TOPICS OF THE DAY

CAMP FOLLOWERS: L'ETAT, C'EST MOI: DAYS OF RECKONING: COUP DE GRACE: BEGGAR MY NEIGHBOUR.

WASHINGTON is always a beleaguered city. The idiosyncrasies of its methods of representation ensure a permanent opportunity to profess the democratic conviction that every man should take as much as possible from his neighbour, and every organisation should take as much as possible from the State. In all parliaments, electors will naturally keep their representatives informed and persuaded concerning individual or corporate needs; and the precise difference between legitimate canvassing of opinion and the tacit assumption of authority is not always easy to determine. But the cajolery of lobbyists is passing from covert to overt threat; and the eloquent week-end delegates of interests "back home" have long since given place to a permanent office at the seat of government and a regularly established organisation for the control of politics. One such bureaucracy is devoted to the interests of an important religious denomination and to the political protection of what it is pleased to regard as "temperance"; its physical and political relation to the Capitol is one that would be impertinent were it not that its size and power allow the arrogant tolerance of Congress as an equal so long as it does what it is told.

The power of such an organisation is manifest: its constituency is not an area, but an interest. However much its supporters may separate on every other question that vexes the Government, they combine for one thing only. They stay till they get it, and they remain to hold it, undisturbed by the vicissitudes of elections. The ballot-box, safeguard of the people's rights, becomes a threat to secure the demands of a minority. The effectiveness of the minority, moreover, does not always diminish with its numbers. Its very smallness and narrowness may make for a concentrated and unrelenting bitterness, and in a delicate balance of major forces can sting a wavering candidate into hasty capitulation.

Hence the deceptive but not the less disturbing temporary success at Congress of certain less honourable "veterans" of the United States expeditionary force. This rabble is not representative. Numerically it has perhaps as little claim to speak for all ex-soldiers as the ex-soldiers have to dictate to the remainder of the population. In terms of sacrifice and genuine service in the

field the most vocal of these petitioners have, fortunately, even less claim to be representative. One might guess this, even if it were not supported by the evidence of press criticism from their compatriots. Such selfish opportunism is hardly the spirit in which Pershing's companies faced hardship and death. It represents much more the temper of the base camp and the service depôt than that of the front line and its immediate tributaries. Granted that many such claimants were eager for service in the field, it remains true that they had the good or ill fortune not to experience it. To this extent they are similar to non-combatant members of other armies, some of whom by prudence, as others by necessity, were denied the privilege of active mutilation. But the peculiar circumstances of their entry into the war, the enthusiasm with which their support was welcomed by the wearied allies, and their effectiveness as a threat to the almost exhausted Central Powers all conspired to give them a feeling of positive achievement before they had been put to the test.

To this may be added the characteristically national thoroughness in crusading. The nation of slogans and campaigns went into the war with the same whole-hearted enthusiasm that it has shown for Prohibition and the Red Cross, supported by the same persuasive eloquence that is devoted to Mother's Day and national canned-tomato week. Such encouragement, warmly and honestly offered and received in the simple faith that has been taught to believe in advertisements, could hardly fail, unchecked, to produce a feeling that the country owed a permanent and easy livelihood to its benefactors. The feeling is one that has been common to the usual run of recruits in all armies of all ages, as well as in other communities that for political or commercial reasons have been made the subject of general adulation.

Many of course—veterans of other wars, frontiersmen, pioneers, hard-headed realists generally—were never much impressed by flattering accounts of the splendid spirit in which they accepted conscription. For others, the romance of anticipation was quickly killed by the grim reality of experience. And these, such of them as returned, were disillusioned. They were not, as a certain form of sentimentality loves to picture them, world-weary, cynical. They had gained a sense of values, not lost it. They kept the substance, and left romance alone. And the stories of war, in their own expressive idiom, were "debunked". So to those who best deserve it, the pretentious sentimentality of the term "veteran" has a false ring not detected by those who earned it by ten weeks in a cis-Atlantic training camp, or by a few pleasant summer weeks

at a commandeered casino of the Riviera. False too are the intrepid doughboys who achieve periodical victories on the book-stall periodicals, and the elaborate indifference of their casual references to "the recent disturbance" or "the late unpleasantness".

