

TOPICS OF THE DAY

NATIONAL REGISTRATION:

UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION:

THE POLICY OF JAPAN: OUR DEFEATED ALLY.

NATIONAL REGISTRATION marks a vital stage in Canada's war effort. The only criticism to be directed against it is that this stage has been too long postponed. Doubtless, there were good enough reasons for delay. Our government was not singular among its allies in a failure to take the war in with sufficient seriousness. The fatal corruption of inertia humbled France in the dust of defeat. Only after that unspeakable disaster did Britain begin to wake up. The same causes operated in our Canadian life, only with more persuasiveness. If France and Britain, with a powerful enemy lying at their doors in what we now know to have been a condition of overwhelming strength, failed to summon imagination and energy for their effort, how should we, separated by the Atlantic, be expected to realize the full nature of the task to which we were committed? And there were other reasons. Our country entered the war with an astonishing unanimity of consent, but there were occasions of disquiet within our borders. French Canada has been frankly suspicious of any move that suggested conscription, and pledges had to be given that this method would not be employed for the raising of an overseas army. There was grave political dissension within our largest Province, that projected a General Election. Moreover, we were not ready to utilize fuller preparation for national service. Perhaps our leaders suffered from an excess of caution, but now there must not be any slackening in the great engagement to which we have put our hands.

Registration has been followed swiftly by a summons to military training for our young manhood. The government abides by its promise that compulsory service will apply in the meantime only to preparation for the defence of Canada. Our Active Service Force has gone abroad, and it would appear that we have done as much as is wanted of us for the present. But—only for the present! We must not harbor any illusions. We are in this war as allies not for the sole defence of Canada. And even if we insist on following the counsels of self-interest, surely we must now realize that the outposts of our defensive zone are in Great Britain. The last lingering traces of isolationist

delusion must disappear from our North American minds. Our future is bound up with the allied cause, not alone from any sentiments of imperial unity, but even more because of stern realities that ought now to be plain and clear to every intelligent mind. The enemy we face matches ambition with audacity. Every cause of anxiety in the awakened leadership of the United States of America is multiplied for us in Canada. Surely we must realize that our soil would be the natural point of attack on the North American continent. Even prudence would suggest that our surest hope lies in preventing the possibility of meeting such an ordeal.

The doctrine of victory by a defensive war has been smashed by the events of early summer. We have learned costly lessons in military strategy at a very great price. Even now, we must contemplate a vast and well-organized offensive carried into the territories of the enemy. When that hour strikes, the Dominions must be ready, willing and able to put at least man for man, gun for gun, tank for tank, airplane for airplane into the fighting line with the forces of Great Britain. Indeed, the principle of going the second mile must direct the spirit of our participation. The British people hitherto have been our shield and defence. Every man, woman and child over there is in the fighting line. Here we live in detached immunity, with our normal way of existence relatively untouched by the actual experience of war. These favourable conditions ought to provide an opportunity for intensified preparation to equip and dispatch a great fighting force, armed and supported by the Canadian people. Nothing less will be our worthy share in the immense struggle that awaits us.

The Canadian people have peculiar aptitudes of mind and habit to take a special part in what can no longer be adequately described as a European war. In the last war, our airmen won a great reputation for their prowess and daring. Already, in the present conflict, they have at least maintained this tradition. It would appear that the wide spaces of our Dominion and the long entail of the pioneer outlook combine to create an air-minded psychology. There is no need to point the moral. Hitherto, this has been mainly a war in which the victories have been won from the air, and these conditions are not likely to alter. The need is for pilots and more pilots, and Canada can supply them. We are also a mechanically-minded people. Every schoolboy in Canada has a working knowledge of the internal combustion engine, and climbs into the driver's seat of an auto-

mobile with the same air of familiar ease as his father mounted the saddle of a horse. We breed the very type of men who are likely to drive swiftly moving tanks and to fire automatic weapons. One would like to see Canadian crews trained to man submarines and speedy light naval craft.

If this be a true estimate of Canada's part in the war, the relays of men who are now beginning to proceed into our training centres cannot be regarded simply as a precaution against a possible emergency. We ought not to indulge ourselves with the delusion that there is little likelihood that these men will be asked to fight. Rather, we must already see them as a potent element in the grand army of offence that will cross the sea and carry the battle into the territories of Germany and Italy. Defensive must give way to an offensive psychology, not because we desire war, but because this is the swiftest way to a peaceful and settled world.

