

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE RESIGNATION OF MR. ANTHONY EDEN: THE PADLOCK  
LAW: A UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

THE RESIGNATION OF MR. ANTHONY EDEN is an event that may mark a new encounter with human destiny. The entire course of civilisation may be affected by the crisis in British political life. A potent re-agent has been dropped into the dubious chemical mixture of international relations, and the process of resulting precipitation has certainly enabled us to see the contents in much sharper distinction. So far, but only so far, we have been advanced in our capacity for judgment on the fateful matters at issue. In Britain, and even more so in the Dominions, the public mind is still perturbed and puzzled. It is very evident that the British Prime Minister has made a decision whose gravity cannot be over-estimated. It is not less evident that the late Foreign Secretary has also made his decision, equally grave in its character and with a not less sense of public responsibility. With whom does the better wisdom lie? Our sympathies may all be with Mr. Eden, but many have a lurking suspicion that Mr. Chamberlain may be terribly right.

The immediate issue that has created the reversal of British foreign policy is not concerned with the power of the League of Nations. We must all admit regretfully that for the present that question is closed. The League in itself can do nothing. Mr. Chamberlain said nothing less than the truth when he described it as a delusive hope for the peace of the world. The disquieting feature in his pronouncement lies not so much in his affirmation as in his silence. An expression of regret from his lips that a great ideal of international life had passed into temporary eclipse would have relieved many minds, but no such declaration was forthcoming except in the form of a pious profession, added as a prompted afterthought. Even when we allow for the terse realism of the Chamberlain mind, it is a fair inference that the British Prime Minister and the group for which he speaks are heartily glad to have the humbug of the League out of the way. We have gone back to the "power" game of pre-1914 days, and it is difficult to avoid the reflection that another, only more dreadful, 1914 is already on the way.

Mr. Eden could not have been less aware than his former leader of the League's impotence. His difference in policy is concerned with the manner of our acquiescence in the situation that has confounded the League ideal. One by one, great powers whose ad-

herence to the Geneva compact was essential for its operation have abandoned the Covenant. Germany, Japan and Italy have all walked out when they found its constraints irksome in the development of their imperialist ambitions. Their presence in the Council Chamber of the League would have been a hypocritical appearance, and we can at least respect the sincerity that prompted their withdrawal. It is very clear that they are not concerned with the pacification of the world through international agreement. Compacts are made only to be broken. The League Covenant, the Locarno Agreements, the Briand-Kellogg Pact, the Nine-Power Treaty have all been torn up whenever they have stood in the way of national ambition. The humiliating record of attempts to reach agreement about non-intervention in Spain is simply part of a consistent attitude of cynical contempt for signed pledges. Our only possible conclusion is that they have no interest in international pacification at all. Their policy abroad is part of their domestic political creed. The interest of the nation is the only law, and ruthless terrorism is the method of enforcement.

Two of these nations are the powers with which Mr. Chamberlain proposes that the British people should now enter into agreement. Mr. Eden can hardly be called a sentimental idealist if he views such a possibility with considerable misgiving. When the Prime Minister draws attention to the fact that the League as an instrument of collective security is a sham, has he exchanged the former policy of his Government for anything more substantial when he accepts the word of Signor Mussolini? Has the Ethiopian conqueror changed his skin when we talk with him in Rome or London rather than at Geneva? Mr. Eden has never said that we should not enter into an agreement with the Fascist powers; all that he has demanded is some token of sincerity from powers that have consistently regarded pacts and agreements as temporary expedients of diplomacy, rather than as pledges of honour to be respected. Just there, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary apparently broke, but the issue is too narrow for us to conclude that it is the sole measure of their divergence. Two foreign policies have met and clashed in their two personalities. Mr. Eden contends that as long as even the battered remnant of an instrument for conciliation through general conference remains, we should put all the might of British prestige and power behind it, rather than surrender to the surly blackmail tactics of nations whose recent conduct at home and abroad has given us every reason to distrust them profoundly. Mr. Chamberlain has taken another view. Italy and Germany are too powerful to be ignored. Nothing is to

be gained by talking to them in a foreign tongue which they neither use nor understand. If they think in terms of power, let the British people enter their universe of discourse and oppose power with greater power, until they are compelled into both fear and respect. The process may be as costly as it is distasteful, but every other possibility, already tried with long patience, has failed. The Prime Minister may be right, but the resultant peace will be a very uncertain and unstable product.

Mr. Eden's prestige has not been diminished by the temper of his acquiescence in the defeat of his policy. In his own personal attitude, he has been an exemplar of the nobility that has characterised his outlook. He has been willing to sink career and office without bitterness or recrimination for the sake of unity and peace. In effect he has declared that if his policy is not acceptable, he is willing not only to withdraw but to give a clear road for those who take the opposite view. We have not heard the last of Mr. Eden.

