

TOPICS OF THE DAY

KING GEORGE VI: THE RE-ELECTION OF MR. ROOSEVELT:
ALBERTA FINANCE: THE OUTLOOK FOR PEACE: ADULT
EDUCATION.

KING GEORGE VI has come to the British throne through unprecedented circumstances, which are regrettable as they were unexpected. Only a year ago, our sincere sorrow at the departure of George V was relieved by reflections on the life of a King who, by the very simplicity of his character, had displayed, through a reign of extraordinary difficulty, a combination of personal qualities and official virtues that had elevated the monarchy to what seemed a place of unshakable prestige in our commonwealth. It is possible that our expectations were set too high, when we indulged our hopes with the anticipation that one office, and that the highest in the state, could escape the frailties of our human condition. In this case, our humiliation has been measured by the height of moral attainment from which the royal office had fallen. Our sole consolation, meagre as it may be, lies in the fact that what was done was done quickly, and with the minimum of public disturbance.

Edward VIII's renunciation of the throne was, in every sense of the word, a pitiable act. If the essence of tragedy consists in an encounter with circumstance, within which choice must be made between alternatives, either of which must cause suffering, King Edward was a tragic figure. When the first emotional excitements faded into the light of sober judgment, it became evident that he was faced with two mutually exclusive courses of action, and that only he could make the choice between them. His proposed marriage and his continued occupancy of the throne were alternatives that really admitted of no compromise. The idea of amorganatic marriage was not only a constitutional novelty, it was as impossible as it was detestable. Not only the social inconveniences and the intolerable irritations that would ensue upon a separation between the royal court and the royal home, but the whole circumstances leading to the necessity of such a suggestion, put it beyond the range of practical discussion. The British Cabinet insisted that the King's wife should be not only his consort, but the first lady of the Empire, and we are heartily glad to think that they rightly interpreted the overwhelming sentiment of the British

people in rejecting a woman with two former husbands still alive as the possible occupant of that exalted position. To suggest that this is an attitude of priggish hypocrisy, incapable of defence in the modern world, is, by inference, a gratuitous insult to the decencies of what are still the normal relations of wedded affection. On the contrary, it would have been real hypocrisy to proclaim abroad to all the world, even in the charity that all our hearts would lead us to extend to a King much beloved, that the moral sentiments of the British people had become so distorted that they were indifferent to the disgusting details of a divorce by which it was proposed to make possible the royal marriage. We may well deplore the circumstances that made such a decision necessary, but even the loss of a popular monarch may have its access of public gain, if it has registered in the most effective manner possible that the home is still the fundamental institution of our social life.

The ease with which this melancholy incident has been concluded is a tribute to the flexibility of our British constitution. There was no constitutional or legal impediment to the proposed marriage. Complications might have arisen from the fact that it was forbidden by canon law of the Anglican Church, but that ecclesiastical body is only the Established Church of England, and it is not the Church of the British Empire. Nor was the Prime Minister, in name of the Government, under any constitutional necessity to withstand the marriage. In the end, the real barrier to the union was the force of public opinion, expressed through the ministers of state. Everything took place within the region of responsible personal relationships, between the King and his chief adviser, between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, and between the Cabinet and the High Court of Parliament. At any stage, a situation of deadlock might have emerged, and at first there were threatenings that the whole question might divide the Empire into opposing parties. Yet we have been able to pass through this constitutional crisis, simply because all parties concerned have realised that the peace and welfare of the British Commonwealth has a paramount claim over every personal interest. Because none has been more conspicuous in the spirit of this ultimate devotion than King Edward himself, while we may deplore what looks like folly in his affairs of the heart, we can still think with wounded pride of the time when he was the Empire's darling, and wish with all our hearts that he could have continued to be our King. He had so many qualities of personal attractiveness, so many democratic sympathies, so many princely virtues

that might have counted for inestimable gain in the troubles that the Empire may yet have to encounter, that we can ill afford to let him go. Many poor folk will think of him as a lost leader, and we shall all look back on him as a kind of fairy prince. If he deemed the surrender his people asked to be a price too high even for a King to pay, we can admire the spirit in which he gave up his Empire. Time will reveal the wisdom or folly of his tremendous choice.

