

1944
The Royal Empire Society.

1944 Essay Competition.

Class "A".

"The whole success of International collaboration depends on the working together of all the peoples united in allegiance to the British Crown."

Summary.

1. Post-war conditions. The need for International collaboration- a forecast of the probable economic and political situations in different parts of the world.
2. International jealousies - the last war and the peace treaties- the present war and rivalries in the occupied countries - the new peace.
3. The realities of peace - what must be achieved and methods of achievement; by co-operation and agreement, by economic pressure, or by outright force.
4. Empire collaboration- difficulties and objections - conflicting opinions on international affairs.
5. The voice of the Empire - the need for a good example of collaboration. The influence of the Empire countries on foreign nations - hope for the future.

Submitted by :-

C. Norman Halford.
68 Chesterfield Ave.
Westmount, Que.
Canada.

Born : [REDACTED]

Attending McGill University, Montreal.

1.

Few people will disagree with the idea that International collaboration is necessary to prevent war and bring about prosperity. Wars usually spring from two main causes; a simple desire for aggression and conquest, or a national sense of injustice, both of which may be inflamed by determined leaders and encouraged by those individuals who hope to make a profit of other peoples misfortunes. Wherever a strong nationalistic spirit exists or where a country is becoming rich and prosperous at the expense of another less favourably situated, the seeds of a future war may be sown; and it is the business of everyone, when the present conflict is over, to do whatever possible to prevent its repetition.

It is first necessary to consider what sort of conditions are likely to exist in different parts of the world when the war ends. At the time of writing, early in September 1944, conditions in Europe are chaotic. The Germans appear to be on the verge of a complete collapse, however long isolated groups may be able to continue the struggle. Occupied countries, one by one are being liberated; but as yet there are no clear signs of the extent to which any one of them will be able to stand on its own feet and conduct its national life without outside assistance. It is fairly evident however, that all will lack basic farm produce, raw material, machinery and transportation facilities. This, coupled with the need for repair of war damage, means that very hard times are ahead for these unfortunate peoples, and it may also mean that their bargaining power at the peace table is reduced in direct ratio to the amount of assistance which they require. In Asia, as far as we can see, things are shaping up towards a complete defeat of the Japanese, but a completely impoverished China will remain with little prospect of a united government to speak for her people. It should not be so difficult to restore the economic life of India, but the political problem will be brought right into then open, and any great delay in the settlement of it will be dangerous.

On the American continent we see a different picture. South America is rich and prosperous, without war damage or war debts; while North America, though burdened with debt from its total war effort, possesses all the material and necessities for a quick change-over from war to a peace-time economy; and the United States in particular, has been in this war too deeply to be content to stop fighting and forget about the rest of the world as soon as actual hostilities cease.

There remains Russia to be considered - the great question mark. It is hard to say how far the distrust of Russia among the business and government circles of Britain and the United States is justified, and it is equally hard to decide how far the Russians are justified in their distrust of other nations. Certainly until Germany attacked Russia, there were few people who could see any benefit in co-operation with Russia. But to-day we have a different view. We know that without Russian resistance to Hitler our invasion of Europe could not have been made, and we cannot lose sight of that fact. Can we continue our war-time co-operation with Russia in the tasks of peace ?

2.

It is unreasonable to suppose that this war has changed human nature to any great extent. Greed and selfishness have not been eliminated, and the cry of every man (or nation) for himself is still popular. The war of 1914-18 was supposed to be the war to end all wars. The peace treaties were designed with every conceivable safeguard against future aggression; but we all know what happened twenty years later.

If we consider the spirit to-day which exists in many of the occupied countries, where in spite of the sufferings of the population generally, there seems to be greater hostility towards rival claimants for power than against the Germans, we can anticipate a great deal of difficulty in obtaining even local co-operation once the fear of German retribution is removed. The Vichyite and Quisling type exist in nearly every country, and in addition there are groups clamouring for individual advantages, as well as other groups who believe that their sufferings have been so much greater than anyone else's that they must receive immediate attention, no matter what happens to others.

