

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE CHAMBERLAIN POLICY: THE SASKATCHEWAN ELECTION:  
CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY: THE WESLEY CENTENARY.

THE CHAMBERLAIN POLICY remains the central question of world-politics. On the successful issue of this tremendous gamble depends the future of international peace. The British Prime Minister is playing for stakes of almost inconceivable dimensions and, so far, he has managed his hand with a mingling of audacity and caution that compels admiration even from the most prejudiced spectators. But the game is by no means finished, and the tension that has fallen across the life of Europe is hardly relieved for the space of a single week. It is not too much to suggest that with every returning Monday morning most of us heave a sigh of relief when another Sunday has passed without some dictator marching into a neighbouring country, or some inflammatory speech being delivered, or some fatal match being dropped into the powder-magazine of Central Europe.

British foreign policy, in the meantime, is essentially a game of chance, because of the incalculable elements with which it is dealing. Prudence may suggest indulgence in eulogistic tributes to the policies of Fascism and National Socialism, but the fact remains that the conduct of dictators is highly unpredictable. Your superman is a brilliant, forceful opportunist, with that dash of fanaticism in his character that relieves him from the moderating influences of a capacity for self-criticism. Short of dealing with him by his own direct methods of force, he must be placated, conciliated or outmanoeuvred. As Mr. Chamberlain has discovered, diplomatic intercourse with Mussolini and Hitler involves the pocketing of pride and principle, patience almost beyond endurance, and a political wisdom that few can command.

The temporary triumph of the dictatorial powers seems complete. Italy has compelled the united force of the civilised world into diplomatic subjection in the Abyssinian affair. Mussolini has announced his intention to secure the victory of Franco in Spain, and has told the French Government in no uncertain language that they are unfortunately on the wrong side of the barricade. He has reduced the question of withdrawal of his "volunteers" from the Spanish conflict, although it is inserted

in every agreement he signs, to an occasion for derisive laughter. Hitler has walked into Austria, and, with almost unbelievable impudence, has sent personal wreaths, duly adorned with swastikas, to grace the obsequies of two Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia. Franco, inspired by the success of these tactics, has become reckless in the uncontrolled activities of his armed forces with reference to British ships and French territory. Over against all this record of effrontery, Mr. Chamberlain has one cogent reply. The cup may be bitter, but to swallow it is the price of peace. His argument is that the world can endure anything but an outbreak of war.

The British Government is not without its troubles at home. Straw votes, in the unmistakable form of by-elections, do not indicate that the tide of popular opinion is flowing entirely in the direction of Mr. Chamberlain's policies. Mr. Lloyd George can still give the Government a nasty time inside and outside of the House of Commons. Sir Archibald Sinclair, despite the poverty of his following, has proved to be a critic whose views must be respected. Mr. Winston Churchill's prestige never stood higher, and in the rôle of candid friend, he may yet have a very powerful influence on British policy. The Government has won a great diplomatic victory with the re-constituted Eiré, where Mr. de Valera has not been slow to realise that the British people in their programme of defence cannot afford to have a disaffected Ireland for a neighbour. But the main cause of uneasiness has been the slumbering power of the Trades Union Congress. The Labour leaders have no love for the dictators, and they are openly hostile to Franco in Spain. If they are to make munitions on a vast scale, and submit probably to a form of veiled industrial conscription, they are demanding to have a voice in the policies which their warlike activities are intended to support. Thus the uneasy Prime Minister has to reckon not only with dictators abroad, but also with the dictators at home, and here again he has to encounter incalculable elements in the tremendous game he is called upon to play.

Mr. Chamberlain's policy is two-fold. He is avoiding every occasion of hostile relations, and at the same time, getting ready for any emergency. If he wins, all the world of mankind will be his debtors. His aim is peace and conciliation, almost, if not quite, at any price. He has potent arguments on his side. War would be an inconceivable disaster, and the man who can avoid it has a right on his side that outweighs almost every other form of wrong. Every crime against humanity, however

atrocious, is a triviality compared with the monstrous iniquity of a world-conflict.