Meantime, the Dominions overseas may be pardoned if they are completely baffled and stunned by the new position in which they find themselves. Their signatures stand alongside the Mother Country's on the Covenant of the League of Nations. They have been assiduous in their attendance at the League Assembly, and have even enjoyed a certain pardonable satisfaction and pride through being associated on equal terms with Great Britain in matters of general world policy. Now, it seems that they have been participating in a solemn sham. Without open consultation, they have been deserted by the British Cabinet, which has suddenly adopted an entirely new foreign policy. Have Australia, Canada and South Africa simply been abandoned in favour of Italy and Germany? Imperial relations, which the League did so much to advance, have certainly not been improved by the high-handed action of the British Cabinet. True, the English Channel is rather narrower than the Atlantic Ocean, and Europe is nearer at hand than India, North America, Africa or the Australias; but if Britain is now going to talk in the dread and awful language of military power, she is not taking the most tactful course in mustering the full panoply of her authority. If we who live in the Dominions overseas are to develop a foreign policy that is calculated at once to promote our self-respect and to develop imperial unity, we have not been greatly helped by Mr. Chamberlain.

---

**T**HE PADLOCK LAW of Quebec has entered upon a new phase in its sinister operations. Hitherto, the legal instrument has been employed by the police authorities to conduct sundry raids on the

homes and offices of private individuals, or to suppress the publication of certain undesirable papers. Now, the law has become a threat to the exercise of free speech, and has been definitely used for this purpose, of all places, in McGill University. Neither the academic nor the political reputation of Canada will be advanced if this kind of activity is allowed to flourish among us.

Mr. Tim Buck, a well-known Communist leader, had been invited by the students of McGill University to lay his case before them. Evidently, the student organization was advised that if such an address was delivered on the campus, the University would be liable to police action. Presumably, the spectacle that appeared to the imagination of those who tendered this advice was that of patrol wagons arriving at the gates of the academic institution, armed with padlocks and crowbars. When the Faculty and students had been duly excluded from their seditious haunts, the library would be ransacked by police authorities, who would confiscate every book and document of a Communist tendency. We have no intimate knowledge of the volumes that accumulate their proportion of academic dust on the shelves of McGill Library, but we may conclude justifiably enough that the range and variety of literature to which the Montreal police might devote their inquisitorial zeal would be vast and interesting, and, even then, some innocent looking volumes might escape their attention. We would expect *Das Kapital* to lead the procession into the police wagons, but what of Plato's *Republic*, or More's *Utopia*, not to speak of the entire *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in which sundry highly subversive articles lie firmly embedded? A sergeant of police might knit his brows for quite a time over the concluding verses of the second chapter in the *Acts of the Apostles* before he could make up his mind about removing the Holy Bible. The whole prospect is so ludicrous, we are amazed that the highly diverting possibilities did not induce the legal advisers of the University to try a fall with M. Duplessis. Or has the spirit of humour wholly departed from McGill with retirement of Professor Stephen Leacock?

McGill University has lost a splendid opportunity to assert the rights of free speech in the Province of Quebec. The authorities could hardly have been convicted of defying the law, because, under this particular legislation, the onus of taking action resides with the police, presumably under instruction of the Attorney-General's department. So far as we are aware, no actual prosecutions have been carried through under the Padlock Law. A disquieting feature of the whole business is that swift suppression, without right of appeal beyond summary courts, is the method of operation. If

the law officers of Quebec had been stupid enough to attempt anything like a "padlocking" of the venerable McGill University, the ridiculous situations created would have rocked Canada with laughter from one end to another. And mockery is the one potent weapon that would-be dictators have no means to withstand.

The easy surrender of a great English-speaking University to the new law is a very disquieting event in the eastern life of Canada. Are we to infer that there is a covert acquiescence in the methods of the Padlock Act? There has been an ominous silence in the city of Montreal: even the English press has not raised anything like the hub-bub we might have expected. If Mr. Tim Buck cannot be allowed to speak to the University students at McGill, then the day may come when the *Gazette* or the *Star*, by some dreadful lapse from journalistic vigilance, may report the debates of the House of Commons in which, let us say, Mr. Woodsworth passes some highly complimentary remarks on how they do things in Russia. The unholy news may thus be spread around the sacred soil of Quebec. Already we hear the police-sirens whining up the street, and observe the great organs of public opinion being silenced by the methods of the crowbar and the padlock. If McGill University knuckles under in Montreal, where shall liberty find her voice?

The situation is not improved when we consider further the circumstances under which Mr. Buck was invited to expound his unpalatable doctrines to the innocent youth of McGill. M. Arcand, leader of the National Social Christian Party, had already appeared on the campus, and without let or hindrance, and, to do the gentleman justice, without any apology on his part, had unfolded the programme of his party. In the course of his address, he informed his hearers that no law-abiding citizens need fear the attainment of his particular group to power in Canada, about which prospect M. Arcand appears to be unduly optimistic. Nevertheless, he was not at any pains to conceal his contempt for parliamentary institutions and democratic liberties. If there is a conspiracy anywhere in Canada to-day to overthrow the constitution, this particular group, for which M. Arcand speaks, comes as near to it as we can discover. Yet, he is given the freedom of the University to say his say. The young men and women of McGill may surely be pardoned in their desire, at least, *audire alteram partem*. If the University authorities are specially solicitous for the political healthy-mindedness of the student body (and we understand there are anxieties of that character in Montreal), the counsels of sanity might have allowed the extremists of the right and the left to cancel each other out. Instead, Mr. Tim Buck wears the halo of a martyr,

a ready created object for the adulation of youth. The Communist Party may be fanatical missionaries, but they have enough experience of propagandist ways to assess the net gains to their cause as not inconsiderable. The University has made itself ridiculous, and M. Duplessis enjoys another triumph. The rest of Canada looks on with mingled distaste and alarm at the growth of a sinister political appearance among us that to-day has plunged Europe into chaos and despair, and ere these lines are published may have brought civilisation to the brink of a world-war.

