

# Manx Notes 462 (2020)

“GOVAG”

“MANX POLITICS ANALYSED”

(1937)

A clever and subtle analysis of the aims and objects of the six “political parties” in the Isle of Man is contained in the current issue of *The Govag*, the recently published official organ of the Douglas High School Old Boys’ Association, and, as “the joke” is too good to keep within the confines of a “mag” with a somewhat limited circulation, we have taken the liberty of reproducing it, with full acknowledgments (and the payment (?) of the usual royalty fees) to *The Govag*. The article, which is headed “Careers for Old Boys,” reads as follows:

Insular politics is a field which offers wide scope for Old Boys to exercise their peculiar talents. The necessary qualifications include:

- (1) Handsome appearance (this is necessary to capture the female vote).
- (2) Gift of the Gab (membership of the committees of this Association is valuable in this connection).
- (3) Ability to make promises.
- (4) Certain powers of overstatement, understatement, and misleading statement. Also considerable command of vituperative expression and invective for use when replying to an opponent, even if he is right.
- (5) A certain standard of education (*ie*, not wholly illiterate).

Having some of the qualifications, the Old Boy anxious to seek the support of the electors should consider what Party he will attach himself to. The following are some of the political parties in vogue in the Island at the moment:

- (a) Labour Party.
- (b) Agricultural Party, or God-Help-the-Farmers Group.
- (c) Four-Pointers or Anti-Restrictionists.
- (d) Restrictionists.
- (e) Town Party.
- (f) Country Party.

To deal with (a) first, a lot depends upon the point of view of the Old Boy. If he has Labour sympathies, he will doubtless stand in the Labour interests: if not, he should not hesitate to stand as a Labour candidate if he thinks Labour has a fair chance of winning in any particular constituency. It is 10 to 1 nobody will notice the difference after you are returned. In the Manx Legislature, Labour members are hardly distinguishable. The only thing is they never agree about anything, and they put a motion on the agenda at intervals for something to be done in regard to unemployment. This is quite harmless, and it impresses the electors and makes the members feel they are doing something for the good of the community.

Now we come to the Agricultural Party. This is a most influential body, and Old Boys who have a leaning towards the soil should not hesitate to espouse the cause. The party exists to offer relief to deserving farmers, a section of them which, if you read the reports of the speeches of the Agricultural members in the Legislature, you will know embraces them all. One of the party's main functions is to enable farmers to keep body and soul together and buy petrol for their cars. Not only does the Legislature relieve farmers of rates and subsidise them in various ways, but now there is a scheme to pay their labourers' wages. The only thing left to do for the farmers, so far as we can see, is to feed and house them and rear their young. This would provide a fine plank in an agricultural sheading, and is worth consideration.

Four-Pointers or Anti-Restrictionists. Not so much is heard about them now, though there was a tremendous blow last winter. We believe they have lately blossomed out with so many points that they have punctured themselves quite flat. Old Boys who believe in the liberty of the subject might try their hand at revivifying the corpse.

The Anti-Restrictionists are akin to the Four-Pointers in some respects, but they are not such whole-hoggers as the Four-Pointers are (or were). To become a member of the Anti-Restrictionists, the careful Old Boy should concentrate on the Shop Hours Bill. You might try to frame an amending Bill acceptable to all shades of opinion. This is a hobby which will provide many fascinating hours (if not years).

As you may have guessed, Restrictionists stand for all the things which Anti-Restrictionists and Four-Pointers do not. They believe in shutting shops on Sunday, shutting pubs on Sunday, no betting, no horse-racing, and no Continental Sundays. They come mostly from the country districts, and regard Douglas as one of the Cities of the Plain. Before joining this party, the Old Boy should be careful to make certain he believes in all these things.

As regards (e), the Town Party, this party is only active when the Country Members want something the Town Members think they should not have; and (f), the Country Party, is only active when the Town Members want something the Country Members think they should not have. The chief bone of contention is Redistribution. Great bitterness is frequently aroused, and they display great subtlety in taking it out of each other on every occasion which offers.

When returned to the House of Keys, there are certain things which the Old Boy will need to watch. They are (1) Constitutional Crisis; (2) The Dignity of the House. Under (1) you will keep an eye on the Governor and the Legislative Council. As for (2) it may be difficult to discover, but you will hear a lot about it. The Old Boy should remember, as well, that there is nothing like a good row; over its rights and privileges to remind the electorate it has them, and to keep it interested in Democracy.

If you are not returned, you may be appointed on a Commission by the Governor. Commissioners are a numerous body in the Isle of Man, and together with the Staff of Government Office, they run the Island.

Otherwise, if you are not made a Commissioner, you may be made a Justice of the Peace, which will come as a nice surprise for everybody who knows you.

Pseud [signed as "Govag"], "Manx Politics Analysed: What the Six Parties Stand For," *Isle of Man Examiner* 17 March 1937, 3b.

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The *Isle of Man Examiner* was surely correct in its view that this piece of satire should not be left sitting in the pages of *The Govag*, the magazine put out by the Douglas High School Old Boys' Association. It is worth reprinting every time an election comes around in the Island and using it as an *aide-mémoire* when ranking the "peculiar talents" of those seeking office.

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