We have already seen a number of examples. Throughout the war in Yugo-Slavia there have been two rival elements fighting among themselves, and taking what backing they could from Germans and allies alike. In Greece, in France, in Norway and China the same situation has existed in varying degrees; in Poland it is probably worse; and in Italy so far there seems little evidence of any determination to establish the country on a sane and practical basis. In the Balkans various governments are demanding peace and starting new wars with reckless abandon in their eagerness to be on the winning side.

This state of affairs makes several things clear. When hostilities cease, those countries in Europe which have felt the brunt of the fighting will have no love for the Germans; but we must not expect them to be particularly enthusiastic about the allies, once the danger of German attack has been removed. They will want to be left alone to work out their own destiny without foreign interference, and then as the memories of war fade away, a new generation will start to make new agreements and alliances which will probably in time lead to another war. The peace terms which we impose will have to take all this into account, combining justice with mercy and at the same time weighing present gains against future advantages. Only in this way can we hope to avoid the mistakes which were made after the last war, and try to lay the foundations of a peace which will be lasting. Where real grievances exist, something must be done to remedy them; where the grievances are more or less imaginary, persuasion, education, and if necessary force will have to be used. Above all, we shall have to persist in our efforts. After the last war treaties and agreements were scrapped almost as soon as they were written. The League of Nations was a farce; while most nations were trying to live for themselves alone and avoid all responsibility for what went on in the rest of the world; the result of course, was another war.

3.

No situation has ever arisen in the history of the world which had to meet one fraction of the problems which the end of this war will bring. We have seen a struggle reaching almost from pole to pole and around the entire circumference of the earth, and an early repetition of it might destroy mankind entirely. Some method must be devised of eliminating war and finding a ~~method~~ means of settling man's disputes without involving wholesale destruction.

There seem to be three main schools of thought on the matter. First, the "balance of power" system, whereby a series of treaties would presumably unite sufficient peace-loving nations to prevent attack by others. This system has been tried with such disastrous effects in Europe in the past that it is hardly worth consideration. Secondly, the "World Federation" theory, a modern version of the League of Nations, and a vague conception referred to from time to time by political leaders in different countries. This is the dream of the idealist, and it is impossible to see how it could be applied in the atmosphere which will pervade the world when hostilities finally cease. Human nature will not change over-night. Thirdly, what might be called the realistic theory, which ~~involves~~ involves co-operation between Britain, Russia and the United States in deciding what is to be done, and in seeing that much of it is done quickly.

Naturally there is tremendous opposition to this idea from ardent nationalists, idealists, neutrals, anti-British, anti-Russians, anti-Americans, pro-Germans and professional politicians. The chief objection, and the most reasonable one, is that we have been fighting against dictatorships, and would be imposing one upon ourselves; that we should be encouraging rivalry among three great powers which would inevitably drag in the smaller nations and lead to war; and that a few men at the peace table would be able to divide the world in accordance with their own ideas, and would thus sow the seeds of national hatreds and future wars.

These arguments have more than a measure of truth in them, for unless a true spirit of collaboration exists between these three powers very little permanent good can be achieved; but it is reasonable to ask, if such a spirit cannot be developed among the three, how can it be expected if these three are to be joined by dozens of others with an equal voice in the discussions? The pre-requisite of co-operation is mutual trust and respect, and this will have been achieved in a military sense by the efforts made by all three in defeating the common enemy. It remains to build up on this foundation in an economic and political sense.

We have to remember that whatever decisions are reached by these three major powers will affect millions of people and will have to be enforced to become effective. We have seen the mistakes made by the Germans in trying to impose their will upon other nations and we shall have to use different methods. We will have the same weapons, economic pressure and outright force, and it may be necessary to use both to some extent; but only when methods of co-operation and agreement have failed, and then only against those whose obvious intention is to foster enmity among nations rather than promote good-will.

Before the outbreak of war it is quite possible that the outward appearance of the British Empire gave some encouragement to the German military authorities. There was plenty of criticism of one part by another, and there was very little semblance of unity of purpose. How misleading this appearance was is now a matter of history and the solid front displayed by the British peoples in 1940 won the admiration of the world.

