

PURPOSES OF OUR NATIONAL DEFENCE

EDGAR McINNIS

THOSE pessimists who assert that oratory is a vanished art—or are they really optimists in disguise?—must have taken heart from the recent speech of the Minister of National Defence during the budget debate. Whatever other omissions there may have been from Mr. Mackenzie's pronouncement, there was no lack of eloquence. He quoted the Prime Minister. He quoted Seneca. He talked about the ordered progress of our national life, about the cherished liberties of our civilization, about "the great treasure of culture that came from old France and the institution of ordered government that came from Great Britain." He provided in his peroration, in fact, a model for the recruiting speeches of the next war.

Yet, after all this, it is hard not to sympathize with the slightly astringent comments of Miss Agnes Macphail. "It was a lengthy address, and it did not seem to me clear. It may be that in reading the speech it will be easier to understand the position of the Minister than it was in listening to him." It was charitable of her to give the Minister the benefit of the doubt. But even after one has read the speech, the doubt remains unallayed.

The reason for this lies not so much in the Minister's explanation of how we should defend ourselves—though even here there were ambiguities—as in the lack of any indication as to what we might have to defend ourselves against. "We are confronted," said Mr. Mackenzie, "with very grave international problems which may at any moment explode against the ordered progress of our national life in the Dominion." It is a favorite assertion of the advocates of higher defence expenditure; but up to the time of writing it remains as unproved as the nebular hypothesis. And when it is carried to the lengths of Mr. MacNicol's alarm over the lack of gas masks in Cochrane, or Mr. Bertrand's graphic vision of a bombing fleet destroying the reservoirs and flooding the whole St. Maurice valley, it begins to resemble an old wives' panic over things that go bump in the night.

Now there are two distinct sets of circumstances under which a need for military action by Canada might conceiv-

ably be envisaged. The first is a situation in which Canada is involved directly in a quarrel with another state. The second is a case in which Canada, without herself being concerned with the immediate issue, is drawn into a war through her political or her geographical connections. The two cases are obviously quite different, and would involve quite different courses of action. But among the advocates of increased armaments for Canada the two are generally confused; and Mr. Mackenzie's speech almost makes one believe that the confusion is skilfully exploited. For though his assertions were intended to give the impression that the major purpose of those armaments was the defence of Canadian territory against unprovoked aggression, the real assumptions underlying his speech were based on the possibility of our becoming involved in quarrels not our own.

In fact, the idea that Canada is in imminent danger of falling a prey to some aggressor nation becomes wholly chimerical as soon as it is examined with any precision. Not that this prevents its reiteration with all the assurance of dogma. It was recently stated in its most familiar form by Commander E. R. Mainguy in a speech at Winnipeg on April 18. "This country is rich in natural resources, it has great uninhabited areas, and why shouldn't it be attractive to one of the land hungry countries just as Ethiopia was?"

Well—setting aside the somewhat unflattering comparison—there are certain practical circumstances which might deter the land hungry countries from this particular adventure. Let it be supposed, as many people do suppose quite vocally, that Germany is attracted by our vast fertile spaces and our unbounded natural resources, mythical though these may be. It is surely clear that a number of conditions would have to be fulfilled before this attraction is likely to be translated into an active effort at conquest. It is not irrelevant to suggest that Danzig and Memel, Czechoslovakia and the Ukraine are more urgent preoccupations than Sudbury or Saskatoon, and that until these objectives are either achieved or abandoned, we can feel reasonably safe from a German invasion. That in itself should reassure us for quite a number of years to come. And even if Hitler were to find himself satisfied with Germany's European boundaries and gratified in his ambitions in Africa and Asia, he would still have to feel so secure in Europe that he could risk a military adventure three thousand miles overseas. Such security appears indefinitely remote at the moment.

And finally, even under these unlikely circumstances, he would want a reasonable assurance that the United States would stand benevolently aside while he carried out his civilizing mission at Canada's expense. These look like pretty formidable conditions. If this is the sort of threat "which at any moment may explode against the ordered progress of our national life," we can sleep more tranquilly than almost any other nation on earth.

The other land hungry countries are Italy and Japan. No one really expects an Italian descent upon our shores—Il Duce has his hands full as it is. As for Japan, her position is analogous to that of Germany. The immediate objects of her ambition lie upon another continent. They are extensive enough to occupy her indefinitely, and perhaps to break her in her attempt to achieve them. She is further tied to the other side of the Pacific by her preoccupation with Russia. And though causes might be imagined which would lead Japan to risk a war with the United States, a desire to possess and rule Canada is hardly one of them. This does not mean that we are immune under all circumstances from the risk of a Japanese attack; but a deliberate and unprovoked effort at conquest can be ruled completely out of the picture.

An attack by a foreign power whose objectives stop short of conquest might be envisaged with somewhat greater plausibility. Menaces to secure concessions, armed action to enforce contested claims, attacks in retaliation for alleged grievances, are practices only too characteristic of the dealings of great powers with smaller states. It is not inconceivable that, under favorable circumstances, Japan would be ready to use such methods to secure concessions on fisheries, or Germany to overcome some presumed trade discrimination. But it must be admitted that such occasions are somewhat unlikely, and such favorable circumstances—again in view of the more immediate problems besetting these Powers—even more unlikely to develop. The possibility is conceivable; the probability is too remote to make it a matter of urgent concern.