If the real veterans or their dependents were responsible for the present embarrassment of the Government, and if their plea were restricted to the relief of genuine hardship, there would be little complaint. But the makers of the agitation are not only those, for the most part, who have given least; they are also, by some ironical paradox, the ones who have already received most. Facts and figures in support of this remarkable statement are supplied in articles especially written for the *New York World:*

> The farther a disabled veteran was from the actual fighting on the Western front, the more he is now averaging each month from the federal Treasury.
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> A woman with two children who lost her husband under enemy guns gets only $46 a month, but a certain ex-officer, who entered the service 13 days before the armistice, is now getting $187.50 a month retirement pay, although he has a $9,000 salary, and although the record shows that at the time of his discharge he had no wound, injury or disease whether incurred in the military service or otherwise.
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> Official records list the names of men..earning salaries of from $4,000 to $10,000, who are getting full retirement compensation.

Doubtless these last find their time too much occupied with their private business to find profit in the "march", by motor truck, in order to present their claims upon a grateful country and ask for more. The preferences to ex-service men, with their strange inequalities and inconsistencies, have only been hinted at by the examples quoted. But it is surely evident that the original War Risk Insurance Act, with its even more liberal modifications, has been simply asking for trouble. Conceived originally in grateful generosity, it has been enlarged by the same improvident spirit of vote-catching that has prompted the passing of the present "Bonus Bill". It has been exploited by professional lobbyists until it has become a political menace in the hands of a favoured minority. At present, for example, the beneficiaries of war veterans' relief, being one per cent of the population, receive twenty-five per cent of the federal revenue, and "will swallow this year the entire income tax paid by the other 99.2 per cent of the population." Few grants of patents or monopolies to royal favourites

can have created a greater tax on the many for the benefit of the few.

Great Britain, with almost ten times the number of casualties, has been steadily reducing her bill for war relief, and gradually establishing her ex-soldiers on a civilian basis, to be cared for if necessary by the regular forms of charitable relief, including the much abused unemployment "dole". Almost every other country can show comparable figures. The present Canadian demand for an enquiry into alleged fraudulent claims for pensions and compensation, while deserving investigation, appears of small comparative importance; and it is interesting to note that the demand for an enquiry comes from ex-service men. Undoubtedly, in Canada, as elsewhere, many able-bodied persons have contrived to obtain an unearned subsidy by manipulating official applications. But this wholesale preference for soldiers, capped by the formal demand for an immediate capitalization of insurance policies, is without parallel. The disgrace of post-war misery has always been aggravated in the past by the pitiful spectacle of the broken soldier begging in the streets. The tables for once have been turned, and the ex-soldier threatens to beggar a nation. To quote again from *The World:* "If the trend continues at the present rate, veterans' relief will swallow the Treasury in twenty-one years." Doubtless some expedient will be discovered long before that happens; American enthusiasm has been devoted to economy in depression with as much thoroughness as to extravagance during prosperity. If the electorate discovers just how much the tail is wagging the dog, even individual Congressmen may find that one vote may be somewhat expensively bought at the price of a dozen. There are limits even to American generosity.

THE fall of monarchies has been marked by the rise of the despots. The amiable pretence of royal autocracy has been supplanted—often with salutary results—by rigorous dictatorships based theoretically on popular consent, actually upon personal power. So long as these modern Cromwells prove to be Olivers and not Richards, their rule is seldom questioned except by potential usurpers—who are commonly given short shrift. Tyranny is welcomed so long as it is honest, competent and unselfish.

