

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

BRITAIN'S ORDEAL: THE RETURN OF MR. ROOSEVELT: THE DOMINION-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE: THE POWER OF PROPAGANDA.

BRITAIN'S ORDEAL is the contemporary "rendezvous with destiny". The courage of a proud people has become the last barricade of civilisation. A familiar rhetorical device attracts emphasis to current events by predicting their estimation in the eyes of future history—an indulgence as easy as it is safe, because, obviously the judgment cannot be checked by facts. But if ever there can be a time when the shape of things to come is being forged in the fiery furnace of present experience, that hour is now. The contemplation of similar crises in the past only clarifies our intuition concerning the immense importance of what is being fought out in that island off the coast of Europe, to which so many lines of our own life turn back.

The chief heroes of this grim struggle are the common people of England. There is a dramatic value in regarding the fight as the clash of contradictory principles, incapable of reconciliation by any subtlety of dialectic, and only to be settled by a life-or-death encounter. But, the realities of the conflict are only to be seen by walking through the dreary streets of London's east-end, where miles of drab homes have been reduced to rubble. In the great industrial towns of the midlands, workmen who had been willing overnight to tear up half a century's gains in trades-unionism, have toiled in factories until the roofs were blazing above their heads. The German High Command with their perverse sense of human values evidently gave an attack on these poor honest folk a calculated place in their programme of demoralisation. But, in the tough fibre of the cockney, the Germans have encountered an irreducible and ultimate fact of human endurance that lies beyond the orbit of their psychological cunning. When the hard core of moral dignity is reached, smart rascals who presume to play about with ethical values discover that their most elaborate wiles begin to have an effect exactly opposite to their intentions. Hitler selected the British working folk in London, Birmingham, Coventry, Southampton and Bristol, as the props of national resistance that were to crumble as a prelude to invasion but he has only strengthened

those pillars of society which, as long as they endure, everything else falls into a place of secondary importance. He mocked at democracy and he has had democracy's reply. The answer to his challenge has come not from the debates of parliament, on which he has been studious to lavish his contempt—(although, this trumpet has given no uncertain sound)—but from the cheerful courage of artizans, clerks, warehousemen, typists, shopkeepers, and not the least, housewives and school children who choose to die rather than surrender. Nothing quite similar has happened in the history of the world.

The British people are enduring this siege of their island home not only for their own sakes, but on behalf of us all. Theirs is the awful loneliness of vicarious suffering. We can and ought to send them every kind of help. They need food, clothes, materials of battle, and, above all, airplanes and pilots to man them. But we cannot suffer in their place, nor, indeed, in any real way, can we share their ordeal. The inhabitants of Great Britain are immensely encouraged by our material and spiritual assistance. The presence among them of our Canadian Expeditionary Force ready, should invasion come, to line their shores, has much greater value than the actual numbers of men so engaged. Our friends ought to be strengthened in their will to endure by an acquaintance with our share in the Commonwealth Air Training Scheme. They must know that every true Canadian heart is with them in the struggle. But, all this said, and it is saying much, they must pass through this dark valley alone. If they should fail, then all is lost, and not only for themselves. The manner of their encounter with the ordeal hitherto gives good ground for hope that they shall endure to the end. But we must have no delusions about the severity of their trial, nor should we dismiss its tragic solemnity with light words of superficial admiration. As a people, the British folk have a habit of understatement and a certain gaiety of heart that transforms grimmest experiences into occasions for amusement. These national traits can easily be misunderstood in countries where the mental temper is more volatile and tradition has not yet induced the philosophic mind. The truth is that the British people are passing through a valley of Gehenna, and our only reasonable attitude is one of profound awe and thanksgiving.

Meantime, there must be no slackening of effort on the Canadian front. It is difficult for us, even now, to realise that we are in this fight not as children of the family rushing to pro-

teet the old home, but as allies in a war, which we entered separately and deliberately for ourselves. We are still in the mental attitude of "giving all possible help to Britain". Commendable as this spirit may be, it does not represent the truth about the struggle in which we are engaged. This is *our* war, and the British people are taking heavy punishment in the front line only to enable us to get ready for the great offensive. The sole end to the fight will be a defeat of the enemy. Already, one of the axis partners betrays signs of uneasy weakness and the much-discussed break-up of propaganda-created morale may be nearer than we think. Such an event will require an immense superiority of allied strength if the resulting situation is not to become a triumph for Russian communism. There will be no short-cut to victory, and we must dismiss any subtle self-delusion whereby we hope to reap the fruits without paying the price in sacrifice. We have gone on talking almost *ad nauseam* about Britain being able "to take it". Well, so can we. There must be only one limit to our contribution, and that is measured by opportunity and capacity.

