

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE British Empire is proceeding apace these days, and the Labor Ministry, which has undertaken this unpleasant task, has simultaneously enraged Mr. Winston Churchill and given him the melancholy satisfaction of being able to fulfil his vow, which, had he remained in power, he might well have had to forswear, that he would never be responsible for it. The Attlee Ministry has negotiated an agreement with the political leaders of Burma, for the concession of complete independence to that country as soon as a workable constitution has been evolved for it; it is negotiating with a stiff-necked Egyptian Government a treaty about its withdrawal from that country and, as an earnest of its good intentions, has removed the British garrison from Cairo; it proposes to refer the thorny problem of Palestine to the arbitrament of the United Nations, and it has announced that its authority in India will be finally renounced not later than June, 1948, which is the most momentous step of all. These decisions confound critics of Britain on this continent who have charged her with insincerity in her professions of her anxiety to confer full self-government upon her subject races as soon as they were fitted for it, and give her high prestige as an honest and enlightened nation. The Conservative politicians with their Imperialist traditions are naturally beside themselves with fury over what they describe as cowardly abdications, but the Labor Ministry can remind them that a Tory ex-Viceroy of India, the Marquis of Linlithgow, lately counselled withdrawal from India, if a concordat between the Hindus and Moslems would not be achieved within a reasonable time, and it could also plead that the sheer necessity for curtailing the overseas commitments of Britain, which now confronts them, would have forced a Conservative Ministry to similar action.

The cold truth is that Britain, financially and economically weakened as she is by her heroic part in two long and bloody struggles to save human freedom, now lacks the resources in money and manpower to maintain her control over a great tropical empire. If her attempts to retain power in the countries from which she now intends to withdraw produced in them revolutionary movements on a large scale, the task of suppressing them would impose an intolerable additional strain upon her hardpressed people and might involve her in terrible humiliations and even complete bankruptcy. Her present grave difficulties at home arise largely from the lack of manpower

sufficient to maintain her productive capacity on a scale that will ensure the necessary outflow of exports and adequate supplies of goods for her home market, and under the circumstances she cannot afford to keep a million and a half people in her armed forces and half a million more engaged in the manufacture of war materials. So it is sound statesmanship to cut her coat according to her cloth, and furthermore through a voluntary renunciation of power, which will leave her on friendly terms with the Indians, the Burmese and the Egyptians, she will have a good prospect of salvaging her heavy investments of capital in their countries and finding in them the profitable markets for her goods which she so badly needs.

But the impending departure of the British from India is the end of a very old song. It was as far back as 1610 that the East India Company established its first posts in Hindustan, and ever since Clive by his victory at Plassey conquered Bengal in 1759, the fortunes of Britain and India have been closely intertwined. Among the upper classes of Britain there can scarcely be a family without a record of one or more members who found their lifework in India; for generations the retired Indian colonel and civil servant and planter have been familiar figures in every British community, and British literature abounds in books dealing with life in India.

To the British occupation of India there is both a credit and debit side. The British established a just regime of law and order, which guaranteed personal security and peace, for the myriad inhabitants of India who had never known them before, they provided the country with the physical machinery of modern societies, they introduced the benefits of western culture and laid the foundations of a decent educational system, they increased both the agricultural and industrial production of the country, they devised means for mitigating the terrible ravages of the recurrent famines, and they abolished barbarous practices like suttee. But they have been unable to solve the basic problem of India, the sheer poverty of the mass of the people, which makes large areas nothing better than squalorous slums, and the problem may be insoluble, since statistics show that improvements in production and standards of living for the Indians, who refuse to practice birth control, almost invariably lead to an increase in population, which means additional pressure upon the available means of subsistence.

However, the Indian populations allege with some justice that for nearly a century and a half Britain has exacted from India



an enormous sum and that it is largely responsible for her poverty. Certainly thousands of British people have drawn very comfortable salaries and pensions from India, and at one time Scotland was in a peculiar degree the beneficiary of a large stream of money from India. In the era of the younger Pitt, his friend, Henry Dundas, who was the Tory "boss" of Scotland, had control of the patronage of the East India Company and he used to win political support by planting in the military and civilian services of the Companies hundreds of young men belonging to the gentry and professional families of Scotland. Not a few of these young Scots found early graves in India, but many of the survivors made substantial fortunes by methods which were rated quite legitimate in those days. On retirement they returned to their native land, and since ownership of land was then the hallmark of social distinction, they bought estates and became country gentlemen. Scottish agriculture had been kept backward through lack of capital, and they provided it in abundant quantities for the first time; these Anglo-Indian lairds spent their money freely on agricultural improvements, such as building decent farm steadings, draining, fencing and planting trees, and they helped very materially to start Scottish farming on the road to its present excellence and at the same time to beautify their country. So if India lost, by the tribute, Scotland was the gainer.

