CURRENT MAGAZINES

THE FUTURE OF BRITAIN. BILINGUALISM.

THE question of whether Britain can keep her head above the waters of bankruptcy is of interest to all. The answer is not yet clear, but current magazines find no lack of prophets willing to predict Britain's future. It is natural that English writers who deal with the present crisis should exhibit some party bias, while to writers who are not English, party considerations are of secondary importance. By examining articles from many sources we may find some indication of the security of the Labour Government's tenure of power, we may discover to what extent it is held responsible for Britain's present plight, and we may view, in the light of party allegiances, British reactions to present conditions.

The *Economist* (which, because of the failure of electricity, was for a time contained in *The Financial Times*), Friday, February 21, complained that Mr. Shinwell's Ministry of Fuel and Power showed a singular obtuseness in simple economics. For example, factories that generate their own power by water-power or windmill were closed simply because they were in a restricted area. Periodicals could be printed neither abroad nor on hand presses or duplicators. The whole economy of the country was forced into a lock-step, the pace of which was regulated by the slowest. "We shall soon be starving and freezing in perfect equality," says the *Economist*. The editors of the *Economist*, however, are fully aware that the crisis confronts all Englishmen, not merely the leaders of the present government. They point out that, while Mr Attlee received only 48 per cent of the total vote, he is now pursuing policies which are not in accord with those of his political adversaries, that the opposition has so far behaved with generosity, and that it is for Mr. Attlee to see that such a satisfactory state of affairs continues. The Prime Minister has the choice either of leading his country through her present troubles, or of making England the guinea-pig upon which the Labour Party imposes its controversial schemes.

"London Calling," by "Adelphi," the column in *The Financial Post*, March 22, reports that, in regard to the order by the Minister of Fuel and Power (popularly known to his critics as the Minister of Food and Bother) to cease publication of periodicals in February, publishers are now inclined to think

such an action an extremely dangerous precedent. May not those Ministers responsible for any of the various public facilities order operation to cease if difficulties are encountered? Will not the Government, after testing the public reaction by watching this particular straw in the wind, now conceive other bees in its gubernatorial bonnet?

The loudest ack-ack (anti-Attlee) artillery, however, is to be found in *The National Review*, "Episodes of the Month." It is earnestly to be hoped that they are drawing a bead on a bogey rather than on reality. We quote from their editorial of April to establish the tone of their fulminations:

> All the people who have been wrong about everything for years are telling us what to do now and how to do it. All the parasites who have fastened on a nation too weary to shake them off are preparing to make fresh blood-sucking demands, aided by the noodles who have a great responsibility for our present condition. We must look to see this new attack pressed home. It is, in some ways, more dangerous than the German menace, for now the enemy to our continuance is inside the country, not outside, and he is very active.

An overworked Civil Service cannot save the country from "false theory, legislative folly, gross improvidence" and "ministerial panic" which, one is told, are the inevitable results of Socialism. *The National Review* believes that once the false prophets have been cast aside, trade, the bloodstream of energy, will flow again. Incentive to work, freedom to work, freedom to keep the fruits of work will once more bring out the full efforts of the nation.

The National Review criticizes the speed of demobilization of the services as excessive, although some economy in defence is desirable; it dislikes the Government's long-term commitments to the United Nations, "that dangerous institution," believing that the purpose of Britain's armed might is to defend the Empire, not to bolster up an impractical dream; it weeps over the doubling of the legacy and succession duties on estates over £2,000 even more than it bewails the tobacco tax. The May issue of *The National Review* brands as tyrannical and impractical the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen—one more year for British youth to be indoctrinated with Socialist propaganda. Bulk Purchase, the present system of British trading, is regarded as creating an artificial shortage by discouraging home production, and *The National Review*, after commending private enterprise in Belgium on its economic

recovery by ignoring governmental red-tape and openly defying the laws of the country, strongly criticizes government fixation of prices on export goods below the world selling price.

The National Review insists that the Labour Government is the cause of Britain's present woes with the exception of the severe winter weather. It calls upon all Britons to rally round the Mosaic leader of the Conservative Party, who will then lead the Israelites from bondage An article in *Saturday Night* (March 29), bearing the striking title, "Britain To-day is the Japan of Yesterday", takes a different point of view. The author, Mr. Stewart C. Easton, says that Britain finds herself to-day in a position analagous to that of the Japan of yesterday, since Britain, feeling a severe economic pinch, cannot survive without the co-operation of other nations. Industrialization had so increased Japan's population that she found difficulties in food supply. Because Japan had to import raw materials, because her production costs were higher than those in the home-lands of raw materials, profit on manufactured goods was only possible by lowering both wages and the standard of living. At last, shut out from certain desirable markets by preferential tariffs, Japan decided to create for herself a self-sufficient and Japanese-dominated sphere of trade and commerce. She learned the bitter lesson that war is not the solution, for, the war being lost, the problem remains. She is once again dependent upon the willing or unwilling co-operation of other nations.

