

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE FIGHT FOR TIME: A SECOND FRONT: NATIONAL SELECTIVE SERVICE: THE FUTURE OF RADIO.

THE FIGHT FOR TIME that has been waged all summer is nearing its close, and present appearances suggest that we have won a victory. We have gained all that was possible for this present year, but our achievement is not to be measured in terms of territory, rather in opportunity to prepare for future campaigns. Any hopes we may have entertained of driving back the Germans this year have been modified by actual experience: but, at the time of writing, while we cannot indulge our emotions with any flattering self-esteem, on sober reflection we should be well content with the result of the summer battles. One way of looking at the matter would be to think of it from the point of view of our enemies. It is very evident that they have not gained what they expected. If they have a time-table (which we take leave to think is not quite so accurately drawn up as some of our commentators would lead us to believe), according to its provisions, a grand meeting-point of what our war correspondents call pincer-movements was set for the plains of India. The Germans were to drive in through the Russians to the Caucasus, and from there onward to make a junction-point in the Near East with the African armies of Rommel. Meanwhile, the Japanese were to move in from Burma. But the Germans are still on the Volga and the Nile, and the Nipponese are still outside India. It may not be the most exhilarating kind of victory to win, but for the present we must be content to say that every disappointed hope for our enemies is a gain for our arms.

The main blows have fallen on our Russian allies. Their losses have been stupendous, and their resistance has been beyond all praise. The Red Armies have fought the hardest of all campaigns—a delaying action on a grand scale, with periodic stands at strategic points. No operation is so difficult to manage as a retirement in face of a powerful and well-equipped enemy. The vital factor in such a battle is the human spirit of endurance, especially when it has to be maintained month after month. A short strategic retreat can be executed with comparative ease: or again, there are times when events make an enforced retreat an exciting adventure while it lasts. But the campaign

fought by the Russians this summer has been a very different affair. Month after month they have gone back fighting with their line unbroken. They have stood before city after city, river after river, always hoping against hope that they had exhausted an enemy on whom they were inflicting fearful losses. The Germans have gained important strategic points, and have penetrated to the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains. Nevertheless, the Russians are undefeated, and, apparently, unbroken in spirit. It is not the victory the Red leaders had confidently predicted in the spring: nevertheless, it is a moral victory they have won in the course of the summer months.

For a time it looked as if the British were about to receive very severe and almost fatal reverses in the North African desert. The powerful, well-led mechanized forces of the Germans made a sudden assault that brought them to the very gates of Alexandria. Tobruk, so gallantly defended month after month, went down at last most unexpectedly. Our hearts trembled while Rommel's tanks rolled on to the basin of the Nile, and in our darkest moments we saw them at Suez and even beyond, rushing on to the historic battle-grounds of Syria and Palestine. Here again, in this strangest of all the war theatres, our chief comfort is in the frustrated aims of the enemy. As we write, our lines still hold, and by all accounts, our forces have been greatly strengthened. However, we cannot hope, like our allies in the north, for a winter respite. There is little or no intermission in the desert heat, and we shall feel safer and happier only when we have driven the enemy back from the positions he has gained. However, once again, we have fought for time and won it.

After early spectacular victories, the Japanese have made little progress in the Pacific and the Far East. The first onward rush was sufficiently devastating to leave little room for satisfaction, not to speak of complacency. We are still smarting from the heavy blows inflicted on the British and American forces, with the loss of vital strategic bases. However, the Japanese have had their reverses and frustrations. They have received two signal defeats at sea, and have been unable to advance further beyond Burma or into Australia. From such reflections we must extract all the comfort we can—for they provide all the encouragement we are likely to have for some time. Here again we fight for time, and at present we can say that we are holding on to our positions.

There are two western theatres of war that are of vital importance. The first is over Germany. The spectacular raids

of the Royal Air Force, in which the Royal Canadian Air Force is taking so gallant a share, must be having a severe effect on German production and *morale*. Factories in the Rhine valley have been smashed, and whole communities severely punished. The experience of the British people suggests that we must not over-estimate the results of these aerial expeditions. The Germans are a stubborn people, with great capacity for endurance, and we should only be deceiving ourselves if we built up false hopes on their inability to bear up under heavy blows. It is probable that, with their characteristic thoroughness, they have not put their factories all in one geographical area, nor left them unprotected from air assault. Nevertheless, photographs cannot lie, and the effect of nightly raids in force, with the promise of still greater to come, is as heartening to us as it must be terrifying to our enemies. Memories of the 1940 blitz can provoke nothing but satisfaction at these retaliatory measures.