But the British Empire in its wane is only following the path of numerous bygone empires, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Roman, the Spanish, the Holy Roman and the Turkish being some of the names in a long list. Fifty years ago Meredith Townsend, who had edited a paper in India and was later a famous editor of the London *Spectator*, was foretelling that British rule in India could not possibly last more than a century now that a Nationalist movement had been born, and it should never be forgotten that in its initial stages this movement received generous encouragement and wise guidance from liberal-minded British civil servants in India like Octavian Hume and Sir William Wedderburn. To-day democracy is coming to full flower and empires are out of fashion. Long ago Thucydides, the Greek historian, declared that empire and democracy were incompatible, and at the beginning of this century, J. A. Hobson, one of the wisest men in Britain, made in his book *Imperialism* a formidable indictment of the British imperial system, contending that, while it had benefitted a limited class in Britain, it had been a grave misfortune for the

great mass of the British people. And Wilfred Scawen Blunt, the poet, who was that uncommon type of politician, a Tory anti-Imperialist, and spent years of time and much money in battling with the British Foreign office in the cause of the Egyptian people, at the close of his life recorded in his diaries his view that the British Empire had been much more of a curse than a blessing to the backward peoples which had come under its control, and that its decay was inevitable for this reason; he welcomed this but also voiced the fear that it might be succeeded by worse empires. However neither the Americans nor the Russians are likely to try to succeed the British as overlords of the tropical empire which the last named are now largely abandoning, and the peoples who are due to be emancipated from foreign control will be given a fair field to mould their own destinies. But Miss Dorothy Thompson and Mr. Walter Lippmann are properly pointing out that the disappearance of British authority with its stabilizing power, from so large an area of the earth leaves a huge vacuum and that this momentous change can hardly fail to involve the American people in fresh burdens and responsibilities. It remains to be seen whether the British can derive real profit from the coming easement of their load of trouble and whether they can falsify the contention advanced by Arnold Toynbee in his monumental work "The Story of History" that only as the centre and core of a great Commonwealth and Empire could Britain provide a decent standard of living and culture for her people.

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THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT is still wrestling with the problem of making new financial arrangements with the provinces, which will enable it to carry to fruition its ambitious programme of social security. By raising its bid of increased subsidies from the Federal Treasury to an aggregate sum of 206 million dollars, which many people consider an extravagantly high figure in the light of the sacrifice of revenue sought from the provinces, it has now brought six out of the nine provincial ministries to a receptive mood about its proposals and hopes to sign agreements with them in the near future. But the governments of Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia, each of a different political color, have still to be converted to acceptance. The obduracy of Premier Angus Macdonald of Nova Scotia must be particularly embarrassing to the King Ministry, because when the allegation is made that the recalcitrancy of Mr. Drew



and Mr. Duplessis is mainly due to their political animosity against the ruling powers at Ottawa, the pertinent question can be asked—what about the unsympathetic attitude of Mr. Macdonald, a Liberal of unblemished political lineage? The financial terms offered to Mr. Macdonald must sound very alluring to the people of a comparatively poor province like Nova Scotia, but involved in their acceptance is the much wider issue of the greater centralization of authority at Ottawa. It is crystal clear that the provinces that accept the Federal proposals will become for the future, pensioners of Ottawa and the authority of their ministries in the formulation of economic and social policies will be circumscribed and limited to a marked degree.

Mr. Mackenzie King and his supporters argue that a greater centralization of authority at Ottawa is absolutely essential for the purpose of achieving an equitable distribution of the benefits of social services and that when the wealthier provinces are induced to assist the poorer ones in bearing their financial burdens, the result will be a progressive march towards the greater national unity that is so desirable. But there is also a powerful case against greater centralization at Ottawa, and its most effective presentation has come in two articles entitled "The Bell Tolls and the People Sleep" from the pen of the veteran editor of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Mr. A. A. McIntosh, who thus summed up his case in his closing paragraph:

One thing seems clear: because of its geographical setting Canada is destined to be for some time a country of diverse sectional problems and ambitions, which no central overall policy can serve. Years and expedients have been wasted trying to reverse this fact. Then, instead of undergoing regimentation, should not the provinces, singly or in groups, as they themselves elect, be free to follow their own ideals and develop their own economic status? Allowed to use their own natural resources, the property within their boundaries and the energies of their people, unhampered by Ottawa, they would have reason to seize their opportunity with new inspiration.