Whenever the great offensive against Germany opens up, then Canada's day will have come. For that day we must toil without ceasing. We have protested, for long, our claim to national sovereignty; now we must implement our rights by fulfilment of our duties. It is our hope and expectation that for this gigantic task a great Imperial war-council will be established and not simply by the appointment of Dominion representatives to the British cabinet. Sporadic visits to the United Kingdom by ministers and other officials will never be an adequate substitute for common deliberation on a basis of equality. So far from giving occasion for unworthy fear that our gains in national liberty would thereby be compromised, it seems the inevitable next step under the present circumstances that we should be in this affair not only as equals, but as comrades alike on the battlefield and at the council-table.

Meanwhile, all eyes and hearts on Britain, for all other talk is indulgence in problematic discussion until she has dreed her weird. Adversity has its uses even when they are far from sweet. If you are sure the metal is gold, you can trust that it will be refined by fire. Britain has entered into a new-self-knowledge and has discovered to herself the hidden sources of her strength. The effects of this fierce assault upon her life and liberty will last long and some may well be permanent,

but they need not be entirely loss. Although encompassed by many sorrows, Britain still can be a Happy Warrior

Who doomed to go in company with Pain,  
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain.

THE RETURN OF MR. ROOSEVELT for a third term as President of the United States of America has been unanimously approved in the Dominion of Canada. He is not our Chief Magistrate, but any suggestion of indifference to his re-election on our part would be a foolish pretense. On the night of Nov. 5, there were at least as many Canadian as United States ears cocked at radios and there was certainly no emotional cleft among the listeners on this side of the line as the victory of the President became more assured. Frankly, we believe that on the whole, we are going to be happier during the next four momentous years with Mr. Roosevelt at the White House. He is our friend, and he is the friend of our cause. He has given proof of his capacity for bold and unusual action. He represents those qualities of his people that most approve themselves to our minds and hearts. We were not afraid of Mr. Wilkie, but we liked Mr. Roosevelt better, and in the indulgence of that prejudice the choice of the United States of America has confirmed our judgment.

The election is not only over, but it is well over. It was well to happen when and as it did, and with such a result. For us, the contest had the effect of a snag in the stream to be passed before we could come to a stretch of clear water. Now that we have left it behind, we know where we are so far as the United States are concerned. Moreover, the election presented an example to the world of a free people choosing its leader by democratic methods. On the whole, the fight was on a high level. The principals indulged in no personal abuse of each other and never stooped to an unworthy argument. The egg and fruit incidents were unhappy recrudescences of former sansculotte practices which in their revival, were condemned because of their singularity, whereas, there was a time, not so far off, when the hurling of over-ripe missiles even at presumptive presidents was regarded as a token that the glorious principles of the Constitution had not faded from at least a section of the public mind. By the wizard power of radio, every elector could hear not merely some local echo of the party trumpet,

but the living voices of the candidates themselves. To that extent, the whole apparatus of modern suffrage-seeking had advanced to a new height of dignity and argument.

There were two major planks in the Republic platform—"No Third Term" and "Keep America Out of the War". Of course, there was the general, bitter detestation of Mr. Roosevelt and all his works, but that merely formed a sombre obligato for the major theme which was a repetition of the two chief slogans. The first Mr. Wilkie kept at so steadily that he induced a crow-like quality in his larynx long before he reached the final round. And he did it very effectively for a man who had talked himself into a sore throat. His point was that the more indispensable Mr. Roosevelt was represented to be, the more dangerous he became. The President was the very stuff that dictators are made of. Mediocrities are never likely to scare honest men, but let once the whisper get abroad that a man cannot be replaced, then tyranny is round the corner. This was an able and cogent argument, advanced with powerful advocacy by Mr. Wilkie. The other battle-cry he left to lesser voices—less scrupulous and more emotional. In this phase of the battle, rival buttons had a conspicuous place in the party armament. The wearing of these emblems of faith and loyalty at times provoked unseemly personal brawls, mostly among the female electors, some of whom were so hysterical about the need for keeping America out of the European melee that they were moved to start a personal war of their own against any who wore a rival favour. To both calls the people refused to rally. In the last resort, there is only one explanation of the Republican failure. They did not achieve success for exactly the same reasons as they were defeated in 1932 and 1936. Neither Mr. Wilkie nor the party he represented had any constructive policy and programme to put before the nation. They were labouring under the astonishing delusion that if you leave business alone, you will get back to the old days of unrestricted production in which capital will flow into industry and thus, out into a stream of goods that will find open and ready markets awaiting them. Until the G.O.P. can adjust their minds to the consideration of policies designed for our altered conditions, not only are they doomed to fail, but they deserve their doom.

