

# TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE NEXT ELECTION: POPULATION AND IMMIGRATION: NOVA  
SCOTIA AND EDINBURGH MUSIC.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION in Canada can fairly be described as in a state of subdued tranquillity. The last session of the Federal Parliament could show a substantial, if undistinguished, record of legislative accomplishment, and throughout its course the King Ministry, despite its narrow majority in the House of Commons, was never in serious danger of defeat. Indeed it has good prospects of surviving, if it chooses, until the end of the statutory life of the present Parliament, because the sharp divergencies between the ideologies and practical programmes of the opposition groups forbid their presenting a united front against the Ministry except on rare occasions. Recent tests of public sentiment through the polls of the Gallup organization also show that the Liberal party still enjoys a substantial lead in popular favor over its rivals, but the fate of all Canadian Governments, when they come to seek a fresh mandate, depends in a large measure upon the condition of the country's economic fortunes on election day. At present it is eminently satisfactory, as industrial productivity has reached record levels in recent months and unemployment has been reduced to meagre dimensions; huge expenditures for the re-equipment and expansion of our industrial structure, increased employment, higher wage scales, which mean a great demand for food, clothing and other necessities, a heavy outflow of exports and the seasonal stimulus of the summer tourist trade have combined to keep the national income at the level of the war years, with the result that the increased output of most of our industrial plants has been easily absorbed up to date. But it should not be forgotten that our now prosperous export trade is on a very artificial basis because many of our customers are paying for their purchases with credits, furnished by ourselves, and the recent decision of the British Government to decree a sharp curtailment of imports from countries outside the sterling area is bound to diminish our export trade, when it comes into effect.

So there is some justification for the warning note sounded by the Bank of Nova Scotia in its August survey of Canadian business, when, after noting the satisfactory level of production and employment, the review continued: "It is unfortunate

that this highly encouraging picture must be viewed against developments and problems which augur less favorably for the future." One of these developments is the damage wrought by drought upon the western grain crop, the prospective reduction, of which below an average yield will impair our ability to fulfil export commitments and maintain a high level of meat production. Another untoward development is the growing shortage of American dollar exchange, and unless some remedy can be found, it may have restrictive effects upon Canadian business before the end of this year. There has also been recently a marked abatement in the demand for certain important lines of consumers' goods because the public has become exasperated at the continuing rise in prices and thinks that the quality offered in many cases does not give fair value for the money sought for it. So there are ominous clouds upon the economic horizon and if the present high tide of economic prosperity were to recede sharply before the next general election occurred, the Liberal party would have no assurance of a renewal of its present mandate.

A perplexing factor in its plans for the future is Prime Minister's King's refusal to make a clearcut declaration concerning the leadership. His severe illness last winter was a sharp reminder that nature imposes limitations to human capacity for sustaining the arduous burdens of high political office, but he shares with the great track athletes a passion for breaking records. He has already beaten the record of Sir John Macdonald as Prime Minister of Canada, but he has yet to beat the record of Sir Robert Walpole as the record holder of the Prime Ministership in the British Commonwealth of Nations. It had been thought that he would achieve this goal in March, 1948, but some meddlesome historical pundit has recently published in a British paper an article in which he maintains that Walpole, who invented the title of Prime Minister, was, before he assumed it the *de facto* head of the British Government for several years with the title of the First Lord of the Treasury. If this claim is correct, then Mr. King will have to cling to office for about three years after next March before he can boast that he has headed a government longer than any other British statesman, and so it may well be that he is only now beginning the Indian summer of his long career.

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THE ACTION OF THE provincial ministry of Ontario in making arrangements to bring to Canada by air some 6500 picked immigrants from Britain, and the announcement of the government of Alberta that it contemplates a similar move has bestirred the Federal Government to adopt a more energetic attitude about the encouragement of immigration. The barriers to immigrants from Britain have been lowered, the doors have opened to substantial additional contingents of displaced persons from the continent of Europe, and groups of Dutch workers and Polish factory workers are being admitted. Various French-Canadians papers see in the plan for stimulating immigration from Britain a sinister scheme to preserve what they call Anglo-Saxon hegemony in Canada, but the case for a vigorous immigration policy is almost unanswerable. The density of our population is still at a little over 12 millions, less than 4 per square mile of our territory, and it compares very badly with the figures of 35 and 25 recorded respectively for Sweden and Norway, which have hard northern climates, similar to our own, and a comparable range of natural resources. The cold truth is that in the eighty years elapsed since Confederation the growth of Canada's population has been extremely disappointing. It was placed in 1871 by the first post-Confederation census at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions, rose to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  millions in 1901, and by 1931, as the result mainly of two large waves of immigration in the first and third decades of this century, it had mounted to  $10\frac{1}{2}$  millions. But that figure showed an immense leakage of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  millions by emigration, for if the country had retained its own natural increase, estimated at 5 millions, and the  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million immigrants admitted between 1871 and 1931, its population in the latter year should have been 14 millions. During the depression of the early thirties and the late war both immigration and emigration were on a modest scale, and the census of 1941 only gave Canada a population of 11.6 millions, a figure that, according to an estimate of the Bureau of Statistics, had been raised at the end of 1946 to 12.1 millions. So the best that can be said for our record about population is that its growth has been steady but very, very slow and that it has fallen far short of the hopes of the optimists, who provided the country with a physical equipment in many lines adequate to serve the needs of a population of 30 millions.

