William Ferguson Massey Biography

William Ferguson Massey

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

William Ferguson Massey Biography.....1

Contents.....2

Biography.....3

Biography

William Ferguson Massey (1856-1925) was a New Zealand political leader and prime minister. His talent for administration saw his country through World War I and led New Zealand to economic recovery.

William Ferguson Massey was born in the village of Limavady a few miles from Londonderry, Ireland, on March 26, 1856. In 1870 he followed his father to New Zealand, where he gained farming experience and by 1890 had set himself up near Auckland as a small farmer. He took to politics as a spokesman for the small farmers and was elected to Parliament in 1894. For 18 years he sat on the opposition benches with the independent Conservatives and was elected opposition leader in September 1903. In February 1909 he announced that his party would thenceforth be known as the Reform party, and in 1912 he emerged from the political confusion to form a government, though lacking a clear majority of seats, and remained in office until his death 13 years later.

During World War I Massey showed his ability in organizing the country for the crisis. In August 1915 he led the Reform party into a coalition with the Liberal party under Sir Joseph Ward, leaving a small Labour minority as the opposition. Both Ward and Massey went to England twice to attend meetings of the imperial War Cabinet, and after the war Massey represented New Zealand at the peace conference.

Massey did not work easily with Ward, who was minister of finance and not inclined to accept a subordinate role, and in 1919 the coalition was dissolved. At the election in December the Reform party won a substantial majority, and Massey was able for the first time to govern without maneuvering among the other parties. He retained his majority in the election of 1922. In 1923 he was able to effect large reductions in income tax and a return to penny postage, but his health was failing, and he died at Wellington on May 10, 1925, just before an election in which his party was to triumph yet again.

Massey was a large man with a homespun appearance and was an effective, if harsh and verbose, speaker. He was devoted to politics and was in some ways stubborn and narrow in outlook, but he gave the impression of sincerity, was respected by his opponents, and was admired for his courage, tenacity, and political acumen.