The superb and almost complacent self-confidence of the President formed a marked contrast to the restless energy of his rival. Mr. Wilkie tore from end to end of the country, never losing an opportunity to harangue the electorate. Mr.

Roosevelt took the election in his stride with a few radio addresses. Mr. Wilkie was terribly in earnest, and his chagrin at his failure was obvious and sincere. Mr. Roosevelt treated the campaign as an incident in affairs more pressing and certainly fuller of interest. It was this touch of cock-sure audacity that must have offended his opponents to the point of contemptuous abuse, but it made him the idol of the mob. In his own way, he supplies for his people the same embodiment of essential aristocracy that has elevated Mr. Churchill into such a place of trust and affection among the people of Britain. We need just such men in whom leadership amounts to an endowment of genius for our time in the world. If we must have *fuhrers* and *duces* let us draw them from men with the warm and expansive humanity of Churchill and Roosevelt.

For us, in Canada and the British Empire, the election settles a great question beyond debate. During the whole election campaign one of the wisest remarks was made in the radio answer to a similarly posed question about how America could be kept out of the war. The answer was that America could not be kept out of the conflict because she was in it already. The formal declaration of hostilities has almost become an anachronism. Rather when undertaken, it is a solemn declaration to the world of some momentous decision—the last act in some international drama moving to its inevitable climax. But there are other wars, into which nations slip almost as a matter of international policy. The United States of America have virtually joined in this war. We are at the stage of exchanging destroyers for defensive bases—a mutual benefit that deceives nobody. Before long, the barriers of credit will go down to send a steady stream of war materials across the Atlantic. Already, Mr. Roosevelt has pledged the entire support of his country to Greece in her resistance to the Italian invaders. The first "peace-time" draft in the history of the United States has been adopted as a means to strengthen the armed forces. Above all there is the clear voice of the President, silencing all others, not by shouting them down, but by the sheer persuasiveness of its counsel. An overt declaration of war could hardly take the country further and it could easily divert its attention to ways of action which while they might be much more spectacular, would be much less helpful. It was suggested, somewhat unworthily, during the campaign that every vote for Wilkie was a vote for Hitler. Be that as it may, this much is sure, the election of Mr. Roosevelt is the sealing

of a virtual alliance of the British and American peoples against Hitler. As such, it is great gain for the world.

THE DOMINION-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE provides ground for hope that the Sirois Report is not to be put into cold storage for the duration of the war. There were plenty of reasons for doing nothing about it and the Government could hardly have been blamed if they had set the whole matter aside for consideration in a less pre-occupied time. You do not normally select an outbreak of fire threatening the whole town with destruction as an occasion for discussing the re-organisation of your household. Presumably, every intelligent political mind in Canada is working to the limit on our conduct of the war. It seems like an outrageous suggestion that the possessors of these minds should be able to find leisure of thought for devotion to what is universally admitted to be the biggest task faced by our country since Confederation. Considerations of unusual cogency must have arisen to induce even a preliminary survey of the proposed adjustments in our Canadian order of political life.

Presumably, a conference on the implementing of the Sirois Report has become a necessary factor in a fuller war effort. Let us recollect very briefly what created the need for the Royal Commission and what were the general principles of its Report. Since Confederation both Canada and the wider world have considerably changed, not only in the outward relations of persons and states but also in the inward concepts of social responsibility. The Canada of Confederation was still an expanding pioneer community—indeed great stretches of her territory remained to be settled. Our frontier is still receding, but the questions we have now to face are largely concerned with stabilised conditions of social life. Great industries have grown up, mainly in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, while the Maritime Provinces and the vast west have gone into primary production mainly for export. Especially after the great depression of 1929 with the resultant diminishing area of free international trade, difficult fiscal problems became acute, mainly concerned with the amount of money the several provinces could expect to receive as grants from the Federal government. With the multiplication and development of social services, were there unlimited rights of taxation for Dominion, Province and Municipality? Could each of these authorities have a cut at a man's income, and if so, to what extent? If they had not such means of raising funds, how could these same institutions of govern-