---

**A** UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND has been definitely envisaged in a Report prepared by a Joint-Commission of Anglican and Nonconformist Churchmen. The framing of this document carries the protracted discussions of nearly twenty years to a new point of practical decision. In 1920, on a wave of enthusiasm created by the post-war mood, the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church issued a famous appeal to the Churches of Christendom, and in particular to the other Churches of the British people. Since then, the movement towards unity has followed a rather desultory course, but the ideal has never been allowed completely to fade away. Now, with the Conference of 1940 in view, it seems that some really definite proposals are to become the basis for new discussion.

The notable feature of this outline for a United Church of England is its domination by the idea of federation rather than incorporation. The wisdom of this course is unquestionable. Three hundred years of history are not easily wiped out, particularly when we recollect that we are dealing with convictions so deep-rooted as those concerned with religion. It is easy to jeer at ecclesiastical differences, and to draw attention to the singular absence of brotherly love among those who profess the Christian faith. These contemptuous attitudes have only too real a foundation in history and experience, and no lover of things spiritual can do other than to deplore the bitterness of religious controversy. Nevertheless, we ought to keep in mind that men quarrel seriously only about things they prize highly. In this particular case, there are long trailing memories reaching far beyond differences in points of theological doctrine and even church polity. The rending of English Christendom into Established Church and Nonconformity has sent a cleavage down through the whole of national life, dividing the people on questions of education and, not infrequently, of social status and condition. The Non-Conformists have had to fight so long and so often against entrenched privilege that we can-

not expect the memories of old feuds to fade out even in the course of a single generation. On the other hand, the Church of England has its own cherished traditions, associated with the life of the State, with the ancient Universities, and, above all, with quiet old parishes deep in the countryside. If these two streams of religious life, so different, and yet, each in its own way, so essentially English, should unite, or, as is proposed, even flow together, no genuine lover of the old land could help rejoicing at the prospect.

Some future historian may describe the past score of years as "The Age of Conferences". Certainly it would be a proper epithet to apply in respect of the religious life. No great enthusiasms have arisen among us, no tides of the Spirit have swept us onward to new ventures or illuminations. Nevertheless, Church leaders all over the world have been meeting to discuss their problems and to take counsel on their common cause. Notably at Oxford and Edinburgh in July and August of last year, Universal Conferences assembled to formulate common policies on the relation of the Christian Church to the grave issues of the modern world, and to consult about their agreement or disagreement on questions of belief and order. These Conferences have given a realistic turn to the rather dilatory proceedings in England. Brethren from the persecuted Churches of Europe were able to speak of the new religion of Nationalism that has swept across the continent. Communism has become a mighty missionary faith, erecting materialism almost into a quasi-religion. England even in her happy geographical situation can hardly hope to insulate herself completely from the titanic forces that have risen up to rock the world. New philosophies of life, holding the Christian view of existence in contempt, have become the creed of millions. The days of the persecution have returned, and the Church must fight for her existence. Under these circumstances, disunity becomes a luxury, and even the most revered traditions of the fathers have to give place before the new wisdom that should confront the tasks of to-day and to-morrow.

One notable feature of these Conferences is the unanimity of agreement as to what the Church has to say in the name of God to the world. If Christianity has any claim to be a Divine message, the Churches of the world have largely made up their minds as to its nature and contents. The real differences have centred on the nature of the Church, its ministry and government. So far as the Churches in England are concerned, the question at issue is as to the essential place of the episcopate. It is hardly believable that so narrow a gulf should permanently divide the English Church.

Anglican theologians, of indubitable scholarship, have written learned volumes to prove that an appeal to early history will not support the view that the episcopate has always been an essential feature of the Church. Men like the Archbishop of York now contend that only its long continued existence is the attestation of need for the office of Bishop in a properly ordered Church. You cannot erect such a doctrine into a fixed principle beyond which there can be no concession to other traditions.

The Church of England is still gravely divided in her own life. Anglo-Catholicism is less vocal in her counsels, but the adherents to its doctrines are hardly less numerous. It is from this quarter we may anticipate the wreckage of any scheme of Church federation. Indeed, it seems unthinkable, short of some unforeseen change of mind, that there can be any real result from the negotiation. The Anglican communion will be faced with a grave decision whether to rend her own life asunder or to stand aloof from the other Churches. Recent experience in Canada will indicate the seriousness of any such question. We may see an entirely new ecclesiastical alignment in English life, and when we consider how closely the Church attachments of English-speaking Canada still follow the Old Country models, we cannot remain indifferent to the result.

J. S. T.