



Conservative Meeting at Worton

A meeting was held last evening at the Royal Oak, Worton, Mr. H. E. Medicott presiding, when addresses were delivered by Mr. H. K. Norris (Devizes) and Mr. Bush (Cheverill).

THE CHAIRMAN said he wished, as that was the first public meeting he had attended there since his election as a member of the County Council, to formally thank them for having supported him by their votes and otherwise. He had heard a gentleman a few days ago at Devizes Railway Station ask someone near him if he were satisfied with the present Government, and he thought the question a very good one to speak from. What had the Conservative Government done to give them satisfaction? He had alluded to the County Council, and they had passed the Act which called County Council into existence - an Act which was highly complex and complicated, and required great judgement and skill and forethought. No one worked harder than Mr. Long to make that Act a success and to pass it into law (*applause*). He (Mr. Medicott) believed that in the County Council which were formed under its provisions they had public bodies capable of doing a great deal of good, more especially for those connected with agriculture. At the meeting that day two practical matters of great importance had been discussed. One was the question of the provision of pure drinking water for people in country villages and districts. It was not a matter with regard to which County Councils had very great powers, but in calling public attention to it they could do a great deal. Nothing was more valuable than pure water, and they were well aware that through the use of impure water much sickness and disease was brought about. Every cottage should, if possible, be provided with a good supply of pure water (*applause*). The other matter was one brought forward by his friend Mr. J King, who spoke very sensibly and moderately about it. He urged that there should be in the county a register of all parochial charities of every kind, and that everybody should have the opportunity of seeing it and ascertaining whether they were properly distributed to those whose benefit they had been originally left (*applause*). Another important subject discussed at his last meeting of the County Council was that of allotments, and though perhaps there was just a little too much talk, yet the discussion had a good effect. On the whole he had no doubt that much good would yet be accomplished by the County Council, and whenever they felt that they were useful representative bodies they must not forget that it was the present Government which had brought them into

existence, and that with the difficult task they had accomplished Mr. Walter Long had been prominently associated (*applause*). But they were met that evening to discuss the working of the Imperial Council - The House of Commons and its work. On those subjects Mr. Norris and Mr. Bush would address them. The members of the Government had succeeded, in spite of obstruction, in doing a great deal of good, but very much more would have been done but for the obstruction caused by members of the Opposition, who got up and simply talked in order to waste time.

MR. BUSH then addressed the meeting, and in the course of his remarks urged upon them the necessity of examining public questions for themselves, and especially of studying the Irish question. Referring to Mr. Fyffe, he said he seemed to be ready to promise everything in order that he might successfully oppose their worthy member, Mr. Walter Long (*applause*). They were to have prettycottages with a nice piece of land surrounding them, their cellars were to be full of coal, their chimneys hung with bacon, and piles of potatoes everywhere, even under their beds (*laughter*). Although they were to have all those things they were to be free from taxes of every kind., which were to be paid by the big landowners. He (Mr. Bush) believed the agricultural labourer had much sound common sense, and would not be misled by such vague promises and glowing pictures as those. He warned them to be suspicious of men who were going to be very generous with other people's property; nothing was easier than to promise to give away what was not one's own (*laughter*). When they had two party candidates before them he thought the wisest thing they could do was support the one that made the fewest promises, because he would be more likely to perform them than the man who made impossible ones. When people talked to them about land monopoly, they should remember that if land were equally divided, on the morrow some would be thrifty and improve their holding, while others would be unthrifty and sell theirs, and thus there would soon again be land monopoly, and other division would be necessary. Many of those who talked so much about free education were only wanting to make it a lever for the destruction of the Established Church. In conclusion he pointed out the admirable way in which Lord Salisbury administered the foreign affairs of the country, and the equally excellent manner in which Mr. Goschen administered its finances. He considered East Wilts ought to be proud of its member, Mr. Walter Long (*applause*), who was a a Wiltshire man, a man of great abilities, and one of the most energetic members of the present Government (*applause*).

