

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

OUR PARTY POLITICS: LORD HALIFAX AT TORONTO: MR. CHURCHILL'S POLITICAL FUTURE: OUR PROBLEMS OF IMMIGRATION.

IN CANADA THE domestic political situation has reached a condition of complete fluidity and considerable confusion. At Ottawa the ruling Liberal government, firmly entrenched behind its commanding majorities in both Houses, can pass any legislation which it desires, but in the country its authority has been materially weakened. Ministers and their parliamentary followers are now conscious of an erosion of the popular support which brought them an overwhelming victory in March, 1940, and they have evidently made up their minds that to frustrate the doubleheaded attack of the Progressive-Conservatives and the C.C.F. party at the next general election they must move sharply to the Left. So at the opening of the session there was unfolded a programme of legislation which committed the Liberal party to a very extensive and far-reaching series of social and economic reforms. It remains to be seen, however, whether any substantial part of this programme can be translated into practical legislation this session, and difficult hurdles in the shape of provincial rights have to be overcome before certain measures of social reform (like the national health plan) can be given legal authority. The provincial governments of both Quebec and Ontario have already been showing their teeth, the former by refusing to conform to the projected Labor code and producing a provincial code of its own making, and the latter by propounding its own provincial health programme. Hopes that the forthcoming Dominion-provincial Conference will result in harmonious cooperation between Ottawa and all the provincial administrations for a comprehensive programme of social reform do not run high, and may well founder in the Serbonian bog of provincial rights.

Meanwhile, however, both the historic parties are firmly committed to a series of far-reaching radical reforms, which five years ago they would have regarded as perilous and expensive experiments, involving burdens of taxation far beyond the capacity of the Canadian people to carry. We have now more spacious ideas about our ability to bear taxation, and the excuse that money cannot possibly be found for desirable social reforms no longer holds water. But the sudden conversion of the older parties to a zeal for economic and social reforms can be attributed

partly to the general awakening of the public conscience about proven flaws in our social order, which the war has produced, and even more to the emergence of the C.C.F. as a national party with formidable voting strength behind it. Its prospects of securing a clear majority in the next general election, at the best slim, are thought by the political pundits to have receded in recent months. But, long before it attains office, it may have the satisfaction of seeing a large part of its programme put into effect by its senior rivals, whether united by a merger or preserving their ancient rivalry. The administration of Canada's affairs for a spell by a vigorous party of the Left would do no harm, but it will never come to pass as long as our Leftist elements are split into quarrelsome factions, and prefer to waste their time and energies, as they do at present, in internecine feuds with one another, instead of establishing a common front for the furtherance of progressive reforms.

At present the C.C.F. have no more remorseless critics in the House of Commons than the New Democracy group, and in the industrial constituencies they are hard pressed by the competition of the political wares offered by the *soi-disant* Communists, who now style themselves the Labor-Progressives. The position of the latter has a very comic aspect, for Mr. Tim Buck and his associates have repudiated all notions of achieving reform by revolutionary methods; they have become persistent deriders of the Socialist creed, and almost blatant fuglemen of the capitalist system. There was a time, not so long ago, when the C.C.F. were spurning the overtures of the Labor-Progressives for a merger because they feared that their adhesion would bring a revolutionary taint which would frighten away all middle-class support. But now the Labor-Progressives seem to regard the C.C.F. as dangerous lunatics, and in the light of their exhortations that the socialist lion must lie down with the capitalist lamb, they would find it easier to form an alliance with the Liberals or the Progressive-Conservatives than with the C.C.F. In the coming months some illumination upon the trends of political sentiment will be thrown by provincial elections in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Quebec; in all three the Liberal party will be on the defensive. It has to contend with a peculiarly difficult situation in Quebec, where the recurring emergence of new parties or factions has reduced politics to an unintelligible melee.

