

TOPICS OF THE DAY

LORD TWEEDSMUIR: THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT: THE
CAMPAIGN IN FINLAND: THE YOUTH MOVEMENTS.

LORD TWEEDSMUIR has departed in bodily presence from our Canadian life, but his memory will linger on in the affection of Canadian hearts. His untimely death evoked sentiments of regard that were as widely spread as they were sincere. There is nothing official in the sorrow we feel at his tragically sudden end, and no stated period will set an appointed limit to the time during which we shall continue to mourn as often as we think of him and his influence. Especially at such a time as this we could ill afford to lose him, but now that he is gone, nothing but gratitude adorns the memory he leaves behind.

As Lord Tweedsmuir he came to Canada, an unknown and untried representative of His Majesty; but as John Buchan, already he was both familiar and beloved. There were headshakings over the appointment. We knew something of the varied gifts, interest and activities that had gone to make a disposition uniting literary production with a capacity for practical life. Chiefly, his name was flaunted on every bookstall by the yellow jackets of popular novels, which he seemed to turn out with such facility as to make their annual appearance an expected event. They were good stories, wholesome, clean and exciting, but hardly great literature. More serious readers knew his historical and biographical studies, especially his tribute of pious regard to his literary hero, Sir Walter Scott. He had written the best contemporary history of the Great War. In parliament, he had taken a distinctive although not a leading place as member for the Scottish Universities. He had also been a man of affairs, first in the days of his youth through his association with Lord Milner, and later in connection with a great publishing house. But the office of Governor-General of Canada was new and untried ground, requiring a singular combination of personal qualities and political abilities. Our Dominion within her own life and in relation to the Commonwealth was passing through a period of change. The tide of national self-consciousness was flowing strongly through the land. The man who could represent the Crown must be politically sagacious, constitutionally correct in his official deportment, if possible more expressive of Canadian independence than

symbolic of the imperial bond. As events turned out, nobody could have fulfilled that difficult rôle more to perfection than the man who has just gone from us.

Lord Tweedsmuir came to Canada as a man matched for his hour. Like the exalted office of the Crown itself, the function of vice-royalty, because of its official restrictions, requires special endowment of wisdom and discretion in the person who exercises it. He must not be a mere lay-figure, who can sign documents and appear on state occasions with an air of distinction. Politically, he must be the very embodiment of impartiality, but he is also expected to identify himself with the life of the people over which he presides. The position cannot be filled by a fool or a nobody. In matters of state, he must act on the advice of his ministers, but in the whole wide region of opportunity and influence that lies beyond, he has the right and duty of entering with all the prestige of his august office into the guidance of a country's destiny. Canada looked for someone different from the traditional representative of the British Crown, not simply the bearer of a great name, or a man who had spent his life in the diplomatic service and who was in line for appointment to a high designation of state. As the late Governor-General once said in private conversation, Canada "wanted a lover"—that is, a man who, for the period of his stay among us, would give himself to us and our manner of life. Therein, Lord Tweedsmuir disclosed the secret of his own great success. He came with no airs of patronage, but as one equipped and ready to become a Canadian. He never surrendered to the suggestion that Canada could be understood by spending more of his time in Rideau Hall, or through hasty, official tours, during which he was always the Governor-General and nothing more. All that was required in the way of official appearance he carried through with dignity and grace, but he was most characteristically and happily engaged when he could be discovered strolling down the streets of a prairie town, addressing a luncheon meeting of a Canadian Club, making a trip into the great north, or dining *al fresco* and with immense gusto among hearty cowboys at a foot-hills stampede. He won the confidence and respect of the Canadian-French not only by his facility in speaking their language, but by entering fully into their outlook and aspirations. When he spoke, he had always something to say. Universities and Churches were encouraged by the eager support he gave to their work, and by the frequency with which he spoke to them in their conclaves. All this he carried through with an unaffected sim-

plicity and a familiarity of manner which, nevertheless, did not degenerate into superficial heartiness and back-slapping.

The temptation of a Governor-General is to be so correct in his deportment that he never does anything distinctive. He is never merely a private citizen. But Lord Tweedsmuir could speak out of his own mind when the occasion demanded. He had a shrewd insight into our many problems, and he could expose our weaknesses as well as extol our virtues. In private conversation, one was speedily aware that he brought an observant eye to all that he saw, and a penetrating judgment to our affairs. He could be astonishingly frank, but never to the point of rudeness. His wide range of knowledge and experience formed a background of sure wisdom. And through all his intercourse with men, a warm, human heart beat with a sympathetic grace that made talk easy and sincere.

