

# THE WAY OF WILLIAMSTOWN

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**M**ANY spectators feel at first (and I as much as any) that there is something ruthless in the American way of doing things. It is so big and thorough that it seems as though it must be a system devised by supermen for supermen; and yet, when it is your good fortune to work with them instead of looking at them or skimming the contents of their press, you realize almost with a shock that they are people of like stature with yourself: strong where you are weak, weak perhaps where you are strong, and withal generously appreciative of the individualism that is in you. I was at the Williamstown Institute of Politics throughout the month of August; and I came away convinced that here is a great people, feeling in their own way after truth upon international affairs. They have their prejudices; I have mine; and I learned most from those with whom, as I heard them, I differed most. At this point and that I tried to urge the case of England or Canada or the British Empire. I rose with almost a truculent feeling; but before I sat down, I found myself partially disarmed by the undercurrent of sympathy with which my explanation or retort was received. I felt that their purpose was the attainment of truth, and having been made to feel that, I too learnt as I went along. They have a saving sense of humour too, which never fails them. Their Latin-American economists lauded the civilising work of American capital in Mexico; upon which I congratulated the U. S. A. on making the world safe for capitalism. Their international lawyer attacked Sir Austen Chamberlain's reservation on the Kellogg Pact; upon which I enlarged his criticism into the picture of a buccaneering England demanding a roving Munroe commission in every corner of the world. Call these feeble jokes, if you like. The point is that they received them with laughing cheers. They are far too big to resent a jest directed against themselves. They laugh with you as only a people can which is conscious of a great reserve of power. Am I wrong in urging that suspicions are removed and understandings created most easily after a sally of humour?

The Press is a formidable force at Williamstown. Each Round Table must deliver to it, the day before a press release, not merely an abstract, but an advance report with emphasis on the points that

will have "news-value". I thought the pressmen very clever and well-informed, and I did not find that their attentions distracted me. But to some, and in particular I think to Dr. Graham Wallas, the publicity was something of a torture. He commented in his Round Table upon the tendency of journalism "to prefer to the patient and careful search for truth the production of a certain number of columns, abridged so as to give prominence to what is of special popular interest", and he lamented "the exaction of advance outlines of the proposed discussion, restricting the possibility of results from the experiment of spontaneous impact of minds". Dr. Wallas's subject was distinctly speculative—"Methods of Social Direction"; and the Press was perhaps too exacting here. But those of us who handled more concrete problems found less difficulty in giving the Press what was expected and reserving a margin of freedom for ourselves.

Our session lasted for four weeks. Recreation, physical and spiritual, was happily blended with some good hard work. The Round Tables begin at 9 a. m. and last till 10.30, after which the members adjourn to a General Conference which lasts from 11 till 1. In the evening there are one-hour lectures by distinguished men and women, some of them being the leaders of Round Tables. Each Round Table leader is responsible for a couple of General Conferences. The leader chooses his subject from among the matters discussed at his Round Table, and introduces it himself, followed by experts when these are available, and then the discussion is thrown open. My Round Table being on the Agricultural Surplus, I selected as my two subjects the McNary-Haugen Bill and the Canadian Wheat Pools. As the audience was primarily political, the debate was not exciting, but the addresses were received with enthusiasm. The most excited debate was on Nicaragua. Set speeches having occupied the whole morning, the Conference demanded a further session in which it should have its say. I had the honour of being asked to act as Chairman "to ensure a fair and regular discussion", as they told me—playing upon the "fair and regular elections" which the American marines were sent to Nicaragua to ensure. It was a splendid example of sharp differences interchanged with earnestness and good temper. And the American navy by its bluff humour won many hearts, including the Chairman's.

This was the 8th session of the Institute. Earlier sessions had been devoted mainly to European affairs at a time when America's entry into the League of Nations was a living issue, as it no longer is, I feel. Some of the old guard were there, but they seemed to me

to be fighting a lost cause. The majority was of the opinion that America would do most by working, as it were, from Washington outwards. Indeed, some of the debates seemed to proceed with an almost studied disregard of the existence of a League of Nations; and those who differed from this attitude were glad to find in the audience a League expert in the person of Sir Herbert Ames, the late Treasurer of the League. As a Canadian of American descent, he spoke with authority; and his contributions dispelled the thought, which at times lurked around, that the League was just the Sunday-go-to-meeting dress of European nationalism—Europe's half-hearted screen for its inveterate militarism. Here, as elsewhere, the Conference was most pleased when the opposing case was ably put.

This year the Institute was invited to take as its subject: "Can the U. S. A. mitigate the rigours of economic imperialism as it has mitigated those of political imperialism?" With this in view, pairs of Round Tables discussed Latin-American political relations and Latin-American economic relations; the problems of the Pacific with special reference to the politics of China and Japan; and the problems of the Pacific Rim with special reference to population and migration.