AT THE END OF January certain high strategists of the Liberal party were rejoicing that a kindly providence had guided Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador at Washington, to Toronto to make a speech likely to raise an issue calculated to bring back into the Liberal fold all the numerous French-Canadian sheep who had strayed from it. The *furor* created by the speech has not completely died down, and Mr. Churchill's disclaimer—that his government had no responsibility for it—did not carry complete conviction. If it was deliberately planned to provoke in Canada public discussion of the present arrangements of the Commonwealth, it has had a considerable measure of success. But for the rôle of an advocate of their improvement Lord Halifax was a distinctly unfortunate choice. The record he carries as a persistent practitioner of "appeasement" in the unhappy days, when he was directing British foreign policy, had left a large body of intelligent Canadian opinion very suspicious about both the soundness of his political judgment and his lack of democratic sympathies. Moreover, if he had consulted any Canadian friends before he delivered his speech, as he did not, they would have told him that Toronto was the most unsuitable place in Canada for its delivery. It is an unfortunate fact that other sections of Canada usually look with jaundiced eyes upon all ideas or policies emanating from Toronto, and it was an easy matter for the critics of the speech to raise the cry that Lord Halifax was the collaborating accomplice of a band of rabid Toronto imperialists, who had preserved a colonial mentality and were ready to surrender Canada's hard won autonomy. If the same speech had been delivered by a British Leftist politician like Sir Stafford Cripps or Mr. Herbert Morrison, in Winnipeg or Montreal, it would have been accorded a more widely sympathetic reception than the counsel proffered by an arch-appeaser like Lord Halifax.

The form and delivery of the speech were in the best traditions of British statesmanship, and the ideas embodied in it can be segregated into two main compartments. The first group embodied Lord Halifax's plea for "closer unity of thought and action" and its attainment by reinforcing equality of status with equality of function: this was propounded as offering a way of escape for the Dominions from the dilemma which under the present arrangements must always confront them whenever a foreign war occurs. In the second group was his picture of the future international scene with peace dependent upon a harmonious working partnership among four great powers, and

his argument that such a partnership would work most satisfactorily when there existed some reasonable equality of power and resources among the partners, but that such equality was beyond the reach of the British nations without the adoption of the closer unity of thought and action for which he pleaded. It was a complete misrepresentation of the speech to accuse Lord Halifax, as many French-Canadian papers and politicians have done, of advocating a revival of British Imperial supremacy over the Dominions. He did not even follow the lead given by Mr. Curtin, the Laborite Prime Minister of Australia, and propose the creation of some coordinating agency like an Imperial Council or Imperial Secretariat. He merely set forth reasons why in his opinion the people of the British Commonwealth should examine carefully their existing mutual relations and arrangements, to determine whether they will provide satisfactory machinery and power for British ideals and aims to play an effective part in the moulding of the post-war world.

The Canadian papers which welcomed the speech of Lord Halifax accepted in the main his appraisal of the post-war situation, and on this premise argued that his plea for an examination of the merits of the present loose arrangements of the Commonwealth was sane realism. But the papers critical of his speech all directed their chief fire against it on the ground that any cooperative coordination of the policies of the Commonwealth would be simply a further encouragement to the creation of sinister power blocs whose threatened emergence spelled doom for the prospects of a stable peace. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, the ablest of the newspaper critics, saw "a clear note of fear" in Lord Halifax's speech, writing as follows:

"The fear is that the United Kingdom cannot qualify as the fourth master nation, and that therefore the addition to her of the Dominions is essential. If this assumption is true, then indeed the prospect is bleak. For such a power-ridden world there could be no hope of peace. The peace of 1919 was the work of the Big Three. Here was the principle of power in full flower, and with us at this hour are the tragic."

Against this can be set the contrary view of the *Ottawa Journal*:

"Lord Halifax close to the heart of things sees differently. He sees the world affairs dominated, certainly directed and controlled for a long time at any rate, by a group of four great powers, and what he suggests and all he suggests is that Canada should be part of one of that group".

Premier King took a very sombre view of Lord Halifax's proposals, and for the purposes of unqualified condemnation bracketed them together with the earlier suggestions of Field-Marshal Smuts. Speaking in the House of Commons on January 31, he said:

"What we must strive for is close cooperation among those great states themselves and all other likeminded countries. Behind the conception expressed by Lord Halifax and General Smuts there lurks the idea of inevitable rivalry between the great powers. Could Canada, situated as she is geographically between the United States and the Soviet Union and at the same time a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, for one moment give support to such a policy?"