The other theatre of war is in the western ocean. This wide and fateful place of battle sends out few communiqués, and only almost by chance do we hear some tale of gallantry that is unequalled in the long annals of human heroism. The merchant marine is fighting a hard and often unequal battle, but in the few reports that reach us the fight for getting supplies across the Atlantic is, on the whole, successful. There are appalling losses in men, ships and materials, but we do know that great armies of Canadians and Americans are crossing the sea steadily. Bombers are being flown across the wide Atlantic day after day. We have no reason to believe other than that the preponderating proportion of war materials that leave our shores for the European continent is getting to its destination.

The fight for time is a battle of preparation for what must be our main occupation in this North American continent—to train armies and airmen, to build ships and man them, to make material of every description and to get it where it is needed. This vast enterprize we must think of in terms of a fight. The Russians, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the British, the Americans, on sea, land and air have been fighting to give us time. It would be monstrous treachery to slacken in our share of the great battle. Already we must begin to think of the campaigns of 1943. We may not have won all the battles of 1942, but we have won the opportunity to fight next year, and that is for us at present the greatest possible gain.

THE SECOND FRONT agitation deceives nobody—neither those who press for the opening of a new offensive, nor those to whom the propaganda is directed—least of all does it impress our enemies. The stump orators who harangue mass meetings of “the workers” know very well that military leaders should not decide matters of high strategy on the basis of soap-box resolutions. On the other hand, statesmen who have to make tremendous decisions involving the fate of a million private soldiers are not free to announce coming blows at the enemy for the sake of a gesture to the Left. The trouble about the second front discussion is that it is a species of political and social warfare waged in a domestic campaign. The real attack is on the old guard of the Munich men, not to mention the Munich women, of whom Lady Astor is the chieftainess. With us in Canada, proposals for a second front come significantly from circles that label themselves anti-fascist—and the suggestion is that the fascists are not all to be found wearing black or brown shirts on the continent of Europe.

There are probably good enough reasons for gratification at the existence of an alert and vigilant body of opinion waiting to slay any resurrected appearance of the Munich mind. But it is a complete distortion of historical fact to suggest that the appeasement policies that have led us beyond the brink of disaster were approved solely by what are called the reactionary classes. During the years immediately before the war, was North American labor less isolationist than North American capital? It is notorious that, when war broke out, radical groups who were being used as a front by the insignificant but active Communist party all maintained a luke-warm attitude towards the conflict. It was sedulously suggested that we had on our hands the newest version of a capitalist-imperialist war, in which the working man could have no interest except to avoid being led once again to the meaningless slaughter. With the attack on Russia by the Nazis, the whole picture changed over-night, and fighting Hitler, which had hitherto been denounced as the 1939 version of the old, old game, now became a holy crusade.

The urgency of current events is too grave for the indulgence of recriminations about the past. We must leave future historians and psychologists (both will be needed) to unravel the tangled skein of motives and policies that have led us to this present time. We have all been guilty partners in playing the opportunist game. The need of the hour is for all to stand together, and the fact that the agitation for a second front has

become a party-cry is the main complaint against its advocacy. Every intelligent person realizes that the Russians are our allies, and admires the magnificent capacity for combat they have displayed in a stubborn, heroic resistance to our common enemy. Every blow struck at the Axis powers is our blow, whoever directs it, and the foes of Hitler are our friends, wherever they may be found. But an admiration for the Russians and sense of common cause with them in their struggle need not throw the whole picture of the war completely out of focus. One earnest Canadian lady orator has suggested that the Russians can teach us how to fight. Doubtless we have much to learn in the new warfare of modern times, and only blind stupidity would prevent us from gaining instruction from any likely quarter: but there is no need to accept the innuendo that our own armies are entirely abandoned to the leadership of half-hearted fools. Support for the Russians in the ordeal to which they are exposed is an obvious strategy that cannot have escaped the notice of our own High Command. It would be monstrous to suggest that any responsible leader in our allied cause should refrain from attacking Hitler at his most vulnerable point because it is impossible to distinguish between the Russians and the Germans as our enemies. The only inference left in our minds is that the cry for a second front is not really an attempt to stir up a lethargic High Command, but the waving of a party battle-flag, when such banners only confuse and divide.

