

Seek Ottawa Conference

Only a trickle of what goes on at the annual meetings of Provincial Premiers gets into the press releases, for the meetings are held in camera, in order that the freest exchange of views may take place. The proceedings of the two-day conference proceedings at Halifax this week, however, indicate the important nature of the subject matters discussed—such as co-ordination of education standards and curricula, sales tax legislation and collection, economic growth and development, portable pension legislation and inter-provincial co-operation in coping with national emergencies.

On one other subject the reports are more specific. These deal with the gravity of the unemployment problem, and indicate that the Premiers will seek a federal-provincial conference on this subject. No date was specified, but presumably the matter will be presented to Ottawa as a most urgent consideration.

Only recently the Federal Government intimated, with unusual candor, that unemployment in Canada probably will be higher next winter than it was a year ago. It would be interesting to know what the Premiers actually had to say, in view of the employment assurances given in the last Federal election campaign. That is water under the bridge now, but it is regrettable that so little progress was made at the current Parliamentary session, now recessed, in putting into effect the measures Finance Minister Gordon said were so necessary in grappling with this problem.

Mr. Gordon was eloquent in deploring "the grim experiences of continuing unemployment" which were to be found "in nearly every part of Canada, in nearly every constituency." He regarded them as "human tragedies that inevitably result when economic conditions are unsatisfactory and our national affairs mismanaged." This prevalence of unemployment was "a wrong that must be righted."

Mr. Gordon went on to say that "any Canadian, young or old, who wants a job must be able to find one. Any Canadian must be able by his work and his savings to make his own direct contribution to the well-being of his country. This is a basic tenet of Liberal philosophy. It is an aim which we are dedicated to achieve."

This being the case, the Provincial Premiers will expect a prompt and enthusiastic response to their proposal for a joint conference on the subject. Indeed, it is passing strange that they should have had to take the initiative in making it.

In The Elite Class

Writing in the Toronto Telegram a well-known Ottawa journalist, Peter Dempson, quotes a disgruntled government employee as saying: "Now that Members of Parliament have boosted their salaries by more than 400 per cent in less than 10 years, shouldn't we be eligible for at least a four per cent salary increase?" The embarrassing thing about this statement is that the 400 per cent figure is correct.

Early in 1954 the indemnities of MPs was \$6,000. Today it is \$18,000. The \$6,000 tax-free privilege is worth another \$4,000 or \$5,000 in salary. Then there are the perquisites, the "extras" granted to MPs. These have been overshadowed by the size of the pay increase, but they go to swell the amount. All told, the latest pay boost plus extras will put our MPs in the ordinary citizen's \$25,000 a year cate-

gory. It might higher. They have become, in short, the financial elite of the legislative world.

With their new indemnities, they now receive more than U.S. Congressmen or Senators; their basic pay is 3 1/2 times that of members of the British House of Commons (\$4,900); and a French Deputy's \$8,800 stipend pales by comparison. In actual salary the U.S. Congressman draws more than the Canadian MP—\$22,500, all of it taxable. But he is short on prerequisites compared with his Canadian counterpart.

The Telegram writer recalls that when Prime Minister Pearson announced the pay to be raised, and that the Government would take "full responsibility" for it, he suggested that having an MP is now a "full-time" job. To assure that they make it a full-time job, Members have agreed to increase the penalty for absenteeism from \$20 to \$120 per day over the "penal" three weeks of non-attendance.

Unlike the Senate, however, there is no roll-call in the Commons. So how is the check made on MPs? By the honor system: MPs simply sign a monthly statement under oath. And how is this system working? The record can be found in the public accounts, prepared and audited by the Treasury officers of the Department of Finance. During 1961-62 (the latest available) only three MPs admitted to any absenteeism over the "permitted" 21 days. The three paid the \$60 per day penalty; the remaining 262 Members claimed full attendance and drew full pay.

So according to the public accounts, the attendance record of MPs has been almost 100 per cent. If a roll call were to be held, it would tell an entirely different story.

In justice to our Maritime and Western MPs, it should be added that the difference in the story is due in no small measure to the truancy practiced by many Quebec and Ontario members in setting a Tuesday-through-Thursday week for their absences. These members live close enough to the capital that they can get home in a few hours, and their parliamentary weekends include time—at both ends—that should find them at their desks.

