit is England, of which Wales is now a part. If economic considerations demand the transference of population from one part of England—South Wales, to another part of England—the Midlands and the South, then it is obviously the *duty* of the unemployed of South Wales to submit to transference, and Sir Malcolm Stewart quite rightly rates them for their reluctance. They refuse to do what is best for the "country" and for themselves, and may legitimately be compelled to mend their ways.

The *only* argument that can meet this crushing charge is the plea of Welsh nationhood. Let no one suppose that it will make any great difference to Wales which English party plans its economy, whether the present capitalist system or a Socialist system at some indeterminate date in the future; the crucial and deadly fact in both cases will be that the unit will be England and the centre London. Mr. Ernest Bevin's complaint against the present system is equally valid against the Socialist alternative—the "manipulation of trade by gentlemen sitting in London, regardless of its effect either upon the Welsh nation, character, or upon the local authorities." Wales has deluded itself into supposing that the choice lies between two English systems. Such a choice is a choice between two evils; its tragedy is that it is quite unnecessary. For there is a good for Wales, and that is a Welsh good; it consists in taking Wales seriously, and substituting for Wales, the geographical expression, Wales the nation. *Above all it consists in regarding Welsh nationhood not as a blind opposition*



*to everything English, but as a challenge and an inspiration to constructive effort.* It is that challenge that the Welsh Nationalist Party has accepted. It proposes to Wales the rebuilding of its life on the abiding basis of its nationhood.

The aims of the Welsh Nationalist Party therefore are,

A. POLITICALLY—A WALES WITH DOMINION STATUS.

B. CULTURALLY—A WELSH WALES.

C. ECONOMICALLY — A CO-OPERATIVE WALES.

#### A. THE POLITICAL AIM—DOMINION STATUS

The case for Dominion Status cannot be better or more succinctly put than in a declaration issued jointly by the Executive of the Scottish and Welsh Nationalist Parties on the occasion of the Jubilee of H.M. King George V:

"The Jubilee anniversary of the reign of H.M. King George V had for the nations comprised in the British Commonwealth of Nations a unique significance, which it is now most proper to emphasise.

"In the constitutional history of His Majesty's reign, the development of greatest importance and of best augury for the future peace and happiness of all the countries over which he is king, has been the recognition of the principle of nationality. The main events in the triumphant development of this principle may be summarised:—

"In 1917, by Resolution IX of the Imperial War Conference of the British Empire, it was defined that

'the organisation of the British Empire is to be based upon equality of nationhood.'

"In 1919, recognition of the principle of Nationality within the Empire was formally avowed by the formation of the British Empire Peace Delegation at Paris, and later most definitely by the admission of the Dominions of His Majesty to membership of the League of Nations.

"In 1929, the Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation, etc., declared as follows:—

'Nationality is a term used . . . to indicate a common consciousness based upon race, language, traditions, or other analogous ties and interests. . . . With the constitutional development of the communities now forming the British Commonwealth of Nations, the terms "national," "nationhood," and "nationality" *in connexion with each member*, have come into common use.' And further:

'The Crown is the symbol of the free association of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and they are united by a common allegiance to the Crown.'

"INASMUCH as this recognition of Nationhood and of its fundamental place in the structure of the British Commonwealth of Nations is the pre-eminent constitutional development of His Most Excellent Majesty's Reign,

"AND INASMUCH as the definition of Clause 73 of the Conference of 1929, cited above, can by no possibility exclude from nationhood, or from its recognised rights, the two parent nations of Scotland and Wales,

"WE most respectfully and humbly beg that on the occasion of His Majesty's Jubilee, recognition shall be made of the inherent rights of Scotland and Wales



to the status of political Nationhood. We desire and beg that our adherence to the Crown may be for our two countries also, as for the other Dominions of His Majesty, the symbol of our historic right to equality with all other nations within the British Commonwealth."

