TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE MUNICH SETTLEMENT: TRADE AGREEMENTS: CANADIAN UNITY: MORAL RE-ARMAMENT.

THE MUNICH SETTLEMENT continues to provoke vehement debate. All parties are agreed at least on this—that the argument is concerned with a question of utmost gravity for the future of civilisation. If Mr. Chamberlain has made so much as a single movement in the direction of European reconciliation, we do not ask to see the distant scene—his one step is enough for us. Nevertheless it is the distant scene that worries the opponents of the British Prime Minister. The experiences of the intervening weeks have not helped us greatly in the arduous business of making up our minds. Incalculable factors are as uncertain as ever. Principally, these unpredictable elements are the elusive personalities who rotate on the Berlin-Rome axis.

Mr. Chamberlain's case remains substantially the same. Peace, almost at any price, is better than war. The British statesman contends that the German Fuehrer was ready to march into Czecho-Slovakia, and that any forcible attempt to restrain his designs would have provoked a general European war. Germany would have met might with might. In the ensuing struggle, as in the war of 1914-18, the *casus belli* would almost immediately disappear from view. Nothing could have saved Czecho-Slovakia. Even if we are to suppose that France and Russia, with the vigorous assistance of a United British Empire, had undertaken an immediate penal attack on Germany and presumably also on Italy, the Sudeten people would have been left with a very dreadful conflict on its hands. *Cui bono?* The National Government of Great Britain will not have it that democracy and dictatorship cannot live together in the same world-order. But, even if they must clash, why should we induce the conflict over a question so morally confused as the right of Czecho-Slovakia to retain frontiers that were constructed by the dubious wisdom of the Versailles Conference? However we may deplore the methods by which Herr Hitler asserted his claim to amend the map of Europe, at least there was a *prima facie* case for its amendment. And, did we give him much opportunity to advance his proposals in any other fashion?

The opponents of the Chamberlain policy insist that while the territorial destiny of Sudeten land was the immediate cause of dispute, we must have regard to the larger questions that lie behind. Must we submit to the threat of brute-force? A generation of youth was bled white between 1914 and 18 to save the world from such an abject surrender. Twenty years later, it appears that we were prepared to sell treacherously all that our splendid youth gave their lives to defend. We have compounded with a felony. We have surrendered to blackmail. All that has happened since supports our suspicion that once we have begun to drift with the stream, sooner or later we must reach the hazardous and dubious ordeal of shooting a European Niagara.

It will be difficult to impugn the sincerity of Mr. Chamberlain when he replies that nothing pressed upon his mind and conscience more decisively during the momentous days of the crisis than those very memories of the Great War. In 1914, we faced a situation not so very dissimilar in its essential elements. We decided to fight in a quarrel which was not of our seeking. What has been the net upshot of that terrible struggle? Let us unite in agreement that, for our part, we are as adamant as ever in our adherence to the democratic way of life both for domestic government and as a method of intercourse between nations. Other peoples have accepted a very different conception of the State. Shall we advance the security of democracy among ourselves by engaging in a life-or-death battle with the totalitarian powers? Given the choice of living or fighting with the Fascists, Mr. Chamberlain has accepted the former alternative, on the principle that where there is life there is hope. Agree with thine adversary whilst thou art in the way with him. The democratic method is settlement by discussion and conciliation. Even dictators must be included in this way of rational appeasement. If we are to direct our eyes to some distant and desirable goal of European settlement, let us keep the channels of intercourse open and effective. Every day we gain in time gives an opportunity for the slumbering activities of goodwill to work in the life of the world. The rejoicings of the German people at the Munich settlements suggest that these influences are not so overcome by the narcotic effects of propaganda as we might have supposed.

Nevertheless, the policies of the National Government in Great Britain reveal that their minds are ill at ease. Almost with the same breath that shouted plaudits at a triumphant leader, they began to call for vaster expenditure on armaments.

It is difficult to reconcile the appearance of Mr. Chamberlain excitedly waving a pact of perpetual peace signed by himself and Herr Hitler, and the redoubled efforts for national preparation, in which something as near to adult conscription has been set up as peace-time conditions can permit. The cause of peace will not be advanced by self-deception. The horrible example of the Briand-Kellogg Pact stands before us as a monumental instance of international deceit. This pretended appeasement is no appeasement. Therein lies the strength of the case against the whole Chamberlain attitude.