The operation of our curious British system of political life depends ultimately on intangible and undefinable forces. From time to time, it passes into classical formulations, but even then relationships are never rigidly fixed by precise terms. Our government by a crowned head, our loosely articulated commonwealth of nations, our conceptions of law and freedom, our constitution, half traditional and half written, our whole manner of existence have become like an alluvial soil that continually produces new crops in response to our husbandry. It is astonishingly fertile, and no exact analysis will ever reveal the conditions of its success. So much we may say, however, that its continuance depends much on the emergence from time to time, of singular men, in whose careers tradition becomes creatively alive. Their genius is original and distinctive, but it is not apart from the environment and heritage in which they appear. Like the processes of biological evolution, they continue the past, but also bring forth new characters in response to new conditions. Lord Tweedsmuir was such a man in our Canadian life. As a historian and man of letters, he was sensitive to all that had gone before; but as a man of affairs, he knew that tradition in itself is no unfailing guide for present action. Above all, he was in himself an essentially good man, uncorrupted by great success, without the tricks of personality in which men of assured reputation are tempted to indulge, humble, without a trace of self-assertion, ennobled by a sense of duty, always acting with a sense of responsibility to his times. Such a man would have made a success of life wherever he had been summoned to play his part, and we are fortunate that the last years of his great career were spent in the Dominion of Canada.

THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT was an act of political audacity that made the Dominion of Canada gasp with astonishment.* By the time these words appear in print, the results of the precipitated general election will have provided opportunity for some measure of recovery. But, the sudden act of the Prime Minister will not have been forgotten, and for years to come it will be "resurrected" both within and without parliament. It is clearly patient of diverse interpretations. At its best possible construction, the opponents of Mr. King will regard it as the rash decision of a peevish mind, irritated beyond endurance by his tormentors. But this is a mild estimate compared with the accusations of political cowardice that have been thundered on a hundred platforms across Canada during the intervening weeks. The members of the government party who, if all reports are true, shared in the universal surprise, not unnaturally regard the act of dissolution as the proper challenge of a courageous leader to snarling critics who were lying in wait for the attack. It was a bold stroke in a battle that could not be avoided, and which ought to be fought to a finish as soon as possible.

If we look at the dissolution with unprejudiced eyes, it has to be admitted that the decision requires both explanation and defence. It still wears the appearance of being a wanton act prompted by hasty emotion. The Prime Minister is within his right at any time in advising the Governor-General to dissolve the high court of parliament and thereby to make an appeal to the country. But he must adduce good and sufficient reason for the advice he tenders. In this case, he was getting within measurable reach of the time when a dissolution would be a statutory necessity. Most people expected a General Election in the course of the year. The singular circumstances in this event lay in the fact that the Prime Minister, apparently with the greatest haste, resolved upon advising the termination of parliament immediately after the first, formal opening session. Such a course could be expected only if his Government had received an adverse vote in the House, so that his Ministry had forfeited the confidence of a parliamentary majority. It has to be recollected that, in the month of September, parliament had been summoned to meet in extraordinary session to determine the grave question of Canada's participation in the war. With a remarkable and overwhelming accession of support from all parties, the Prime Minister was upheld in the momentous decision of his Cabinet to pledge Canadian support for the

*This article was necessarily in type before the recent election.—EDITOR.

allied cause. There was no appearance of any popular weakening in the country's adherence to what must be the major concern of any Canadian government in our time. The Dominion was solidly behind the war effort. The heartening result of the Quebec election was still fresh in the public mind. Thereby, the only serious anxiety that could have beset the mind of any Canadian Prime Minister had been emphatically removed. There had been criticisms of a very remarkable character, but they were not directed against the major decision to declare a state of war with Germany. On the contrary, the complaint of these adverse reflections was concerned with the manner of carrying that decision into vigorous action. Mr. Hepburn, Premier of Ontario, supported by Colonel Drew, leader of the Opposition in the legislative assembly of the province, had carried what was virtually a vote of no-confidence in the Dominion Government. Dr. Manion, leader of the Opposition in the Federal House, had been vigorous in his criticisms of Mr. King and his colleagues, and he left nobody in doubt as to the charges he proposed to adduce against the administration on the floor of Parliament. Surely the Prime Minister could hardly expect anything else from the opposition parties, even in a time of war. If Dr. Manion was persuaded that there had been culpable slackness and partisanship in the carrying on of the war activities, it was his particular and special duty as leader of the opposition to confront the Government with his criticisms and to await an answer in the House of Commons. He would have been failing in his duty had he not done so. Equally, it was the duty of the Prime Minister to regard these allegations seriously, and to defend himself against them. Such would seem to be the proper procedure under the system of parliamentary government.