A similar communication, *mutatis mutandis*, has been sent by the Welsh Nationalist Party to the Imperial Conference at present sitting in London.

#### B. THE CULTURAL AIM—A WELSH WALES

Culturally we aim at the increasing prominence of Welsh in all spheres of the national life, until, after a necessary transition period, during which, in order to avoid injustice and hardship, English will also be recognised as an official language, the time comes when Welsh alone will be the language of government, law and education in Wales. Then only will the evil effects of the Act of Union finally be undone. For it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of official status for a language in its native country. Lacking that, it is in a permanent position of inferiority, and however much it may be loved for its own sake, love will be unable to stand against the unremitting pressure of inferiority. Considerations of career, of social status, of public dignity will always be at issue with love of one's native language. Welsh people will always be forced to choose between Welsh and some other quite legitimate end, just as at the secondary school I attended the regulation choice was "Welsh" or "French." And whatever choice they make will inevitably leave a sense of dissatisfaction and exasperation. No wonder, for it is only in a thoroughly abnormal

and unhealthy system that such choices are offered. To-day in Wales it is, materially speaking, no advantage, and may even be a disadvantage to possess a thorough knowledge of Welsh. The normal thing in Wales surely should be that Welsh be essential and ignorance of it a handicap.

How many people are aware that monoglot Welshmen to-day may and actually have been disqualified from acting as jurymen, on the ground that, English being the official "language of the court," no one ignorant of that language is competent to act as jurymen. Similarly in a recent case at Bridgend a Welsh-speaking defendant who refused to speak English and was refused permission to speak Welsh, was fined without his being able to say a word in his own defence. In the first case knowledge of Welsh, in the second the added possession of principles proved severe disadvantages.

Though we admit the necessity of a transition period, when English will also be officially recognised, we aim at a mainly monoglot Welsh Wales. Bilingualism we regard as a transitional necessity, not as a final ideal. The theory, so popular in Wales, of the inherent superiority of a bilingual to a monolingual nation, i.e. of Welshmen to Englishmen, is nothing but a bit of face-saving on the part of an inferiority-conscious nation. The natural and normal thing for the ordinary man (we exclude extraordinary people like scholars and diplomats) is to speak one language, and that his own. It is external pressure, never inherent need that makes a nation bilingual. That Wales is not purely Welsh in language is due not to the possession of noble thoughts that break through Welsh and escape into English, it is the simple conse-



quence of her political and economic domination by English government and English capitalism. It was an English Act of Parliament that made English the official language of Wales and the City of London that shaped her educational system. Once the causes are removed, their effects will disappear also. Welsh will become the language of Wales, and her present urbanised education will be replaced by a genuinely Welsh system in which the Welsh countryside will come into its own. The struggle for the recognition of Welsh need not, and should not be postponed a single day. For to the extent that Welsh becomes the language of Wales, will the whole of Welsh life be detached from its suffocating dependence upon England, and reattached to its own lifegiving past. Hence the struggle for the legal recognition of Welsh and for its central place in the educational system

### C. THE ECONOMIC AIM—CO-OPERATION

Economically we propose a social system based upon co-operation. The meaning we attach to this overworked word will become clear from the following propositions, first explicitly enunciated by Mr. Saunders Lewis in *Y DDRAIG GOCH*, March, 1935, but implicit in the Party's programme from its foundation.

"The economic unit should, as far as possible, be identical with the social and political unit, because only so can the workers be protected from external oppression. Neither ought Wales to be so dependent on other countries for sustenance that she could not, in case of war or some other emergency, feed her people and keep them from want.

"Industrial capitalism and unregulated economic

competition (i.e. Free Trade) are unmixed evils, and absolutely contrary to the principles of co-operative nationalism.

"It shall be the duty of a Welsh Government to control finance and credit in the interests of industry and social development.

"Trade unions, works committees, industrial boards, economic councils and a national economic council, co-operative societies both of individuals and of local authorities, shall have an important and controlling share in the economic organisation of Wales.