With the mobilization of man-power must go the organization of productive industry. We have long boasted to ourselves, and before the world, of our vast potential wealth in natural resources. . . Food in all forms abounds in plenty. As long as the sea-way between Great Britain and Canada lies open, we can maintain supplies of wheat, meat, fish, fruit and dairy products across the Atlantic. Hunger may yet be a powerful weapon in breaking down the resistance of the enemy, and, by the same token, the availability of foodstuffs may be an equally potent support for the morale of a population living in the firing-line. Here, in this great land, we have metals and lumber all waiting to be converted into instruments of war. Our industrial development has lagged in our Canadian record of progress, and we have many handicaps in our want of highly skilled labor. But we must make the best use of what we have, in the growth of what may well become a permanent forward movement in the whole of our Canadian economy whereby we may become, in the fullest sense of the word, a self-sustaining nation.

If we rise to the full height of what is represented by the aim of national registration, it may easily mark a new epoch in the history of Canadian development, that will leave a permanent impress on our life long after the war has become an ugly memory. Properly understood, this national mobilization should be the symbol of our national coming-of-age. Politically we have attained to the status of a nation; economically and industrially we have not fulfilled the promise of our political

development. The world-crisis has thrown upon us new and sudden responsibilities. What we have claimed as rights must now be fulfilled in terms of obligations. We are like a young man who, suddenly in the midst of the years, by constraint of circumstance, has adult responsibilities thrust upon him. Such an experience is a testing time for character. Inward resolution and discipline must match the demand that comes from without. Such an hour has come to Canada, and if we meet it as we ought, we shall rise permanently into a new stature of political life.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION finds public opinion in the United States of America distracted, and even pre-occupied. The two "champs", as Mr. Wilkie has it, are in the ring, but we have hardly got beyond preliminary sparring of a very desultory character. So far, the customary zest and repartee have been absent from the proceedings. Old-time campaigners and party-organizers must be getting rather worried, especially in the Republican camp. The Battle of Britain holds the newspaper headlines, and crowds every other interest off the air. In domestic politics, there are questions of more immediate importance to draw the fire of public discussion, such as the amount and character of help to be given to the British people, and the defence of the United States. Doubtless, as election day draws nearer, the tempo of the struggle will increase, but present indications suggest a fight that will be short, and probably sharp.

Mr. Wilkie, the Republican nominee, presents a problem for the detached Canadian observer. He came into the race as a very dark horse. It is evident that he has an attractive personality and popular appeal. He may have walked with the kings of big business, but he has not lost the common touch. Of his shrewdness and ability there can be no doubt. But the question that keeps on proposing itself to our Canadian minds, as we stand aloof and unprejudiced by partizan opinions, is this—Is he cast in the mould of a national leader, who will act with courage, wisdom and understanding at a time of extraordinary world-crisis? Mr. Wilkie is a man without a political past, and consequently we have only his speeches by which to form our judgment on his ability and promise. It may be that he is an astute campaigner who is keeping his heavy artillery in reserve for the closing stages of the battle, or, on the other hand, he may want to be known as a man of action rather than words. Our only reflection, at this stage, is that we have not

heard anything from the Republican candidate, so far, that suggests anything beyond the utterances of a very ordinary mind. We do not look for smartness, and we can do without literary distinction, but we do await a clear, positive and constructive policy to guide a great nation both at home and abroad. Mr. Wilkie, as yet, has not revealed any qualities that indicate the mind of a statesman rather than a politician.

The Republican candidate has the great merit of representing exactly the political outlook of the party for which he contends. If we complain about lack of programme, the Republican party replies that the United States of America has suffered a good deal under social schemes and devices for the past eight years. The time has come to give the country a rest from continual interference with business and industry. The general plea of Mr. Wilkie is that the people in affairs both domestic and foreign want to be left alone. Mr. Roosevelt is represented as an interfering busy-body, who tries to make the affairs of everyone his particular concern. At home, his régime has been a succession of ambitious schemes that have introduced an entirely new conception of the State's function into American life. Starting out from dealing with an acknowledged emergency at a time of grave economic crisis, he has introduced policies of social responsibility that have become permanent. It is alleged that his principal achievement has been that of adding colossal sums to the national debt, and thereby increasing burdens on the back of industry. The policy of pump-priming has ended by flooding the land until the economic fields have turned sour and unhealthy. The accusation is one of indulgence in reckless expenditure, amounting to an endowment of incompetence, and a mass-bribery of the electorate. The time has come, says Mr. Wilkie, to get back to the American ideal of economic freedom, under which the United States flourished for so many years. A similar criticism is made of the Presidential foreign policy. Mr. Wilkie is quite emphatic about his condemnation of the aggressive activities that have risen up to menace the democratic way of life. We cannot expect any reversal of policy in the preparation of the nation to defend her liberties against the possibility of attack. But he roundly accuses Mr. Roosevelt of interference in foreign affairs beyond the limits of strict American interest. In a word, at home and abroad, the Republican candidate declares for *laissez-faire*.

