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President: Lieut. Col. W. Chester S. McLure
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Secretary: Lieut. Col. D. A. MacKinnon, D.S.O.
Editor and Managing Director: J. R. Burnett, F.J.I.
Associate Editors: Frank Walker and Ian A. Burnett

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"The Strongest Memory is Weaker than the Weakest Ink."

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 1941.

The Ottawa Conference

Already the prospect of achieving unity at the Dominion-Provincial conference on the St. Louis report, opened at Ottawa yesterday, has become highly problematical. As indicated in today's dispatches, three of the provincial Premiers favor adoption of the report; three are opposed and three are classed as "non-committal". Premier Campbell, who is quoted along with the heads of the Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments as being favorable, makes important reservations. He says Prime Edward Island cannot accept as final the Commission's finding that the Dominion's obligations have been fully discharged with regard to our transportation claims. Nor is the Island "entirely satisfied" with the financial proposals, though accepting them in principle.

A more independent attitude was taken by the Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Premiers who, while expressing willingness to "explore the possibilities" of the recommendations, refused to commit themselves in advance. On one point Premier Campbell sprung a surprise on his own constituents. When he stated his belief that the fear of loss of provincial autonomy was "exaggerated", he could scarcely claim to be speaking for the people of this Province as a whole. One reason given for this belief, namely, that "the present Prime Minister and his colleagues are as much opposed to such action as any government in Canada at any time" was simply an expression of his own political bias. Even if his assurance were well founded, what safeguard have we that succeeding Dominion Governments might not abuse the powers which it is proposed to place in federal hands? And why minimize the fact that these powers are implicit in the setting up of an adjustment grants board and the proposed supervision over provincial borrowing?

Such statements give point to the criticism frequently voiced with regard to the conference setup, namely, that it smacks too much of partisan politics. As the Halifax Chronicle (Liberal) well says: "Canada's Constitution concerns everyone. The Opposition group should have had an opportunity to join in discussion of the Rowell-St. Louis report and the general public should have the final approval."

The force of this criticism lies in the fact that any concrete decision by the conference would result in changes to our British North America Act, a statute of the Imperial Parliament which is rightly regarded as the sheet-anchor of provincial autonomy. Any tampering with that legislation should only be by consent, not only of all the provincial governments, but of all the provincial legislatures.

The Conference & The Legislatures

It is interesting on this occasion to recall the fate of the last Dominion-Provincial conference, called in December, 1935, by Prime Minister King, which was the most elaborately organized conference up to that time. The agenda included the whole field of Dominion-Provincial relations in which there was uncertainty and friction, but notably the proposal to vest power of changing the B.N.A. Act with the Dominion Parliament. The bait held out to the provincial governments in exchange for their consent to this proposal, was the prospect of wider taxation powers, including authority to impose retail sales taxes. This would probably have gone through but for the strong opposition of the New Brunswick delegates headed by the present Premier (then Attorney General) Hon. J. B. McNair. After the conference sat, subcommittees were held and a "committee of experts" was left behind to draft a scheme which would meet with general approval. This committee sat for about two weeks, but its labors proved unsuccessful.

Speaking in the Legislature on the subject of the 1935 Ottawa conference and subcommittees, Premier Campbell made this interesting statement:

"Up to this point no decision (re amending the B.N.A. Act) has been reached. I am prepared to admit that this is a weighty question, a question upon which proceedings should be cautious and should be comparatively slow, and none of these conferences took upon themselves the function of arriving at any decision. Everything which has been agreed upon so far has been agreed upon by way of a tentative proposal. When these proposals are incorporated in the consolidated redraft, they will be approved by the subcommittee and later will be submitted for the approval of the Dominion Parliament and each provincial Legislature. So that before the Province of Prince Edward Island is committed to any decision by way of providing machinery for the amendment of the British North America Act, either in Great Britain or in Canada, the Legislature of this Province will have ample opportunity of passing its considered opinion upon the proposals which are being so carefully and so systematically prepared."

Here we have, back in March, 1935, Premier Campbell's recognition of the fact that such a "weighty question" as amending the B.N.A. Act is one which no Dominion-Provincial conference should decide, but which should be submitted for approval of the Dominion Parliament and each provincial Legislature. If this course is followed on the present occasion, the provincial delegates will avoid making any commitments, reserving that prerogative for their own legislatures.

EDITORIAL NOTES

The Supreme Court is now in session in Charlottetown.

It is evidently approaching the time when the Janwar win' blew hanel in on Robin.

Part of the Charlottetown Veteran Corps is being sent on defence duty to "somewhere in Prince County."

Henry Dupre Labouchere, British diplomat and journalist, died this date, 1912. First entered the diplomatic service, but left it to take up politics, becoming M.P. for Middlesex and Northampton successively; was Daily News correspondent in Paris during the siege 1870-1; founded and became editor and proprietor of "Truth", a society journal which was successful in the exposure of a number of social, financial and administrative scandals; was a member of the Jameson Rail Commission; involved in many law suits, and kept to the forefront by stirring up trouble, political and social. At the end doubted whether the game was worth the candle.