The array of opinion against the British Prime Minister has a spectrum-band effect of variegated colour. At one end we have the fine old attitude of "Britons never will be slaves." At the other we have the cry of "Save democracy." The latter group contend that the Munich Surrender is simply the last inevitable phase in a drifting movement of half-hearted adherence to the ideal of international co-operation. The loudest critics go so far as to suggest that there is a secret affinity between the Chamberlainites and the totalitarian philosophy of the State. A bolder lead given to the League of Nations in the matters of Manchuria and Abyssinia would have served a warning on all the gangster nations. But the British leaders have temporised, passed resolutions, framed reports, and have done nothing. When Hitler issued his threats, the time for action had already gone. The critics who speak from the right make great play with what is termed "Calling the dictator's bluff." A roar from the British lion would have cowed the Fuehrer into terrified submission. Even if the Germans had made a show of resistance, better to fight them now than two or three years hence. The alignment of forces on the British side was so strong that victory was assured. But, they ask, will it be as sure when the inevitable struggle is forced upon us?

The German people, in their subsequent conduct, have not helped civilised people to believe in the protestations of their leader. The dreadful pogrom against the Jews has shocked the world. Language can hardly express the horror that all decent people feel, as the reports of these outrages come to many of us not only through the press, but in personal records, whose authenticity is beyond all doubt. In their treatment of the Jews, the modern Germans are simply barbarians. The impudent reflections made upon leading British statesmen do not advance the spirit of reconciliation. Above all, whatever documents of appeasement Herr Hitler signs, he has not withdrawn

a line of *Mein Kampf*, and the more we read his book, the graver become our apprehensions for the future.

The outlook is difficult, complicated and obscure. We, who live in Canada, have heard so much said on one side and the other, and our own attitude has been so noncommittal, that we find it exceedingly hard to pass any judgement on the whole tangled affair. The best we can hope for is a breathing-space before we are assailed by new and probably graver crises. It is the maddest self-delusion to believe that either Hitler or Mussolini has ceased to trouble the world, either by his claims or by his methods of submitting them. We have every reason to fear the possibilities of the year 1939. While we must keep every avenue of peaceful persuasion open, there seems to be no escape from the necessity of complete preparation to meet any emergency. An attitude of cynical aloofness on the part of our Canadian people will not advance our reputation among the nations, nor will we increase our own sense of self-respect. If we insist that we have no interest in the European mess, let us at least learn to keep silence when our own kith and kin across the seas face a prospect that must provoke something like terror in every sensitive heart.

THE TRADE AGREEMENTS concluded in November by the United States of America with Great Britain and Canada provide a welcome relief from the gloomy forebodings associated with the recent political arrangements between European powers. The chorus of approval that has sung the praises of the agreements has hardly a discordant note to mar its harmony. Observers of the international scene have been swift to discern a new and hopeful trend in the relations between nations. Even the inevitable disadvantages that must be incurred in arrangements so wide and sweeping in their character tend to disappear when they are regarded in the light of larger good. Especially at such a time as this, when narrow nationalism has become almost a religion, we welcome these signs of realisation that, after all, the world is a small planet, on which we ought to live together as good and helpful comrades.

These notes do not provide the proper place for any extended or detailed examination of the agreements. Nor does the writer possess any competence to fulfil such an office. We must keep ourselves to general observations on the importance of the treaties as agreements in matters of trade. They force upon

our attention the enormous part played in life by questions of an economic character. It involves no surrender to the dismal political philosophy of Karl Marx to recognise that before men can live well, they must first live. A great part of our social existence is concerned with the fundamental activities of growing food, transporting and distributing it, and in making the multitudes of commodities that constitute the physical means of life. There is a sense in which all else that goes to make up the corporate existence of humanity is reared on that substratum. Into economic activity there have come within fairly recent memory a multitude of new and disturbing techniques. Our capacity to multiply commodities and to transport them rapidly from place to place, and from country to country, has been altered by the application of new discoveries. As yet, we have not adjusted our economic life to these fresh methods. In many respects, the wonder is that the life of the world is not more thoroughly upset than it is. A primitive instinct of fear generates the attitude of self-protection. Tariffs have formed the means whereby, in our dealings with other nations, we have endeavoured to keep our economic security intact from foreign competition. Here, in North America, we have been dominated by the attitude of self-sufficiency in matters of trade. But the years of depression have found us out, and our pride of progress has been humbled to the dust. Our depleted industries, our surplus crops, above all, our relief rolls have taught us the lesson that economic isolation is the most foolish of policies. The trade agreements are a tardy recognition of the fact that co-operation is the law of civilised life.