Mr. Mackenzie King's case is that he felt compelled to regard these criticisms even more seriously than was in the intention of his opponents. If his act was extraordinary, it was undertaken in extraordinary circumstances. Canada is at war, and that is almost the only public question. To carry through his grave duties, he must be assured of the unequivocal support of the Canadian people. He did not single out Mr. Hepburn for special mention, but it was hardly possible for the Prime Minister of Canada to regard lightly an adverse motion carried by an overwhelming majority in the legislative assembly of our greatest province. If the Ontario House meant what it said, an intolerable situation had arisen. There must be a clearing of the decks as a preliminary to unhampered action,

and the sooner Mr. King knew where he stood, the better he could interpret the popular mandate. There must be no dubiety about his relation to the country, and the only constitutional method of finding out where he stood was an appeal to the electorate. Indeed, if he had serious hesitation about his assurance of public support, especially in the great province of Ontario, it was his clear duty to take precisely the course he did.

Mr. King is on more uncertain ground when he declared that an acrimonious volume of criticism directed at the ministers daily in parliament would be a serious handicap to his successful prosecution of Canada's war effort. Presumably he expects to be returned to power, but Dr. Manion is also a candidate for office. Whatever decision the country may reach on the respective merits of the rival leaders, the bitter debate which is now proceeding throughout the length of Canada will be continued in the House of Commons. If Mr. King's government is sustained, parliament may be the poorer without Dr. Manion's presence, and it is hardly to be expected that there will be no return to a challenge of the government when the new House assembles. The debate that gave such promise of heat and smoke will not have been averted, but only postponed. On the other hand, should the positions be reversed, and if Dr. Manion sits in the Prime Minister's place with Mr. King as leader of the Opposition, are we to expect no criticism of the government of the day from the other side of the House? We hope not. A vigorous Opposition is essential to good parliamentary government. This normal necessity is increased rather than diminished by the fact that a country is at war. The temptation of any government during hostilities is on the one hand to be presumptuous and high-handed, or on the other hand, to become slack and bureaucratic. The stirring of vigilant opposition is continually needed to maintain vigour and efficiency.

As for the electoral battle that is proceeding as we write and will have been decided before these words appear in print, we are fortunate in the circumstance that it is not being fought on the question of Canada's share in the allied cause. On that major issue, Mr. King and Dr. Manion are agreed. They present themselves as rival leaders in the same fight. Dr. Manion's proposal for a national government is not to be regarded seriously. There is no great divergence in policy between the two parties. Dr. Manion states that he would do the same job as Mr. King, only he would do it better. Mr. King defends himself by asserting that he is doing it as well as human possibility permits.

In the absence of a profound cleavage in political principles, the election has degenerated into considerable personal accusation and abuse. The rival candidates have nothing to discuss but their opponents. The only striking character on the political scene is not an actual combatant in the fray. He is Mr. Hepburn, Premier of Ontario. Both Mr. King and Dr. Manion must have difficulty in estimating his value, whether he is to be regarded as an asset or a liability, and we suspect that "Mitch" cares not "a darn" for either of them. The presumption is that, in the rôle of a front-seat spectator, he extracts a huge delight from observing the fight, and particularly from the sallies which he hurls from time to time at the combatants.

THE CAMPAIGN IN FINLAND has been the major military episode in this most surprising of wars. The swift overthrow of Poland in a matter of weeks was a severe blow to the allied cause, but the gallant resistance of the Finns has revived hope in ways that reach out beyond ultimate success or failure in the military operations. We had been led to conclude that modern war was more an affair of machines than men, and that the combined onslaught of airplanes and tanks could no longer be resisted by flesh and blood. The Finnish army has demonstrated that a comparatively small army of determined men, moved by a sense of patriotic duty, can put up a brave and effective fight against superior numbers of unwilling troops, even when the greater force is supported by an overpowering mechanized equipment. We have had a sincere sympathy with the Finns in their amazing battle, which they chose to wage rather than surrender; but for the wretched Russians, driven into a conflict for which they have had no appetite, we have had an overwhelming sense of pity. The frozen corpses of ignorant peasants on the Karelian Isthmus are the most tragic commentary on the hopes for human emancipation held out by our Marxian enthusiasts.