Ironical as it is that victorious Britain should now find herself in a position economically similar to defeated Japan, that condition is not the natural outcome of Britain's present government, and no government—Conservative, Socialist, or Communist—could wave it away with a magic wand. Britain has shortages of home-grown food and important raw materials. She is short of coal and employs antiquated manufacturing methods. These last deficiencies are capable of improvement. Britain's problem is essentially to overcome unalterable handicaps by improvements in her national economy. Should her efforts prove unavailing, Britain will be forced into a closer union with an economy that can assist her. Nations must be realistic. Where survival is concerned, political freedom takes on the appearance of a luxury.

Francis and Katharine Drake, English-born husband and wife and now naturalized Americans, have made several tours of British industry since the cessation of hostilities. They

have written a remarkable survey called "Can Britain Work It Out?" (March *Atlantic*). Like Mr. Easton, they take the view that Britain's problems are deep-rooted and cannot in all justice be blamed on the party that happens to be in power at the moment. Hampered by a struggle between a planned economy and demands for higher wages and shorter hours, John Bull, who is now producing goods at twice his pre-war speed, must redouble his speed once again in order to pay his food bills before the United States loan runs out.

With the Drake's grim picture of the food situation in Britain, it may be interesting to compare the more optimistic, though less penetrating, article by Dudley G. Davies in the *Queen's Quarterly* (Spring), "Short Commons in an English Village". Mr. Davies, writing from a village near Oxford, finds that the "adulteration" of bread consists of leaving more bran in it than formerly, and he finds the change to his taste. He believes there is a tendency to exaggerate the seriousness of the situation and concludes that, in the main, the people of Britain realize it is they, not the Government, who are responsible for the mess they are in. According to the Drakes, however, food is Britain's problem Number One. To make the American loan last longer, the British are continuing to endure their almost fatless and fruitless austerity diet. In order to eat, Britons must forego new clothing, badly needed housing repairs, every imported non-essential except two: movies and tobacco (and enjoyment of the latter has been discouraged). Manufactured goods badly needed at home are exported. This penny-pinching on a national scale must be borne patiently because the British know they are next door to disaster. Having lost a quarter of all their assets in the war, they still bear crushing burdens of foreign responsibilities. Britain must tighten her belt, roll up her sleeves, and produce more and more goods to sell abroad for cash before the breathing space afforded her by the American loan is over. The core of Britain's present dilemma is none of the political *isms*. It is Arithmetic. She is spending more than her income.

Her efforts toward recovery are hobbled by a manpower shortage. The war killed or disabled 600,000 men and diverted for six years her youth from peace trades into war industries. The Civil Service, conscription, and vital industries leave too few men for the necessary industrial effort. The Labour Government of course, inherited this manpower shortage. Mr. Attlee's critics argue, however, that new branches of the Civil

Service that have been set up as machinery to implement mass benefits together with the 40 hour week and higher wage scales demanded by the Trade Union Congress (now almost a Department in the Government) can only further impede the desired 70 per cent increase in production. In this emergency, machine power is the solution. But even deeper than the fact that much of Britain's machinery is obsolete or worn out is the fact that both management and Labour have always had a traditional distrust of mass-production methods. Both the mining and consumption of coal illustrate the Briton's congenital distatse for innovation, for all coal is mined by hand, and one-quarter of it is burned in inefficient open fireplaces. Britain's tragedy is that she must change her methods of production just at the time when she is almost exhausted Not to change is to invite suicide; to modernize even one industry such as coal is, as we have seen, a painful process involving many delays and it is unlikely that machine power will have a chance to boost production before the loan runs out.

In order to organize the effort toward remodelling British manufacturing, the Government has instituted a Planned Economy. Its instruments are Controls and Nationalization. No one quarrels with the goal of the Government's reforms—greater production—but that goal can be seen only dimly through a growing jungle of red tape. Private management protests that already it must spend almost as much time in filling out forms as it does in managing. The small but important manager class complains that to be taken over by the State is to lose its greatest stimulus to work: self-interest. Management is nervously loath to invest capital in expansion, for it feels that the Government risks the chance of doing anything effective by attempting to do too much. The Government has stated that only about 20 per cent of industry will be publicly owned, but capitalists realize that the nationalized industries will be key industries. All industries will thus be government controlled.

On the surface the people of Britain trudge on much as before, short of everything but patience. The majority believe that their Planned State is being constructed by honest, well-intentioned men. There is, however, a gnawing prescience of the great danger in centralization of power, which, if misdirected, could lead to One Party, One Leader—to Despotism.

