

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE VIMY MEMORIAL: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: THE
RUSSIAN CONSTITUTION: CO-OPERATION.

ON Sunday, 26th. July, His Majesty the King performed the official unveiling of the Canadian War Memorial on the historic battlefield of Vimy Ridge. This massive monument not only commemorates the signal victory gained by the Canadian Army Corps in April, 1917: it is also intended to perpetuate in visible form the part played by the forces of the Dominion throughout the entire period of the Great War. The solemn ceremonies of the day gained rather than lost in impressiveness by their separation in time from the events they celebrated. A great company who made a pilgrimage across the Atlantic to be present bears witness to the potency of the sentiments that still gather around the war memories. Radio enabled many thousands more to unite almost physically on what was, by all accounts, a worthy and dignified occasion. The personal presence of the King, and the words he spoke, essentially the address of a soldier to old comrades, indicated the imperial significance of the Memorial. It was a fine inspiration that brought the President of the French Republic to stand alongside the British monarch. The scene was one calculated to stir the imagination with many reflections on the long-drawn movements of history and the healing virtues of time.

This Vimy Memorial is not simply one more monument, added to the great number that now stand on historic sites along the line of territory that used to be familiar to us as the Western Front. Not alone in the immensity of its structure, but also in the significance of its erection, the great pile that now commands the famous Ridge is unique. Here, a whole nation through the vicarious suffering of her youth leaped into a new self-consciousness of being and destiny. With the passing of the years, what happened on that April morning will accumulate in prophetic meaning for the Canadian people. This monument in far-off Artois will not only be, as King Edward said, "for all time a part of Canada", but also the outward symbol of her final emergence into nationhood.

The immediate claim of the Monument on our interest is the purpose that inspired its erection. Its outward form expresses the feelings that dominated the minds of all who attended the unveiling. We have built a shrine of sacred memory, rather than

a pillar of exultant victory. When we turn back to the war years, it is to remember the flower of a whole generation, cut down in the pride of youth. The 60,000 fallen Canadians, whose sacrifice is commemorated at Vimy, came from a people which, with all our faults, had nothing of the tradition or mentality of war. These men were reared in scenes of peace, and had every right to indulge their minds with the long prospect of normal human existence in a land of wide opportunity. It would be foolish to suggest that all of them enlisted from a single-hearted desire to fight for liberty, or even for country. Yet, it cannot be doubted that the great majority offered themselves, not conscribed but with a willing mind, in response to what appeared as a clear call of duty. There was no nation that entered the Great War with more genuine unselfishness of motive than the people of Canada. In none did young manhood join the armed forces in truer liberty. The nobility of their self-sacrifice is increased by the freedom of their service. For us, who are still alive and can remember, unless something has gone fatally wrong with the roots of our moral natures, their example must form an imperishable inspiration, and their memory constitutes a sacred heritage, which it would be treachery to neglect. Whenever we are tempted to take the baser estimate of life, or, in the stress of public duty, to slip out from under responsibility, or to evade the issues of the long controversy with wrong, it will be an infallible evidence of our moral health if these young men surround us like a presence, and act as a conscience to remind us that within living memory there was a generation in this land that knew how to serve the country with generous self-abandon, without expectancy of personal reward, and who were not afraid to die for Canada.

The Canadian outlook has been profoundly affected by the experiences of the Great War. Subsequent developments in imperial relations are the best commentary on the new uprising of national self-consciousness that had its origin during these terrible years. For our time, at least, a single day in the early August of 1914 brought the debate that had gone on for more than one generation to an emphatic conclusion. Since the earliest days of our history there have been twitterings of one kind and another, sometimes magnified into loudly-expressed sentiments, to the effect that the inevitable destiny of the Dominion is incorporation with the United States of America. The spontaneous enthusiasm of Canada's adherence to the British cause overwhelmed such opinions into silence. From the very outset, not only was Canadian loyalty beyond all question of doubt, but her ardent desire to take an

active part in the struggle resulted in the raising and equipment of an entire Canadian Army Corps for the field of battle.

The very strength of Canada's adherence to the Empire induced a new realisation of her own individuality. In her eagerness to serve the larger cause, she came to herself as a distinctive people. Through the efforts to assert her share in the Motherland's struggle, colonialism receded from her political horizon. She was a daughter-nation, but now grown-up, able and willing to give rather than waiting to receive. Vimy Ridge, and all that it symbolises, will have an assured place among the landmarks of Canadian history. We shall turn back to look upon it as the spring from which began that tide of life which has now carried us to the full realisation of independent nationhood.