The anomalous position of the Police Committee of the City Council seems to justify the action taken by Convener Sterns at Monday's meeting. Apparently it exists without the necessary power to function. It is an advisory body, working in conjunction with the Magistrate who is the executive officer. It may be recalled that there was a reason for this anomaly. City Councillors, who are subject to electoral control, not infrequently found it inconvenient and annoying to be interviewed by electors and their friends with pressure brought to bear to get them to revise decisions and cancel prosecutions and penalties. For this, and other reasons, it was considered desirable to put the onus on the Magistrate who is a permanent official and in a position to use his discretion without fear or favour.

Beginning this month, the new budget plan for federal income tax payments goes into effect. In order to take advantage of the plan, taxpayers must make their first payment by the last day of this month. The plan offers two alternative budgets; the first provides for eight equal instalments payable at the end of each month from January to August; the second offers the opportunity to pay one-twelfth of the total tax at the end of each month for the first four months and one-sixth at the end of each of the subsequent four months. These plans "cushion" the burden of taxes that have been doubled, and in some cases trebled. It is seen by the alternative plans that first payment, in either case, must be made by the end of this month. The actual due date for income tax is April 30.

Mr. Walter Lockhart Gordon, of the Toronto firm of Clarkson, Gordon, Dilworth and Nash, has been appointed special assistant to the Deputy Minister of Finance. He was attached to the Foreign Exchange Control Board during its organization. Mr. Gordon is the fourth partner in his firm to be loaned to the Government for war service. Brigadier A. E. Nash is Deputy Adjutant-General at Defense Headquarters; Mr. J. C. Thompson is one of the experts preparing the material on the St. Louis report for the Dominion-Provincial conference this month; Mr. G. P. Clarkson is with the British Purchasing Commission in New York. More than a dozen other officials of the firm are attached as experts to the Foreign Exchange Control Board and other Government departments. A recent checkup showed that 25 per cent of the staff had joined one of the armed forces on active service. The belief was expressed that Clarkson, Gordon, Dilworth and Nash had a higher percentage of its staff engaged in a variety of war work than any other firm in Canada.

The average reader or bearer is apt to be carried away with the reports of British and Greek successes and to conclude that everything is going smoothly and rapidly towards victory. That is not by any means so, and the British Purchasing Commission in the United States are endeavouring to impress this upon industrialists. Sir Louis Beale, one of the members told the Society of Automotive Engineers in Chicago that "the hope for complete victory lies in the engineering industry of the United States." Addressing more than a thousand production experts and technicians of the country's automobile and aircraft industries who are meeting to discuss plans for speeding defense, Sir Louis stressed the great "latent resources" of the United States which could be added to the present productive capacity to defeat the dictators. "Our needs are far, far greater than our total supplies from all sources," said Sir Louis, and unless speed is observed in production Britain may yet "miss the bus" which would be tragic indeed.

In his New Year address to the Canadian people Prime Minister Mackenzie King warned them against the dangerous belief that the tide of war has definitely turned, that success is now assured, says the Gazette. He said: "The task may well be greater in 1941 than it has been in 1940. It is going to demand more effort, more sacrifice, and far more change in our daily lives than up till now has been required. The hour is near when the enemy, with ruthless ferocity, may be expected to gather all his strength and strike." This was a grave statement though the truth of it is fully understood and appreciated, or should be, by every citizen of this country. The people of Canada are not unwilling to put forward a greater effort, to make greater sacrifices, to modify, if need be, their scale of living, in order that victory may be assured. But they are entitled to have leadership. They cannot, of their own initiative, plan and enforce any such system of service as is implied in the words of the Prime Minister. With an official program before them, with definite requirements indicated to them, they will make the necessary response, but it is no use telling them what they must do and at the same time refuse in telling them in precise terms how they should do it. This is what is meant by a demand for leadership.

NOTES BY THE WAY

Says the Edmonton Journal "Lots of snow—and how heavy that snow shovel gets." Out in this climate we can sympathize with Edmonton's hardships. Often these weekends our golf clubs begin to feel the pinch of a blizzard. The garden, among the sprouting snowdrops, many a gardener finds the weight of his trowel oppressive. — Vancouver Sun.

The porters and others employed on sleeping-cars and chair cars may be university students or even graduates. The porters on the Toronto-Sudbury run uses his spare moments to prepare sermons which he delivers each Sunday at London, Ont., congregation of which he is the pastor. — Brockville Recorder and Times.

Their Fuehrer is taking the German people along a hard, bitter, crushed from their lives all the human warmth and happiness they used to know. Another winter of war stretches ahead of them. The bleakness of their Christmas must have convinced Hitler's most devoted dupes that he is leading them to a dead end. The Kaiser did in the Great War. Out of their own intelligence must come the conviction that, in this crisis, they must make their lives a mockery. — Hamilton Spectator.

