

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE LESSON OF NEWFOUNDLAND: TOO MUCH POLITICS: A LUST FOR POWER: THE FASCIST STATE OF MIND.

THE reversion to the status of Crown Colony is doubtless accepted by the legislature and the people of Newfoundland as a desperate remedy for desperate ills. To those living in places where more pretentious systems have not yet been adjudged bankrupt and ineffectual, this drastic corrective may serve as a salutary indication of the way in which we should seek redress of our own perhaps smaller but certainly not diminishing ailments. Acceptance of the measure is generally accompanied by suggestions that it is a temporary expedient only. Objectors, who appear to belong chiefly to the recently defeated Government and its immediate circle, are loud in denouncing the loss of prestige that will follow upon any relinquishment of autonomy. For those whose hearts are set on ostentation rather than on worth, as to those whose loss will be their country's gain, putting the Ancient Colony into a political receivership will hardly come as a palatable draught. But for those who are concerned to see her credit restored, in the moral as well as in the financial sense, the dropping of the gaudy but tattered vesture of "responsible" government has come as an act of wisdom and courage from which nothing should follow but good, and which might serve other countries as a hint if not as an example.

When Newfoundland rejected the proposal to hand over to vast commercial interests the country's resources, and in effect the government itself, it was manifest that her ills were not so deep-seated as to lie beyond recovery. It is only two years, roughly speaking, since Australia was confronted with troubles which were absolutely, if not comparatively, far in excess of those of Newfoundland. Australia to-day is cutting her cloth to suit her purse, and re-establishing herself as a self-supporting member of her family. Her example offers encouragement to those who doubt the wisdom of the extreme course recommended by Lord Amulree's Commission. Our only fear should be lest the period of "temporary suspension" be made too short, and the reformers join hands with their opponents in restoring the country to the conditions in which it had so narrow an escape from destruction.

Much has recently been written about the fault, both corporate and individual, of the Government under which the

present misfortunes had come to a head, and whose overwhelming defeat at the last election made it clear that the pitcher had gone once too often to the well. Whether from sympathy for the fallen or from mere perverseness, the present writer is indisposed to add now to the recriminations with which they are being assailed. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that all charges are proved—that members of the Government used their office to swell private fortunes at the public expense, that their selfish disregard for the commonwealth made their pledges suspect upon the market, that they are mainly responsible for poverty and unemployment among their people which are conspicuous even in the impoverished world of to-day. Still it seems reasonable to suppose that men who are able to take such advantage of a system of government are less to blame than the system which made such things possible. We hear too much about the loss of self-government, too little of the faults of—so-called—self-government.

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No province of Canada, nor the Dominion itself, appears to be in imminent danger of sharing the financial and political disasters that recently overtook our nearest British neighbour. But there may still be a lesson for the Dominion, or at least for its provinces, to learn from the enforced curtailment of political prestige and the simplification imposed upon political machinery. In Dominion politics there may still be at least a "big-endian" and "little-endian" distinction between Grit and Tory, but in some of the provinces the battle is merely between the "ins" and the "outs", with the machinery of party government expending most of its energy within itself. The party system retains its advantages for settling the policy of a country; but for smaller units, where the problem is local and administrative rather than national and political, there are obvious disadvantages and few merits in a system which is disproportionately encumbered with mechanism designed to serve a very different need. When Dickens visited the Province House in Halifax, he compared its proceedings to those of Westminster seen through the wrong end of a telescope. Whatever may have been true ninety years ago, the diminution to-day does not seem now to be exactly proportional. In the days of Howe it was necessary for a province to maintain a parliamentary machine that should be self-contained and self-sufficient. Closer interests and improved communications brought a federal Government which removed most of the real political functions of the provinces without removing their political machinery so that, in the smaller provinces

especially, a full parliamentary procedure is maintained to do business that is more appropriate to a county council or similar board of local government.

A recent visitor to Canada remarked, after seeing something of our political institutions at work, that it was mathematically if not geographically true that, having already a federal parliament, we maintained nine provincial parliaments to minister to a population not much greater than that of the London County Council; and suggested that the obvious way to achieve economy and efficiency in government would be to make the machinery for local administration at once simpler and more permanent. No one would dispute this, probably, except those who derive a direct personal gain from the present establishment. Much is said of tradition, independence, and prestige, whenever anyone rashly raises the question of "handing over to Ottawa", or of merging two present institutions into one. But the objections may usually be found to rest less on patriotism, or even on prejudice, than on self-interest. The fault in small and unnecessarily elaborate systems of government is that their parasites are not reduced in proportion to the size of the body politic. In every form of elective government there must be waste and corruption; but as the amount of real government decreases, the waste becomes greater. The active body develops fewest troubles and is least worried by those it has.