Nevertheless, we dare assert that the circumstances out of which arose this fresh release of national sense will also define the environment in which the Canadian spirit will thrive. "Blood is thicker than water", especially when it is the blood of sacrifice. We can never again think lightly about ties for which, only a few years ago, men were willing to die. It cannot be that the loyalty, of which the ultimate pledge, given by 60,000 young Canadians, finds an outward expression on Vimy Ridge should ever be allowed to perish.

WE are being told that the campaign for the Presidency of the United States of America, now in process of gathering itself to the penultimate stage, is unique in its character. The singularity of the contest is variously defined as consisting in the critical nature of the issues to be decided, the determinative influence of the election on the future of the country, and the bitterness that is already importing itself into the fight. These suggestions have a familiar ring. Was there ever an election worth fighting that could not be represented as fateful in its gravity or momentous in its historical significance? In the movement of public affairs, there has always been some clash of opinion, on which rival battle-cries could be raised. And the impending struggle will require reserves of emotional interest hitherto unrevealed, if its acrimonious accompaniments are to outstrip the more desperate struggles of American political history.

The forthcoming election is the American version of a world-wide struggle, in which the final issues are economic. In Spain, they fight the same battle by a civil war as the Americans wage in newspapers, over the radio, on platforms, and deep down in

devious courses of ward organisation parlours. On the whole, the methods of our immediate neighbours are vastly to be preferred. They are safer, certainly more entertaining, and with all their defects, much more rational. As in most countries, the question to be decided gains in picturesque simplicity by its embodiment in a dominant personality. The American people are really going to decide for or against President Roosevelt. Mr. Landon, his opponent, in all proper respect for that worthy man, is hardly more than a name. The Governor from Kansas has been selected to carry the Republican colours with electioneering astuteness, but he might almost have been anybody. The real opposition comes from the forces he represents, of which he is the well-nigh impersonal, and, up to date, the astonishingly mute expression.

Mr. Roosevelt is a very different kind of man. The amount and character of the personal abuse that is directed towards the President is the surest indication of his qualities. A fierce hatred that is evoked by the very mention of his name reminds us of the kind of obloquy that was heaped on Mr. Lloyd George in the days of his Limehouse speeches. Even then, the Welsh Wizard was never exposed to a whispering campaign such as that being carried on against the President, in which gross suggestions of personal unworthiness are being insinuated abroad. We expect to hear that he has thrown over the sacred ark of the Constitution, but hardly to learn that he has lost control of his own reason. His irritating smile is said not only to accompany political villainy, but also to be the smug exterior of a low and hypocritical character. Thus the strategy of the Republican campaign is directed not so much towards the election of Mr. Landon, as towards the demand, at all costs, to get rid of the iniquitous Mr. Roosevelt.

The President can have no conceivable objection to the issue on which he is called to fight. He has had his term of office, and the time has now come to call a reckoning. We carry our minds over the period of his régime and recollect the circumstances of his election. He came to office in a fateful hour, with the entire business life of the country in chaos and threatening to collapse. Exigencies of national desperation rather than the confidence of popular trust swept him into power. The New Deal was a blank cheque, in which the only person who might confidently expect his name to be written was the Forgotten Man. Mr. Roosevelt has travelled far beyond the steps that might be regarded as absolutely essential in dealing with a national emergency. Legislative majorities have guaranteed freedom from administration hindrances. The famous Recovery Acts, which almost exhausted the descriptive resources of alpha-

betical combination, were finally declared illegal, but not before what were admittedly only temporary schemes had been given their opportunity to carry the ship of state out of the economic doldrums. Immense appropriations have been made for schemes of employment, until the national debt has reached almost astronomical figures. He has endeavoured to help every disaffected interest—the farmer, the unemployed man, the student who could no longer pay his way to college, the small business man, the investor looking for security, and the unprotected worker. Expedients to accomplish his purposes have varied from the construction of public works to the slaughter of hogs, from the expansion of the civil service to the payment of college fees, from the threat of currency inflation to the closing of banks, from old age pensions to shorter hours of work. Nobody can deny the vigour and resourcefulness with which the President has tackled his problem. Now, the American people are to have an opportunity to say what they think about it all.