Mr. H. Kent Norris then read a paper almost entirely with the question of Ireland. He pointed out that while English speakers in favour of Home Rule said that it was merely local self government, the difference between the two things was very great, and that the Irish members would never accept local government. Because the Irish people sent a majority of members in favour of Home Rule, therefore Radicals said it was right she should have it. Were majorities always right, and would it be always right to give what they asked? He would reply "No." Suppose Yorkshire by a majority demanded Home Rule, would they grant it. But Radical Home Rulers objected and said, Yorkshire was a part of England, while Ireland was a nation. Of course if Ireland was a nation, then she should have a nation's rights - A parliament of her own with complete control over her own civil and military forces, power to direct her own home and foreign policy, to form colonies of her own, and tax her own trade as she pleased. Those were the rights of a nation, but no single Gladstonian or Home Ruler would come before them and say that Ireland should have those privileges. Besides, it was not quite correct to say that Ireland as whole demanded Home Rule. All the Loyalists, all the educated people, nearly all those engaged in commerce and trade, and all who had a large stake in the country were opposed to Home Rule and in favour of the Union (*applause*). The Protestant Episcopal Church of Ireland and the whole body of dissenters, almost without exception were strongly opposed to Home Rule. It was sometimes said that bribery had been used to bring about the Union between England and Ireland, but that statement was not true. The four Roman Catholic archbishops, supported by the priests, and they in turn supported by the laity, had been in favour of the Union. Mr. Norris then adduced statistics showing the immense strides which Ireland had made since the passing of that Act of Union towards prosperity in every department of her national life, and said that coercion was only a nick-name for law passed to meet an exceptional state of crime. The number of these so-called Coercion Acts passed by Conservative Governments was only ten, while the Radicals had passed twenty-nine. Moreover, the repressive legislation passed by Mr. Gladstone's Government was of a much more severe and arbitrary nature than any passed by the Conservatives. Mr. Gladstone put Mr. Parnell and the majority of the Irish members and others, numbering in all over 200, in gaol, without the semblance of a trial, and merely on the charge that they were reasonably suspected of promoting or perpetrating crime. Again, Radicals always made or tried to make political capital out of evictions,

but the number of evictions which took place under Liberal administrations was always very much greater than under Conservative one (*applause*). Mr. Norris then gave copious statistics showing the marvellous improvement of Imperial affairs under the present Government compared with its Liberal predecessor, and said that when the time came for the Conservatives to go to the country they would not have a long series of disastrous and humiliating wars, ending with the sacrifice of Gordon, to answer for. They would not have to justify budgets of one hundred millions, nor give an account of the filling of Irish gaols with prisoners. But, on the contrary, they would be able to come before the country with a claim on their confidence on account of great reforms carried and economies effected, and as being one of the wisest, best and most stable Governments that had ever ruled the British Empire (*loud applause*). He had much pleasure in proposing "That this meeting desires to record its conviction that the present Government is deserving of the hearty support of the electors of the country." Mr. Fooks seconded, and the motion was carried *nem. con.*

Mr. Bath proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman and Messrs Bush and Norris and said that speaking as a working-man to working men he would advise his hearers not to be misled by foolish Radical promises which were never going to be fulfilled. Mr. Long, by his eminent abilities and constant attendance to his duties, had shown what he was capable of, and they should return him again with a double majority. The Government found the country in a wretched and unsettled state when they came into office and now they had put everything in order and restored confidence and prosperity. They should not rely on Radical promises, for if they waited until they were fulfilled they might starve.

Mr. Musselwhite, in appropriate terms, seconded the resolution, and in doing so said he had letters expressing regret at the inability to be present from Messrs. G. Watson Taylor, Pierc, and Wheeler (Rowde).

The resolution having been put and carried unanimously, it was acknowledged by the three gentlemen in whose favour it was passed and the political part of the proceedings then terminated. The remainder of the evening was spent in a sociable manner.

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