The Democratic party decided very swiftly and emphatically that their policy is one of inviting the people of the United States

to give a vote of confidence in Mr. Roosevelt. No other candidate was seriously considered. In nominating Mr. Roosevelt, the party has rightly interpreted the sentiment of the nation. The only issue in the election is for or against the present occupant of the Chief Magistrate's office. It represents exactly the existent line of cleavage between the Democratic and the Republican parties. The Democrats believe, quite rightly, that in President Roosevelt the United States has found a man of bold and resolute action, who speaks with a voice of singular authority in a troubled world. He has gone as far as he could, and further than most would have dared, in supplying aid to the cause with which he has been at no pains to conceal his sympathy. He has contrived to unite the whole western hemisphere in a defensive accord against the possibility of attack. He has a living mind that conducts its thinking in a real modern world. The Republicans contend, with equal force of truth, that there is a great volume of public opinion that has grown weary of Mr. Roosevelt and suspicious of his policies. They view with alarm the mounting public debt, and believe that a time has come for retrenchment. If the traditional policy of American individualism is to have a chance to re-assert itself in the national life, the tide of drift in the way of national control must be turned now. Similarly, there is a widespread fear that Mr. Roosevelt may lead the United States directly into war, and the Republicans assert that the only safeguard is the removal of his powerful personal leadership from political life.

It is a tribute to the effectiveness of the democratic system that two clearly opposed national policies can thus be brought into public debate and settled by the judgment of the ballot-box. Here in Canada we shall watch the contest with close and eager interest. We have every reason to believe that the overwhelming sentiment of the United States is with us in sympathetic support of the great cause to which we are at present committed. Mr. Roosevelt we know. He is a good friend and staunch comrade of the Canadian people. Mr. Wilkie we do not know, but, at least he is no friend of our enemies. The "third term" prejudice will not operate very strongly for or against the President. Doubtless the argument will be employed, but only as a weapon for expressing more potent likes and dislikes. Very powerful interests will seek the downfall of Mr. Roosevelt, some because they see in his policies a direct menace to themselves, and others because they conceive

his continuance in office to be an obstacle to national progress. Equally powerful sentiments will desire his return as a pledge of continuance for the new social outlook he has fostered and the vigorous foreign policy he has advocated. Whatever decision is reached, the name of Mr. F. D. Roosevelt will go down to history as that of one of the great Presidents in the United States of America.

THE POLICY OF JAPAN continues to disturb and distract the eastern world. The Japanese have been master-opportunists in the promotion of what they conceive to be their manifest world-destiny, and they have not been slow in turning the confusions of Europe to their own advantage. The capture of Holland overnight and the subsequent enslavement of France left an open door into new far eastern territories. French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies had long come under the envious eyes of the ambitious Japanese, who threatened more than once to seize what they wanted from these rich colonial possessions, if the economic screw was too tightly applied. There was an immediate renewal of the undeclared war on China, with bombing raids into the far western provinces. Above all, the Japanese were able to force a diplomatic victory in the temporary closing of the Burma Road, the famous back-door, through which the Chinese hoped to get supplies for the continuance of their resistance. Thus the relentless pressure that began with the invasion of Manchuria is maintained. While the British peoples are straining themselves to the limit in the struggle to prevent Germany from dominating Europe, and Italy from controlling North Africa, it appears that we have a third problem on our hands—the ambition of Japan to hold sway over Asia, and not improbably Australasia. We now begin to see something of the extent and magnitude of the threat that has arisen to reverse the progress of humane and enlightened civilization.

The rise of Japan as a national power has been a spectacular tribute to the tough and virile character of an island people. In the second half of last century, they were visited by a renaissance in their national life. However, the new growth that has sprouted with such rapidity and strength was the result of a grafting process rather than a native re-flowering of ancient life. The agile-minded Japanese are gifted in the arts of imitation, and this new stemming-out of the ancestral tree imported its culture from three main sources:—America, Germany and Great Britain. From America they derived their first insight into the power