The inevitable question that leaps to our minds is probably unanswerable. Has Mr. Chamberlain avoided war, or merely postponed it? *Mein Kampf* has been read and re-read much of late, and, as we search its pages, we are left with very uneasy feelings. If the man who wrote it is to continue as the leader of the German people, the only peace for Europe will consist in a submission to German domination. His march into Austria is only the prelude to further marching. The hour nearly struck for the exhaustion of patience when he threatened Czechoslovakia, and a firm show of resistance put an effective stop to the German aggression. Would a similar warning, delivered earlier, have had a like effect, and have announced to the Unholy Alliance of the Berlin-Rome axis that there is still a united civilisation in the world which hates tyranny and will not submit to it? These are the awful questions that must haunt the mind of Mr. Chamberlain. The issue is dubious as it is fateful, and we must await the inevitable judgment of time.

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THE SASKATCHEWAN ELECTION was no ordinary political event in Western Canada. After four years of office, the Liberal administration under Mr. Patterson determined on an appeal to the electorate for a renewal of their confidence, and the people of the province have given an indisputable answer to the challenge addressed to them. Not in quite the same strength as in the former Legislative Assembly, yet with a majority that is entitled to be called overwhelming, the Liberal party has been returned to power. This, in itself, is a remarkable enough circumstance. A period of economic depression is notoriously a stimulant to political restlessness. When people are exposed to hardships, no Government is likely to be popular, and any change of administration appears in the nature of a welcome relief. The province of Saskatchewan has been passing through a desperate time of economic suffering. Added to the general condition of depression, there has been a long continued drought, culminating last year in a crop failure of tragic dimensions. Saskatchewan is essentially a one-industry province, and when agriculture yields no returns, the whole population is deprived of a livelihood. Mr. Patterson and his ministry are entitled to extract all the satisfaction they care to enjoy from the popular vote that has summoned them to continue in office.

The extraordinary feature of the election, which held all Canada listening to the radio on 8th. June in expectation of the results, was the incursion of the Social Credit Party of Alberta into the neighbouring province. Mr. Aberhart, unabashed by the difficulties attendant on the prosecution of his policies in the province of which he is First Minister of the Crown, made a vigorous attempt to extend his doctrines in Saskatchewan. The election was no sooner announced than he and his cohorts crossed the boundary line, and for three weeks he took personal command of a campaign that lacked nothing in political energy. Crowds flocked to hear the Premier of Alberta whenever he lifted up his voice. Mr. Aberhart entered the lists with such commanding intensity that, single-handed, he forced the issue of the election. He compelled his opponents, Liberal, C.C.F. and Conservative, to turn their whole artillery of oratory in counter-battery work on his position. The Social Credit Party became the only rivals that created serious alarm in the Liberal ranks. Nevertheless, the labours of the Rockies gave birth only to the most ridiculous of political mice in the shape of two members in the new Legislative Assembly. Evidently, Saskatchewan remains stolidly unconvinced that the Social Credit party has any constructive help for her agrarian population.

If the Social Credit group in Canada have any serious political ambitions, they will require to make considerable revision in their electioneering tactics. Mr. Aberhart has the reputation of being an astute propagandist, but he could hardly have committed more blunders than he did in Saskatchewan. As a preacher and teacher with years of experience behind him, he really ought to have been more wide-awake than to attempt the political domination of any one province in Canada from outside of the province itself. Surely it was an unpardonable error in strategy for one who has been so loud in his protestation of provincial rights to enter the election campaign of a neighbour without even taking the trouble to secure the creation of an indigenous political party. The list of official candidates was actually issued from Edmonton. The result was that the Social Credit group exposed itself as an easy target for accusations of dictatorial methods, and their campaign never had an opportunity to assume the character they themselves desired to impose upon it of being a crusade for economic liberation.