The King has gone! Long live the King!—and Queen! King George VI may not have the picturesque personality of his elder brother, but he is not of unproved mettle. He shows all the promise of growing into the exalted duties that are demanded of his office, and in this he will be supported by a gracious lady who in her home and character has already become the personal expression of all that we admire and respect. If, as we have every reason to hope, he will bring to a throne that has been rudely shaken the steadying virtues of a more disciplined character, our royal line of kings and queens shall continue, and much that we love shall continue with it.

MR. ROOSEVELT'S triumphal return is the most significant current event in North American life. From the Canadian point-of-view, the Presidential contest is not entirely a private affair of the United States. Our seat may be in the grand-stand, but it is not in the announcer's box, where interest is concentrated on the game simply as a public spectacle. We are so closely related to our neighbours both in trends of opinion and in matters of business that whatever happens across the line has its effects, direct and indirect, upon our own life. The United States Election is much more indicative than the uncertain device of the "straw vote" of what is going on among ourselves. It would appear that the drift of the public mind has developed into a flood, and has ended up as something rather like a torrent, sweeping the President back to power with a momentum that evidently surprised Mr. Roosevelt himself.

We cannot have much doubt as to the meaning of the Democratic avalanche. The President has scored a great personal victory, but even his attractive qualities as an individual cannot provide a sufficient explanation for his triumph. Certainly, so far as the personal factor entered into the contest, he had great advantages over his opponent. We are told that, during the last stages of the campaign, even Father Coughlin, who seems to have

taken the result so grievously to heart that he now proposes to relieve us from listening to his strident oratory, played the rôle of candid friend to the extent of counselling Mr. Landon to bring his New England visit to a premature end. The best that can be said of the Republican candidate is that he was a good clean sportsman, who took his licking like a man, and sent a message of unmistakable goodwill to the victor. But the contrast between the rival candidates had more than an individual reference. Parties get the leaders they deserve. The buoyancy of Mr. Roosevelt and the feebleness of Mr. Landon were symptomatic of the fighting spirit in the opposing camps. The Republicans could hardly hope to win the favour of the electors, when they had clearly lost a good deal of confidence in themselves. They were a party in the sulks. Mr. Landon was the compromise-candidate of embittered men, who were seeking to turn personal grievance into a public cause. To a nation listening for the signal to advance, they offered the strategy of a rearguard action. Desperate efforts to instil creepiness into the public mind failed to raise a single wrinkle in the national flesh. Production of the communist bogey-man could not scare the voters, and the blandishments of Al. Smith had lost their power to charm, even on the side-walks of New York. At best, the Republicans had nothing better to offer than what they announced as a return from dubious experiments and spend-thrift policies to the traditional practices of American political life. In the meantime, at least, it is very evident that this appeal has been rejected most emphatically by the people of the United States.

The Election appears to indicate that, for the present, and possibly for all time to come, the American people have abandoned "laissez-faire" economics. This decision gains in impressiveness because, until very recently, the United States provided the shining example to all mankind of that policy in its success. Every circumstance in their condition was in its favour—history, tradition, geographical situation and social psychology. The typical American was the adventurous pioneer, willing to take a chance, and, in failure, equally willing to cut his losses and make the new beginning which was always open to him. A few became fabulously wealthy, and many more basked in the sunshine of their economic success. The general level of material well-being was higher than in any other country of the world. A noble generosity of disposition devoted large benefactions to public institutions and opportunities for higher education. Where every man was a potential bourgeois, there was little taste for class warfare or even for class distinctions.

And, on the whole, despite the writings of Mr. Upton Sinclair, the system (or the lack of system) worked as well as human nature, in its present condition, is likely to permit.

The very success of American individualism led to its collapse. Zeal to produce outran the economic, if not the real, capacity to consume. The true economic use of capital as the instrument of production faded out of sight, as capital became master instead of servant. The sobering experiences of the past seven years are the best commentary on the condition of impasse into which unmodified "laissez-faire" has developed. It has become clear that the economic world is not a private sphere of existence, with sacrosanct laws of operation, but that it has to do with the very basal conditions of human well being—food, homes, work, wages. If a democratic government cannot intervene, when things go wrong in that particular region of social life, where, we may well ask, can it interpose its action at all? In this respect, Mr. Roosevelt has proved himself a better American than the leaders of the G.O.P. A new situation demands new experiments, and a studious avoidance of the merely doctrinaire attitude of mind. The pioneer psychology of the North American mind has found its present expression in the re-elected President. Without propounding any social theory, or announcing a new system, he has recognised that the same qualities of initiation and adventure that have colonised a sub-continent have now to be turned to the new phase of national development in the meeting of those problems which have been created by the enterprise of the past. Frustrated in one direction, he has turned to others. It is his determination that something practical had to be done, and done at once, that has appealed to his fellow-citizens. They have recognised in him the authentic expression of their own genius as a people, and what better qualification could a man have for being elected President of a Republic?