These agreements have a political reference that is not less important than their relation to matters of trade. Peace is a desirable goal, but it is reached through activities of reconciliation. It is the fear of economic restriction that drives nations to seek expansion through war. Sooner or later, the intelligence of the world will be compelled to realise that appeasement in matters of trade and commerce is fundamental to the structure of peace. Too often, a short-sighted striving for temporary advantage in matters of business has driven statesmen to policies that sowed the seeds of grievance and reaped an inevitable crop of trouble. Hitherto, attempts at general economic conferences have broken up without results. Our wisest minds have entreated us to forsake narrow nationalism in trade. Volumes have been written to convince the world of its folly. But emotions of fear and prejudice, combined with the short-

sighted indulgence of selfish instincts, have been effective in preventing any measure of co-operation. Nevertheless, a few statesmen with quiet persistence have refused to surrender to the general madness of mankind. Among them, we must give pride of place to Mr. Cordell Hull of the United States of America. Wherever the door of possibility opened, he has entered into an opportunity of trade agreement. And now, his crowning achievement is his treaty with the United Kingdom.

The hour of concluding the trade agreement was magnificently timed. Whether intentionally or not, it formed a splendid counter-blast to the wild talk of the European dictators. At a time when a united front of the American and British peoples was something more than a sentimental aspiration, it meant a great deal to the world that they were able to come to a cordial arrangement on questions of reciprocity in the exchange of goods. Hard-headed bargaining is not a bad basis for mutual respect and firm friendship. The realisation of fundamental common interest in matters of trade takes us a long way towards a beginning of co-operation in international persuasion. These agreements may easily lead us out to a much-delayed recognition of our mutual welfare in questions of politics and culture. There has been a long-deferred appeasement between Great Britain and the United States of America.

The Agreement between the United States and Canada had a necessary part in the new economic arrangements. Without our participation, the other treaty could never have been signed. We have no reason to be ashamed of the part we played in reaching a triangular basis for mutual trade. Canada surrendered some privileges in the matter of preferences, but our gains are also great. There is now a freer course for our primary products in fish and agriculture to flow southward into the United States. There are complaints at both extremes of the Dominion that we have given up valuable opportunities to market fruit in the British Isles. Our great ports in the Maritime Provinces and British Columbia will probably suffer in their volume of trade. On the other hand, agriculturalists and fishermen have had a long-standing grievance that they were prevented from sending their products to the great centres of population across the border. In the inevitable give-and-take, such losses and gains are unavoidable. On balance, all estimates seem to indicate that even in the income from transportation we have improved our position. In any case, exchange of goods makes for healthy relations.

Our dismal Canadian prophets of doom should note the important part we have played in these recent treaties. In questions of international trade, Canada is not a small nation. We have a voice that must be heard and respected. We are not a mere appendage to the economic system of the world. Moreover, our future welfare depends on the extension of our export trade. Nothing is more vital to the Canadian economy than the opening of channels for our primary products. All else is secondary. That is why Canadian isolationism will not bear the scrutiny of a realistic mind. All protestations of national self-sufficiency go down before the hard facts of our economic existence. If we attempt to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world, we perish. One of the gravest problems we face is a world of economic nationalism that is closing doors formerly open to receive our fruit, fish and, above all, our wheat. In grim terms, we have been told that Canada must blast its way into new markets. Here, by less explosive methods, we have contrived to keep channels, already open, a little more accessible. What we need now is energy, self-discipline, the establishment of an even better reputation for first-grade products, and we shall have moved a little further out of the economic doldrums into which we have settled too easily.

CANADIAN UNITY has become our supreme national necessity. We are having a hard enough time to pull through the economic and political difficulties which we share with all mankind, without the added hindrance of internal strife. When provincial premiers engage in the exchange of verbal brickbats, the spectacle provokes disgust at home while abroad it trails the Canadian name in the mire. He is no friend to his country who sets province against province, or province against Dominion. Let us have discussion, negotiation and debate, but as members of one fair realm, which we call Canada.

This plea for Canadian unity falls strangely on our ears to-day. A few short years ago, we were boastfully waving our national colours before the eyes of the world. Even now, when it comes to questions of international policy, we assert our essential sovereignty, and are eager to claim the rights of independent action. But our inner disharmony belies our pride of achievement, and may wreck the fair dream of Confederation. It would be a shameful reflection on our sense of heritage if we

should have travelled together thus far, only to fall apart into disunity when a time of grievous trial has overwhelmed some of our members.