"The families of the nation shall be free, secure and as independent as possible. To ensure that, plans must be made and laws passed to secure as wide a distribution of property as possible, for only the possession of property guarantees liberty. Property shall be so widely divided among the families of the nation as to make it impossible for either the Government, an individual or a body of individuals to exercise economic pressure on the people. The chief property so to be divided is the land.

"Agriculture should be the chief industry of Wales and the basis of her civilisation.

"To ensure the moral health of Wales and the moral and bodily health of her people, South Wales must be de-industrialised. The entire natural resources of Wales are to be carefully developed in the interests of the Welsh people and to assist her neighbours in other parts of the world.

"No unconditional right or claim of property shall be acknowledged apart from its corresponding obligation and social responsibility.

"It shall be part of the duty of the Government of Wales to co-operate with other Governments in the



discussion of economic problems. Welsh Trade Unions and Industrial Boards shall also be permitted and urged to co-operate and consult with the corresponding bodies in other countries, either directly or through the International Labour Office.

"It is not the function of government to create and impose upon a people any ready-made economic system, but rather to create and energetically to maintain such conditions as will give the nation the necessary opportunity, leadership and support to develop a system congenial to its own ideals and traditions.

Here we have expressed, in a coherent and articulated body of economic doctrine, adapted to modern conditions, the traditional Welsh social philosophy. In these propositions are asserted the primacy of the two most fundamental of human societies, the family and the nation. Any economic system will therefore be judged by its contribution to the freedom, security and independence of these two societies. Thus a sound Welsh economy will defend the people of Wales against external, and the families of Wales against internal exploitation. This means in relation to other countries the end of the domination of international finance. No longer will Wales content itself with exporting coal, as the Sudan has to content itself with growing cotton, because London finds it most profitable. Wales will take in hand the reorganisation of its economic life on the basis of its own home market. It will repopulate its own countryside instead of swelling the population of London and Birmingham. It will link up North and South Wales, and open up the highlands of Central Wales with a series of roads, differing radically in location, purpose and effect from

the trunk roads of the English Government. Our aim will be, not to bring South Wales into closer union with Bristol by a Severn Bridge—a suicidal policy, but with North Wales by a Central Road. The attempt of the B.B.C. to restore the "kingdom of Arthur" on the air ignominiously broke down because of the incompatibility of its components. The same fate, and for the same reason, will befall any attempt to restore it on the earth. We fail to see why Lancashire cabbages, Yorkshire woollens, Northampton boots, Birmingham chocolates could not—forgive the Irishism—be produced equally well in Wales. It is ridiculous that Welsh unemployed should be tramping on foot from casual ward to casual ward in search of work, while English commercial travellers are motoring from hotel to hotel bulging with orders. We have been told what to do. "A local market for local production" is Sir Malcolm Stewart's advice to the "special area" in South Wales. We gladly acclaim this proclamation of nationalism in industry, and expand it into "A Welsh market for Welsh production." Let us spend our money not on soldiers, ships and aeroplanes, but on the development and reclamation of the land of Wales. Professor R. G. Stapledon tells us in *The Land, To-day and To-morrow*, that with £10,000,000 he could double the productivity of the soil of Wales. Actually that £10,000,000 is probably a fraction of the contribution of Wales to what English Government euphemistically calls "national defence." We have 70,000 surplus coal miners in South Wales, almost equally terrible we have 140,000 miners actually working in the most dangerous of industries. At the same time we have an empty countryside and no light industries. Economic nationalism is the obvious remedy, provided



Wales wishes to remain a nation. Let her not, however, plead nationality against transference, and "internationality" against autonomy. If nationality is a legitimate defence against the transference policy of the Government—and we believe with all our heart that it is, it must also be a challenge to self-help. We cannot reject the Government solution of our problem without taking it in hand ourselves. To ask the Government to change its policy is to ask it to acknowledge Wales as *Wales*, i.e. as an end in itself. Such a request, at best the forlornest of hopes, becomes the merest crying for the moon, unless Wales first shows that it does so itself. To ask England to save us the trouble of acknowledging ourselves is to court the ignominious rebuffs that all such requests have in point of fact met with.