The only conclusion we can draw from the Saskatchewan election is that Social Credit, shorn of its Bible Prophetic Institute with its quasi-religious propaganda, and when seriously

examined by an unprejudiced electorate, failed to convince. If the prairie provinces need to be set free from the oppression of financial domination, the people of Saskatchewan have not found any way of hope in the gospel of Mr. Aberhart. Burdens of debt and interest lie just as heavily on their backs as on the farmers of Alberta. The same inducements of moratoriums and cancellation that have persuaded their neighbours to elect the Social Credit Party to office were clearly before the minds of the electorate in Saskatchewan. However, the blandishments of the Alberta Premier and his friends have failed to woo them away from the less pretentious policies of Mr. Patterson, and Social Credit has had a decided set-back if not a mortal blow, so far as Canadian politics are concerned.

In their natural elation over the results of the election, the Liberal Party, alike in Saskatchewan and in Canada generally, would do well to note the fact that the C.C.F. party doubled its representation in the new Legislative Assembly. True, their numbers are not large. "The Quintuplets", as they were called in the former House, have become only ten, but they have become the only real opposition to the Government in Saskatchewan. With a good deal less bluster and considerably more real popular appeal than the upstart Social Credit Party, the C.C.F. have proved that the announcement of their political demise is somewhat premature. There is a rising tide of Labour opinion in the North American continent. The demand for overhauling our economic system is growing on all hands. There is still too much unemployment, especially among young people, to permit a complacent attitude towards our general Canadian situation. Every city and town in the Dominion has a terrible problem on its hands in the attempt to deal with economic misery and continued unemployment. Fires are smouldering everywhere that may easily start up into a blaze. The C.C.F. is the party to whom the disaffected naturally turn for a sympathetic understanding of their sufferings. Mr. Woodsworth and his friends may require to be taken with considerable seriousness in the future of our Canadian political affairs.

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CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY was the subject of a first-class debate in the House of Commons on Tuesday, May 24. The discussion had the merit not only of dealing with a timely question, but also of bringing out into clear light the contending principles that bewilder the public mind in the Dominion

when it discusses this all-important topic. Our young people, especially, have the right to know where our political leaders stand on issues that may involve us, before so very long, in peace or war. The debate was not one of those great occasions when some history-making pronouncement falls on the ears of a tensely waiting House. Rather, its merits consisted in a calm review of rather divergent outlooks, all of which must be considered in any estimate of the Canadian attitude to one of the major questions of our time. This was no mere party quarrel. Seldom have the leaders of the great parties so reflected, each with his own particular emphasis, the conflict of opinion in the country beyond the House of Commons itself.

Mr. Mackenzie King had a congenial theme. He is a master of political exposition, and the occasion enabled him to set forth his reflections on the great international questions of the day that are agitating the minds of serious people everywhere. The Prime Minister declared that there are three special areas of relationship affecting Canada's attitude towards external affairs. There are our relations to the United States of America, to the League of Nations and to the British Commonwealth of Nations. The first is so close and inevitable that we hardly think of it as a question of "foreign policy" at all. Economically and socially the United States of America and our Dominion of Canada are so completely integrated that, while management of the connection is not always easy, nevertheless, the possibility of a rupture is so remote as hardly to merit discussion. The questions that people are asking deal with our commitments under the Covenant of the League of Nations, and, more particularly, through our association within the British Commonwealth.