On Latin-American policy the experts differed sharply. The political experts, among whom were professors from the American South, ardent disciples of Woodrow Wilson, denounced American aggression. The economists and naval authorities defended American policy. Criticism took these lines. (1) America's protest against Mexican legislation is an unwarranted interference with Mexico's sovereign power. To defend the oil interest, which contained in its ranks individuals and corporations with an unsavoury record, the American Government did not scruple to risk war. (2) At the recent Pan-American conference the Latin-American opposition was hidden from the public. The American press was forbidden to tell the truth. (3) The declaration of President Coolidge, that the person and property of an American citizen are a part of the national domain, even when abroad, is sheer and aggressive imperialism, as reprehensible as talk about citizens abroad being "the living currency" of their own country and therefore, like the dollar, sacrosanct. *Per contra*, the economists and representatives of American business (for these were in attendance and spoke most ably in defence), argued that the U. S. A. had been patient and moderate, and that America's so-called imperialism compared very favourably with that of other imperial nations. The impressive trade gains of the U. S. A. in Central and South America were recited. "Industrialised North America", said the economist,

"can look there increasingly in the near future for raw materials, and for markets necessary to the disposing of our growing exportable surplus". Whereupon Japan arose and said: "That is precisely why we are in Manchuria". Our economist was a professor at a prominent school of commerce which is pledged by its founder to teach protection; and it was instructive therefore to hear his protest against the policy of the Big Four of South America in adopting tariffs "for the protection of industries which logically should not exist within their borders". A whole book might be written on the use of the word "logical" in the American business programme.

Both sides were agreed that Latin-America was restive under America's one-sided interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine; and a professor from the South sought an escape from this state of unpopular monopoly by urging the entry of Canada into the Pan-American union. "It would give us", he said, "an understanding neighbour, and Latin-America a possible counterpoise to the terrifying supremacy of the United States". I agreed. For it is quite clear to me that America's attitude towards Canada is *not* one of "Hands off in the name of Monroe". Should trouble develop in South America or the Pacific, the less Great Britain and the British navy are brought into the limelight, the better it will be for the British Empire. Canada and Australia can interpret Great Britain in the U. S. A. only if they speak in the first instance as Canada and Australia. The separateness which might be imputed to Canada if she joined the Pan-American union would, I believe, be far outweighed by the more real power which she would exercise at an early stage of any trouble through such membership.

In the Pacific Conferences the leaders, covering different ground, were not in pronounced disagreement. On the question of population the Conference leader urged:

The concept that the Nordic is superior to the Oriental because he has more and larger industries has no basis in science.

This was the saying of greatest news-value in the whole meeting. Pressmen in nearly every State of the Union reproduced it and commented on it. The Williamstown local had for a headline—"Nordic type is not superior, says Professor R. D. McKenzie"; and just underneath, by pure accident, was a haggard picture of Graham Wallas entitled "From England"! Again:

The white population of the world during the past hundred years has increased much faster than that of all the coloured put together. In fact, outside of Japan and the Dutch East Indies, there is little indication of much increase among the peoples of Asia or of Africa.

Surprising news to me, but strongly confirmed for Africa later in the meeting.

More important still from a Canadian standpoint was the law of migration, as enunciated by Professor McKenzie. The natural movement of peoples is from the country of the lower standard to that of the higher. Labour thus obtained assists the process of industrialization. The U. S. A. had the negroes first; after them the Orientals, until they were excluded by law; and now Mexicans are entering in such numbers that organised labour in the Pacific States demands the application of a strict quota to them. Furthermore, when two streams of people flow to a new land, that with the higher standard finds it difficult to hold its own. The Japanese, excluded from North America, have not flowed readily into Manchuria. They have sent troops, capital and technical experts, but it is the Chinese with their lower standards who are colonising Manchuria. The Japanese cannot compete. This bears on Canada's immigration problems. Great Britain to-day has a block of unemployment; but whether they are employed or unemployed, their standards, thank heaven, and unemployment insurance, are decently high. She is not as Ireland was in 1846, nor has Canada the climate of the U. S. A. There is therefore every reason to fear that the Open Door would result in populating the Canadian West with a preponderance of European peoples to whom the move from Europe to Canada means a great increase in security and material well-being. I believe that in the interest of the Canadian West the Dominion should spend money and effort in securing British settlers, and should go slowly rather than imperil its cultural standards. Without control, in the form of a quota or something analogous, we shall impose upon the West the cruel task of digesting more types than it healthfully can, and of spending its energies decade by decade in not losing cultural ground, instead of securing that its native children and the children of British stock shall reach a progressively higher life. Our West must not be for us another Manchuria. This was the train of thought which I pursued, fresh as I was from a month of travel and study in the Prairie provinces.

But if there were no sharp differences between the leaders, there was open war between China and Japan; of words, that is to say. For on one Sunday the Asiatic members of the Institute, from Turkey, Persia, China, Japan, entertained us to a tea of tropical splendour, with luxuries ranging from Turkish Delight to Soya Beans. The Honourable and Grey-haired Mr. Zumota, Japan's wise old man, spoke patient, inexorable words. Japan holds to her Treaty rights; she is protecting China against herself, against



that self which tried to sell China to Russia in 1896. Japan will go when China is strong enough (he did not say "to put her out", that would have been too crude) to keep order for herself. Whereupon Young China, trained or training in American law schools, was on its feet defying the Chairman's baton. China is a continent, America is a continent. China must be free like America. Manchuria is ours. We are a great people, and will not be oppressed. The big heart of America opened itself to China's impetuous youth; and I stood ready to share my bucket of whitewash, low though it was by this time, with the island empire of the Pacific.