ment be expected to provide educational, social, health, agricultural services with pensions for the aged, the widows and the orphans, not to speak of relief to the unemployed and destitute? These questions were all both difficult and urgent. The general line of the Commission's Report was to lay emphasis on the fact that Canada is an economic and fiscal unity. She remains a Confederation, and devolves upon the Provinces the administration of local services, but they are not to be left to grapple with immense tasks as if they had no relation to one another or to the Dominion as a whole. Thus, it is proposed that such imposts as income tax and succession duties should be collected only by the Dominion, and generally that the distribution of federal grants should be based on the principle of wealth assisting poverty.

Through the outbreak of war, Dominion-Provincial relations have reached a condition of acute crisis. The enormous industrial development that has become part of our war effort is confined largely to Ontario. At the same time, the export markets for fish, fruit and wheat have contracted and have almost disappeared. Primary producers have still limited markets for live stock, bacon, eggs, cheese, butter, and, of course, lumber and metals. But the fishermen around the coasts are in a worse plight than ever, the prairie farmers are wading in wheat which they can neither store nor sell, and the orchardists of Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia cannot look beyond the Canadian market. If pre-war economy was lop-sided, our present condition is so ill-balanced that it threatens to wreck the whole fiscal machinery. Then, in addition, as we all know already, vast new expenditures mean equally large new taxes, especially taxes on incomes. Two methods of dealing with these problems lay to the hand of the government. The first was that of dealing with an extraordinary situation by means of temporary expedients. The second was that of finding in the Sirois Commission and its Report an instrument ready at hand, designed for this very purpose. With commendable good sense, the Government has chosen the second course, and the provincial premiers have been summoned to Ottawa.

On the whole, the response to the Dominion's invitation has been cordial and promises to be helpful. Mr. Hepburn of Ontario realises very clearly which way the wind must blow, and he is hardly likely to be over-amiably in his attitude. With his genius for striking utterance he will probably renew,



under different figures of speech, his former protests about Ontario being the milch cow of the West. The Maritimers can be calculated to take all they can get and to claim it as a long overdue right. As for the West, the promise of the Sirois Report is their only hope of survival. They are not greatly concerned with rights, they are mostly aware of needs. Quebec is much more likely to be co-operative than she was during the ignominious regime of M. Duplessis.

It is thought by many that the curious move of Mr. John Bracken, Premier of Manitoba, is not entirely unrelated to the Conference. With astonishing success, Mr. Bracken has succeeded in putting himself at the head of a Coalition Government, including the Liberal, Conservative, C.C.F., and Social Credit parties. This astounding achievement has been carried through as a war-time expedient for securing a united provincial government, under which the Legislative Assembly proposes to sit, more or less, as a council of state. There is no charge made against the personal probity of the Manitoba Premier, but it is being freely suggested that consideration for provincial unity in a time of national crisis was not the only motive behind his clever political manoeuvre. Mr. Bracken has a high and enviable reputation in the West. He has been Premier of his Province continuously for eighteen years, and his popularity is as high to-day as ever. Two years ago, he led the Prairie Provinces in a non-political movement for securing favourable treatment in the matter of wheat prices. Now it is surmised that he is working out the same strategy, only this time on the political front and within his own province, and especially as a counterblast to Mr. Hepburn.

Mr. Bracken's astute leadership is said to be creating concern in Ottawa. Political parties are not favourably disposed to movements in the provinces that run athwart their lines of demarcation. These tendencies may spread to dominion politics and, in any case, voters who are neutral on the provincial front are not likely to remain over-loyal adherents of the dominion parties. But Mr. Bracken is not the kind of man to be swayed by these considerations. He has never been a vehement party-man. He is very suave, very wide-awake, but nobody ever accused him of lacking courage. He knows his West, and he knows his own mind and he is likely to get his own way.