Meantime, what of the G.O.P.? There are already evidences that the Republicans have read the lessons of the debacle. They are beginning to realise that you can cry in the wilderness and not be a prophet. Enragement at the departure of a prosperous era will not provide the requisite intelligence for meeting the tasks of a new day. You must not scold a flood: you must attempt to stem its destructive course by re-directing its movement. Surely only self-delusion on the part of great business interests could ever induce them to suppose that American prosperity had ever been built up without federal direction and interference. The whole tariff policy, for which they clamoured so loudly, was government control of the most direct character. The Republican

Party has had a great history, and has provided too many leaders for the life of the United States, to allow the G.O.P. to become a Cave of Adullam for the disgruntled. The contempt with which their futile election programme has been met by the American people already prevents them from becoming the kind of effective Opposition that an enormously popular leader always needs in a democratic country. However, they can still perform a useful national service by keeping a vigilant eye on the graft that is sure to accompany large-scale spending, and on the dictatorial methods that are the temptation of every statesman with large legislative majorities at his command.

And now, all eyes are on Mr. Roosevelt. He has a chance that any European dictator might envy. What they have obtained through the brutal suppression of all opposed to them, the leader of the United States has received as a gift from his people. He holds out friendly hands to Canada. Almost his first gesture on re-election has been to make a plea for the unity of all American life. Surely we may recognise in this courageous and debonaire figure one who is the most effective reply we can make to the insinuations that some nightmare of Communism or Fascism must also be our portion on this side of the Atlantic. We have a very direct interest in the success of his new venture in office.

THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA has advanced its reputation for political eccentricity by its excursions into the regions of public and private finance. The reforming zeal of the Social Credit government has made an oblique attack on the economic problems of the province, first by the ingenious method of circulating scrip, which pays for itself on the instalment plan, and then by a compulsory reduction in the principal and interest of contracted debts. The mingled amusement and contempt with which the election of Mr. Aberhart was greeted by the Canadian people has now turned to uneasiness and active protest. This sense of apprehension has not been simply an alarm among leading financial interests of the country at the reflected diminution of Canadian integrity in the matter of credit. Within the province itself, groups of responsible business men, assembled in Chambers of Commerce, have made vigorous protest against the local government methods. But the dictator of Edmonton, in the calm self-assurance of his heavenly mission, has continued to take his way with such lofty disregard for mundane criticism as befits the divinely-inspired authority of his policies.

mortgage-holder is a devourer of widows' houses: she may herself be a widow. Not every payer of interest must be a down-and-out prairie farmer: he may be a man of business who has taken such payments into his calculations in the ordinary working of his commercial enterprise. Who of us, indeed, could not inflate his necessities if we could gratify them by the simple expedient of obtaining them from somebody else? We are told that capital is "flying" out of Alberta, but there is a considerable amount of capital that no wings can possibly lift. Factories, machinery, roads, farms, homes are not "moveable" capital. They have been built on "credit", but now it seems they are to be handed over as gifts to the nominal owners, on the ingenious principle that the government decrees they should not be paid for. This is not Social Credit; it is legalised confiscation.

Mr. Aberhart has evidently that freedom from self-criticism which accompanies conviction of divine authority. While he thus plays fast-and-loose with credit relations within his own Province, he applies for loans to the Dominion government. Adamant refusal to advance the money is cited as yet another instance of oppression. From his watch-tower in the Prophetic Bible Institute, he mingles scriptural exposition with denunciation of the hard-hearted rich. There is every reason to rejoice that a provincial premier should be a deeply religious man, but a good deal of humbug can be associated with the attempt to make a curious exegesis of Scripture the basis of a social programme. The Premier of Alberta is engaged in the rather unconvincing experiment of making the best of both worlds. He has no objection to receiving help from the federal government, presumably with considerations of interest attached, but he is unwilling to apply the same conditions within his own province.