Dr. Raymond Buell, investigator for the Foreign Policy Association of the U. S. A., supplied the sensation of the meeting. In four Conferences he summarized the result of his investigations into the native problem of Africa. He argued that the European powers in the process of developing Africa had overstimulated the movement of native peoples, and fostered anarchy and disease. "The population in large areas", he said, "is actually decreasing". He condemned the policy of South Africa towards its four and a half million blacks, "barred from land purchase except in reserves, and as workers off these reserves virtual serfs". He criticised the French because "they levy a labour tax of 12 days unpaid work" and "conscript natives for military service and for a labour army, with a term of service three times that of the army in France". *Per contra*, he granted that the doctrine of trusteeship had a creditable record in medicine, education and religion; and he warmly approved of the exclusion of the plantation method from the colonies of British and French West Africa.

Among his speakers was the coloured president of a southern university, who declared that the black man despised those of his own race who desired to be like white men. Should the negro return to Africa? No! The task which the Lord had given him was to stay in America and denounce imperialism at a distance. Imperialistic England was tottering with decay and two millions of unemployed; red with the blood of massacred India, and so guilty that it dared not fight the Russian liberator. He was followed by a quiet coloured student from Jamaica, who formally dissociated himself and the cause of negro education from Bolshevism. As we walked off to lunch, I laughingly complained to a press friend that poor old England was guilty again. He replied, "Wait till you hear about Liberia"—for he had just seen the press release. The lecture on Liberia was a crushing indictment of the Firestone Rubber enterprise, and of Washington's relation to it. And it was the more pungent from the fact that, the day before, one of Dr. Buell's speakers,

to the surprise of Dr. Buell himself, had commended the social and educational provisions of the company. "Labourers of the same tribe are to live together in model villages. . . . The company is acting in accord with the new doctrine of trusteeship, and is inaugurating a new era of prosperity for Liberia".

The attack was along two lines. (1) The American Finance Corporation, a subsidiary of the Firestone Company, has imposed an unjust loan on the Government of Liberia, which that Government knows to be prejudicial, but has accepted because it believes that Washington wishes it so. As a guarantee for the loan, the revenues of Liberia are to be supervised by men whom the American Government may appoint. "This is a policy of attempted domination. . . . The American Congress and the American people knew nothing of the transaction. It is difficult to find in the history of international relations a better example of secret diplomacy at its worst". (2) The Firestone Company is to purchase labour from the chiefs at one cent per man per day. "This is virtually slave labour, for the order of the chief is law, and none dare disobey." The scheme calls ultimately for 300,000 men, which means the commandeering of practically the whole able-bodied population between 18 and 40. The Belgian Congo obtained this number out of its population of ten millions only by the most strenuous and harsh recruiting, "It is another irony of history", he said in conclusion, "that the American Government, which has prided itself that it is not "imperialistic", should maintain a form of control over Liberia the only result of which is to bring interest payments to American bondholders, and to impose heavy administrative charges upon the Liberian Government".

The comment of the press was interesting. A local republican paper called it an abuse of Williamstown's tradition of free speech. The *New York Times*, Democratic, sought to draw a distinction between what he was reported to have said and what he really said; and ended a leader on the subject with a benediction, not on Dr. Buell, but on the surprise speaker who had commended the educational programme of the company in advance. Seven days later the Wall Street Journal dismissed the discreditable episode from the notice of American investors:

It hardly needed the denial of the State Department, accompanied by that of President King of Liberia, to explode the charge that the Firestone rubber concession in Liberia was obtained through improper pressure by our Department of State. This particular libel was offered without rhyme, reason or excuse by an ex-college professor, at one of these irresponsible talk-feasts which pass away the idle hours at some of our second-rate colleges.

Poor professor! Poor Williamstown! And yet, could the tribe of professors and the Institute of Politics ask for a finer testimonial? They gather at Williamstown to speak the truth as they see it, to stand corrected when they are wrong, to learn as well as to teach. This is the spirit of every member of the Institute, professors and non-professors, men and women alike. The Way of Williamstown is serious, yet smiling; enthusiastic, yet tolerant. Americans seek there an American answer to some of the world problems in which their country is involved. But they are persuaded that the answer will be unworthy of America unless it has passed through the fire of criticism. At whose hands they care not, provided that he speaks with some authority. If I went again to Williamstown, I should still arm myself with my pail of British whitewash, but I confess that my presence would not be essential. For I saw enough to realise that if no Englishman or Canadian were there, nevertheless the British case would not go by default. Their purpose in inviting speakers from outside is not merely to tap new knowledge, but also and chiefly to ensure that their own final view is a fair one.