PROVINCIAL Ministers are not without real troubles, that require more than a full amount of physical and mental energy. But if you were to ask any of them, after an election, where his real troubles lie, he would tell you, if he dared, that it was neither problems of labour and finance, nor the threat of a watchful Opposition, but the cupidity of his own party henchmen. The hours that should be given to finding a solution for ever-present ills are absorbed in dealing with an unending procession of place-hunters. The smaller the constituency, the more closely does the individual party-hack approach the successful candidate,—and the more loudly does he demand recompense for his efforts. There is a vicious circle which can be broken only by a Government that has corporately and individually the courage to renounce all obligations to party "workers". As long as the system of patronage is an openly stated and accepted part of political life, as long as the "spoils" system is defended by the "ins" with as much vigour as it is deplored by the "outs", so long will loyal Government waste most of its wealth and energy finding itself at the expense of the community it is pledged to serve.

The selfishness of political systems is perhaps less to blame than the apathy of electors. Those who do not share the spoils are likely to accept the situation, with a shrug, as something which like the weather must be accepted and endured for what it is. On the other hand, there are those who have been brought up in the faith that a Government is elected for the sole purpose of rewarding those who help to elect it, and we are confronted after each change of party with a general shuffle of appointments, ranging from the heads of important departments to the issuers of marriage licenses in fishing villages. Young men and women enter politics with no other conviction than that the family has always stood by the Party, and the Party will always stand by the family. Few of them receive any greater material reward than would follow if they expended their political energies in acquiring knowledge that would fit them for a post in the Civil Service, if that Service were established on a basis of ability rather than of political affiliations. Some civil servants, it is true, are so valuable that they retain their places through opposed administrations; but until permanence can be secured for able public servants in general, it is idle to expect that our public officers will be conspicuous for able and impartial devotion to duty when their appointment depends not so much on conscientious ability as on holding the favour of the local member or the party organizer.

That such wholesale and indiscriminate changes are possible is in itself a sufficient indication that we have too much loose and disorganized government. In federal affairs, where possibilities for place-hunting and job-hunting are not unknown, it is unthinkable that there should be so complete an overthrow of personnel. There is work to be done, and people are specially trained to do it. If our smaller provincial Governments could be expanded in scope and reduced in complexity, the same independent permanence might be partly secured. The Honourable W. D. Euler has once again brought forward a suggestion for the union of closely-related provinces, and seems to have produced the same vehement but unreasoned objections from precisely those quarters in which his proposal would seem to be most deserving of welcome. The economic and geographical reasons for a union of the maritime and of the prairie provinces need hardly be recapitulated here. We have inherited and petrified the accidents of history. If Cape Breton had remained separate from Nova Scotia until Confederation, she would be a separate province to-day. If Prince Edward Island had joined, along with Cape Breton, in 1820, few objections would now be heard. Her interests lie much closer, in many ways,

to those of the mainland of Nova Scotia than those of the larger island. As for maintenance of identity and ardent local patriotism—ask any Cape Bretoner. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are too much of a size, too nearly equal in tradition and importance for one to yield readily to the other. But the loss of local establishments would be more than made up by a gain in effective representation at Ottawa. United we stand, divided we fall. And yet the objection to Mr. Euler's suggestion, as made by one of the most important of New Brunswick papers, is that this is another insidious scheme from Ontario to reduce the power and prestige of the Maritime Provinces. The objection was followed almost immediately by a decision of a maritime business convention that the three Maritime Provinces should *not* combine to develop their possibilities as a tourist resort. No reasons were published, but one suspects that the real reason, if discovered, would prove to be a suspicion that, in the general gain, one province might gain more than another; or that, in the general saving, someone might lose his job. The need for simplification, economy, and permanence of trained and skilled executives is clear; but self-interest and mutual distrust stand in the way of reducing the strength of self-perpetuating bodies that live on their own accumulated fat. But it remains true, while our case is not yet so desperate as theirs, that we of the Dominion have received a valuable object-lesson from our friend and neighbour. Like Newfoundland, we need more government and less politics.

COMMENTING on the "temporary receivership" in Newfoundland, the *New York Times* hazards the opinion that it may be received by Sir—or as the *Times* dubs him—"young" Oswald Mosley as the first victory of Fascism over Democracy in the British Empire. Without attempting to guess what Sir Oswald is likely to think or do about anything, we may still reflect on the curious transition by which he was converted from the leadership of the "New" Labour Party to the sponsorship of British Fascism, and speculate upon the possibilities for Fascist enterprise in the English-speaking world. Of Sir Oswald Mosley's volte-face, a first-hand account is given in the latest book by his former lieutenant, Mr. John Strachey. Beginning as the most through-going of Labour leaders, Mr. Mosley renounced his chosen people when they failed to vote for him, and grew more and more enamoured of what he himself called "Fascist" methods of controlling the workers in whom he had so recently seen the only hope of England. When finally he rejected a memorandum of the new party's attitude to Soviet Russia

for the frankly avowed reason that it would be unpopular with the Conservatives and the Capitalists, Mr. Strachey as an uncompromising Socialist felt that it was time for them to part.