Mr. King observed very properly that Canada cannot be counted among the aggressor nations of the modern world. We have more territory than we can handle, and we have no smouldering hatreds or cherished revenges to stir up the emotional flames of war. Our paramount interest is in the preservation of peace. We can have no conceivable reason for getting into any quarrel abroad, and in our enviable position of territorial security, with a friendly neighbour to the south and great oceans to the east and west, we can observe the madness of the nations with a certain serenity of detachment. We have every reason to be the most peaceful nation on earth. But what of our commitments? The Prime Minister has come to the conclusion that the sanctionist clauses of the League Covenant are not likely to be invoked in the future when they have failed to operate so

miserably in the past. There can be no question of our being dragged into war through our membership of the League of Nations. The real question at issue in Canadian foreign policy is the nature of our relationship within the British Empire. Mr. King contends for our complete liberty of action. At the conclusion of his speech he went out of his way to decry even the constant re-iteration of the word "Dominion" as a description of our status. He wants "Canada" and nothing but "Canada", a free, self-determining people, deciding for herself and by herself when and how she will go to war, if at all. When the issue is raised, Parliament will decide. There are and must be no prior commitments. Canada cannot be expected to declare in advance what she would or should do in the event of the United Kingdom of Great Britain or any other member of the Commonwealth being involved in hostilities. And, so far as the present Government is concerned, there will be no such pronouncement. Meanwhile, Canada's supreme interest is to promote goodwill everywhere, speaking no hasty word and indulging in no provocative conduct.

Mr. Bennett agreed with Mr. King, but with a considerable difference. The famous declaration made at the Imperial Conference of 1926 was freely quoted by both speakers, especially the passage which states concerning the British peoples:—

They are autonomous communities within the British empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any respect of their domestic or external affairs though united by a common allegiance to the crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

In his exegesis of this classical statement, Mr. Bennett places his emphasis on the words "united by a common allegiance to the Crown", and "freely associated." We are *free*, of that there can be no question, but we are also *associated*. And the association, while not one of coercion, is none the less real and effective. Mr. Bennett pointed out very clearly that we may be very sure of our own rights in the matter of declaring for neutrality; but will any possible enemy pay any attention to our position? He agrees with Mr. King that Canada has no interest in going to war with any other nation; but the nice distinctions of political relationships within the Commonwealth, that mean so much to us, will be completely ignored by nations involved in hostile operations against the people of Great Britain. Neither the Parliament of Canada nor the Cabinet, on whom Mr. Bennett



rightly says the responsibility rests for announcing national policy, will be consulted. The initiation of hostilities will not come from the side of Canada, but will consist in a non-observance of any distinction between members of the British Commonwealth by some external power. In short, if Britain is at war, Canada is at war, whether we like it or not. The decision will not rest with the Canadian Parliament, but with the nations that may be involved in fighting against Great Britain. To make a declaration of neutrality effective, Canada requires the capacity to compel respect for her position and manifestly we are in no such situation. On the contrary, our defence is the British Navy in the North Atlantic, and Mr. Bennett thinks we had better recognise the fact.

Mr. Woodsworth wants Canada to go even further than Mr. King is willing to do in her declaration of independence. He is so well aware of the cogency of Mr. Bennett's arguments that he considers we should avoid in advance any suggestion that we may be involved, against our will, in warlike activities of the British people. He would like us to tell the British Government now that they must not count on Canada's support in a time of national emergency. He is afraid of the door that the Prime Minister wants to leave open. However, the leader of the C.C.F. is no isolationist. He believes that the time has come to build up a system of friendly relationships, not on the basis of sanctions or force, but simply on terms of goodwill. Because Canada is free from commitments, she should use her position to make overtures towards the other democratic peoples of the world. Meantime, let her keep out of imperialist wars, and let her declare her intention in this respect to all mankind in general and to Great Britain in particular.

If these three considerations could be fused together under the powerful force of some idealistic energy, we should have the ideal foreign policy for Canada. All are agreed on our sovereign independence of action, and few wish to dissolve our connection with the British Commonwealth. Is it not possible that what not alone Mr. Woodsworth desires, but what is devoutly wished by all lovers of mankind, an association of free nations banded together for the keeping of peace, already exists in that very Commonwealth to which we belong? Our Empire is not a military organisation held together by a central power. It is a new creation in the history of political relationship. Why should we not bring our character into a self-consciousness of purpose



and destiny, and thereby perhaps bring the much-needed pressure of a higher civilisation to bear on a fear-torn and panic-stricken world?