It can be asserted with some show of truth that by nature Canada's separate existence is a geographical and historical outrage. The long invisible line that separates us from the United States of America is too mathematically precise. We have only to look at the map of our continent to realise the meagre hold our population maintains on our vast territories. At many points, as we cross the line, only the presence of customs officers indicates that we are passing from one country into another. The great French bloc in Quebec remains solidly apart from the rest of Canada in language, religion and, increasingly we fear, in political philosophy. A vast hinterland of forest separates the East from the prairie regions, while the majestic Rockies create a great divide between British Columbia and the rest of the Dominion. Economically, we have no unity of interest. Industrial Ontario and Quebec think of internal trade, while extreme East and West have their eyes on overseas markets. There is much to suggest that Canada is an artificial and fortuitous creation.

A wise statesmanship would turn these sources of apparent weakness into opportunities for real strength. Canada will never achieve a unity that rests on uniformity. However, we should be inspired by the recollection that history has many examples to adduce of strong nations that have been created out of very diverse elements. Nationality is a peculiar social entity that is not patient of any easy-going analysis. Certainly, unities of language, heritage, race, custom and religion have never been its basal conditions. Rather, we have seen nations emerge when very different groups of people have been thrown together by the imponderable forces of circumstance, and they have realised that they have a common destiny to achieve in the history of mankind. There is surely evidence to support the view that such is our summons in this great northland of Canada. A century and a half ago we made a momentous decision, which, at this time of day, need cast no reflection on those who took a very different course. Here we proclaimed ourselves loyal to the old association of crown and empire, and our engagement with fate and fortune finds its origin and direction in that adherence. It is ours to manifest a distinctive character in the life of the world—North American in the foreground, British in the background, Canadian all through. Out of such diversities

of character and influence, the pattern of the world's life grows into richer colourings, and we would like to hope, into more attractive forms. Canada can bring the glory of the old world of Latin, Saxon and Celtic strains into a revivified unity, blended, without being brutally beaten into an unrecognisable pulp, out of which we try to fashion something altogether new. But not if we are to be led by men of the temper and outlook of Mr. Hepburn or Mr. Duplessis! A great land, with a future still to make, needs great minds with expansive thoughts and enlarging visions.

Our present economy, like our past history, should be suggestive of our future destiny. Despite the rich rewards that in the past have come to our agricultural industries, we ought to realise that, especially in a world such as we inhabit to-day, a purely agrarian life can hardly hope to reach a high level of economic wellbeing. Especially the type of crops that are produced so abundantly in Canada—wheat and fruit—with their wide fluctuations in yield and price, cannot provide a stable basis for a satisfactory livelihood. Particularly in this age of agricultural specialisation, we need the diversity of economy that is supplied by very different kinds of industry. The farmer complains that he is the last man to be paid, and that he is largely concerned in raising crops to provide a living for the people who sell and transport them. On the other hand, there is no need for a man living on the land with his family ever to face starvation. Probably in the future, Canada must seek more and more to develop different types of economic life within her borders, if her pride of self-contained nationality is to be based on something more than hollow-sounding sentiment.

Above all, Canada must make up its mind once and for all whether the emphasis in her life is to be on the provinces that constitute Confederation or on the Dominion that unites them. There are great difficulties in the way. Quebec wants to maintain her distinctive identity. Nova Scotia has never quite forgotten the Confederation struggle. New Brunswick seems wedded to the ideal of provincial autonomy delegating powers to a central government. Even the West has sent up a faint cry calling for separation not from the Empire but from the Dominion. The spectacle is not encouraging, and there is much in the Canadian scene to provoke dismay. A famous London clergyman declared, some time ago, that what the Church of England needed was not a referee, but a centre forward—in other words

a leader, rather than a keeper of the peace. It is easy to be critical when sitting on the side-lines. Canadian politicians know only too well what a nice balance of interests must be preserved if the scale is not to be tilted too far in this direction or in that. And yet, it must be confessed that more vigorous leadership from Ottawa would not go without its following in this time of disintegration. You cannot go on for ever placating some sectional interest. The policies of appeasement are hardly more attractive on the home front than they are on the international. We listen for the prophetic voice of some great Canadian leader to arise among us with a summons to recall the pioneer labours and sacrifices, and to redirect the energies which sustained them into the new tasks of a new day. Too many have seen the vision of what Canada ought to be, that their dream of good should vanish in the dank fog of narrow provincialism or perish through the unworthiness of small self-seeking minds.