The second front is an erroneous description of what its advocates have in mind: moreover, so to define a new assault on the European continent involves a grave injury to gallant men who have been and still are fighting on far-flung battle-fronts throughout the entire world. From the historical point of view, the battle line in Russia is the second European front. The first front was opened up on 3rd September, 1939, when the British and French declared war on Germany, and in the western theatre operations have never ceased. Deserted by allies, the British were forced back across the channel, and immediately set themselves to organize for defence. The Battle of London provided a record of heroism that will live as long as history itself. Our airmen fought the *Luftwaffe* to a standstill, while the civilian population not only had their homes smashed, but, with silent courage, went into factories and joined the Home Guards to prepare for the next stage in the battle. Meanwhile in Greece, on the island of Crete, in battles fought amidst the blistering heat of African deserts, at Hong-Kong, at Singapore,

and not least in the North Atlantic, the British navies, armies, and air forces were fighting alone and uncomplaining in unequal battles. True, they experienced reverse and defeat at almost every point, but we have to keep in mind the magnitude and extent of the operations in which they were engaged, and the poverty of resources at their disposal. All this must be said neither in boast nor in apology (from many points of view it is a desolating record of dismal failure), but simply to correct any distorted view of events which would suggest that while the Russians are fighting, everybody else has been playing a waiting game. All honour to the Soviet armies, but they have not been fighting alone.

There are three observations that may be made about opening up a western front on the continent of Europe:

(1) Such an expedition is a military necessity. At this time of day there is no need to emphasize the terrible might of air-power. It has added a new revolutionary weapon to the artillery of war. At times, the capacity to strike swiftly and accurately from the air has been a decisive factor in battle. The Germans and Japanese have made use of the dive bomber with shattering effect on battleships and land fortifications. But it has not yet been established that victory can be won solely from the air. The direction of high-explosive missiles from aircraft has added a new potency to the extent of preliminary bombardment, but the land that is to be defeated must be assaulted and occupied by the infantry. Therefore to reduce Germany to defeat there must be an actual invasion of her territory.

(2) An invasion of Europe will be a costly operation. We are fighting against an alert and intelligent enemy, who has a well-deserved reputation for leaving nothing to chance. Since the mid-summer of 1940, the British Isles have been put in a state of readiness against the possibility of an invasion, and we have every reason to believe the preparations for such an ordeal are complete and thorough. What do we suppose the Germans have been doing in the territories they have occupied?

The attack on Dieppe in August of this year adds practical experience to speculative strategy. The force that landed on French soil was comparatively small, but it was able to get across the channel and back again with complete immunity. Naval and air forces could provide sufficient protection for the disembarkation not only of infantry units, but of armoured vehicles. Our commandoes got ashore and penetrated the enemy defences. A landing is possible. But the raid also warns us

that such desperate operations cannot be carried through without grave losses—no greater in proportion than the casualties received in other similar expeditions—nevertheless, sufficient to make an invasion a sober undertaking to be decided upon only after complete study and preparation.

(3) When we attack Germany on the continent, we must proceed with overwhelming force. The invasion should not be delayed a day longer than is possible, but an even greater folly would be to make any premature attempt. We must cross over with certain victory in our grasp. When, how and where this will take place are matters for wise and brave minds to decide, and we will not help them in their grave responsibilities by shouting in their ears.

NATIONAL SELECTIVE SERVICE is now replacing conscription as a principle of action for our maximum contribution to the war. The idea of putting every man (and every woman too) where he or she is best equipped to serve the common cause has much to commend it. An agitation to conscribe men for compulsory duty was well-intentioned, but often it displayed more zeal than knowledge about the vast requirements of modern warfare. The aim was an "all-out" war effort, but in reality it was not "all-out" enough. With memories of the last war in mind, and with an understandable demand for equality of sacrifice as the only principle worthy of a democracy, the call for conscription was often rather ill-considered. The ideal was fine, but the general plan of action was far too limited in its scope. When the scheme was pressed beyond a method of compelling men to serve in the ranks of the army, it was confronted with immense difficulties, and while such service is not to be regarded as other than of first importance, it is only one of many ways in which Canada can take a proper share in a manifold series of operations.

We now realize that getting ready to fight takes a long time—perhaps a longer period than the actual fighting. This is particularly true of Canada, where we had to begin practically from the "scratch line." There can hardly have been a nation on the whole wide earth less prepared for war. Not even the demand for disarmament could have been applied to us: we had never begun to arm! Sharp and bitter criticisms have often fallen from Canadian lips, directed against what is described as the guilty folly of British statesmen who failed to realize the

rising menace of German preparations. Now we know that the designs of Hitler were directed as much against Canada as against Poland, and if the men of the Chamberlain government were deceived, what shall we say of ourselves? If a fool's paradise was located anywhere on this fair earth, it was here in North America, and there is no need to do much searching for the fools who inhabited it. We entered this war not only unprepared in arms, but even more without preparation of mind. For many, participation in a world-war involved a mental and moral revolution: and, as we know, there are elements among us, not inconsiderable in proportions, who have not yet accepted its necessity.