It is plain to every thoughtful observer of the present scene that the old economic order of unlimited individualism cannot continue without modification. Every government is faced with that necessity. To the manifold problems and re-adjustments involved, every competent leader of public life must devote his mind. In that respect, Mr. Aberhart is a portent we would do well to observe. The last method of reform that any sane man wishes to see is through a dictatorship. The most insidious of all absolutists is the religious crank. Whatever reforms are to be introduced, and before we have done with them they will be many and far-reaching, a commanding moral imperative must direct the leaders of society and permeate the public mind. It has become the duty of every well-disposed man, who has powers of

intelligent direction and who is tormented by the human suffering involved in our economic ineptitude, to devote his energies not simply to temporising with present problems through unsatisfactory expedients, but to constructive proposals of re-adjustment and re-distribution that will make us all a happier and more Christian people.

“WAR OR PEACE” continues to be the master-question of world politics. The prospect of international conflict shortens the social horizon and pre-occupies the minds of statesmen with schemes of military preparation. Social planning and long-term development of economic projects seem futile as long as we live in a condition of uncertainty about the very continuance of civilisation. On the other hand, if we could safely indulge our imaginations with the reasonable assurance of a peaceful world, say even for a score of years, the release from emotional tension and the restoration of confidence would solve many of our domestic problems overnight.

The year 1936 has not given us much ground to hope that the madness of war has been exorcised from the life of the world. The meeting of the League of Nations Assembly in September was a depressing and tragic affair. It served only to register how far, both inside and outside the framework of the League, national policies are no longer directed towards conciliation and peace. A new alignment of world forces renders the League ideal in the meantime nothing but an international irrelevancy. The rival outlooks that have come to a clash in Spain divide the great European powers, and it is to this new situation that we have now to adjust our international thinking. Fascism and Communism are theories of the State, both alike inimical to the continuance of peace. They hold in complete contempt the ideal of a world-comity of Nations such as was contemplated in the League Covenant. Fascism frankly accepts military power as the instrument of domestic government, and proclaims unlimited rights of self-assertion in the pursuit of foreign policy. Communism regards war as the most useful prelude to the people's revolution, which is necessary to usher in the dictatorship of the proletariat. The question that remains for the nations which have not adopted these depressing doctrines of the State is how they shall meet the attacks on their own forms of government.

The British people have, fairly unanimously, decided on a programme of self-protection. They have resolved that the only

practicable policy is to be strong enough not to be involved in continental strife. While the door is kept open to receive every overture of conciliation, recent experiences of the League have led them to conclude that, with almost every country of Europe, including France, either hardened into a policy of moral cynicism, or so riven by internal strife that they are engaged in a desperate fight for national existence, Britain must keep to herself. This attitude explains the colossal programme of re-armament now being carried through. The British people were never less warlike. The general body of public opinion resists every attempt to enter into covert alliances or to make commitments on the European continent. Munition factories are working day and night, and the production of war materials is going steadily forward, but there is the greatest difficulty in obtaining recruits for the army. This significant fact is not to be interpreted as meaning that there has been any widespread adoption of doctrinaire pacifism. The disposition of the Englishman does not readily adopt hypothetical attitudes. But there is a good deal of practical pacifism. The leading political parties of Great Britain are agreed that the country should be ready to resist attack on the democratic form of government, but, logically or illogically, the people as a whole refuse to create a large standing army. They have a wholesome fear about the surrender of personal rights that is involved in military enlistment. They are prepared to fight, but they want to have a say in the matter of where and when they shall do the fighting.

In the New World, President Roosevelt has made a significant gesture at the Inter-American Peace Conference. He proposes that the American peoples should stand squarely together for the preservation of peace. His message at Buenos Ayres is a heartening proclamation, that ought to be carried forward into practical effect. Here we have the tradition of peace, conciliation and mutual trust. There are few trailing legacies, laden with the burden of bitter memories, to play havoc with policies of international idealism. A League of American Peoples has considerably more hopefulness than a Geneva League of Nations. It would not be cradled in the atmosphere of revenge and suspicion that damned the Versailles Covenant, almost at the moment of its birth. There is everything to gain, and nothing to lose, in seeking to establish some pact of concord on the basis of the Roosevelt proposals.

