

FEDERAL BUDGET FAULTS

THE President's message presenting the federal budget for 1925-6 to the Congress affords the citizens and taxpayers of the country much food for thought. The mere size of the total is impressive. The figure of \$3,267,551,378 is a lesson in itself. The tabulation which places it definitely before the people, itemized as to the purposes for which the money is to be used is an initial gain of the highest type from the introduction of the budget system at Washington. In the past, the very recent past, it was difficult to ascertain what had been spent in any elapsed year and practically impossible to estimate what would be spent in any coming one. Now we are getting pretty definite figures on current outgo—the President says it will be \$3,534,083,808 for the fiscal year ending on June 30 next—and at least we know exactly what the Administration thinks it will reach in the next twelve months.

Just here we come face to face with the chief defect in the system as applied in the United States. The President's message of transmission and his regular annual message which followed it the next day, shows his consciousness that the three billions and upwards which he asks for may not be the worst. He finds it necessary to resort to appeals and exhortations to economy on the part of Congress in passing the appropriations so that it may be possible to reduce taxation in the near future and thus lighten the burden on business and relax the curb on national progress and prosperity.

In countries which enjoy a fully matured budget system, as, for instance, in England or Switzerland, such pleas to the legislative body would be wholly out of place. Big or small, good or bad, the budget would be the limit of any possible levy on the wealth of the country. The legislature would have no power to increase it in any part—even in its own expenses—in the smallest degree. On the other hand, its power of reducing the demands of the executive would be plenary and salutary. It would have the opportunity, and, under the circumstances, no doubt the will to enforce as rigid an economy as the people could be relied upon to endorse.

In his book on Representative Government, published in the spring (Henry Holt and Company) Professor Henry Jones Ford discusses this factor in budget financiering at considerable length and with convincing logic. He traces to the year 1713 in the reign of Queen Anne the prohibition of the granting of any "supply" by Parliament not asked for by the crown. He discusses the operation of the rule in England, Switzerland, Norway and in the municipal governments of several parts of Europe. He finds that, wherever applied, it operates not only to secure frugal expenditure but also eliminates many forms of corruption.

It would be impossible in this place to quote his facts and arguments in detail; those who read his book will find them presented with a most attractive lucidity; it is only necessary to indicate some of the leading points. In the first place, establishing the budget on a plan under which the Executive suggests expenditures and asks for money while the legislature ratifies and grants, creates a healthy relation between the two branches. The Executive assumes true responsibility such as it never can have when expenditures are imposed on it, regardless of its own opinions or desires. Then, the legislature is placed in the position of holder of the purse strings with compelling functions of investigation, criticism and audit. Furthermore, those temptations to extravagance on mutual grounds, which are described in political slang as "log-rolling" are spared the legislators. At the same time, the plea that the freedom of the popular representatives is impaired if they are not permitted to originate expenditures is weak if not vapid. By resolution or the enactment of laws they can at any time do their duty to the people in this respect. If the Executive approves the bills or those are made law in contradiction to his views, he becomes obliged to ask for funds to provide for their execution. Otherwise he becomes clearly liable to impeachment or to censure and defeat in the next popular election.

Probably it will be a good while before this complete budget system is put into operation at Washington or in our state governments. The politicians will fight it to the last ditch as it will destroy their chief means of selfish peddling and plotting. But the subject is attracting much attention among political thinkers and all the wise ones favor it. The Institute of Government Research at Washington has published a series of treatises on it. The fight may be long, but there can be small doubt that in the long run it will win as all good causes do.

SENATOR HIRAM BINGHAM

THE race of scholars in politics was by no means extinguished by the death of Senator Lodge. In the Senate as at present constituted there is at least one man whose background of history, of economics and of the more classic types of literature is as vivid and stretches in broad perspective. That man is the new Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, William E. Borah. His is the rather erratic though convincing scholarship of the broadly human man of the West. In Senator-elect Bingham of Connecticut we have another and decidedly interesting type of mind, a scholar in the sense of acquired knowledge extending over a broad horizon, but likewise something of a crusader in his application of that scholarship to rather set views and theories.