It has been asserted that we ought to have enacted conscription with the same breath with which we declared war. Such a procedure would have been great folly. To make conscription effective, it is necessary to have a complete and well-considered plan of action ready the very moment the proclamation is issued. Canada had no pigeon-hole in the department of national defence or any other department with a ready-made scheme of procedure for a country at war. There was no national register of men; there was no machinery for calling men to the colours; and if the summons to serve had been issued, there would have been no equipment with which to furnish them. But there were also ideas, vague enough at that time or becoming clearer only with the progress of the war, that an enormous production in munitions and equipment would be required. Canada was known to have vast potentialities in minerals and other raw materials, but what was to be the plan of development? In addition to these grave questions of war policy that could not be settled by Canada apart from her allies, there was a domestic problem of greatest difficulty in the attitude of Quebec. Why raise an unnecessary battle-flag at an hour when so many other standards were required to be run up to the mast-head?

As a matter of fact, the one element of conscription in the Canadian war-programme has been the least important. War Service Boards have been calling single men between the ages of 20 and 40 for service in the army at home, but it can hardly be said that the scheme has been a great success. Its chief effect has been to compel men by this indirect means to enlist voluntarily in some other branch of service. The result is very unhealthy, in that being an infantryman is now regarded as the last refuge of a coward who has neither the will nor the intelligence to be anything else. Nobody has ever suggested

that we should conscribe men for air-crew. The Royal Canadian Air Force would scorn the proposal. And yet, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan is probably the most important single contribution of Canada to the prosecution of the war. Again, young men engaged in essential war industries have been placed in the invidious position of requiring to ask postponement of a call to service. And, so far, there have been only very rough-and-ready methods of judging the merits of their case. Many young men of spirit, rather than run the risk of being called up, have gone off to join the Air Force, the Navy, or the Active Service Army. Often they should have been prevented from doing so, because they were performing important national service in their own employment. But in the last resort, under the voluntary system, nobody could prevent them from selecting their own line of service—no word of official advice was spoken—in other words, "laissez-faire" has hitherto directed our man-power policies.

National Selective Service is only at its beginning. Its present powers of compulsion are negative rather than positive. The Director can tell men and women what they must not do: there is no ultimate authority to tell any person what he must do, unless he happens to be a man of military age, and then the sole mandatory requirement is service in the army for home-defence. You must not leave your present job without a permit, but if you are not in your most suitable employment for war-service, you cannot be compelled to move into something more urgent. Powers of persuasion are stretched to the limit, but so far we operate under a system that is voluntary. Perhaps that is as far as we can travel for the present. Many people profess in all sincerity that they ask nothing more than to be told what they ought to do and then that they be compelled to do it. But the application of such a scheme of work requires wise and careful handling. Labor problems of an acute character would immediately make their appearance with questions of wages, status, location and capacity. The vast majority of Canadian citizens are now at work as primary producers, many on their own farms—Who is to say where every man, woman and child is to go and what to do? Nevertheless, considerable powers of compulsion, positive rather than negative, could be introduced.

The scheme of Selective Service demands continuous study of changing war-needs. Already the first picture of the war contribution that presented itself to the Canadian mind has been altered by events. Who could have predicted that we would

have to fight Japan on our Pacific coast, with the United States of America as an ally? Who would have suggested that after the United States of America the nearest neighbouring ally would be the Union of Soviet Republics? The appointment of a vigorous Board of National Selective Service is a sign that after much tossing about from policy to policy, at last we are facing the problems of service and production in a well-considered fashion. As long as Mr. E. M. Little and his colleagues continue to do a good job, we must support them.

THE FUTURE OF RADIO has been brought into public notice and discussion by the recent investigations of a parliamentary committee into the affairs of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. This committee concentrated its attention on certain matters belonging to the internal organization of our government-owned radio system, and made proposals for amendment. The public interest in the subject was a reflection of the intimate place now occupied by this new instrument of publicity. The voice of radio is the most familiar and universal speech heard in the great majority of Canadian homes. Its potency is hardly yet realized. Already it has no rival as the vehicle of news, the creator of public opinion and the arbiter of taste. The constancy of its influence as well as the perfection of its method may well designate it as almost the most important of all public utilities.