Apply the scalpel to the malignant growth emanating from the national capital and reaching into the vitals of every part of the country, retaining only policies, functions and enactments of essential general application. Cease thinking of the Federal Government as the substance on which the nation feeds, when its duty is to be the binder of the parts. The Dominion may then find itself. First it must awaken and see that the Constitution is not rewritten by a self-seeking feudal-minded administration.

Mr. McIntosh lays emphasis upon the peculiar sectional fissures of Canada, but against the general principle of greater centralization of authority at Ottawa, he and other opponents of it could find very effective ammunition in the works of Pierre Guillaume Frederic Le Play (1806-1882), the well-known French sociologist. Le Play, who was simultaneously a very capable engineer, a successful politician and a profound thinker and brilliant writer on economic and social problems, was the originator of the doctrine of regionalism. He held that a national unit, even of the limited geographical area of France, was much too large to provide a satisfactory basis for the effective operation of the democratic system and for the attainment of the highest possible standards of material prosperity and civilized culture for its citizens. He argued for the reorganization of France and other countries into regional units for whose inhabitants there existed a firm political cement in their common racial lineage, their traditions, habits and customs, their industrial and agricultural methods and their economic interests. He maintained that the people of such a regional unit, if they were given control over their own fortunes and policies, could build for themselves a social and economic structure whose results in every sphere would far surpass the level of civilization achieved in the large national states. Moreover since the government which had the decisive say in their destinies, would not be far distant in some metropolis but within easy reach of the people, it could be kept constantly under vigilant observation and prevented quickly from embarking upon foolish or selfish policies, inimical to the general interest. They could also bring pressure to bear quickly for the remedy of proved grievances and the adoption of reforms urgently needed. For the validity of these arguments there is considerable support in the abundant evidence that the democratic system functions most efficiently and produces the best results for the mass of the people in countries of small territorial area, like Denmark and Switzerland. Undoubtedly, if Frederic Le Play were alive to-day, he would select Nova Scotia as an ideal choice for a regional unit; he would give its citizens full control over their economic and social policies and leave to Ottawa only the direction of defense and foreign affairs. Le Play had numerous influential disciples in other countries. *The Coming Polity*, written jointly by Professor Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford, contains the best outline in English of his theories and practical policies.

A mounting tide of teachers' strikes in Buffalo and other



centres in the United States has served to intensify a growing disquietude about the state of education in the United States. Teaching in the Republic has been described as "a good depression profession", and to-day in an era of unparalleled prosperity, the morale of the American teachers has reached its lowest ebb in history as the result of meagre remuneration, overwork and the lowering of educational standards. Such trivial increases of salary as they secured during the war have been more than cancelled out by much higher costs of living, and even to-day the average weekly income for all teachers in the United States, including principals, is \$37; 20% of the teachers make less than \$24 per week and 4% less than \$12. So it is little wonder that, when teachers see that automobile workers are enjoying weekly earnings of \$53, coal miners of \$55 and meat packers of \$41, they feel discontented at being condemned to live on submarginal incomes. Many of them supplement their incomes by part-time jobs, and the New Republic recently made the astonishing assertion that in New York City alone 10,000 teachers are in their spare time tending bar, selling books and repairing radios. Inevitably teaching under these circumstances has become a very unpopular profession in the United States, and despite campaigns to recruit new teachers and the issuance of 100,000 special emergency teaching permits to people who have very inadequate qualifications for teaching, there has been a net decrease of 400,000 school teachers since 1942, and in large areas of the country the younger generation is being educationally starved as a result.

But, dark as is the American educational picture, Canadians have no cause to preen themselves complacently on the superior brightness of their own in the light of the revelations made in the latest bulletin of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "Secondary and Elementary Education in Canada, 1943-44", for it discloses a serious deterioration during the war years in a situation that was far from satisfactory before then. The efficacy of educational systems depends much less upon the physical plant available and the nature of the curricula prescribed than upon the quality of the teachers, and real ability cannot be enlisted in any profession without adequate remuneration. But this bulletin shows that in 1944, the latest year for which data are available, the average salary paid to the elementary and secondary teachers of Canada was only \$1098, which was \$824 less than the average available for American teachers whose discontent with it is so widespread. It is true that \$1098

represented a gain of \$244 over the pitifully low figure of \$854 recorded for 1939, but the real picture is probably worse as no data about salaries are given for Quebec, where the scales are the lowest in Canada. In the scales paid in the different provinces there are wide discrepancies, ranging from a high level of \$1471 in British Columbia to a low of \$587 in Prince Edward Island.