A similar remoteness attaches to the need to defend our neutrality in case of a war in which we are not engaged. The need could arise only if the United States were a belligerent. Our neutrality is not going to be threatened in case of a purely European war. Even supposing that Canada took the position of a neutral in a war involving Great Britain, it is hard to see what advantage Britain's enemies could gain by divert-

ing against our territory forces which would certainly be needed in the actual theatre of war. The probability that, in any future which we can envisage, a European power will try to attack the United States on this continent and by way of Canadian territory, is so faint as to be negligible. The possibility of a war between the United States and Japan—that periodic spectre of American big navy advocates which Mr. Mackenzie revived in his recent Vancouver speech—is speedily diminishing as Japan becomes more and more involved in the hinterland of Asia. It is still the most conceivable of all these various possibilities; and if it should eventuate, it would be well if we could keep out of it. That means an ability to convince the United States that we could defend our west coast against any attempted seizure by Japan. It is doubtful whether, in the face of a really serious threat, the United States would take the chance; and if she insisted upon occupying our territory in order to defend it, we certainly should not resist. But it is on prospects such as this, vague and tenuous as they are, that the justification for a strictly Canadian defence policy must be based.

Such are the circumstances under which we might be called upon to defend “strategic trade routes, the country’s ports and coast line and the nation’s neutrality.” If these were the only possibilities facing us, our situation could hardly be regarded as critical. But if the idea of “defence” is broadened to include participation in Empire wars or in a new crusade on behalf of democracy, a far wider series of dangers and a vastly different set of problems at once present themselves.

It is clear that such possibilities are very definitely present in the minds of those responsible for the national defence. The Prime Minister has more than once emphasized the fact that, if we are not committed to participation in any future war, neither have we any commitments against such participation. Mr. Mackenzie implicitly ranged himself on the side of those who, while refusing to imperil Canadian unity in advance by any specific declaration, “would join with Great Britain or with the League in a war for a principle, or for the safety of the liberty of the world, if convinced that that liberty was seriously threatened.” He went so far as to assert that in such a clash Canada must be prepared, in company with Britain and France and the United States, “to take her stand, if need be, against brute force and might and ruthlessness, and, if need be, for high purposes to endure sore travail.”

Now however strong a case there may be for such a policy, it is not the case which was implied in Mr. Mackenzie's defence of the estimates. He was talking about the protection of trade routes and territory and neutrality against outside aggression. But if Canada voluntarily abandons her neutrality and takes the initiative for high purposes, this purely defensive attitude becomes quite anomalous. The great democracies will hardly feel that we are cooperating adequately on behalf of these high purposes if we merely stand passive behind our own borders waiting to repulse attacks. An ally of that sort is more of a liability than an asset.

Given this ambiguity, it is small wonder that such assurances as that of Mr. Lapointe of a year ago that "there is no idea whatever of sending a single Canadian soldier overseas in any expeditionary force" do not wholly carry conviction. Nor is it surprising that the French members have shown considerable concern over the provisions of the existing Militia Act, with its clause enabling the Government by simple Order-in-Council to call up all males between the ages of eighteen and sixty for active service either within Canada or abroad, and its provision that such British laws as the Army Act "shall have force and effect as if they had been enacted by the parliament of Canada for the government of the militia." It may be for parliament, as the Prime Minister has repeatedly asserted, to decide whether we shall or shall not go to war. But once the decision is taken, the Government under the present laws could carry Canadian arms into any quarter of the world.

This is the real prospect which faces us. The direct danger to our territory or our neutrality is so remote as to be almost negligible. The possibility of a new expeditionary force has far more actuality under present conditions. Perhaps thirty-four millions for defence is none too adequate in such a case. But the expenditure should be defended on this basis, and not on the assumption that it is to defend our homes and our trade and the lumber interests of British Columbia from unnamed and insubstantial terrors. Thirty-four millions is a lot to spend on things that "go bump in the night."

DOUGLAS HYDE—THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF EIRE

HERBERT L. STEWART

WAS it the spirit of "Appeasement" in the air that brought the parties of Eamon de Valera and William T. Cosgrave to a unanimous choice of the first President for their common country? Or was it the overwhelming appeal of Douglas Hyde to all that these two parties value in common, together with his freedom from any share, on either side, in the rival passions which separate them? In any case, the omen of this first choice is of the very best.

What manner of man is the President-Designate of Eiré?

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The parallel from Thomas Masaryk, of Czechoslovakia, comes at once to mind. For each, before his "elevation", the record was that of a quiet scholar, in a country whose traditions and cultural type he thought had been most unfairly crushed by the political association into which it had been forced. For each, an over-mastering motive was the wish to rescue and revive, before it should be too late, this old national culture. Not that either was insensitive to the riches of that "foreign" civilization with which the native was in contact. Douglas Hyde, like Thomas Masaryk, was far too profound and discerning a thinker to allow local resentment to mislead him so. But to each it seemed a first, because a so long neglected, task that the values of a native culture long hidden should be drawn forth. Like the charm of many an old Norman church which patient and careful chiselling has had to restore, after the damage done it by "modernizers!"