The last shred of the United States' technical "neutrality" was torn away by President Roosevelt last night. Mr. Roosevelt, in what may go down as one of the great speeches of his career, spoke to his nation as to a land already at war. He listed his nation's enemies, he named those which are allied in the fight against us; he predicted victory and he demanded of labor and industry that it sink its differences so that the United States might win the war of the arsenal of democracy. It is true that the President repeated his assurances that no American expeditionary force would be sent to Europe, and denied that his policy is directed toward war. The sole purpose of that policy, he said is "to keep war away from our country and our people." But Mr. Roosevelt refused to guarantee that he could keep the nation out of war. — Montreal Gazette.

Our old friend Boake Carter, an Anglo-Irisher, Englishman, does not like being called an advocate of appeasement. The other day he deviled his entire column to a discussion of the word "appeasement" and "appeasers" all marked that "I believe the word 'appeasement' has done a great deal to destroy the spirit of comparison in the world. It is the Lindbergh-General Johnson school, which, if not actually seeking a German victory, is against giving any help to Britain for it involves the United States as a belligerent. These people are called isolationists, and as isolationists they are being called other names, appeasers." Boake Carter is perhaps proud of being called an isolationist, but he doesn't like being called an appeaser. His former boss, the Times, called him by a stronger term than that, — St. Thomas Times-Journal.

Appointment of the distinguished Viscount Halifax as British ambassador to the United States is greeted with mixed feelings in official Washington. Those accustomed to the fresh and genial Lord Halifax and the tremendous success he had achieved in winning American popularity, greet Halifax's appointment with no great enthusiasm. But to the hotly-tongued of Washington society, always a bit shocked at the way Lord Halifax permitted his dogs to lie in the mud of the living room at the Halifax will be a great relief. In fact, Washington society already is looking forward to the new Halifax era, when adjectives and lowly congressmen no longer will be the vogue at Embassy dinner tables, as they were under Lothian; and when the ambassador no longer will pick up Rhodes scholars in Washington street corners and bring them to dinner without benefit of stiff shirt, bow-tie. From now on Washington can be sure that all Embassy dinner lists will be guarded by that super-guardian of social prestige, Miss Irene Byle, long time chairman of the British Embassy. So all will be peaceful again. — Detroit Free Press.

Speaking in the Guildhall a few weeks ago the Lord Mayor prophesied that although the city was being ruthlessly damaged, it would rise again in all its dignity and glory. Throughout the British Empire the same confidence prevails. "There is no depression in this house," as Queen Victoria said. The effect inspired by London is only strengthened by the honorable cause she now bears. No sacrifice on her citizens' part would be too great for the healing of her wounds, and the lessons of the past have any force, we must look askance at proposals that are based on simple restoration or reinstatement. This was the policy that prevailed after the Great Fire of 1666. More wisely Tokio, after the devastating earthquake of 1923, had the foresight to re-plant four-fifths of the city. Our faith in the future of London is put to the supreme test today. Let us determine that it shall be re-planned on a new scale, for a more exalted destiny. We have been looted out of a rut of complacency. It is more and more evident that the city, crowded, densely-populated and dejected areas of London are a standing challenge to our pride of citizenship. It is a menace to social progress. The need for the ruthless reshaping and regeneration of those dismal territories has been made even more apparent by the cruel incursions of night explosives. — Sir Charles Bressly in The London Listener.

The ordeal to which London mainly and other regions in some degree have been exposed, with the random destruction of life and property, has had another result, which may be added to the damage done to Hitler's cause beside the defeat which he has suffered. The effect of the bombing, unbroken and fiercely counter-attacking from her own soil, has swept the world like a challenge, offering an example which the French may envy and which a people like the Greeks spring to share. Hitler's threat has failed, but the "splendor and

Inopportune

Referring to the Federal-Provincial Conference about to assemble at Ottawa, on the invitation of the Dominion Government, for consideration of the recommendations contained in the St. Louis Report, The Montreal Gazette says: "If it can be proved to be sound it will furnish a strong argument for adoption, but the conference is not likely to lose sight of the fact that this new constitution model which is being proposed is intended to shape the economic, social, educational and, to some extent, the political future of Canada for generations to come. It will be in operation long after this war has gone into history. If it is indispensable as a war measure, and if the conference is so convinced, acceptance may be considered assured, but if it is not proven to be indispensable it will have to stand or fall on its merits as a peace-time structure. In no other case will no business be the conference to discuss political responsibilities for the accumulation of provincial indebtedness, nor indeed to go into past follies at all except for the purpose of considering how far the suggested remedies may be effective. The Commission set out to deal with a condition and to propose a cure. It accomplished a tremendous task and whether its recommendations are or are not to be accepted they ought to be considered in an atmosphere completely free from political quarrels. In no other atmosphere can a judicial discussion be possible."

Not only is a non-partisan atmosphere necessary, but surely also a situation undisturbed by the distractions of the most formidable war in which the British Empire has ever been engaged. The Government presently functioning at Ottawa is one of the most partisan institutions of the kind this country has known. Constitutional reorganization on the scale contemplated here never has been undertaken by such a Government, nor should it even be considered till peace returns and the task of what is necessary, but surely also a situation undisturbed by the distractions of the most formidable war in which the British Empire has ever been engaged. The Government presently functioning at Ottawa is one of the most partisan institutions of the kind this country has known. 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