But this slow growth of population is a feature common

to all the overseas British Dominions. In the nineties of last century, the Late Sir George Foster, then Canadian Minister of Finance, made the confident prediction in a speech in London that in his life time the white population of the Dominions would exceed that of the British Isles. At that time the aggregate population of Great Britain and Ireland was just below 38 millions, and the Dominions could muster between them about 12 millions. In the intervening years Britain has sent forth many millions of emigrants and there has been a heavy inflow of immigrants, mostly from Britain, into the Dominions. But to-day instead of having made good Sir George's prophecy the Dominions between them can show an aggregate population of only 23 millions, which is less than half of the total population of Great Britain and Ireland, now estimated at about 49 millions. The ratio between the population of the Dominions and the motherland has increased, but the gap between them has not narrowed much. To-day all the Dominions are in the same boat as Canada—their populations remain too small to make fully profitable use of the extensive physical equipment that they have provided for themselves.

On the other hand, Britain is obviously over-populated. Even before the late war made a calamitous drain upon her accumulated savings and overseas investments, she was hard pressed to maintain with an adequate standard of living some 47 million people upon a very limited territory, whose main natural resources were fairly abundant reserves of coal and the finest pastures in the world. To-day the aggravation of her economic enfeeblement by the late war had made her basic problem truly desperate, and there are authoritative experts who believe that it could only become manageable, if either through the operation of a declining birthrate or by emigration it could be reduced to about 35 millions. But the first process would take a considerable time to become effective, and so there was sound sense behind the plea made during a recent visit to Ottawa by Mr. Caldwell for a serious consideration of a bold scheme for the redistribution of the white population of the Commonwealth. All the Dominions need more people, and Britain could profitably export 12 millions. But in Britain the powerful voice of Mr. Winston Churchill has already been raised against any large exodus of Britons to the Dominions on the ground that the mother country cannot in this hour

of need spare any manpower and it would be unwise to expect any enthusiasm for the project from our own French-Canadians or the South African Dutch.

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THE GREAT NATIONAL musical festival, which recently attracted people from all over the world to Edinburgh and which was by all accounts an unqualified success, was evidence that the people of Scotland do not intend to let their economic trials and adversities put any damper upon their cultural life. It is not however generally known that Nova Scotia can claim some indirect credit for the long standing vigor of the musical life of Edinburgh, which made it an appropriate place for such a festival to be held, and the connection has an interesting root in the lifelong friendship of two Scottish soldiers. John Reid (1721-1807) and John Small (1726-1791) were Scots lads of good family, born in the same part of Perthshire. Obtaining commissions in the British army, they served together as brother-officers, first in London's Highlanders and later in the Black Watch, and became cronies. A large part of their active service was on this continent, and both attained distinction in it. Reid served as second in command of Colonel Bouquet's expedition in Pontiac's War in 1764 and died a full general in the army, while Small was one of the senior officers of the Royal Highland Emigrants during the American War of Independence, held the office of Governor of Guernsey and closed his career as a Major-General.

Each of them had the traditional craving of the Scottish gentry for the ownership of land and contrived during their service in North America to secure for themselves large tracts of it. But by confiscation after the American Revolution Reid lost the 35,000 acres that he had obtained in Vermont, whereas Small had made the more fortunate choice of an extensive tract in Nova Scotia, and retained it. When Small, a bachelor, died in 1791, it was found that he had bequeathed his whole estate to his old comrade-in-arms General Reid, and it was largely the proceeds of the sale of the lands in Nova Scotia that enabled Reid in 1807 to leave £50,000, a very large estate for these days. Now General Reid had from his youth had a passion for music—he was proficient alike as a player on the flute and as a musical composer, having to his credit a number of regimental marches, including "The Garb of old Gaul," a

favorite marching tune with the Black Watch. So in his will, after making life provision for his only child, a daughter, of whose marriage he disapproved, he decreed that on her death the whole estate should go to the University of Edinburgh for the foundation of a Chair of Music and the endowment of annual concerts. Through his benefaction Edinburgh was provided with the first Chair of Music in Britain. The Reid Concerts, formerly held at intervals during the year, have now been whittled down to a single concert on the General's birthday, but they have always been well attended. Thus land in Nova Scotia was responsible for the creation of two very useful agencies for developing musical talent in the Scottish capital and stimulating its musical life.

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