Now it is all very well to deplore the emergence of power blocs, and strike a noble attitude of refusing to be part and parcel of such a dangerous monstrosity as a power bloc. But there is an old Scots saying "Facts are chiefs that winna ding." There are abundant signs that the skilful and enterprising diplomacy of Soviet Russia is now busily engaged in laying the foundations of a gigantic power bloc in Eastern Europe and Asia. By itself the United States with its huge population, wealth and industrial machinery, constitutes another power unit of the first rank. It is difficult to imagine the disintegration of the mighty structures of Russia and the United States within any foreseeable time, and each of them will for some time to come be supreme in its own section of the planet. These two colossi will also be in a commanding position for imposing their views and policies in the settlement of the peace terms and plans for the reconstruction of the world. But unfortunately both Russia and the United States have as yet an imperfect sympathy with the principles and ideals of the generous liberalism which, despite certain deplorable lapses like the South African War, has permeated British policy for some generations and has been a very wholesome leaven in the statecraft of the world. Yet the influence of British liberalism cannot be powerfully exercised at the peace conference, or in any international organization, if each of the British nations elects to go its own road with a particularist policy about international affairs. There was a time not so long ago when the Prime Minister was laying emphasis on Canada's littleness. "There are," he said in 1936, "obvious limitations to the amount of pressure a small and distant country, not primarily responsible for what may be the outcome of the League's decisions, can apply."

However, his *fidus Achates*, Mr. Brooke Claxton, has lately developed the fantastic theory that it should be the self-appointed lot of Canada to lead the smaller nations in the assertion of their rights for an effective voice in world affairs. One cannot imagine the Ethiopians with their memories of Canada's withdrawal of the oil sanctions when their fate was in the balance in 1935, or the Czechs with their recollection of the paeans with which the shameful pact of Munich was hailed at Ottawa, rallying with enthusiasm to the Canadian banner to frustrate the mighty powers.

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THERE HAS BEEN NO resumption of normal party warfare in Britain, but the processes of parliamentary democracy continue to operate freely, and in such byelections as occur, keen contests invariably take place between Ministerial nominees provided by the party which had held the seat and independents of different stripes. In all the recent byelections the results have been very unsatisfactory for the Churchill Ministry, and in some cases it has sustained reverses of a sensational nature. The retention of seats like Brighton and Bury St. Edmunds by Tory candidates with narrow majorities is equivalent to the capture of Holland by the Dutch. But, when the heir of the dual house of Devonshire, supported by the machines of all the three major parties, is beaten in West Derbyshire, a political preserve of the family for 300 years, by a cobbler's son who ran as an Independent Socialist, and a predominantly rural riding with Tory traditions like the Skipton division of Yorkshire falls to a candidate of the Commonwealth party, a veteran politician like Mr. Churchill must regard such results as grimly ominous for his party's fate at the next general election. Moreover, Conservative gloom must be deepened by the knowledge that, with the great majority of the younger voters absent on war service of some sort, these rebuffs have been inflicted by an electorate composed mainly of middle-aged and elderly people, who are prone to be less progressive than the younger generation. Evidence, too, that the fighting forces are now deeply infected with Leftist sentiments was recently provided by an informal poll, through which members of the British fighting forces serving in Cairo and its vicinity were asked to vote for members for 220 parliamentary seats. A result which gave 119 seats to Labor, 55 to the Commonwealth party, 38 to the Liberals and

only 17 to the Conservatives revealed that the Leftist tendency in the services is even stronger than at home.

But the clear lesson of the byelections is that the British voters are willing and anxious to disregard the party truce, if they are given an opportunity to vote for a candidate who, while prepared to support Mr. Churchill as the best possible leader for waging the war to a victorious conclusion, advocates a much more progressive domestic policy than his government sees fit to undertake. Furthermore, it is manifest that the Conservative party has incurred the deep distrust of thousands of voters, who cannot forget that its almost uninterrupted tenure of office in the decades between the two wars resulted in the country's immersion in a second terrible blood bath, and led it to the brink of almost irretrievable disaster.