For many years prior to our entry into the war, he had devoted himself to the study of Latin America, both as archeologist and historian and interpreter. Many of his discoveries in Peru pertaining to the earliest known civilizations have become notable. But he did not confine his interest to the mysterious past. He linked his daily impressions with the broader questions of policy affecting the two new world continents. He became in time a bitter opponent of the continuance of the Monroe Doctrine, calling it in a rather sensational book, "an obsolete shibboleth." It can be reasonably expected that his views on this subject will do much to revive in the Senate a serious discussion of what the Doctrine has become, what it implies under the altered conditions of today, and what its fate should be. This will be a healthy stimulus to a question that has been allowed to lie for too long among the museum classics of the Congressional Record.

But there is still another side to Mr. Bingham that will broaden his influence at Washington and let it penetrate beyond the range of theory. He is a man of action as well as a student. At the outbreak of the war, although beyond the usual age for such a task, he became an air pilot, and closed his war career by commanding the aviation schools in France with headquarters at Issoundun. As a military man he failed to show any extraordinary talents, but he was at least persistent and determined, and if the quality of airmen trained under him is any gauge of what these qualities are worth, they have a wholesome and far-reaching value.

DR. CRAPSEY ON MODERNISM

A VERY remarkable utterance by Dr. Algernon S. Crapsey may be considered as a confirmation of the belief that there is a deep, widespread readiness of mind in the modern world to follow the teachings of Christianity when these teachings are expressed and exemplified with the zeal and clarity that belong to periods of vital faith. Dr. Crapsey was "deposed for heresy," from the Protestant Episcopal Church, so we read in *Who's Who*. In a recent number of *Books*, the literary supplement of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, he reviews a book by Henry Emerson Fosdick, and one by Dean Shailer Mathews. Each of the books deals with the great battle in the Protestant churches between the Fundamentalists and the Modernists. Both books support the Modernists. Dr. Crapsey finds that every doctrine of orthodox Christianity has been rejected by these two champions of Modernism.

And the "last of the heretics," Dr. Crapsey, then comments as follows—

"Dr. Fosdick and Dean Mathews have been compelled to discard the traditional theology of the Christian religion by the driving force of modern science. But the cause of the triumph of primitive and medi-

aeval Christianity is as yet a secret hidden from the modern theologian and the modern scientist, and that hidden thing is the pacifistic communistic life of the Christian Church as it was lived in the catacombs of Rome in the days of Saint Sixtus and Saint Lawrence and in the monasteries and convents of England in the days of Saint Swithin and Saint Hilda.

"When that secret is rediscovered and applied to human life such a reorganization of human society will come to pass as followed the preaching of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Rome and the renunciation of the world by Saint Benedict.

"The denatured Christianity of Dr. Fosdick and Dean Mathews can no more save human society from dissolution in the twentieth century than the abstract morality of Seneca and the pious meditations of Marcus Aurelius could arrest the dissolution of Roman society in the second century."

We, in common with all Catholic Christians, cannot believe with Dr. Crapsey that the driving force of Christianity, which conquered Paganism, transformed the ancient world, and created western civilization was merely the alleged, "pacifistic, communistic" organization of the slaves of the Roman Empire. Such a cause seems altogether too inadequate to account for the tremendous results that followed the birth of the Church. We believe that this driving force was the spirit of Christ, put into operation in human affairs in the way He directed, and still energetically at work. But we do agree with Dr. Crapsey that the "denatured Christianity" of the Modernists cannot help our distracted society. The only reconstructive power today is the same that began its work in the early Church and which now is again resurgent.

THE JOURNEY OF MANKIND

A RECENT contributor to *The Commonweal* discovered and has made us heirs to a jewel of first water, a quotation from Hermann Bahr, which crystallizes in one brief happy sentence years of groping for a phrase to express that which stares us in the face out of all the mythologies of the world—"Whoever," Bahr tells us (not at all "mystifyingly" but with a flood of illumination) "looks deeply enough into the eyes of the antique world, will suddenly find our Lord, Jesus, looking at him through it." We have been for long impatient of the labored "nature myth"—the straining effort to explain in material terms the obvious fact of clinging memory, of tenacious holding to some obscure, more than half-forgotten thing that made life tolerable in hope, to some tattered remnant of revelation carried along through exile and degradation, through fire and ice and thawing flood again, by mankind, on the "Long Journey" to Christianity and eventual civilization. Making ample allowance for the filtering of some of the mythologies through