The reasons for undertaking the campaign are still somewhat obscure. The Russian version is that Soviet demands on Finland were not oppressive or extortionate. All they wanted was the right to occupy certain strategic positions, to secure safety and protection against the envious rapine of capitalist powers. Some communist apologists have even gone so far as to suggest that Russia wanted to guard herself against an alliance between Germany and Finland. In any case, other smaller Baltic powers had capitulated; why should Finland raise objec-

tions? The Finnish fears were too well founded. When the leaders of the little Republic resisted, the Russians resorted to the impudent and shameful device of maintaining that the spokesmen for Finland were not *bona fide* representatives of the people. Their war became one of liberation for a down-trodden and oppressed nation. The best reply to that disgraceful suggestion is the record of the succeeding campaign. Whatever the immediate results of the operations, the epic of Finland's resistance has now become a glorious story to be preserved in universal history. With a heroism that has awakened the admiration of a watching world, this brave little nation has dared to withstand the aggression of the vast monster that has threatened her with extinction. The love of freedom has not perished from the earth.

The passage of time will reveal how far the Russian plans are looking beyond Finland to the Scandinavian peninsula, and how far the attack has been directed by the sinister alliance between Russia and Germany. Many people are asking why such interested parties as the Swedes and Norwegians, and, even more so, the allied forces of Britain and France have been content to do no more than watch. There are, of course, good and sufficient reasons why they should remain as spectators. The position of Sweden and Norway is one of extraordinary difficulty. As small, progressive peoples, they have every interest in maintaining neutrality. So long as they manage to keep out of the fight, they have some prospect of retaining their much-prized and universally esteemed way of life intact; but, once they become involved by way of direct participation, their only ultimate fate is to be overwhelmed by Germany or Russia, perhaps to be sundered and then devoured, after the manner of Poland. As for the allies, there are, first of all, the difficulties of access, and then even greater difficulties involved in the circumstance that while they may be eager enough to help the Finns in a gallant fight, they themselves await the possibility of an unknown and unpredictable contest with the full fury of the Reich in the spring.

As we write, the Russians are hammering at Viipuri with all the fury of mortified pride, and it seems as if unaided Finnish resistance cannot be indefinitely maintained. By the time these observations appear in print, the whole situation will be changed. But so much can be confidently stated. The neutrals will no longer be under any illusion as to the fate that awaits them whenever one or other of the great powers that have arisen to

menace the peace of mankind sets its unholy eyes on their territory. Mr. Churchill's suggestion that they had better make up their minds as to where their interests lie was much resented by certain neutral leaders, but the time may come when they will remember his admonitions amidst the ruins of their desolated cities. The policy of our enemies is to take them one by one, and by means of a fabricated quarrel to fasten a *casus belli* upon them. Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Finland have fallen one by one into the greedy maw of the devourers. Who will be next?

The other observation is that Russia stands completely unmasked before the world as a sinister enemy of human welfare. There are still voices among us to keep on trying to persuade us that communism is a new philosophy of social existence in which all the old duplicities of capitalist power have been cleansed away by the liberating streams of human brotherhood. What conceivable plan of social emancipation can be achieved by a wanton attack such as that made on Finland, nobody can explain. It is very evident that the same brutal indifference to human suffering can flourish in the minds of Russian commissars as we have been exhorted to believe is the inevitable accompaniment of the capitalist order of society. If the world looks, as it must, for some saving scheme of social reorganization, the eyes of all decent men are now averted for ever from any attention to the hideous tyranny that has erected itself among the people of Russia.

THE YOUTH MOVEMENTS of North America appear to have encountered considerable trouble. Criticisms from without and dissensions from within have assailed them. The American Youth Congress stood on a bleak February afternoon in the grounds of White House to hear a stern message of indirect rebuke from the President of the United States. They provoked Mr. Roosevelt into a declaration of public support for Finland, with an implied condemnation of Russia, which could be construed under the circumstances only as suggesting that the representatives of youth assembled on the classic lawn were of rather different mind. We are told that the message was received in stolid silence. Already, the famous Dies Committee, engaged in smelling out anti-American activities, had accused the Youth Congress of being dominated by communist opinion, and not even the maternal patronage of the President's lady had been able to reduce the charge.

Somewhat earlier in the year, a similar storm broke over a related Canadian movement. During the Christmas vacation, the Canadian Student Assembly met for conference and discussion. Whatever happened during the proceedings, it is evident that some delegates went away disquieted, and, as they themselves have declared, disgusted. The accusation levelled against the Assembly is that of being anti-patriotic, and, in particular, anti-war. It is suggested that protagonists for Canada's support of the allied cause were either talked or sneered down. The dissension has been carried to the universities from which the delegates were sent, and, in some colleges the Assembly has been denounced. Student bodies have withdrawn their support, and have declared that the time has come to bring this unrepresentative organization to an end.