Without necessarily agreeing that in his earlier book, *The Coming Struggle for Power*, Mr. Strachey's conclusions are inevitable, we may still admit that he has made a cogent analysis of the conflicting interests and a convincing diagnosis of the origin and probable consequences of Fascism. Beyond dispute, he has a finer and a more courageous mind than his recently absconded leader; and while his condemnation of Fascism is extreme, the manifestation of it that he knows best, and the one most interesting to us, bears out in its intimate personal details the more sweeping indictment that he offers from observation of established dictatorships in Italy and in Germany. Both Mr. Strachey and the relatively mild and conservative Mr. G. D. H. Cole see Fascism as the effect of anger and fear operating in middle-class interests of which the security has been threatened or destroyed. Mr. Mosley, it is implied, having failed to persuade the working-classes into protecting him, has decided to bully them. Hitlerism is popular because it offers a refuge for unemployed and impoverished German middle-class youth, whose only hope lies in taking by force the livelihood that the established order has offered to some, or that a Socialist revolution would offer to others. Fascism in short, to use the term in the usual loose general sense, is a wedge driven between Capitalism and Socialism by those who would be squeezed out of existence by increased conflict between the two or by the complete victory of either of them.

This conception of Fascism refers to a state of mind rather than to a political institution, of which there is perhaps no real example except that which established the name. The state of mind, however, is a permanent and universal one, which merely awaits an outlet to manifest itself in whatever form may offer. There is one important difference between the Fascism of Mussolini and the Fascisms and other *isms* to which it has given rise: Mussolini was the producer of Fascism; other dictators are its product. In a world that needs strong men to establish a dictatorship, the nations are hoping that dictatorships will produce strong men. But it is the nature of Fascist dictatorships to glorify weak men: that is why they are so popular. If I do not like working with you under Capitalism, I must smother my resentment or run the risk of losing my job. Under Communism I should be in danger of discipline from the local Soviet; but under what passes for Fascism, I should be able to decide for myself that you were anti-national or anti-

social, and burn your house or torture your body or otherwise set myself up at your expense with the help of my Nationalist friends.

It is here that the Fascism of Mussolini is superior to that of his imitators. Discipline is strong and fearlessly maintained; authority is derived from the leader and not from the mob; and the doctrine of "No discussion, only obedience" appears to find general support in motives higher than the fear and self-interest on which it is founded in Germany. Mussolini, it is true, has adopted tactics of alternate placation and truculence to establish himself at his present apparently serene and impregnable elevation. For example, his dismissal of the entire Opposition from parliament in 1926 is typical of the Fascist state of mind, and the almost universal support he receives at the polls may indicate nothing more than impotence under tyranny. Italy is fortunate also in having a more homogeneous people, and more unified interests, than most of her neighbours, so that what is good for one is, on the whole, good for all. Minorities of course exist, as best they can; in the operation of a rigid system like the Italian Fascism the only rules, besides obedience, are *laissez-faire* and Devil take the Hindmost. But the fact remains that there is a system, and a principle, and that they work efficiently and provide temporary security for at least a majority of the Italian people without establishing a reign of terror over the minority.

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In other countries, however, the first question is whether Fascism expresses majority will or the brutal attempt of a terrified minority to preserve its vanishing prestige. Both Mr. Cole and Mr. Strachey see in Fascism the results of what is commonly understood by "an inferiority complex", and a blind terror that change will bring destruction. Bullies are not always cowards; as witness, Mussolini. But cowards are usually bullies if they can establish themselves in a position of security. The evidence of hysteria and panic in the orgies of Hitler and his followers continues before us day by day; it has been more than sufficiently accumulated by Mr. Strachey in *The Menace of Fascism*, and he brings definite statements to confirm what many of us have suspected—that the worst excesses of Hitler's immediate satellites are due to definitely pathological defects of mind and character.

FOR a complete analysis, clear, incisive and ironical, the reader is referred to Mr. Strachey's avowedly Socialist account. We need add to it merely one or two observations on certain symptoms.