The byelections make it plain that the present House of Commons, which was elected almost nine years ago on issues now vanished in the womb of time, has ceased to provide an accurate representation of the political sentiments of the British people, and there is general agreement that a general election must be held as soon as possible after the war ends. But it should be preceded by a measure for redistributing the constituencies, in conformity with the accepted principle that there should be a reasonable equality in the value of each vote cast. The present electoral situation presents many glaring anomalies, as the result of shifts of population which have been accentuated by the war. For example two London boroughs, Romford and Hendon, have each over 200,000 voters on the lists, and not a few rural constituencies have only some 30,000. There is also considerable support for a reform of the voting system through the introduction of proportional representation or the alternative vote. Naturally the greatest enthusiasm for such changes is on the part of the Liberals who are under represented in Parliament, but the official Labor party is hostile to them, because it stands to profit by the present system at the next election.

Meanwhile the brightened prospect for an early termination of the war is bestirring all parties to reshape their ideas and reformulate their policies in the light of the new conditions which will face them, and there has been unloosed a flood of discussion and speculation about their future fortunes. Inevitably the key figure in all calculations and forecasts is Mr. Churchill, who is not only head of the National Ministry but also leader of the Conservative party, with its commanding majority in both

Houses. For the Conservatives Mr. Churchill is an irreplaceable asset. Since he is free from all responsibility for the calamitous policies of appeasement, he offers them their only hope of overcoming the handicap of the heavy burden of odium attaching to them for the follies and sins of the two ill-starred men, Earl Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, who led them in the thirties. They feel confident that Mr. Churchill's hold upon the affections of the British people is so strong that they will be willing to keep him in power as long as he cares to serve them, and that his leadership will provide them with another working majority.

There is some evidence that Mr. Churchill regrets his acceptance of the leadership of the Conservative party, and would prefer to be free from any definite party ties. It is very doubtful if, after having won by his leadership the revering admiration of the whole nation, he will show much enthusiasm for conducting, as the leader of the party of the Right, political warfare against colleagues who worked loyally with him through the stern ordeal of the war and incurring, as the political conflict sharpens, the risk of forfeiting his popularity with half of the nation in defence of vested interests which will resist pressure for serious economic and social changes. It was as an ardent reforming Liberal that he achieved popular fame and political prestige, and the leadership of the whole nation in the difficult tasks of reconstruction would be a more congenial rôle in the few years of public life which remain to him. But he has committed himself beyond recall to lead the Conservative party, which will cling to him like a limpet and, while he has avowed a preference for the continuance of the present structure of Coalition through the early post-war years, he has also intimated his willingness to fight the next election on party lines.

Under the circumstances, the attitude of the Labor party will certainly determine the future course of British politics. Its leaders, who hold office under Mr. Churchill, would probably be well content to entrust the destinies of Britain to his leadership in the post-war years, and will be very averse to breaking with him. But they are under increasing pressure from the rank and file of their party to leave the government and undertake the work of popularising its Socialist programme against the day of a general election. They are accused of having made no serious effort to force from their Conservative and Liberal colleagues immediate acceptance of instalments of this programme, such as nationalization of the coal mines, and of



having complaisantly permitted vested interests to entrench themselves for successful resistance to reforms. Consequently these Laborite Ministers are on the horns of a very serious dilemma. If they were to leave the government tomorrow, they would be attacked for impairing the unity of the nation in the most critical period of the war; but, if they remain in office, they are liable to lose all their authority with their followers, which will pass to other men, and to become permanent prisoners in the Conservative camp.