The ammunition of the Republican attack comes from different sources. Father Coughlin is the most picturesque of the President's opponents, as he enjoys all the liberty of a political *franc-tireur*. The few very wealthy, who remain, are indignant at the inroads made upon their already depleted incomes. More intelligent criticism complains chiefly that the undoubted success which, within limits, has attended the Presidential policies in such matters as the reduction of unemployment, the raising of prices, and the restoration of business activity has been achieved by very dubious methods. There has been an enormous expenditure of public money, much of it wasteful and extravagant. National debt has become an unsupportable burden. The Administration has gambled in futures with a recklessness that simply postpones inevitable economic disaster. Does anyone seriously suggest that the debt can ever be liquidated without tampering with currency—in other words, without a scarcely disguised form of uncompensated confiscation? The Republicans represent Mr. Roosevelt as having proceeded far beyond his election mandate by introducing, under cover of dealing with a national emergency, principles and practices of social action entirely novel in the United States of America. Fortunately, from their point of view, the Constitution has proved to be the bulwark of American liberty against the unwarranted activities of a pseudo-dictator, who conceals his real character by exploiting his personality and indulging in familiar fire-side talks. Every sentimental reformer, with his theory of social improvement, has gravitated to Washington and, there, has assumed a new importance through appointment to the civil service. By subtle

devices, the President has reversed the fundamental principles of American political life. He has extended the outreach of federal government in the most questionable of all forms—through the multiplication of bureaucrats. The net result is that what set out as schemes of national recovery have ended by becoming intolerable interferences with business initiation and individual liberty. The only method of dealing with the situation is to get back to the fundamental principles on which the United States has developed its distinctive life, by an emphatic return to Republican rule and Republican policies.

The Democratic rejoinder to the Republican criticism takes the form of asking for an alternative programme. Supporters of Mr. Roosevelt point out that Mr. Landon has really no positive policy to meet a continuing condition of economic gravity. The Republicans accept the challenge by turning an accusation into a virtue. The country has suffered too much from programmes. The United States needs a rest from the frenzied interference of governmental busy-bodies. In spite of the insecurity introduced by the New Deal, the American economy has revealed its inherent powers of recovery. The course of wisdom is to accelerate progress towards business normalcy by releasing the brakes that have been applied by the Roosevelt policies. A job and not a dole is what the American citizen is entitled to expect, and the objective of the Republicans is to get back to conditions in which that desirable result will become increasingly possible.

The Democrats have almost as little to announce by way of positive programme as the Republicans. They ask for a personal vote of confidence in Mr. Roosevelt, whose case amounts to: "I'm the best adviser that ever was, and so interested in you—so much more interested than Short. . . . God bless you. Recollect the friend. Codlin's the friend, not Short. Short's very well as far as he goes, but the real friend is Codlin—not Short." In November, the American people will decide whether Mr. Roosevelt is still their economic saviour, whose dismissal would be base ingratitude, or whether the time has now come when, with all his gifts of leadership, he may suitably retire into that place of distinguished recollection which he is already certain to maintain in the annals of American history.

ON June 12, 1936, a draft of the new Constitution for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was published in the Russian press, and we are now able to study an English translation of this document. The draft has been circulated for information, study

and suggestion, prior to its adoption by an All-Union Soviet Congress to meet on November 25, this year. We are told that the Constitution has been hailed throughout Russia with complete enthusiasm. Apart from the new rights that are promised to the citizens of the Union, the very act of framing a Constitution must afford satisfaction to those who are able to appreciate its significance. They may surely assume that a definite stage has been reached in the turmoil and upheaval through which the Russian people have been passing for nearly twenty years. The course of the great Revolution has now passed beyond the proletarian dictatorship, with its excesses and uncertainties, beyond the limited and terminable plan, with its foreshortened horizons, into a stabilised condition, with the assurance of rights and liberties, and the protection of law and government. If the man in the Russian street or village is like his fellow-citizen in other parts of the world, he must hate what they call in the army "being messed about." Now, in so far as a Constitution can guarantee his position, he knows where he is. Moreover, he is free to derive what gratification may be afforded by the knowledge that he is deemed to have arrived at that condition of political experience in which he no longer needs the care of a social wet-nurse. His education in Communist doctrine is complete.

On the whole, the draft Constitution makes dull reading. It smells of the Committee-room. Whole sections read more like a cross between a joint stock company's articles of incorporation and the Constitution of a village Mutual Improvement Association than the creed of a new and adventurous social creation. Trotsky found the voice of all revolutions in what he described as the simple words of Lenin: "The important thing for us is revolutionary initiative: the laws should be the result of it". The impression made by the new Constitution is that the stage of revolutionary initiative is past: now we are reaping its fruit in the shape of laws. The heat of battle has been superseded by the calm assurance of realised victory. There are other historic documents of a similar character, in whose pages one can almost hear the roar of cannon and the shouts of the multitude. Here there are no sounds of debate, no vehement denials or negative propositions, no statements of compromise. One can almost imagine it being dictated to a stenographer. The new Constitution is the precipitated deposit of a settled condition, rather than the molten product of controversial heat.