The percentage of males in the teaching profession dropped from 29% in 1939 and to 20% in 1944 and the average salaries of the 80% per cent women teachers is substantially lower than that of the males. No accurate data on this point are available, but there is good ground for computing that the average salary of the female teachers of Canada, if Quebec was included, is not above \$700 per annum. Now this salary is about just half as much as a competent stenographer can secure and is substantially below what a capable female cook, when allowance is made for her board and lodging, can earn. So it is quite futile to expect any large number of intelligent young women to enter the teaching profession, when much more profitable outlets for their energies and abilities are available. The social prestige of the teaching profession is no longer adequate compensation for its poor financial rewards. Moreover, in the rural areas the great majority of the teachers have to work in a very cramped atmosphere since nearly 80% of the rural schools were still one-roomed buildings with very imperfect equipment in 1944.

Other disturbing features in the report are the declines firstly in the experience of teachers in the one-room rural schools, which averaged only 3 years in 1944 as compared with 4.7 years in 1939, and in their tenure of appointments, which dropped from 2.8 years in 1943 to 2.3 years in 1944. Such a tremendous turnover in the personnel of the profession in rural areas militates against efficient teaching, and only in the schools of large urban centres could the situation in regard to turnover be regarded as reasonably satisfactory. Furthermore there was an ominous shrinkage in the ratio of the attendance of pupils. In this, only New Brunswick recorded an increase, and in the other provinces the declines ranged from as high as 29.9% in Manitoba to 10.2% in Nova Scotia, but it is only fair to make some allowance on this score for the special conditions of the war years, when young people were needed on farms to make good the shortage of adult labor on them and attractive opportunities for other work were available for them every-



where. The key to the improvement which is needed in our educational system clearly lies in the payment of higher salaries for teachers. The lessening of its attractions for graduates of universities is proved by the fact that according to the bulletin there was between 1939 and 1944 a drop of about 2% in the number of graduates engaged in the profession. But British Columbia, which paid by far the highest scale of salaries to its teachers, had 30 per cent of them graduates in 1939 and saw their proportion increased to 30.6% in 1944. These facts point a moral for other provinces. But it is deplorable that our educational data are incomplete through the absence of adequate statistics about education in Quebec.

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THERE HAS EMERGED in Canada a veritable tribe of self-styled economic experts who earn a comfortable livelihood as defenders in print or on the platform of the so-called system of free enterprise. They have discovered, as they think, a rich orebody of arguments for their case in the present financial and economic travail of Britain under a Socialist government, and they are busily exploiting it to the limit of their intellectual resources. But they will not gain much credence for their lucubrations as long as they display such woeful ignorance of their subject as Mr. Stuart Armour does in an article recently contributed to *Toronto Saturday Night* under the title "Has Socialism Brought the Police State to Britain". The gist of this article is that Britain was started down a Gadarene slope to economic ruin, when in the first decade of this century Asquith and Lloyd George laid, with old age pensions and unemployment insurance, the foundations for a social security programme and that she is now headed beyond recall for totalitarianism with the state acting as a tyrannical policeman.

Mr. Armour seems to cherish the delusion that there was some fine virginal state of British freedom, which was ravished by a series of depraved statesmen from Asquith onwards. It may have existed for a very limited class, but for the great mass of the population it had no substance. At the beginning of this century the lot of the working classes of Britain, who constituted two-thirds of the population, was still pitiable; their menfolk had to work long, dreary hours for meagre wages, they were housed in dismal insanitary dwellings, and they had no security against the vicissitudes of fortune or the disabilities of old age. Poverty was so endemic that less than one-tenth

of the British left enough money to justify the expense of probating their will. They were necessitous people, and Tom Paine spoke a famous truth when he said, "Necessitous men have no freedom".

Mr. Armour seems to believe that the element of coercion, which collectivist measures entail, is a nineteenth century novelty in Britain, but the writer can give some illustrations to the contrary from his own knowledge of Scotland. For years the Bairds, the great coal mining family of Scotland, saw to it that any miner who took a lead in agitating for higher wages and better working conditions, was "blacklisted" out of employment, and Andrew Fisher, who rose to be Prime Minister of Australia was only one of the numerous victims of this sort of industrial tyranny. Has Mr. Armour ever heard of the massacre of Peterloo or the Tolpudde martyrs? Farming is supposed to be a stronghold of rugged individualism, but only British farmers who owned their own land were really free. Very few landowners ever gave leases in which hard and fast terms about the system of cropping to be followed were not prescribed, and the orders of the county agricultural committees are merely a new variant of an old system. Moreover, until the passage of the Ground Game Act a farmer dared not shoot rabbits which were eating up his crops without incurring heavy penalties. As for more valuable kinds of game, they were absolutely sacred, and within living memory, when a young resident of an island in the West of Scotland, hard pressed to find food for his family, killed a half-tame deer that was the pet of the daughter of a ducal house, the slayer and all his family were banished forever from the island. In the aggregate there is infinitely more freedom for the mass of the British people than there was half a century ago.