Perhaps the best illustration of this reversion to undivided permanent allegiance is offered by the curious political situation of Germany. If any country might have been expected to welcome popular representative government after its unhappy experience

with Emperors, it was surely the Fatherland. And yet the struggle between Hindenburg and Hitler is more reminiscent of the Wars of the Roses than, say, the American presidential campaign. Even that battle for representation is being waged as much upon personality—not to say upon personalities directed according to party—as upon politics. We may discount, for the time being, the recent monarchist movement in Germany, and the pro-Hapsburg *Heimwehr* in Austria. The contest for German absolutism lies between two very different corporeal symbols for what is fundamentally the same national enthusiasm to transfer responsibility to an unquestioned personal leader. On the one hand is a beloved father of his people, endowed with all reverend qualities of tradition and achievement, a patriarchal monarch held to office by ties of mutual loyalty and affection when the mere business of representative administration could obviously be better handled by a younger man. On the other is the ardent nationalist, aggressive leader of youth, the avowed deliverer and establisher of his people. Two very different types of national hero; but each, in all but name, a king.

Few kings, indeed, could have effected the dismissal of a Prime Minister as von Hindenburg requested and obtained the resignation of Chancellor Bruening. Whether or not it be true, as stated in a recent article of the New York *Times*, that the President did not step out of his proper rôle, it is clearly true that he has the personal courage, born of confidence in himself and in the support of the nation, to confront his parliament on a footing of equality. Bruening had a technical majority that would have kept most British Governments in power, so long as they chose to remain. Not since William IV has the Sovereign taken the initiative in dismissing a ministry; the formation of a new ministry may have been encouraged by the King, as with the present National Government, but only with the certainty of a strong parliamentary majority. The German president had no indication of any desire for change from the Reichstag. Observing changes in the political temper of the country, and entrusting his judgment to popular support, he took counsel of his own advisers, and gave orders to the Chancellor.

Whether Hitler could have succeeded as well is open to question. Such an act requires the support of solid confidence as well as of enthusiastic loyalty; the coming champion of Teuton hopes has neither the unique personal qualities nor the peculiarly undivided opportunities for national control that mark the Italian strong-man who is his professed model. In many respects the counterpart

of Mussolini, he is in others helped or hindered—according to the age and temper of his potential converts—by a fanaticism that is strongly suggestive of de Valera. Like de Valera, too, he has a somewhat dubious birth-right to the leadership of his people, having achieved a technical German citizenship by holding, for a day or so, a sinecure in the police force. Finally, and again like de Valera, he has a record that gives pause to the more thoughtful members of his constituency, and even the very sensational success that he has recently been achieving may possibly indicate, like the recent Hibernian fiasco, as much the desire for a change as a conviction about any special need for it. The failure of the original *putsch* has not yet been forgotten, and the Nazi shock-troops have failed to gain the power and prestige of the black-shirt army of Il Duce. Nor has the spread of pan-German nationalism to his own Austria provided so much a personal gain for Hitler as an indication of racial solidarity that might flourish better under another influence. His enthusiasm may communicate itself to the younger Nationals, but for the nation at large he lacks the support of a record of continuous ponderable achievement which makes Mussolini the classical contemporary illustration of the axiom that nothing succeeds like success.

MANY reputations of the last decade appear to have been subject to the contemporary epidemic of inflation. Collapsed supermen have found it convenient to offer the excuse of "general depression" or "wide-spread economic and political unrest", and point to their abounding success in the less critical days of prosperity. Sometimes, however, it seems reasonable to suppose that the hard facts of hard times provide a surer test of their measure; though commonly, and especially in economic matters, the accounting of stewardships has come too late to provide a confiding public with anything but food for reflection.

For what they are worth, investigations of what has been done in the past are as frequent as conferences to settle what should be done next. Every administration seems to be the subject of a probe. The result usually is general dissatisfaction, for the most immaculate steward is, at the least, hindered in his work by the necessity of confronting imputations of incompetence or dishonesty; and, even if wrong-doing can be proved, it is a sorry comfort to take revenge. No one can accept with pleasure or confidence the recent disclosures, or threats of disclosure, concerning Beauharnois or Newfoundland. Stock exchange commissions prove no more than that gamblers' fortunes are not commonly made

except by betting on certainties. The recent findings of Judge Seabury tell the world only what it already knew concerning metropolitan politics and finance, and the pronouncement that Mayor Walker is "unfit to govern" would carry more weight if it provided any certainty that he is not a perfectly fit person for the kind of governing he has to do. Within the realms of more or less private enterprise, when a corporation president elopes with trust funds and leaves his shareholders to mourn their dividends, it is small comfort to an investor to learn that "he could have made us all a bonus if he hadn't misjudged the market; and, anyway, the police are taking steps towards extradition". Some few ex-magnates have faced the matter out, presented their books, and are paying what they can. Others, like Ivar Kreuger, have appealed to a higher court.