#### WELSH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

This is why the Welsh Nationalist Party has throughout emphasised the duty of the Welsh local authorities—the only Government that Wales at present possesses—to unite in a strong National Development Council. Nothing makes the case of Wales so hopeless as the apathy of those authorities who refuse to join at all, unless it be the frank selfishness of those who pop in and out according to their conception of their own local interest. In a pamphlet published by the Welsh Nationalist Party, "Local Authorities and Welsh Industry" (Saunders Lewis), a scheme, based on the Belgian "Régie Co-opérative" or Co-operative Utility Board, is suggested to the Welsh Local authorities, for

(a) the salvage of part of our heavy industries,

(b) effective action by Welsh municipalities and local authorities in the industrial field,

(c) the introduction into Welsh industry of a new principle, the principle of co-operative conduct of industry and its public control, yet without State monopoly and without the various dangers of direct municipal trading or enterprise.

"Let them begin modestly by all means. Let them begin with advancing a Bill for setting up Co-operative Utility Boards to supply the regular necessities of their own administrative and constructional departments. It would be a sound beginning, a first important measure of the Welsh National Development Council. It would be of great value because it would bind the Welsh authorities together in the unity of a co-operative economic enterprise. It would provide the beginning of the new light industries that must be introduced into Wales."

But the same principle must be introduced into the sphere of heavy industry, and especially of coal. It is through the development of oil-from-coal processes by such a Co-operative Utility Board that the salvage of some part of the coal industry is alone possible.

Now this is an immediate measure to meet an immediate need. None the less it is precisely because it is based on an abiding principle that it can meet the immediate emergency. The habit of co-operation of Welsh authorities for Welsh ends, once learnt, will never be unlearnt, because it is not really a new lesson but an old memory. A fire on an old hearth is easily kindled. Once Welshmen start co-operating North and South for the sake of Wales, they will merely be taking up the work where it was interrupted centuries ago; they will take it up naturally and joyfully, and



will not easily forgive themselves for allowing an alien system to dissuade them from it.

But co-operation, as well as being the safeguard of the nation against external, is also the safeguard against internal exploitation. For co-operation can only be co-operation between more or less equals, at least between independents. The ultimate units of the nation are its families, and it is for as well as in its families that the nation exists. Hence the whole economic system is designed to safeguard as far as possible the equality and certainly the independence and security of the family. Its two great enemies are capitalism and centralisation, for both systems set up other ends than the well-being and independence of the family—capitalism profits, centralisation the State. A conscienceless capitalism and an efficient centralised State machine are equally enemies of freedom. We cannot forget the question put to the appellant in the Swansea Court of referees: "You realise, of course, that it is on Government money that you are living?" The only remedy for that eminently reasonable and diabolic sort of question is that it should be impossible to ask it. And it is only in a system where property and therefore power and security and independence are the heritage of all that it will be impossible. Hence our aim is to make Wales self-governing, in the most literal sense, not by substituting a capitalist Welsh system for a capitalist English system or by substituting a centralised Welsh Government, Fascist or Socialist, for a centralised English Government, but by so diffusing property that Welshmen rule themselves. Hence the emphasis on agriculture, on rural crafts, on the small industry and the uncompromising opposition to urbanisation and

its inevitable proletarianisation, to chain stores and multiple shops; hence, too, the interposition of so many societies between the family and the State, each with its own function and assured status, and all so interwoven in the social structure that the State becomes in the main, merely the defender and guarantor of the system. Co-operative nationalism is at the opposite pole from the state-idolatry both of Fascism and Socialism. It is the small successful countries of Europe, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, who stir our emulation, because they have all been faced with crises similar to ours, and have shown us by their example how such crises may be overcome.