and value of universal education and the importance of industrial organization. On Germany they modelled the ruthless efficiency of their military machine. But, above all, there stood before them the impressive example of the British people, whose world-wide empire has exercised a magical fascination for the Japanese mind. The Japanese navy is a manifest imitation of the British fleet, but the psychological fixation penetrated much deeper into the subconscious mind. The achievement of one island people in Europe could surely be repeated in Asia. The British people had risen to power, wealth and influence through a process of colonial expansion—why could not the Japanese do the same? Many of them emigrated to China, the East Indies, America, India, Africa, and, as we know, to the western sea-boards of the United States and Canada. Wherever they have gone, they have displayed an amazing industry, combined with an ability and a will to accept an economic standard of life lower than peoples of European origin. They have crashed into the world-markets for the production of fruit, fish, and the manufacture of all kinds of small-wares. Early in the present century, their sense of territorial destiny seemed to be confirmed by their spectacular victory over a decadent Russia. To-day, they have become so inflated with a belief in their national future that, when the Germans and Italians have been taught to behave themselves as a preliminary step in their return to the comity of nations, our next task may be that of teaching a similar lesson to the Japanese. But, in the meantime, our task may have grown immeasurably harder than it would have been a few years ago.

The aggressive activity of Japan has fallen on her Chinese neighbours with tragic force. Our own temporising attitude towards the struggle is but another chapter in the dismal record of short-sighted policies of appeasement. China, like Japan, had experienced a renaissance in her national life, but of a very different character. The stimulating influences came from without, but the movement was indigenous. Early in the present century, the vast, ancient and otiose Chinese people, largely through the attendance of their brightest young men at American and European Universities, began to feel the stirrings of a new life. They threw off an ancient dynasty, and began to re-assert themselves as a free and independent people, resentful of foreign interference and anxious to build the structure of their national life on a new model. The post-war world provided a stimulating environment for the culture of new institutions. Russia was eager in attempts to exploit the revolutionary situa-

tion, but the Chinese, true to their national genius, took what they wanted from the philosophy of the Communists, digested the new teaching that was found palatable, and continued on their way. But the western powers that dominated the League of Nations could not be induced to adopt a similar philosophical attitude towards the influence of the Soviets. They were persuaded to tolerate the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, and so to set their feet on the primrose way of appeasement to the present international bonfire. It is a sad and tragic tale. Future historians may re-tell it when the conflagration has died down, and the detachment of later judgment supervenes on the immediate counsels of prejudice, fear and opportunism—but not before incredible damage has been done. Perhaps it serves no good purpose to reflect on what might have been, but it is difficult to avoid the exercise. A China supported and encouraged by the united goodwill of the League might have proved a mighty balance-wheel not alone in the disturbed life of Asia, where immemorial existence has been invaded by new and unfamiliar forces, but also in the wider movements of life in the modern world. Instead, we have been moved by short-sighted fears and immediate advantages alike in Europe and in Asia, and Japan will take opportunity of every momentary weakness to advance her own interests.

The Japanese retort to our fears is so obvious that it has already been expressed to the League of Nations Assembly by the present Lord Chancellor of England, and, more recently, in Tokio itself by the British Minister to Japan. The reply is that they have as much right to a national career and destiny as any other nation. And it is difficult to withstand the claim. However, it leads on to rather divergent views of the possible future history of mankind. The trouble-making nations, with their dynamic conception of life, accept with considerable delight the proposal that the international scene should be a perpetual struggle for power, in which the spoils go to the victor. Nothing is permanently settled if it can be altered by force. Other nations, or at least groups of enlightened people within them, believe that there is no need to resign ourselves to such a dismal and forbidding interpretation of human existence. What the persuasions of decency and morality have created within democratic society can become the accepted way of life for nations. But there is no hope for such an outlook to prevail if Germany, Italy and Japan have their way in the modern world. If it is further retorted, as it may be, and most aptly,

that unfortunately this new philosophy of international life is proposed by a possessor group of nations to the dispossessed, the reply must be that so far as the British people are concerned, they have become largely a dispossessed nation, but not through the *force majeure* of military conquest, rather through the devolution of imperial power in accordance with the very international policy they propose to the world. With this outlook Japan has no sympathy; she has no interest in its triumph, and until she has, she must be watched and withstood.

THE MILITARY DEFEAT OF FRANCE has assailed our minds with all the force of an unbelievable tragedy. Our feelings are similar to those we experience when some dear and respected friend has been overtaken by a sudden weakness, so that he loses both nerve and mind in the battle of life. Moreover, this friend of ours was linked with us in a life-and-death struggle, when, panic-stricken, he threw up his hands and abandoned the fight. The first mood of resentment has passed, but the sorrow and pity of it remains.