Fear of a day of reckoning is not so necessary to the clever and unscrupulous opportunist as to the naively honest person who trustfully walks into pitfalls that chance or design has set before him. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the modern world's most successful idealist, has recently given proof of this. According to reports in recent press dispatches from London, his indisposition and consequent inability to protect himself were made the occasion of an attempt to oust him from authority, his crime being that he had placed country before party. A finely organised plan to establish Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the more uncompromising Tories at the expense of Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Baldwin was upset, according to the report, mainly through the efforts of "a section of the press", and through the personal influence of King George. His Majesty, re-affirming his confidence and showing unusual evidence of his personal regard, took occasion to tender a warning, as clear as it was tactful, that his First Minister should walk more circumspectly in the presence of his enemies. Whatever the foundation for the report, Mr. MacDonald is still in office, and in these difficult times is likely to remain. He is an honest man; he has won the public confidence. *Magna est veritas et praevalebit:* there is a divinity that shapes the ends even of politicians.

A fitting end was certainly shaped for Premier Lang of New South Wales. The man whose arrogance permitted him to repudiate loans, to deny legal obligations to the Australian Commonwealth Government and to Great Britain, could be brought to reason only by confronting some one person who could tell him to get out. Australian electorates have often been unfortunately

represented, both in their parliaments and before the eyes of the world. The reason is not so much the frequency of Labour Governments—though Queensland has provided sufficient object lessons of what *they* can do—as the importance in electing candidates for any party of a certain irresponsible section of the populace that has been bred by circumstances to expect ease without obligations.

Both Australia and New Zealand are noted for their advanced social and industrial legislation, but it is not true that they are both commonly governed by "Labour". In New Zealand the Government alternates between moderate liberals and advanced conservatives; in Australia, Labour is more likely to rule than to govern. The circumstances of Australasian life are such that proper organisation of labour is difficult outside of mining and transportation. There is a large floating population of labourers, often highly skilled and highly paid, but subject to seasonal employment that provides no fixed abode and ensures long periods of affluent idleness in cities. Living is cheap where nature is so prodigal of warmth and space and fertility; and in prosperous times this section of the proletariat enjoys itself hugely without detriment to the substantial body of the population, which is sufficiently prosperous to be able to live and let live. Until recently this happy state of affairs has been taken as a matter of course. Mr. Lang's utterances concerning "the Australian standard of living" represent merely the inability, in the small section of Australia's mentality of which he is typical, to grasp the idea that deprivation means going without.

A typical product of this loose casual drift is the "larrikin", a species as characteristically antipodean as the kiwi or the kangaroo. He is not brutal like the tough, nor so rowdy as the hoodlum, nor is he organised for nefarious purposes like the gangster. Generally he is not a bad fellow, so long as no one interferes with his inalienable right to express his independence by shouting, skylarking, and having all he wants to eat and drink. He gives no commands, and he takes none. He sees no reason to stand in line; and there is always room to walk round him. Being flush, he wants nothing of yours, and is generous with his own. Not being flush, or being placed under restriction, he is puzzled; and if his disposition happens to be ugly, it may show itself, though he has a genius for finding a way out.

This extreme and quite unrepresentative type is symptomatic of a certain Australasian independence that may occasionally lead to difficulties. It made the Australian troops notorious alike for bravery and for lack of discipline. It was responsible for the rioting and looting by Auckland unemployed. In ordinary day-to-

day affairs it prompts young men to take a nicely-calculated half-minute extra to board a train, with a smart announcement that it can't start without them, or to walk before the engine daring the driver to run them down. The same easy confidence threw a group of Australasian youth beneath the wheels of an express that failed to stop where they thought it would.