The *New Yorker* publishes from time to time letters from correspondents in England and elsewhere. These objective reports, although compressed, are informative, and, when

followed over a period of time, give one a good view of the English scene. "Letter from Oxford" by Wentworth Andrewes (April 5) tells of the cautious and sober atmosphere to be found in that University city where shortages make a lively social life next to impossible even for that increasingly rare bird, the wealthy student. Among other interesting facts, the Conservative Club now has the largest membership among all the undergraduate political organizations. Before the war, the Labour Party dominated student politics which may indicate only that political perversity in young men is the normal thing. In both Oxford and Cambridge the spirit of revolt is absent. To revolt is to volunteer, and veterans have learned that it is seldom worth while to volunteer. "Letter from London" by Mollie Panter-Downes (April 12) describes the astonishingly high morale of the British in this second, and possibly more critical, Battle of Britain. The loudest grumblers are reported to be the gently born, whose small but fixed incomes now progressively appear more minute. In industrial centres, wives may waver in their faith in the Labour Government, but it is the men who decide the family vote. Another crisis might well cause the Government to topple from power, but even Conservatives are seldom bold enough to predict the return to power of the Conservative Party in that event Indeed, says Miss Panter-Downes, the men who most clearly see the weaknesses inherent in Socialism are frequently forthright enough to admit that, had the recent deluge of calamities found Mr. Churchill in power, the mood of the country would have been for more dangerous than it is to-day. "Letter from London" (May 10), also by Miss Panter-Downes, tells of the first important signs of dissatisfaction with the Socialists. The fuel shortage apparently having been concluded without any real impairment of the Government's popularity, the tobacco tax proved to be a bitter and unexpected blow. In this Letter, too, we read of public disapproval of the Government's plan to dwarf St. Paul's by building a huge power plant between the river and the cathedral.

A discussion of the 1947-48 Budget is to be found in May 3, *Saturday Night*. John L. Marston's article, "Britain's Budget Aims to Reduce Inflation", points out that the Budget, on the whole, is the best that might be expected at this time. He considers unfortunate the general movement toward lower direct taxation and higher indirect taxation since it hits the lower and middle-income groups more than the higher. There is,

moreover, no evidence that the Labour Government desires to tax the capital-owning class unduly, as financial circles had feared. The goose must be encouraged to lay more and more beautiful golden eggs.

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Is Canada slowly becoming bilingual? Many fear so. Many hope that it is, seeing in bilingualism a tremendous stride in the direction of Canadian national unity. Mr. Vernon Thomas (May 3, *Saturday Night*) reports in "Winnipeg leads Way to True Bilingualism" that in Canada's geographically central city, French is increasingly widely spoken. Most Anglo-Saxons living in St. Boniface, which has a French population of about 10,000, are bilingual to some extent. The French are completely so. There is in Winnipeg a considerable vogue for French drama. Last May, Premier Garson gave a radio speech in French—the first time a Manitoba Premier has done so—and the C.B.C. has begun a series of language lessons, "Let's Learn French", for Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This series supplements the French as taught in the schools, where it proves to be the most popular foreign language with the majority of students. In Manitoba there is ample evidence to prove that bilingualism is on the increase.

"Canada, Quebec and Bilingualism" (Spring, *Queen's Quarterly*) by F. R. Scott quotes part of a letter to show that the desire of many people outside Quebec is to speak English and no other language. Mr. Scott shows that Canada is bilingual, whether or not we wish it otherwise. Section 133 of the British North America Act guarantees the use of both French and English, and in Federal law, the French version of the law may supersede the English where it is considered by the judge to be more reasonable. Either French or English may be used in the law courts established by the B. N. A. Act. Mr. Scott believes the time is now ripe to consider whether another province should not now become bilingual in the provincial field since 35 per cent of the population are of French origin. That province is New Brunswick. Or perhaps one should say Nouveau Brunswick.

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Professor Stace's article, "The Zionist Illusion", which appeared in the February *Atlantic* and to which we referred in our last issue, evoked a wide response The April *Atlantic* has

selected a number of letters that explain the Case of the Zionists together with a brief rebuttal by Professor Stace. These occupy the whole of the section, "Atlantic Repartee". In the same issue is to be found "Palestine: Realities and Illusions" by Eliahu Ben-Horin. One-time Editor of the Hebrew *Doar Hayom* and Editor-in-Chief of the *Palestine News Service*, Mr Ben-Horin has an intimate knowledge of Palestine and the Middle East. His article presents a point of view diametrically opposed to that of Professor Stace, and the two articles taken together give powerful expression to the difficulties involved in solving the Palestine problem.

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