Clearly the Dominion of Canada is faced with a new situation in the development of our foreign policy. Hitherto we have made the best of every world—the world of the League of Nations, of the British Empire, and of the Munroe Doctrine. Probably

we shall continue to do so, at least for some years to come. We are not more opportunist than others. Foreign policy must be guided by dominant national interests. We cannot cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. We are a North American people, but not in the same sense as the United States. Our sentimental and commercial ties with the British Empire are too strong and real to suggest thoughts of withdrawal to some Pan-American League. On the other hand, we are manifestly incapable of self-defence, and we have no mind for war. The clear path of wisdom for Canada is to hold tenaciously to every kind of alliance that will keep ourselves and, as far as our influence will permit, also the rest of the world out of entanglement in war.

ADULT EDUCATION, for a variety of reasons, has been assuming a new place of prominence among us. Interest in this subject has become something like a world-wide movement, finding its focus in a World Association for Adult Education. Now, for some years, we have had a national Association in Canada devoting its energies to the furtherance of this cause. Much of the zeal for adult study is frankly propagandist in its aim. But this circumstance should not disturb us overmuch. We must admit that most education, even when it labels itself cultural rather than vocational, springs from utilitarian motives. The main point of interest is that education is being recognised as the one sure method whereby permanent and rational alteration may be achieved in human conduct.

The new philosophy of education seeks for expression in terms of life. M. Bergson, the great French thinker, in his last work, predicts that biological categories must now dominate human thought everywhere. If we are to carry through this educational ideal, clearly the development of mind and character that education implies must be co-extensive with the whole of life, and there can be no point at which we can say we have "passed" beyond education, as the examination system would seem to imply.

Adult Education, for the most part, must depend on voluntary effort, and this circumstance is a help rather than a hindrance. Probably, the state-directed system of education ought to be greatly extended in the direction of vocational training. In this respect, the Maritime Provinces are far behind proper requirements. Our thinking on education has been too much confined to universities, colleges and institutions, and we have neglected to care for the

youth who, for a variety of reasons, cannot give some years of life to attendance at central teaching establishments. But, in the wider fields of education, leadership cannot come directly from governmental sources. Rather, we have the right to look to our universities for inspiration and guidance in this new social venture.

The new phase in adult education indicates that we are passing from pioneer conditions to a more settled way of life. Much work has already been done, but it has been of a rather unstudied character. Visiting lecturers have discoursed at our larger centres, and have brought the interested public into touch with wider currents of life. Associations and societies have organised study-clubs, conferences and summer-schools. There has been much over-lapping, and at the same time, much uncovered territory. Our next efforts should be directed towards more considered programmes and policies, and, at this point, our universities might helpfully enter in, to a new place of usefulness. At present, these institutions are falling over one another, because they are all, more or less, attempting to do the same restricted work in a necessarily confined space. If they would look beyond into the rural life of our Province, and realise that a university is not a group of buildings and laboratories, but an association of human beings moving towards a more intelligent life, then there would be more than room for them all in Maritime Canada. At present, our universities are far too crowded with young people who are being carried along on the assembly-belt of a mass-production academic plant. Model "B.A." does not inspire much confidence as it emerges from the factory door. It needs a good deal of "running-in" before it is ready for the road. Competition between rival colleges has lowered academic standards in an age when ideals of culture have to fight for an existence. The movement for Adult Education might easily lead to a happy solution of the difficulties in which our academic life is at present floundering. The outcome would not be less education, but rather more, and of a better kind, and more suitable for a greater number of people.

We should like to hope that not the least of the desirable effects produced by such a Movement would be reflected in our ordinary day-schools. Geographical conditions and sparse population create extraordinary difficulties in the way of an effective system of public education for these provinces. We have paid lip-service to the value of education, and by concentrating attention on the undesirable success in life of a selected few products, who have been shaped into rugged strength by the very difficulties to be overcome, we have closed our eyes to the desperately low

level of general attainment. Neither money nor thought is being given to education in a degree that is commensurate with its importance. Teachers and taught are suffering through the tyranny of an outworn system in which training for self-expression has been lost in the net-work of grades, examinations and text-books. Culturally, we are still at the stage of belief in verbal-inspiration. A new movement in Adult Education might easily admit the necessary fresh air into the stuffy atmosphere of our educational system.

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