The last annual conference of the Trades Union Congress revealed a growing restlessness over the present situation among the delegates of the British workers. Ministers who appeared before it had to listen to severe criticism for their complicity in policies of the government, and there was unanimous support for a very radical programme, embodying what are called the four fundamental deencies, namely a decent home, a decent job, a decent education and decent social security. It also rejected a personal appeal from Mr. Churchill to delay until the close of the war further pressure for a revision of *Trades Disputes Act*, whose present provisions as amended after the general strike of 1927 are very objectionable to British Labor. But, although the attitude of the Congress towards Mr. Churchill was far from friendly, the four-year programme of reform which he outlined in a broadcast some months ago satisfied many Laborites, and one of their leaders, Mr. A. M. Wall, warned the Congress in blunt terms that British Labor would miss an historic opportunity if it threw away the chance to enlist the immense prestige and abilities of Mr. Churchill for achieving reforms upon which it had set its heart and to which he was favorable. It is also pointed out that the group of young Tory reformers headed by Lord Hinchinbroke and the Hon. Quintin Hogr are prepared to go as far and as speedily as the Labor leaders in the direction of drastic reformation of Britain's economic and social structure, but it remains to be seen whether their influence could make any serious dent upon the hard core of reaction and inertia which exists in British Conservatism.

In Liberal circles it is argued that the real political needs of the nation could best be met by a revival of the Liberal party, which according to its devotees offers the most effective agency for representing the most consistent mood of the British people. But although it commands the allegiance of some of the best brains in the nation, it shows no signs of any ability to

recover popular strength, and remains a minor, if useful, faction in the British political arena.

The problems of reconstruction are so complicated and difficult that many people dread the prospect of their proper solution being jeopardised by an immediate renewal of bitter party warfare. So the suggestion is being advanced in some quarters that the structure of the National Government be preserved under the leadership of Mr. Churchill after the war, but that at the next general election the coupon plan, which was adopted with calamitous results in the general election of 1918 to ensure the return of Lloyd George's Coalition ministry, should be avoided, and all the parties supporting the Churchill government should be left free to nominate separate candidates in the constituencies. Sweden supplies a precedent for such a course, because at the general election of 1940 the National Ministry, which was in power, conferred this very freedom upon all the parties supporting it. The Socialist party, to which the Prime Minister, Mr. Per Hansson, belonged, made such gains that it secured a clear majority in both Houses, but he made no effort to reconstruct his Ministry on party lines as he was entitled to do, and kept in office his non-Socialist colleagues for the purpose of preserving the largest possible measure of national unity in grave times. In the event of the adoption of this plan in Britain, the Labor party, if it made, as most political experts forecast, substantial gains at the general election, would properly claim stronger representation in the Cabinet at the expense of the Conservatives, and Mr. Churchill might not be loath to concede it. He may cherish a distrust of Socialism and a dislike of Communism, but he has not shed his reforming spirit with the lapse of years, and stranger things have occurred than that he might wind up his long, varied and illustrious career as leader of a National Ministry the largest body of whose supporters belonged to the Labor party.

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**I**MMIGRATION, WHICH during the war has declined to a feeble trickle, has become a subject of considerable controversy in the mounting discussion of post-war policies for Canada. Its encouragement has a number of influential advocates, politicians and newspapers, who favor it for a variety of reasons. Some of them emphasize the urgent need for reinforcing the British stock of population, whose numerical ascendancy is,

on the evidence of the last census, clearly threatened, and others take the broader ground that, if Canada is to make the most profitable and efficient use of the huge structure of her expensive physical equipment, she ought to have double her present population. But in French-Canada there is passionate opposition to the active furtherance of immigration, through the fear that the real design of its advocates is to diminish the relative influence of the French-Canadians. And in the English speaking provinces there is almost equal hostility to immigration on the part of labor elements whose memories of the grim horrors of unemployment in the pre-war years make them insist that no encouragement be given to immigrants until full employment for the existing population of Canada has been assured and every member of the fighting forces firmly reestablished in civil life.