An exact analysis of the decline and fall of France will inevitably attract the attention of future historians, but there are pressing reasons why some immediate study of the subject should be made. The late Sigmund Freud in his theory of mental disease speaks of an "advantage through illness". That great analyst taught that there are hidden causes of instability which are revealed only when the patient becomes thoroughly ill. France provides us with a case study in the pathological condition of democracy. None of us is so completely healthy in our social life that we can neglect an example, so apparent and revealing, of what can bring a great and proud nation in abasement to the dust of defeat. The lines of Mark Antony come to mind:

Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen:
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.

The terrible German onslaught that brought France tottering to her knees was conceived with superb audacity, planned with meticulous care, and delivered with overwhelming force. Its speed and punch simply paralysed the French military leaders. The nature of the attack that was about to be made upon him had never taken shape in General Gamelin's imagina-

tion. The French High Command was bemused by its Maginot Line, although Rauschnig represents Hitler as prophesying that he would take it without the loss of a single man. The great fortress wall, against which the Germans were expected to dash themselves in futile fury, was taken by a corporal's guard who paddled their way beneath its guns in a boat, after the columns of rapidly moving tanks had gone clean past its northern end. French strategy was conceived with a military ineptitude that was equalled only by colossal blunders in the actual tactics of the field. The tragic fact is that Hitler did not fight the battle Gamelin intended. Instead, the Germans took the offensive with such masterly power into their own hands that the French were completely unprepared to defend themselves against its smashing blows.

The German High Command had adapted its tactical conceptions to a modern warfare of incredibly swift movement alike in the air and on the land. To this they added an unenviable psychological appreciation of the weapon of panic. Diving bombers swooped with terrifying screams on the fleeing multitudes of refugees, who hampered the orderly conduct of a rearguard action. The resultant demoralization provided an opportunity for the German columns of motor-cycles and tanks to rush on, completely abandoning all classical concepts of military attack. The familiar names came back to us—Cambrai, St. Quentin, Amiens, Arras and Abbeville, around which great battles had been fought hardly more than a score of years before—and now taken with bewildering speed by squadrons of machine-gunners mounted on motor-cycles!

The débâcle in the north was a disaster of the first magnitude, but it was not the defeat that finally brought France down. The military weakness was a symptom of a deeper-seated disease. Even after King Leopold abandoned the fight, the battle was by no means lost. A gallant British army was able to hold the enemy in check sufficiently long to extricate itself as by a miracle through the port of Dunkirk. France had still a great army in the field, and manoeuvring space to deploy it into action, if not for counter-offensive, at least for stubborn resistance. We now know that the real defeat was not on the military front, but in the divided counsels of the French government. Timid-hearted politicians, some of them in secret sympathy with the enemies of their country, were sitting in the places of authority. Daladier was a man of straw, while rascals like Laval and Flandin detested the British alliance. The reactionary capitalist Baudoin

appeared on the scene, and the gallant Reynaud could only resign into the hands of the pathetic Petain. Oh for one hour of Clemenceau! He would have died at the head of the French army before he would have set his foot in that railway-car in the forest of Compiègne. But France had no Clemenceau in her hour of desperate need, and—so, she fell.

It has often been asserted that a country gets the government it deserves. There is reason to fear that a disunited government reflected only too well the general mind of France. The modern spirit of secularism had penetrated deep into the heart of her life. Farmers had abandoned their lands to the cultivation of foreigners, while they themselves lived the easy life of *rentiers*. The labour movement had degenerated into a revolutionary Bolshevism. Cynical materialism had eaten like a corrosive acid into the temper of French life. They had become a people without a living faith. The political system gave opportunity for endless manipulation in the hands of self-seeking worldly-minded men. The bewildering variety of parties presented a spectrum-band-like appearance to the eye of the external observer, who was astonished to find that the name Socialist could be the merest label attached to a group of the most conservative politicians. The "bloc" method of forming governments put a premium on governmental instability. Thus France almost exactly fulfilled the prediction of Plato, that democracy will decay through an excess of freedom.

These inherent weaknesses of French life had a devastating effect on the war-effort. There were foolish alternations between unwarranted liberty and excited repression. A stupidly applied censorship on the press only gave rise to a whispering campaign in *estaminets* and *cafés*. The government consumed its energies in internal dissension. Above all, the people were induced to adopt an attitude of smug self-confidence that crumpled up when the hour of testing came.

France has fallen very low, and there are probably new indignities yet to be heaped on her defeated condition. She lies prostrate beneath the German heel, at the mercy of a people that has dropped mercy from its vocabulary. We may hope that she will yet march again at our side, cleansed and disciplined by the fire of defeat. But the shock of disillusionment has been undeniably great and, meantime, the British peoples must fight alone.

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