When peace comes once more we shall find that many of the pre-war differences still exist and there is a possibility that other difficult problems ~~which~~ will have arisen as a direct result of the war. We may recall that in January 1944 Lord Halifax in a speech at Toronto visualized Great Britain at the peace-table with Russia, the United States and China, and claimed that without the whole-hearted support of the Empire and Commonwealth, the British claim to recognition might be weakened. Shortly afterwards Mr. King, Premier of Canada disagreed flatly with Lord Halifax on this point, implying that he would like to see a common policy towards peace and prosperity which could be adopted by all nations rather than one dictated by four great powers. Subsequent events, and meetings between the leaders of some of the Empire countries may have modified Mr. King's views. He made no concrete proposals at that time, and the imminence of the German collapse and the conditions existing in Europe to-day make it obvious that something definite should be planned without further delay.

The chief difficulty in obtaining a united Empire policy is the subconscious feeling in many places that such a policy will somehow represent the views of the British Government, with the interests of Great Britain predominating, and that the Empire statesmen will not have the experience or the guile to match wits with the diplomats of the mother country. This inferiority complex is probably based on past experience; on the peace negotiations after the last war, and the chain of events which led to the present war.

Another difficulty is brought about by geographical conditions, influenced by the fear of sudden attack with the methods of modern warfare. Under such circumstances, would Britain be able to help Canada, Australia or India as well as the United States or Russia? The point arises whether co-operation should not be based upon locality before sentiment.

While most of the problems originate among the various countries of the Empire, Britain also will not find the situation as simple as might be supposed. In the past Britain has been a dominant figure at any peace table because she has finished a war still rich and powerful, with resources hardly depleted as compared with the rest of the world. After this war things may be very different. Not only will Britain have lost most of her foreign investments, but her own war damage will be extremely heavy and her debt colossal. Her best customers, the European countries with whom she traded so successfully in peace time will be bankrupt and exhausted, and it will be impossible for her to compete with the United States on equal terms for some time to come. As Lord Halifax pointed out so clearly, unless the Commonwealth and Empire come to her assistance, she will be forced to play a minor role in post war re-adjustment. This will be Britain's problem: will her statesmen realize that they must make some concessions rather than lay down a policy and expect it to be accepted simply because it represents the views of the senior partner.

5.

It is obvious that without effective international co-operation there can be no permanent peace and some form of compulsion will have to be exercised to achieve it. We believe, however, that more can be accomplished by moral pressure and the force of example than by the tactics of a Hitler or the world planning of a few allied statesmen. It is here that the British people and the Commonwealth generally will have the chance to show the way to the rest of the world. The influence of some one or other of the Empire peoples is felt in every corner of the world, and if we can unite with a common purpose to see that peace and prosperity for the whole world must be placed before individual ambitions, we shall be setting an example more potent than any armed might can enforce.

The British Empire was not created to any set plan, and it has not held its place in the world according to any hard and fast system of regulation. But with all the human faults and failings which it possesses the fact remains that in it is found more of the ideal of freedom which men seek instinctively than in any other part of the world. It does not exist as a monument to the ambition of any government, king or feuhrer; it does not seek to swallow up or destroy the weak; and it stands, by and large, for the principles of fair-play and honest dealing. We need those principles in the world of to-morrow more than anything else. If the peoples of the British flag can stand together and maintain them as the guiding light of their policy towards each other and the rest of the world they will find men and women of good-will everywhere supporting their efforts and working with them to bring peace and security back into our lives again.

The British people make no claim to be a master race or God's chosen people. They do however have great traditions of government and respect for law and order; they are spread all over the world and have established a reputation for living up to their word and for a willingness to fight for what they believe to be right. Whatever their local and internal differences may be, they must speak with a single voice when the time comes to clear up the debris of war and to set the world once more upon the path of peace, and it is the responsibility of statesmen in every corner of the Empire to see this as their first duty.

If the Empire as a whole can settle its disputes amicably, remedy injustice and lay out its own internal plan for co-operation for the benefit of all, it will have set the example of what can be done. It will have removed many of the arguments of its opponents; by presenting a united voice its prestige is increased; and if in every part of the world its members are active in supporting a programme of co-operation based on good-will towards all men, we may see the dawn of a new era of peace and prosperity for strong and weak alike.

Material studied.

1. The "Round Table"
2. The "United Nations Review"
3. Lectures
4. "The British Commonwealth"- Grigg.