MORAL RE-ARMAMENT is a term that has been appearing and re-appearing in various quarters during the past few months. Obviously it is intended as a counter-plea to the summons for increasing military armament in most parts of the world. It recalls William James's famous suggestion about finding "a moral equivalent for war." We are reminded that, after all, the making of war is a form of human conduct, and, short of changing fundamental attitudes in human beings, we cannot hope to change their ways of self-expression. The moral problem refuses to be short-circuited.

The strategy of those who are associated with this movement for re-armament is that of summoning men and women from the spiritual sloth of a secular age to a new and personal realisation of religious truth. They rightly affirm the moral bankruptcy of our time, and the impotence that has mocked our finest humanist aspirations. The recent crisis has revealed how widespread is the mind for peace. Mr. Chamberlain was as much a hero in Berlin as he was in London. The great populace of the world has no appetite for war, and the public mind must be misled by propaganda before it can be induced to demand military action. Yet this inert mass of popular opinion somehow fails to get into action, and we plunge helplessly from crisis to crisis. There is need for some sustained self-conscious movement, that will press on to great moral objectives with the same

relentless sense of mission that seems to capture the imagination and tap the energies of totalitarian powers.

The danger is that the call to moral re-armament may become a catch-word and nothing more. It stands for a real need, but in itself it is a mere abstract noun indicating a condition to be achieved rather than a movement towards its fulfilment. All good men see the goal, but the course is obscure, and a mere fixation upon the end does not create the means. The human race has no means of moral self-improvement, and the causes of our present spiritual decline are both many and profound. The same confusion that exists in the world of international relations finds a counterpart in the regions of ethical standards and the spiritual faith in which the moral life finds its final sanction. The same new forces that have come hurtling in upon an easy-going world of nations have broken in upon the ancient shapes of religious belief, and call for more than vigorous re-examination.

Doubtless, as our moral guides suggest, a simple and unaffected return to the tremendous simplicities of the Sermon on the Mount, with its counsels of love, truth and unselfishness on the part of men and women everywhere, would indeed make all things new. And yet, as that same Sermon suggests, these principles of conduct are fruits that cannot be grafted on to a different kind of tree. Much less can they become mere cut flowers, separated from their source of life and used to decorate a scheme of human relations that finds its support in an alien philosophy. If our moral principles are to be simple and few, there is a conspiracy of influences at work to make their application confused and complicated. And, while that is no adequate excuse for a refusal to face the cost involved, we will not help the cause of moral rearmament by turning away from the difficulties.

The call to moral rearmament is sounded as a counter-blast to the drums of war. Already what is known as the pacifist attitude has become the settled conviction of many honest minds. The moral duty of the individual is reduced to the simplest terms. "Thou shalt not kill" seems a plain enough command, and no cause is sufficiently cogent to warrant the awful act of taking away the life of a fellow human-being. The pacifist consents to be killed rather than to kill. Moreover, he believes that the wide adoption of this quietist philosophy would avert the wrath of any aggressor. Force provokes force, while love breeds love. This ethical attitude has been rudely jolted during these past months. It would be possible if all

life could be reduced to simple, direct personal relations. You may resolve on turning the other cheek when your own face is slapped, but what are you to do when the affront is offered to some other person? There is nothing in the Sermon on the Mount about turning some other person's other cheek. And that is all that we have succeeded in accomplishing during these past months. Personal pacifist opinions seem to be somewhat irrelevant to a butchery of the Abyssinians, the merciless bombing of the Chinese and the horror of the anti-Semitic pogroms. A moral re-armament that has no place among its absolute demands for absolute hatred of such moral offences dissolves into a weak and ineffective sentimentalism.

Nevertheless, the plea for moral re-armament remains in its radical relation to all hope of human amendment. But it has to be conceived on a wide scale. Mere scolding of popular self-indulgence has too long been the stock-in-trade of our preachers of religion. The world is crying out for a positive faith, and perishing for the lack of spiritual persuasion. The duty that is laid upon the Churches to-day is very grave and urgent, but the opportunity is also very great. The lifting up of prophetic voices would command an amazing response from a fear-ridden world. A rising tide of spiritual life alone can float the ship of peace out into the uncharted waters of a new and tempest-driven age.

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