A story that Dr. Hyde is fond of narrating is about the question once put in amazement by a member of the Royal Irish Academy to a speaker who had dwelt upon the remains of ancient Irish art. "Surely, sir, you do not mean to tell us that there exists the slightest evidence to prove that the Irish had any acquaintance with the arts of civilized life anterior to the arrival in Ireland of the English?" His recollection of his own undergraduate days at Trinity College, Dublin, was of what Dr. Hyde has called "gross ignorance, but perfect good

faith," as shown by the lecturer who in his hearing—back in the eighteen-eighties—adjured the Irish to realize that before Cromwell's time they were "utter savages!"

If this attitude of mind is no longer possible in any educated person, if the concern for genuine historical study of Irish literature, long conspicuous in continental scholars, has now become real in Great Britain, incomparably chief among those deserving credit for the change is Douglas Hyde. His *Literary History of Ireland* constituted a veritable revelation also for those of his own countrymen upon whom the "Anglifying" method of education had been all too efficacious. This is the story not merely of books and manuscripts, not merely of those treasures shut up in cases in the underground room of Trinity College Library, about which he has well said that "if they had been deposited in any other seat of learning in Europe—in Paris, Rome, Vienna or Berlin—there would long ago have been trained up scholars to read them, a catalogue of them would have been published, and funds would have been found to edit them." Dr. Hyde's history is also a picture of the developing civilisation which these texts—many of them previously unexplored—reveal to the discerning eye. Unlike too many literary histories, this one is itself literature, setting forth in apt, vivid, compelling interpretation the story of the poets and annalists, the historians, the missionaries, the schools and colleges, the folklore of ancient and mediaeval and modern Ireland. What was thus presented in summary, the author has throughout a long life illustrated and enriched by his own original Irish poetry, his Irish romantic tales, the Irish texts he has edited, the Irish masterpieces he has translated. Not only continental, but British Celticists now frequent that underground room of Trinity College Library. We know whose interpretation chiefly drew them.

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Here we touch another aspect of Douglas Hyde, which makes his selection to be President of Eiré all the more auspicious and promising. It may bring together groups too long fiercely apart.

His intense interest in Irish antiquities is not that of a native Celt. Douglas Hyde is not of his country's predominant faith, which so many assume to be the one active principle in all its native cultural life. He is a Protestant, the son of an Anglican clergyman, whose field was in the County of Roscommon, a county "very far west", where Protestants are few and might

be expected to show a minority's aloofness. He was trained in Trinity College, Dublin, that Elizabethan foundation which for centuries represented the prosperous, privileged Protestant faith, with all the prestige of government on its side. Not until about the time of his entrance to College was the barrier removed which for two hundred and fifty years had made it impossible for a Roman Catholic to be there enrolled as a student. For at least a generation after that, the "National Movement" had still no more bitter antagonist than Trinity. All the more notable, for this unpromising preparation—in family, in surroundings, in college training and influence—was the enthusiasm he developed for all things Irish. One does not wonder that the quest for a man whose name might symbolize and whose repute would adorn the cause of a revived Irish Nationality led all parties in the Dail to Douglas Hyde.

Not only does he stand, as he has always stood, for what is dear to them: he stands for it on such grounds, moral and intellectual, as may well enable him to win to its cause those whom champions of a different sort would merely repel. Of the fierce passions by which the struggle for Irish Nationality was encumbered much more than it was served, he has shown no trace. It has been his distinction to be steadfast for his ideal not only when it was being thwarted by its enemies, but—a harder task—when it was being sullied by some who called themselves its friends. Ever beyond the faults and follies and crimes of persons, Douglas Hyde could see the goal looming ahead. Never did he falter in his conviction that somehow or other—though so late—there must be found a method to make Irish development, like all other healthy developments, a *natural* and not an artificial thing, a growth from within, rather than an imposition from without. For him this meant the recovery of its roots so long disastrously neglected. The essence of his creed is in the dedication of one of his books to the society of which he was so long the heart and soul:

To the members of the Gaelic League, the only body in Ireland which appears to realise the fact that Ireland has a past, has a history, has a literature, and the only body in Ireland which seeks to render the present a rational continuation of the past, I dedicate this attempt at a review of that literature which, despite its present neglected position, they feel and know to be a true possession of national importance.

Such is the faith of one who—a Protestant, son of a clergyman in the Protestant missionary Church, trained in a university

of the sternest anti-national tradition—has been chosen un-
animously by the warring Irish Catholic groups as first President
of Eiré. “A very great honor”, he exclaimed, “but I am so
old!” Is there not an enrichment which, more than impoverish-
ment, comes to certain spirits long after three score years and
ten? May the venerable first President of Eiré prove a rallying
centre round which the antagonisms, not only of Southern
parties, but of South and North will be softened to a common
Irish devotion.