Sir Oswald Mosley and his private army represent the Fascist state of mind in what may be termed the public-school tradition. Sir Oswald's quick defection from the Labour Party, and equally quick adoption of Fascism, indicates a muddle-headed desire to do "the right thing", a desire to show the true British spirit to the British working-man. If the working-man does not follow, then he is obviously not true, but in danger of being corrupted by "those Bolshies", and must be put in his place by an army of sound fellows who know a good man when they see him and are happy to follow their self-appointed leader. This sort of thing should be leniently indulged, as giving a safety valve to officers and gentlemen convinced that they were designed by nature to take up the white man's burden, and to insurance clerks who feel that they are the humbler guardians of imperialism according to Kipling and Rhodes. The most recently reported Fascist organisation suggests the promise of more important developments. Lord Lloyd again appears to be in the right tradition to tell the country what it should think, and to establish an armed force of his own devising to see that the country's laws against illegal force are properly maintained:

Though ultra-conservative in character, every effort will be made to give the new cause a popular appeal, catering especially to farmers, industrialists and the middle-classes against the bogey of communism and socialism, fascism and dictatorships of all kinds.

"And dictatorships of all kinds"—except of course, the particular kind that is to be established by the latest "New" party. Definite information is withheld, and we are told to wait for the next general election. "Hitler's ideas will be purged to suit British conditions—as Hitler, no doubt, purged Mussolini's ideas to suit German conditions. "Jew-baiting will be taboo, but Britain's achievements will be exploited to justify the claim that the British are arbiters of the world's destiny". This would be less disturbing if we were not informed that Mr. Winston Churchill and Lord Beaverbrook are "behind" the movement, so that we are led to wonder what possibilities lie open for military or financial developments. We wonder also what use such an organization would make of the territorials in the event, say, of a general strike; and about its attitude towards unemployment and the rights of those whose insurance payments have been mulcted under the Means Test.

In the United States the Fascist mind has been asserting itself less dangerously from a political than from a social standpoint. Pirates and swash-bucklers have not invoked the support of a

citizen army, and signs of Fascist government are few; signs of unregulated Fascist temper, however, are distressingly common. It is true that Mr. Roosevelt's "plans" for the recovery of industry are in many ways a reproduction of Italian and German "corporate" systems. But the precise way in which the National Recovery scheme will effect a compromise between autocracy and State Socialism without upsetting Capitalism, it is for the future to reveal; and the process so far has been accompanied by no general Fascist manifestations. A purely Fascist gesture, however, the demand of the "Bonus Army", was so uncompromisingly checked as to suggest that American soil is unfavourable to the growth of this political form. The most conspicuous attempt to introduce Fascist haberdashery across the border occurred when an astute salesman added yet another to the multitude of "official" hues for shirts and appointed himself as a general until all his stock was sold, when he decamped, having done much good to himself and less than the usual amount of harm to others.

There is one field, however, in which the Fascist mind is dangerously at work, and that too where in at least one unfortunate breach the very institutions that were being attacked provided help and encouragement for the unorganised but powerful insurrectionists. The reference, of course, is to the lynching of alleged kidnappers in California, and the crop of similar offences that appear, at this present writing, to be following directly from it. We may condemn the increase of violent lawlessness and especially of crimes against the person; we may deplore the weakness of juries and the perversion of legal safeguards; we may wish occasionally for the speedy trials and summary justice of martial law; and we may accept mob psychology and mob-rage for what they are. That a populace worked up to a fever of rage and excitement should endeavour to wreak its own idea of vengeance upon supposedly confessed kidnappers is something that lies with the boundaries of understanding if not of condonation. That is the spirit of which Fascism is made, and it is born of that curious mixture of cowardice and power of which cruelty is born. But it is a very different matter when a Governor announces, under a liberal and democratic administration, that he will not only encourage a lynching and pardon the lynchers, but give his personal authority to the acquiescence of State Troops. This exemplifies Fascist mentality coupled with Fascist authority; and it is encouraging to observe that while further lynchings and attempted lynchings became almost epidemic, the authority of the State and of the law was invariably and courageously set against

the law-breakers, and the press and educated public opinion have been unanimous in their condemnation of this unfortunate imitation of Hitlerism.

It is often forgotten, as we check the recent increased accretions to the armies of coloured shirts and swastikas, that the United States, and even to some extent Canada, had for years been familiar with an organisation which displays to perfection the temperament and the technique of the gospel according to Hitler. It has had two separate existences, each taking its origin from a war. The first did good work until its inherent Fascist opportunities for private greed and private vengeance brought public and legal condemnation to bear upon it. The second was commercial in its origin, and political, though secret in its organization; it possessed illegally the machinery for Fascism, and was inspired entirely by its spirit. The aims, briefly, were to provide security and political power for native-born Protestants, and to place every possible political and financial restriction upon those who did not conform to these requirements. Naturally, it achieved popularity with a certain type of Nationalist, who according to their own definition, were one hundred per cent National; but as with all such movements, its fortunes in the States were short-lived. For insignia, instead of shirt and swastika, its distinctive garments consisted of a sheet and pillow-case, and its symbols were the fiery cross and the mystic symbols K.K.K., which were originally adopted as a means of impressing credulous and superstitious peasants just released from slavery.

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