

TOPICS OF THE DAY

ZIONISM: THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS:
THE COMING CONFERENCES AT WASHINGTON:
"COMMONWEALTH" OR "COMMUNITY"?

IN an official report recently made public Sir Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner, states that there are now barely seven hundred thousand people in Palestine, a much smaller population than that of Galilee alone in the time of Christ. Ten thousand Jewish immigrants arrived between May and September. The prospects for these newcomers are known to be far from encouraging. There is not only scarcity of work and of opportunity; the native Arabs are intensely hostile both to the immigrants and to resident Jews. Riots and incipient rebellions have been numerous. Military force has to be used frequently to keep down the Arabs who constitute the overwhelming majority of the population and much resent the attempt that is being made to Hebraize their country. The British High Commissioner himself has to be under constant guard. The new Arab kingdom to the south and east is being antagonized, and relations with France and Syria made by no means too pleasant, all for the benefit of a Zionist fad which apparently stands to benefit no one in the end. Sir Herbert Samuel attributes the scarcity of population to lack of development, but what is there to develop? Palestine was always a poor country, and has been wasted during centuries, so that it would be extremely difficult and costly to restore it to anything like its best former state. The water supply of Jerusalem is proving insufficient, and recourse is being had at Government expense—that is, at the expense of the British taxpayer—to the ancient reservoirs known as the Pools of Solomon, eight miles away. The garrison of the country has been reduced, but it still numbers five thousand fighting men, who are costing at the rate of five hundred pounds per man annually, or twelve and a half million dollars a year. This, with the expenses of civil government, is no small drain on the British Exchequer at the present time. What good is to come out of it all, or what profit for the people of the United Kingdom who have to foot the bill, it is difficult to see. The immigrants are mostly from continental Europe, and many of them are said to be tainted with Bolshevism. Pretty settlers these for a land which is ever expected

to become British or of service to Britain! With the twelve and a half millions a year expended on a military force for the keeping down of the Arabs in what has long been their own country, to help foreign Jews who want to take possession of it, and the two hundred millions a year being dumped in Mesopotamia Great Britain might not only considerably relieve her own unemployment situation, but add very largely to the populations of Canada, Australia, or other British colonies from which immediate profit and ultimate strength might be directly derived.

THE late meeting of the Assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva aroused about as much interest throughout the world as does an ordinary church vestry meeting in a city. It has figured very inconspicuously in the news columns of the press. Even the Carpentier-Dempsey boxing match appeared as a big international event compared with it, from which its probable ultimate influence and efficacy can be reasonably inferred. The Americans have been accused of "killing the League" for domestic political reasons. They have been wrongly blamed. It was obviously unadapted to their institutions, and unadaptable to them, unless successive Presidents were to be recognised and permitted to act as dictators such as Mr. Wilson imagined himself to be. The League was not killed by any nation. Morally it was still-born. It has simply stayed dead. It was really the creature of one man's exalted, egotistic imagination. It did not differ in that respect from the Holy Alliance which sprang from the brain of a Russian Czar. But the Holy Alliance had at least physical force behind it, if it had not moral force. The League of Nations lacks both. It is a voice without embodiment. It can furnish advice and give directions, but it can neither enforce the one nor ensure obedience to the other. It was purely fanciful in its origin and artificial in its constitution, and therefore foredoomed to failure as such theoretical schemes for the summary saving of humanity from itself always are. It was a product of the professorial study, not of the school of men and real affairs. It was so introduced, thrust forward and insisted upon by its author that it made almost incurable the very conditions which it was expected to ameliorate. Had the Paris Convention devoted the initial months which it spent on the constitution of the League to practical peace making, many of the complications which the delay occasioned would never have arisen. Some of the most serious consequences of the war might have been avoided, and the world much sooner restored to normality.

One of the principal proclaimed purposes of the League was to induce disarmament, and so lessen the likelihood of wars. The League, in as practical operation as it is ever likely to be in its present form, has formally asked the nations to limit their expenditures on armaments during the next two years to the amount of their budgets for the present year. It has received wholly favourable replies from just three of the Governments addressed. The three are Bolivia, Guatemala, and China. To add to this absurdity, Great Britain and Italy—two members of the Supreme Council—have answered that they would be willing to comply with the Assembly's request "provided other nations did the same". Most other nations have evaded the question, or excused themselves in various ways. In the meantime war and preparations for war are going on as bravely as ever, while the Assembly of the League cackles without laying international eggs at Geneva, and the Supreme Council which is practically an alliance on the old model takes its own way, or as much of it as its members can agree upon, in the old fashion. If ever an effective international organization for peace comes into existence, it will spring from the consciousness and conscience of the people, not ready-made from the brain of any one theorist. The days of such Jovian births are past.