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THE WESLEY CENTENARY makes a unique contribution to the prevalent habit of commemorating the physical birth or demise of our distinguished ancestors. This year, the religious and literary world has been recalling with fitting celebration the spiritual rebirth of the great John Wesley. In his famous Journal, so unprecisely dated that it requires circumstantial evidence to fix the day definitely as 24th May, 1738, the Rev. John Wesley records:

In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.

W. E. H. Lecky in his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* says, "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the scene which took place at that humble meeting in Aldersgate Street forms an epoch in English history."

The centenary occasion has produced the usual crop of books—worthy and unworthy, eulogistic, critical and sanely appreciative. Aspects of Wesley's career have provided easy material for the work of the "debunkers" who have appeared, as is their wont, on the historical scene. The diversity and character of these volumes all attest the fact that John Wesley and his influence must be reckoned with in any proper study of English history. Extravagant admirers have attempted to attribute too much to his work, as, for example, in the suggestion that the romantic revival in literature and the great movements of social reform that characterized the beginning of the nineteenth century all go back to his mission of evangelism. The fact is that the preaching of Wesley was one significant, and probably essential, element in that many-sided sweep of life which, fortunately, in England was a counterpart of the Industrial Revolution. The powerful contribution he was able to make was in the region of spiritual revival, without which other factors in the wide movement would have been inoperative for lack of moral power.

John Wesley was a genius in the region of subjective religion. But genius requires to be guided by practical wisdom before it can make its full impression on the world. In addition to the gift of a singularly spiritual nature which came into the full release of its power on that momentous night in Aldersgate Street, Wesley had a majestic will, a singular capacity for organising his results into permanent form, and a restless energy which passed into sheer physical labours that can seldom have been surpassed in human history. When you take this remarkable combination of gifts and direct them towards the salvation of human souls through an overwhelming spiritual experience of personal religious assurance, you begin to understand the amazing results that attended his preaching. Like most sermons, the discourses of Wesley make the dullest of reading to-day. They are argumentative and long-winded and you wonder, in the memorable phrase of the late Lord Asquith, how they could be the means of salvation even for a titmouse. Nevertheless, these same sermons, preached sometimes five and six times a day, lit up by the intense ardor of this wandering preacher, were able to hold working-men listening with tears coursing down their cheeks at five o'clock in the morning. He endured the jeers of hostile crowds, and was driven out by the Church he loved. Yet he kept on throughout his long life, preaching, organizing, reading, writing until he set all England ablaze with his message. It is not too much to say that he altered the spiritual climate of a whole century, and provided the environment which enabled notable achievements in political and social progress to be realized.

No man, not even a man so richly endowed as Wesley, can see the truth of religion in its totality. He moved in the region of the subjective and experimental, and while that attitude of mind was a reflection of his times, it had its grave defects, which have never yet received their complementary correction. Compared with St. Paul or St. Augustine, he had little awareness of the objective aspects of spiritual truth. He was religiously rather than theologically minded. The Wesley revival provided fire and zeal that communicated itself to entire stretches of human endeavour over a long period of history; but, in the last resort, it was unable to provide the massive sense of intellectual certainty that is the hunger of the scientific mind, and that creates the central problem of the religious life in our day.

Nevertheless, the singular career of John Wesley should not be merely an occasion for pious recollection in the modern

world. The root of all our terrible trouble is to be found in our lack of spiritual conviction. Our age needs nothing so much as a powerful revival of the religious life. The problems that beset us in international affairs, in social and economic reform, present themselves clearly enough to most intelligent minds. We know what ought to be done, but we lack the power to attain our ends. A twentieth century John Wesley, able to speak to the great masses of mankind, now so sunk in political and economic despair, and equally dedicated to a great mission of human salvation, could lift us all to new and unimaginable heights of moral achievement. As yet, he has not appeared on the horizon of our times. Still we can wait and watch for his coming.

J. S. T.