Students of the Constitution who still live under a capitalist order of society naturally turn with greatest interest to the articles

dealing with the status of the individual citizen. Dr. Johnson asserted that "political liberty is good only so far as it produces private liberty," and that same worthy claimed to be indifferent as to what form of government he lived under. Such a preoccupation with personal questions may be a mark of the invincible *bourgeois*, but it is difficult for any form of society to evade the final test of how far it promotes the individual welfare of its members. The draft Constitution is arranged in thirteen chapters, and we must wait until we have reached the tenth before our curiosity on this point is satisfied. The title of this chapter is *Basic Rights and Obligations of Citizens*. We can recall other Constitutions, which blazoned such rights in the very forefront of their articles, sometimes as a high-sounding preamble, in the light of which we have to read all that follows. Here the order is reversed, and that fact is in itself highly revealing. If we are to appreciate the Communist outlook, we must set out from where the Constitution begins. The state comes first, and defines the place of the individual. Thus, Chapter 1 deals with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, describing it as "a socialist state of workers and peasants." It proceeds to emphasise and underline the public ownership of the material and means of production. The economic objective is a purpose "of increasing public wealth, of a steady rise in the material and cultural level of the toilers, of strengthening the independence of the U. S. S. R. and its defence capacity". Only after the whole apparatus of government, administration and justice has been laid down, do we come to the place of the individual citizen.

The major rights of the U. S. S. R. citizens are four in number—the right to work, the right to rest, the right to material security in old age and sickness, the right to education. Women are accorded the same rights as men, and there is a most emphatic statement on the subject of equality, guaranteeing equal rights to all citizens irrespective of nationality or race by an irrevocable law. The definition of freedom is complementary to the declaration of rights. Here the articles bear a preface: "In accordance with the interests of the toilers, for the purpose of strengthening the socialist system, the citizens of the U. S. S. R. are guaranteed"—then follow the areas of life in which freedom is to be exercised. These are freedom of conscience, including freedom to perform religious rites and, also, freedom of anti-religious propaganda, freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly meetings, of street processions and demonstrations, freedom of combination and association for all kinds of purposes. But, politically, there is, by inference, a notable limitation. One form of association is

specifically mentioned. "For the most active and conscientious citizens from the ranks of the working class and other strata of the toilers" there is the right of "uniting in the Communist Party of the U. S. S. R., which is the vanguard of the toilers in the struggle for strengthening and developing the socialist system, and which represents the leading nucleus of all organisations of the toilers, both public and state." Article 124 begins by declaring that "to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the Church in the U. S. S. R. is separated from the State, and the school from the Church." But it is very evident that to ensure civic orthodoxy, the new Russia has substituted for the Church a state political party.

The final power of the U. S. S. R. is vested in the Supreme Council, which consists of two chambers, one representing the Union as a whole, elected on an almost arithmetical basis, and the other consisting of deputies appointed by the constituent Republics, which are also granted the right of secession. The Supreme Council elects a smaller Presidium of thirty-seven members, which acts as a Sub-Committee between meetings of the larger body. Executive and administrative responsibility is in the hands of a Council of People's Commissars or Ministers, which is appointed by the Supreme Council. Judges are to be appointed for limited periods. The Supreme Court will be appointed by the Supreme Council, while the People's Courts are to be elected by direct vote of the people on the basis of universal suffrage. All voting is to be secret, and all citizens of eighteen years of age have the right to participate in elections. Personal property for use and comfort is permitted, but it must not be employed to exploit the labour of others. Work is the obligation of each capable citizen.

There are notable omissions in the document. There is no provision for anything in the nature of a President, beyond the Chairmen of the Presidium and of the Council of the People's Commissars. The State is evidently to have no visible Head. Marriage, divorce and the status of children are passed over in silence. Questions of wage-determination, which may easily become a leading issue in a country so avowedly economic in aim and basis, have no apparatus of adjustment. We presume that such matters will be decided by the Soviets; but who is to keep the peace between them? There is no mention of taxation—O blessed state!

Thomas Carlyle contrasts "the gospel of brotherhood according to any of the four old evangelists, calling on men to repent and amend each his own wicked existence that they might be saved"

with "a gospel according to a new fifth Evangelist, Jean Jacques, calling on men to amend the whole world's wicked existence and be saved by making the Constitution." It is a modern fallacy that we can be organised into goodness. Nevertheless, many a gospel has evaporated into thin air because nobody had the energy or wit to make it into a programme. The world to-day has every interest in the continuation and progress of a stabilised Russia. If this Constitution helps towards that desirable end, we can wish it well and be humble enough, in our own difficulties, to profit by its experience.