The cold truth is that the social legislation introduced by the Asquith Ministry represented a belated effort to cope with the widespread poverty and industrial squalor, which under a system of unregulated free enterprise, had covered the face of Britain with festering slums. It might prevent Mr. Armour from exuding a repetition of the claptrap and fustian of this article, if he would undertake seriously a course of reading about the history of social conditions in Britain. Since he seems to ascribe the misguided trends of British social policy to doctrinaire Liberals and fanatical Socialists let him make a beginning with the novels of the great Tory statesman, Disraeli and learn what he said about the gulf between "the two nations"



in Britain and its deplorable consequences. Let him read the early speeches of another famous Tory, Joseph Chamberlain, who said, "The birthright of the English people has been bartered away for a mess of pottage. What I say is that the community as a whole, cooperating for the benefit of all, may do something to add to the sum of human happiness, something to make the life of all its citizens and above all the poorest of them, somewhat better, somewhat nobler, somewhat happier—Every kindly act of legislation by which the community has sought to discharge its responsibilities and its obligations to the poor is Socialism and it is none the worse for that."

Let Mr. Armour also read *The Town Laborer* and *The Country Laborer*, both by J. L. and Barbara Hammond, Charles Booth's great *Inquiry into the Life and Labor of the People of London* and George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*, a grim story of conditions in the town of Wigan in the present century. Let him also study the reports of Sir John Boyd Orr, the greatest living expert on nutrition, whose statement, made about 1930, that 40% of the population of Britain were habitually undernourished, has never been effectively refuted. But it may be vain to hope that such a course of reading for the cure of ignorance will be undertaken by a writer who has the gross effrontery to insert amid such a farrago of economic balderdash a sneer at Lord Keynes as "that brilliant but frequently superficial man".

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THE AUGURIES FOR THE complete success of the Four-Power Conference, which is tackling at Moscow the all-important problem of a peace settlement with Germany, are not exactly propitious, because it started with comparatively little progress made towards the reconciliations of the sharply divergent views of the Four great powers about the future of Germany. The decision of the Great Powers to limit the participation of the smaller powers in the settlement to a presentation of their views before hand has evoked vigorous protests from all the the Dominions, but the position of Canada would have been stronger, if she had maintained a contingent of her troops in the armies of occupation. There is a common agreement among the Great Powers that until a central Government is established for Germany, no final peace settlement with her can be achieved and that such government must at all costs be rendered powerless to rebuild Germany's war machine, but

there the concordat ends. The two most controversial issues at Moscow concern the economic future of Germany and reparations. The Anglo-Saxon democracies are agreed that, if Germany is not to be left as a canker of poverty, misery and economic unrest in the heart of Europe, her industrial machine must be sufficiently restored to offer a measure of reasonable prosperity to the German people and that also without such restoration any hope of extracting reparations from her will vanish. The French, although they have now recognized the impossibility of a physical separation of the Rhineland and the Ruhr from the rest of Germany, are afraid that the rehabilitation of German economy will recreate a dangerous war potential for Germany, and so they want the former limited to the dimensions calculated to promote France's recovery through the payment of reparations. But obviously it is very difficult to fix any such limitation. The Russians on their part are obviously apprehensive that the Anglo-Saxon democracies cherish a sinister design to rebuild the economic strength of Germany as a potential ally against themselves and their allies, and they are anxious to ensure that when a central government is established for Germany, it will be under the control of elements sympathetic to Russia, i.e., Communists or Socialists. They are the reverse of enthusiastic about the idea, which has now wide support both in Britain and the United States and in the smaller countries of Europe, of setting up a permanent international control for the Ruhr and integrating German industry in a larger European economy, of which it could be made a valuable buttress. This project has received considerable encouragement from the unanimous acceptance by the General Assembly of the United Nations to set up a European Commission, which would act as a sort of planning board for Europe, as a channel for loans and as the heir to various existing technical bodies such as the European Coal Organization and Emergency Committee, and the Russians' abandonment of their opposition to this Commission is a hopeful sign. But it is quite obvious that the emergence of a greater spirit of compromise among the Great Powers than is now visible is an essential prelude to the settlement of the future of Germany

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