But, if the forecasts of expert authorities on the trends of population are correct, the question of encouraging an inflow of immigrants from Europe, which has heretofore been our chief source of supply, will become academic within a generation, if not sooner, because the main impulse to emigration, the pressure of population upon the available means of subsistence within national boundaries, will have disappeared for most of the countries of Northwestern and Central Europe. All the evidence of statistics shows that as the result of a progressive decline in the national birthrate, a steady shrinkage of the population of the United Kingdom is inevitable. Before the war began, the net annual reproduction rate for England and Wales was only .782, which meant that the number of babies being born every year was 22% short of the number required to maintain the population at the then current level of 46½ millions. For this purpose an annual birthrate of 19 per thousand is necessary, and even the acceleration of marriages produced by the war, which gave Britain in the first six months of 1943 the highest record of births, 352,000, for any similar period since 1918 has not made good the deficiency, which for the full year would be at least 80,000. But this upsurge of births is regarded as a temporary development of the war, which will make no real contribution to the solution of a problem described by a government spokesman as "one of the most sombre anxieties of the time." So serious a view of it is taken by the Churchill government that it has recently appointed a Royal Commission manned by an impressive personnel, which is charged with the duty of investigating the fundamental causes

of the ominous decline in the birthrate and making suggestions for their removal. But according to the more pessimistic experts it is now too late to take measures for preventing the reduction of the population of Britain to 40 millions by 1970, and there are not wanting Jeremiahs who predict that, unless the present trends are speedily reversed, the population of Britain will have fallen to 20 million at the end of the first quarter of the 21st century. There are people who argue that such a development should not be considered undesirable, because little islands with very limited natural resources cannot be expected to provide a general high standard of living for more than 20 million people. But the British people will take very unkindly to their country's gradual declension from the status of a great power, which such a shrinkage of population would bring about. They may soon come to a mood in which they will frown upon emigration of their youth, because it would tend to hasten the decline of the nation's relative power in the world. So, if there is to be any reinforcement of the British stock of population in Canada from the other side of the Atlantic, it should be arranged for within the next decade, as none may be available 20 years hence.

After the British races, natives of other countries of Northwestern and Central Europe have always been considered our most satisfactory immigrants. But doubts about the possibility of attracting many immigrants from these countries will be aroused by an interesting study of the trends of population in Europe, which has been conducted by the Office of Population Research for the Economic Department of the League of Nations, and which will shortly be available in book form under the title *The Future Population of Europe and the Soviet Union*. The authors lay emphasis upon a marked difference between the situation at the close of the first world-war, when the losses of that blood bath were speedily made good by the high rate of natural increase in rapidly growing populations, and the present condition of affairs, when heavy war casualties fall upon populations which have been increasing, if at all, at a much slower rate. Their conclusion is that a decline in the populations of most countries of Northwestern and Central Europe, which in any case would have proceeded steadily, has been accelerated by the war, that they will never make good the losses of the war and that, unless there is a swift reversal of present trends, most of them will have reached their maximum population by 1955 at the latest.

But the expansion of the populations of Eastern and Southern Europe can be expected to continue for a longer period. Indeed it is forecast that despite its enormous losses in the war the Soviet Union will experience within its own boundaries by 1970 an increment of as many as 50 million people. During the nineteenth century the population of the United States grew with tremendous rapidity, and the prime cause was that its huge stretches of fertile uncolonized land and its abundant other natural resources offered the promise of adequate subsistence for an increasing population. Now the vast Siberian territory and the undeveloped resources of Russia offer parallel opportunities, and it may be many years before a serious pressure of population upon the means of subsistence will threaten the Soviet Union. In 1940 it had within its bounds more children under five than the number in any other five-year span, and it is these children who in the rôle of parents will produce a steady enlargement of Russia's population in the coming years. But the Soviet government will want to use all the surplus population of Russia proper for the more intensive settlement of Siberia, and is almost certain to veto emigration to other countries.

In Italy and Balkan countries like Rumania and Jugoslavia the birthrate, while lower than the Russian, is still relatively high, but the comparatively meagre extent of their fertile soil and natural resources limits their capacity for sustaining a much larger population. Some expansion may become possible through improvement in agricultural methods and industrial developments; unless the birthrate falls greatly, these countries will remain reservoirs of prospective emigrants. But many Italians find Canada's winter too severe and prefer the warmer climate of South America, and the peoples of the Balkan countries are for the most part so backward and poorly educated that as immigrants they are not easily assimilated into Canada's population and are likely to hive in racial groups. So the portents indicate that after Europe settles down from the great bouleversement of the war, she will not be able to supply Canada with a large number of any but the less desirable classes of immigrants.

J. A. STEVENSON