CO-OPERATION has become a topic of frequent discussion on our Nova Scotian countryside. The movement, which is being inspired and directed to a great extent by St. Francis Xavier University, has now assumed considerable proportions, particularly in those areas more accessible to Antigonish. The specially appointed staff of the College who give leadership to its development are men of missionary zeal and organising ability. To many of our farmers and fishermen, the practice of co-operative industry has appeared to point a way out of the economic defeatism that has settled too easily on the Maritime mind. Among the whirl of social theories that have been let loose during the period of depression, they find in the project of co-operation a way of recovery that is at once sane and cautious. It has all the attractiveness of voluntary adoption, and is evidently capable of trial without any great social disturbance. Moreover, the plan appears to have a particular suitability for our Maritime conditions.

The Co-operative Plan is not a novel experiment, even for Nova Scotia. We extol the individualistic virtues of our pioneer settlers, but, as a matter of fact, unless they had co-operated in their tremendous labours, they would never have survived. In the earliest days, one helped the other by sharing implements, the use of animals and in the communal purchase of provisions. Since then, from time to time, various schemes of co-operation have been adopted here and there. Some of these had considerable success; but until fairly recent times the individual farmer or fisherman was content to manage his own affairs, to do his purchasing at the rural store, and to sell his produce where and as he could. Nowadays the small producer lives in changed conditions; most important for him, markets are worldwide in extent and buyers have become organisations, which can search through a whole continent, and beyond it, to command their price. Dismal pro-

phets have foreseen the end of the small owner-farmer and the family-fishing-boat. For a province like Nova Scotia, such a prospect would be a tragedy. The Co-operative Movement holds out the promise of preserving the life of the countryside and seaboard, with those sturdy virtues which are a social asset of incalculable value, and of enabling the people who live there to adjust themselves to the new world-conditions. Nothing could do more to revitalise the life of our province than the bringing of new hope and vision to our rural folk. Herein lies the contribution of the Co-operative Movement to Nova Scotia.

Elsewhere, co-operation has passed far beyond the experimental stage. In Great Britain, Consumers' Co-operative stores are the largest sales' organisation in the country. In the great industrial districts, they grew up mainly as a movement among public-spirited working-men. Co-operative stores took the place of the Truck-system, after the abolition of wage-payment in kind. These community enterprises have had an excellent record of enlightened management and honest administration. Not a few labour members of parliament had their first experience in public affairs through membership of their management-committees. The system is now very wide-spread. Professional and clerical workers have recognised its benefits, and many of them are enthusiastic supporters. We are told that agricultural co-operation is the secret of Denmark's remarkable success in dairy-farming. Crofters and small farmers in Great Britain are now adopting the same methods, and find them to be eminently suitable to their needs. And there is already sufficient evidence of co-operative success nearer home here in Nova Scotia to warrant its further adoption among us.

The Antigonish leaders wisely realise that there are two preliminary necessities before it is possible to launch community co-operatives with any hope of success. These are, first, the mind and will to co-operate, and then, a sound understanding of the principles and practice of the plan. It is hoped that both of these ends may be achieved together by a thoroughgoing system for Adult Education. Already, many study-circles and co-operative clubs have been created, and in August of this year a large conference was held at St. Francis Xavier University to give impetus to the movement. Once the project is in being, it can continue with satisfaction only if it is guided by enlightened management and worked with small operating costs. The success of co-operation in other parts of the world has come from the amount of voluntary service that well-disposed members have been willing to give to

its direction. In Canada, particularly in the West, co-operation has been cursed by the attempt to imitate big business in its pretentious organisation and its spirit of sheer greed. The ideal of co-operation is not to secure large returns in cash as the result of bold speculation, but to maintain steady, modest livings for community groups through the will to work together. The psychological outlook is quite as important as the economic.

If the Co-operative Movement fulfils its promise, its social effects will not be the least of its benefits. If communities are willing to unite for production, they are likely to strike out in other directions. "Rugged individualism" belongs to the past. Communism proposes to assign each of us a place in the social order by the process of subordinating the individual to the common good. Socialism hands over the direction of industry to the Government. Fascism over-rules the individual in the name of a Corporative State. Capitalism uses the individual only in so far as business operations require his service. Co-operation holds out the ideal of preserving the individual's interest through voluntary union with his fellows in a joint enterprise. It has all the promise of attempting to realise a mediating system in a time of rough-handed extremism.

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