Another Rebuff

South Africa is determined to go its own way in its racial segregation policies, but the cost is becoming increasingly high. At the United Nations Security Council last week, the United States announced its decision to ban arms sales to that country and its decision was seen as a forerunner to possible similar action by France—and even by Britain.

Supporters of the opposition United Party in South Africa, and even some Nationalist quarters, were reported to be describing the American announcement as the "worst diplomatic defeat" suffered by the Nationalist government in its 15 years of power. And it is that kind of defeat that may vitally affect the country's defence problem.

The reaction of the Sunday Times of Johannesburg to this move is significant. "Nothing that any South African spokesman could say today," it says, "would silence our enemies or allay the misgivings of our friends—nothing except the one thing this government is not prepared to say. And that is to declare its willingness to modify its policies or else give way to those who would steer South Africa into a less perilous course."

It has now become a question of time, how long the "perilous course" can be maintained without disaster. It is like watching a Greek tragedy on the stage—only it is not stageplay and the fate of a whole nation is involved.

EDITORIAL NOTES

There is a good thing at least to say for modern economists, notes an exchange. They have a completely cured unemployment among the economists. Every man jack of them is fully employed solving the problem and so long as it remains unsolved no expert will be without a job.

The Manitoba city of Brandon offers further evidence of the beneficial results accruing from fluoridation of a water supply. Brandon's water has been fluoridated since 1955. The percentage of children in the six-to-eight age group without cavities in permanent teeth has risen from 32 per cent eight years ago to 71 per cent in 1962.



GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

OTTAWA REPORT by Patrick Nicholson

To Bermuda Via Modern Magic Carpet

"Ah was bawn in Bermuda and Ah nevah wants to leave my home, but I sho would like to visit New York just to see dat strange 'ting dey has dere called 'De Bat Race'."

Taxi-driver Jim Morrissey expounded his simple philosophy of life's happiness in that memorable sentence, as he drove the Nicholson family along the twisting, cinder-trail lanes of that island sometimes called "Paradise's Sun Beach." The holiday visitors, as we were, quickly came under the easy-going spell of "The Summer Islands," as Bermuda is called. Eternal sun makes that coral strand lush and different. One quickly forgets the rat race back home, in the world's greatest tourist Mecca which even banned for half a century that noisy innovation the motor car.

TOURISTS WELCOME

Bermuda is a cluster of 100 isles, of which only 20 are inhabited. Their total area is less than 20 square miles. Their population—two-thirds coloured—is 45,000, but 28,000 guest beds make fourteen their biggest bed-and-breakfast.

Bermuda, like the more distant Caribbean Islands, used to be thought of as a playground for the idle rich, especially in our month-long holiday season of the year. But the airliner has changed all that. In only two hours, the Nicholson family was jetted from the complained-of heat of Montreal to the ocean-cooled sunshine of Bermuda. There were magic carpet operated by Trans Canada Air Lines. Just time to enjoy the duty-free "bubble" with an excellent lunch—plus a bird's eye view of affectionate rumormongers on Cape Cod as we passed over.

While the "haves" made their happy path in Moscow, the "have nots" continued to make ominous sounds in Peking. The high hopes raised by the nuclear test-ban treaty signed by the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain are belied by the balmy attitude of Red China.

To a lesser extent the refusal of France to subscribe to the Moscow agreement detracts from the general air of festivity. That is by the way, the presence of musical chairs in this because, in some ways, France now occupies the position previously held by Britain.

Of late years, Prime Minister Macmillan has been one of the most determined advocates of a ban but he was not so keen in 1955 when Britain wanted to test its own H-bomb.

BOMB WORN PLACE

And it was because Britain did get the bomb that it won a place at the conference that evolved the Moscow agreement.

"By what authority had Britain gained her seat at the Moscow conference?" "Not, alas, by the mere profusion of high moral principles. It is by the sheer authority of our own nuclear power. In spite of economic pressures, in 'Hot Penny' and temptations to contract out and abandon our position as a nuclear power, Britain has stood fast."

If this nuclear test has now been agreed—an achievement to which our country has made so great a contribution, it is because Great Britain has not shuffed out of her responsibilities.

If you ever need a copy of the report of the committee which was set up by the President de Gaulle's scrapbook.

It is available at the London weekly Observer depicts Red China's Mao Tse-tung as a student of Macmillan's change is a "Marxist-Leninist-Macmillanist."

Indeed before portraits of Marx, Lenin and Macmillan, to his friends in the United States, it is the "theory of independent deterrence," by Mac."

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