The parliamentary committee might have devoted some of its time to an appraisal of what the C.B.C. has accomplished in its short history, and also to a critical estimate of its present operations. Our public are not very interested in the personnel of management: most properly, they judge the effectiveness of radio by what comes streaming through their receiving-sets. The progress made has been rather remarkable. Only a score of years ago, we were fumbling with crude pieces of apparatus, some of it home-made, and all rather inadequate. To-day, the simple turning of a handle brings the voice of the world into our homes with such accuracy of reproduction that the very personalities of speakers and musicians enter with the sound of their performances. Statesmen have forsaken the tribune for the microphone, and whereas only a few years ago they depended for their influence on great public meetings and the dissemination of their speeches through the press, now they sit at home and talk to a whole nation. A whole continent guffaws in simultaneous laughter at the quips of a comedian. Here in

North America the listener may choose his programmes to suit his taste—grand opera or jazz, the declamation of the orator or the gags of an entertainer, the news of the day or the latest episode in a serial story that may be a thriller or a romance.

In North America, most new ventures still depend on the enterprise of the pioneer. Radio began as a small private venture by local companies who frankly recognized it as a means of making money, and it still continues to bring rich rewards. The stage of development corresponds to the old nickel movie shows, and the programmes were on the same standard—rather crude, without high standards in production or taste. Inevitably, the new industry attracted large capital, and in the United States of America great net-works have been built up to control programmes with ability to attract outstanding artists and performers. It is not generally recognised how important it is for Canada that our system should be in the hands of a public corporation. There is no frontier in the air. If the development of Canadian radio were left to private stations, for the most part they would be unable, except in a few large urban centres, to supply programmes that could compete in interest or efficiency with those that pour across the border. These stations would be compelled to become mere adjuncts or outlets for American networks, with the result that a distinctive Canadian note and emphasis would disappear from our most influential vehicle of public communication.

Nevertheless, the local station is required for Canada. We live in a wide country with far-separated communities. The local city or town generally described by the Board of Trade as a "hub" community is the focus of loyalty for many of our people. "Boasting the home-town" may be an exercise in parochialism that has limiting effects on the interests of the public mind, but it does provide for sentiments of pride in the hearts of many Canadians, who want to follow the moves in their own local hockey-match or to hear a speech delivered by one of their own familiar orators. At the same time, we need to develop a sense of unity in Canada, and no single vehicle of propaganda can provide a rival for radio in accomplishing this desirable effect. With great skill, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has created a national voice to speak with a local accent. The unified system co-operates with the small stations to combine items of Canadian interest with those of more limited concern.

There is much discussion of the place that advertising ought to occupy on the radio. If we compare broadcasts, as we may,

to the theatre, one important difference is the absence of the box-office in the receiving set. True, there is a license fee which is enacted for the privilege of listening-in, but it is not adequate to maintain the heavy upkeep of a national system strung across the Dominion of Canada. The only other possibility would be to receive large government subsidies, but this would limit the desirable freedom of a Broadcasting Corporation. In any case, we cannot keep advertising out of the Canadian air, because the United States of America provides some of the most popular programmes on a sponsor-basis. The Canadian people may as well derive the monetary benefits of these features: they help to provide other desirable items, which could be given to our population as a whole only through a national system—items such as the news of the day, commentaries on current affairs, first-class music and, more and more, education both for children and for adults. On the other hand, advertising must be controlled. The public grows weary of incessant appeals to buy. There are standards of taste to be conserved. Here again, a national system is the guardian of the individual listener against unlimited commercialism.

Radio is only in its infancy. There are great developments ahead. Already dictator nations have recognised its potency to mould public opinion, and the direst penalties are inflicted for listening to foreign broadcasts. The effect of the German radio on the French population is now regarded as having been an important factor in the collapse of the nation. We have no desire to make Canadian radio an instrument of propaganda for any party or group. Rather the future of radio in a democracy must be contemplated in terms of education. The public wants to be entertained, and radio can provide an opportunity of laughter and amusement for the leisure hour. Like the newspaper, the radio programme will always be a mirror of the popular mind in its variety and emphasis—including the comic strips as well as the news, local gossip as well as leading articles, and also the advertising pages. But it is now being recognised all across Canada that, like the cinematograph, the radio has a place in the school-room. It is a medium for the lecturer and the discussion forum. Already the standard of public taste in music has been elevated through listening to the finest orchestras and solo performers. The theatre has entered every home. In this mad world of ours we must hold on to this new vehicle of influence for civilization.

J. S. T.