Youth movements are no modern appearance in the life of the world. From the days of Socrates, and probably long before, radical ideas have agitated the minds of young men, and the powers that be have felt disturbed. It is a safe generalization that every new movement has begun by being a revolutionary idea or project around which some group of youth have gathered their energies. To older people they must appear disruptive and subversive, for they frequently direct themselves against institutions that are venerable and long-established. Our complaint is often that these movements go to extremes, that they are impudent and profane, without respect for tradition, and destructive rather than constructive. That is another way of saying that they are movements of youth. Every healthy-minded young person ought to go through a phase where he is awakened into a thorough-going criticism of life as he finds it. Teachers in universities and similar institutions are doing less than their duty if they fail to induce this attitude, and help to put students through the mill of a disturbed and aroused mind. When these young ardent spirits get together, there ought to be fireworks. The stealth of the older mind should not consist in patronizing restraint, but rather in guiding young people through negative into positive and constructive effort, to assist in the passage from some "Everlasting Nay" to an "Everlasting Yea"; but, even then, he will be wise if he lets youth have its fling. As Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in his memorable essay on "Crabbed Age and Youth", "It is better to be a fool than to be dead. It is better to emit a scream in the shape of a theory than to be entirely insensible to the jars and incongruities of life, and take everything as it comes in a forlorn stupidity. Some people

swallow the universe like a pill: they travel on through the world, like smiling images pushed from behind. For God's sake, give me a young man who has brains enough to make a fool of himself!"

In an age such as ours, where so much is profoundly disturbed and where the shadows of dreadful tragedy are creeping over large areas of the world's life, we should welcome every sign of vitality in the life of youth. Even if they ask questions before marching off to the wars, and are under no illusions about the glories of the battlefield, is such an attitude not great gain? There are too many countries where young manhood seems to have been captured by blind enthusiasms of a very different order, and when the voice of protest has been raised, it has been cruelly silenced by the bludgeon of authority. It is better for young men and women to meet and pass resolutions, even if we are worried by their lack of relation to possible action, than to have our youth turned into sadistic bands of rowdies, knocking Jews over the head and devising new tortures for inmates of concentration camps. Of course, they will pass severe criticisms on the entire system of our modern life, but more experienced minds are equally aware of the extent to which the social and economic fabric has broken in our hands. Older people inevitably approach these tremendous questions that have been raised by the experiences of our time with greater caution and a fuller appreciation of the values that ought to be conserved in the midst of change. But it is a sign of social health that youth is awake and vocal, and that they are dreaming their dreams of a new and better world. The inevitable processes of age will moderate their zeal, in most cases, all too soon.

Youth has great capacity for hero-worship, and can give itself up with zeal and fury to a cause. If we are troubled about our present-day young people, our concern is not so much with themselves as with those who are ready to exploit their enthusiastic support. It has been said that the cynical reflection about war being made by old men does not apply to the conflict that is now raging in the world. The middle-aged people, even in Germany, did not want to project this war. There seems to be no doubt that young Germany has been the main support of the Nazi cause. Nevertheless, they have been deliberately used and led by older men, and their zeal has probably astonished even their leaders. Little attempt has been made to restrain their frenzy, and before the poison has run its course, incredible damage may have been done to civilization. Youth can abandon

itself to dreadful excesses, as well as rise to unbelievable heights of heroic devotion. The strategy of the communists is more subtle. They declaim against exploitation, but they themselves have turned it into a fine art. A Congress of Youth met to discuss social problems is almost a ready-prepared seed-bed for planting their ideas and propagating their policies. Some have gone so far as to suggest that the communists deliberately organize the movements, always acting through the innocent well-disposed, and then step in to direct their own creation where they want it to go. The "suckers" are found on the imposing list of honorary patrons, and not infrequently among the presidents and secretaries, while the "reds" get busy in committee rooms where the resolutions are drafted. Whether this is the origin of our North America youth movement or not, we do know that it is always difficult to find out exactly who sets them agoing or keeps their precarious existence alive. It is the kind of activity that the young communist is specially trained to carry on.

On the other hand, we must beware of indulgence in the ancient and unholy diversion of witch-hunting. You have not dismissed an idea when you have attached a sinister label. Not every young man who wants to change the world is a "red." It is possible to combine an enthusiasm for social reform with a complete horror for the communist programme and method. When you get a dialectical "free-for-all" such as a modern youth congress, the young communists enter the proceedings with the advantage of being a well-drilled, well-organized, well-informed and self-conscious group. They do not arrive on the scene to debate principles, but to make converts. For this reason, their influence and effect greatly outrange their numbers. If they can arouse other groups of youth into a similiar intensity of enthusiasm for nobler programmes of human improvement, perhaps we may yet be grateful to them for their incessant activities.

J. S. T.