WHILE not much hope for the future seems to exist in connexion with the League of Nations as at present constituted and composed, it is otherwise with reference to the approaching Conferences at Washington, one relating not to disarmament but to a reduction of armaments, and the other to arrange if possible an understanding or agreement among the nations bordering the Pacific Ocean. These last are the United States, the British, Japan, China, and—to a very limited extent—Holland, which is not likely to receive an invitation to take part in the Conference. Precedence both in time of meeting and in importance is to be given to the Pacific Conference. Indeed, if it should have an unsatisfactory outcome, the other Conference would thereby be made practically abortive. If the three great naval Powers principally interested in the Pacific cannot come to definite terms as to their naval armaments therein or bearing thereon, there would be little use in discussing a reduction of armaments elsewhere, or a general material reduction of any kind. The key to the Pacific situation lies in China, with reference particularly to Japan and the United States. An open or closed door in China is the real issue. There has been little doubt as to Japanese policy and aims with regard to China for a considerable time past. Her policy has been "peaceful penetration", with a view to ultimate

monopoly, always associated however with gentle rattlings of the sword in its scabbard, and an occasional pinch from mailed fingers within an outwardly silken glove. In support of this policy it is essential that Japan should maintain a fleet strong enough to intimidate possible foreign intruders on her intended preserves. Her maintenance of a fleet for this purpose not only runs counter to America's policy with reference to China, but also threatens her home policy with regard to Japanese exclusion from her territory,—a threat which is hardly serious, and serves mainly as a domestic political scare-crow. The first problem of the Conference will be to reach a definite agreement with reference to China. If that can be solved, and all fear of Japanese encroachment on British territory in the Pacific set at rest, there should be little difficulty in coming to an agreement under which there would be no increase of armaments in the Pacific, but a considerable future decrease. With that matter settled there would be no excuse for further United States naval building, and therefore no possible call for the British to build against her or against anyone else. The British and American fleets are each strong enough now to have no disposition to challenge each other, even if there were any conceivable reason for doing so. Each of them is strong enough, if the other is excluded, to stand against the rest of the world. United in support of an agreement concerning the Pacific they need no longer consider Japan as a possible menace to world peace. With the ground thus cleared, the Conference on the genuine reduction of armaments would be able to begin functioning at once with the brightest hopes. An agreement between Great Britain and the United States concerning the Pacific would practically make these Powers jointly responsible for the peace of the world, and able to keep all "fretful realms" in awe whether their armaments were reduced or not. It would thereafter be the part of wisdom, as well as of economy, for them to reduce their armaments to the level of domestic needs as speedily as possible in imitation of Great Britain and the United States which have already cut down their land forces to a minimum. But it is as good as certain that no satisfactory agreement or understanding can be reached between Great Britain and the United States until the Japanese Treaty has been got altogether out of the way.

THE question of "Commonwealth or Empire" as a suitable appellation for the scattered British people and their possessions in all parts of the globe has been raised anew by the publication a few weeks ago in London of a little book on the subject. The

writer, Mr. Ernest Law, C. B., goes thoughtfully into the matter, to which he has evidently devoted considerable time and research. He pronounces against "Empire" because of its alleged military significance, and its sense of subjection on the part of the people. He admits the prejudice which still exists against "Commonwealth" on account of its Cromwellian associations, but he labours to prove its primitive innocence and its freedom from objectionable present suggestion. He declares strongly for it as a British world name. One thing he has not made clear, namely the appropriateness of this word to more than a single State. The term both in form and in use implies proximity of the persons and interests to whom and to which it is applied. It has always been used with reference to the people of a country regarded as a single State with mutual and closely interwoven interests. It means concentrated possessions, and in that sense is scarcely applicable to the scattered British lands. The word "Empire" as it is almost invariably used and understood is not objectionable in any way. No well-informed person could seriously think of our Empire as under the domination of a military or other commander, or of our King as an Emperor. We think of it only as "our Empire",—the parts of the earth subject to us, the British people, who with our kingly head possess and rule over them under British institutions. Mr. Law fears that foreigners may misunderstand our use of the word Empire. They have not done so in the past. Why then should we abandon our good, inherited name and style on the hasty suggestion of General Smuts? If we must change in accordance with present "unrest", why not "Community" rather than "Commonwealth"? Community would be void of offence, and much more accurately descriptive.

W. E. M.