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**T**HE POWER OF PROPAGANDA afflicts the uneasy mind of our age. The battle of ideologies is a strange witness, in an era of infidelity and materialism, to the truth that a man is as he

thinketh in his heart. Mind still rules the world. The vendors of ideas remain unimpressed by the Marxian and behaviourist accounts of human nature, and leave disputation about the existence or non-existence of mental activities for the more practical study of how to make up men's minds for them. We may not exactly concur with the dark conclusion of the psalmist about the universal character of man when he was in a hasty temper, but we do suspect the manner in which all men tell the truth. News items are scanned for tendencious writing, and the hardest part for the devotee of Truth is to find his mistress.

The newer studies of psychology reveal how subtle and potent are the persuasions of propaganda. We are told that the old belief about man being a rational animal is an indulgence in self-flattery. Long ago, Professor William James wrote about the place of what he called man's *passional* nature in the formation of his beliefs. Nowadays, this whole subject has been explored and we know all about the power of emotion in the elaborate apparatus of human nature. Moreover, psychologists have insisted on getting down beneath the level of the self-conscious processes to those arts of suggestion whereby, through an appeal to imagination, the citadel of the mind is taken without a frontal attack on our beliefs. The modern world is peopled by an array of eager propagandists who, for good reason or bad, are continually at work on "getting it across", the indeterminate "it" being either a theory of the State, an appeal for money or a packet of tea. We are continually pursued by salesmen who are endeavouring to get us to buy or believe something or other, and the most cunning weapon in their apparatus is an ability to persuade us that a solicitude for our personal welfare is the sole motive that prompts their endeavours.

The modern apparatus of mechanical publicity has greatly increased the importance of propaganda. Chief among these devices is the radio. This potent influence on the public mind is now practically in every home in our land. A steady stream of talk penetrates every household, in many cases from dawn to dark. An appalling amount of its time is taken up with unabashed salesmanship. Interminable sagas are recounted day after day to our North American housewives in the interests of selling soap. Symphony orchestras play, comedians bandy patter, ventriloquists keep half a continent in merriment and all to give earnest advocates a minute or two to recount the exclusive merits of coffee, cigarettes or soap in their particular

brands. It is all very innocent, although one may pardonably lament much of its blatant vulgarity, but this same method of appeal has had more sinister results. The preposterous lies of the notorious "Lord Haw-Haw" developed into an amusing interlude in the dull winter evenings of the British black-out, but the insidious talk of the Stuttgart traitors had its infamous share in breaking down the spirit of France. In an age when the classics were still read, most schoolboys knew the Virgilian portrait of Rumour as a bird flying from city to city with outspread wings full of eyes. This mythical creature is the advance-guard of the Fifth Column, which exploits every human emotion from fear to self-esteem in the interests of a cause.

Propaganda is easy to describe but difficult to define. Generally, we mean by it the lies that are told by the other fellow. All persuasive speech and writing is in the nature of propaganda, and surely it cannot all be morally wrong. Sermons and speeches of every kind advocate views, which, presumably, the hearer is intended to adopt. Books, pamphlets and every sort of printed word have a similar purpose. The spice of conversation is the advancement of opinions, and it is impossible to narrate the simplest chronicle of facts without injecting the colour of the reporter's mind. Where do we draw the line between propaganda and education? The distinction raises fine points in the ethics of intercourse. Immanuel Kant in his austere treatment of morality gives us a useful principle, however difficult it may be to apply in practice, when he formulates his famous maxim "Act so to use humanity whether in your own person or in the person of another always as an end, and never as a means". The fundamental crime of the propagandist is the use of human beings as means to his end. That is why the propagandist ethic falls in so naturally with the methods of the dictator, who makes such constant use of its wiles.

The democratic way of life suffers gravely at the hands of the propaganda merchant. A dilemma is forced upon its advocates, from which only a partial escape is possible. The fundamental principle of democracy is a respect for individual human beings. Among its cherished methods is that of allowing free and open discussion, in which every view however foolish, and, let it be noted, however stated, has a right to be heard. This climate is congenial to the methods of the propagandist who is always loud in his protests for liberty. Hyde Park is a much-admired institution, but it is helpful mainly when it is

confined to its own limited location. A safety-valve is a useful device, but it cannot drive an engine. On the other hand, the censorship of ideas is a dangerous weapon to be placed in the hands of government. Our problem is how to maintain opportunity for free discussion and at the same time to prevent its abuse by unscrupulous agitators of the public mind. In the last event, the state must be judge of the limits to which open propagation of opinion can go, but in a democratic society there must be a perpetual vigilance lest the government in its zeal use its powers to suppress views whose only fault is that the men in authority do not like either the views or the people who hold them.

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