It is seldom that the larrikin achieves power, and his fellow-countrymen, other than his own kind, are keenly sensitive to the impression he creates abroad. Mr. Lang is a super-larrikin with a super-conceit of himself. Australian and New Zealand newspapers have recently acclaimed his downfall with enthusiasm. Mr. Lang is probably wondering what happened to him, and why.

Meanwhile, other people continue to worry about debts and obligations. As this issue goes to press, we are left speculating about Lausanne, and re-reading Mr. Lloyd George's recent book and the latest number of *Current History*. The unofficial report that Britain and the United States have agreed on proportional disarmament comes with encouraging opportuneness on the eve of lifting the Hoover moratorium. The news would be more welcome if it were not accompanied by the expected addition that France is likely to prove as uncompromising about disarmament as she has been about reparations. What though the Allied creditors could write off their bad debts at a profit if they cancelled their appropriations for defence? What though her potential enemies are by poverty as well as by the limitations of treaty prevented from effective aggression? What though her own demands for reparation are grotesquely in excess not only of the actual damage done, but of the entire resources of Germany to pay? France is at least consistent in keeping on with the war to the bitter end; for she has still to learn, apparently, that war does not pay.

According to the figures quoted by Mr. Lloyd George, as indeed by the casual observation of any competent eye-witness, France has come out of war, if we judge in terms of material things, very well indeed. Her insistence on the inviolability of the original terms of Versailles is indefensible in law, unjustified by facts, and economically absurd. Unless M. Tardieu has changed his opinion that Mr. J. M. Keynes's early estimate of Germany's capacity to pay "oversteps the limit of permissible tomfoolery", it is not difficult to agree with Mr. Lloyd George that "it bodes ill for any settlement at the Lausanne Conference".

Delegates to the Economic Conference at Ottawa have already learned something of the lesson that France is slow to acquire, though each doubtless would prefer to have it applied in practice

by the others. Some time ago when Mr. Bennett was questioned concerning retaliatory measures from New Zealand immediately following his tax upon her butter, the Prime Minister is reported to have admitted that no doubt, from her own selfish point of view, there was something to be said for the attitude of the sister Dominion. Such selfishness is sometimes difficult to eradicate, and Mr. Coates and Mr. Downie Stewart may remain somewhat biassed on the question of where to purchase their automobiles. It might be a welcome relief if the matters in dispute could be submitted to the adjudication of dispassionate arbiters from another planet. This naturally suggests a caucus of those unworldly beings, college professors and research students, whose fame has been somewhat increased since the depression, though the cash-conversion value of their ministrations has been reduced to vanishing point. Although there are few positions for this year's crop of graduates, some of the dethroned kings of finance are beginning to ask whether there may not perhaps be something in this academic business besides the acquisition of useful information concerning commercial geography or the law of trusts. Ancient history perhaps might give information about a previous economic upset, and philosophy expound the way to grin and bear it. Professors of economics, at all events, are relatively free from the popular condemnation, for they not only teach a "useful" subject, but have actually been known to make money by turning their knowledge to account in other than strictly academic fields.

So it is interesting to note that the Canadian Political Science Association has recently concluded its fourth Annual Meeting, and proposes to continue devoting itself to the investigation of political, social and especially of economic problems. How far the findings of these specialists might be applied, regardless of special interests, is a matter on which one may guess at one's pleasure. We may recall, however, that the professors of Toronto University, which was host for the recent meeting of the Association, were not so long ago accused, as the climax of a series of charges that included sedition, atheism, and communism, of being, almost to a man, acknowledged supporters of Free Trade.

Professors *en masse* provide a dismal spectacle which is not always improved by a closer examination of the individual specimen. But disinterested study can occasionally produce more practical results than work-a-day experience. Without wishing to hand all conferences over to committees of economic experts, the present writer would cheerfully squander his last vote in support of the election to a dictatorship at Lausanne and Ottawa of that "pro-German scribe from Cambridge", John Maynard Keynes. C.L.B.