

structive discussion. Or if this method looked dangerously distracting, there were many ways to have subordinated the final yes or no decision to an introductory educational debate. With the assistance of local organizations of various kinds, forums could have been arranged all over the country. A syllabus could have been prepared which would help the debaters to obtain information about the plan and supply them with a chart of its surrounding geography. The syllabus could have provoked people to examine how the plan differed from the Covenant of the League, what the significance of the differences was, what kind of protection against war the modified League would offer, and what were the advantages and disadvantages, the dangers and safeguards of the proposed highway to world peace.

As a matter of fact, however, every effort is being made to obtain a particular decision rather than a liberating discussion; and as a consequence of this management the future usefulness of the plan is gravely compromised. Even good democrats, such as are the great majority of the people who advocate American participation in the League of Nations, have small faith in democracy as education as contrasted with democracy as the servant of some particular doctrine or policy. They attach far more importance to the formal adherence of the American government to the League of Nations than they do to the quality of popular choice and understanding which the adherence would express.

Yet if the Covenant of the League of Nations were modified as the Bok plan proposes, the future process of appeasement would become almost entirely a matter of the quality and the firmness of popular opinion and conviction with respect to war and peace. Its success would depend upon the ability of public opinion to discriminate wisely and steadily between conflicting claims on its support. The Bok peace plan offered a rare and handsome opportunity to start processes which would tend to invigorate public opinion with respect to the problems of peace and war, but as it is being promoted, this opportunity is not being turned to good account. The current referendum will, in all probability, merely sharpen the conflict between those who wish the United States to enter the League without qualifications and those who wish to exclude it without qualification.

Intervention: An Accomplished Fact

IT would be folly to deceive ourselves as to the meaning of what has happened between the United States and Mexico. Intervention is now an accomplished fact. Whether you like it or not, we have committed ourselves, as completely as we can ever be committed, to an active interference

in the internal affairs of our southern neighbor. American guns and ammunition are now being used against the de la Huerta forces. Every effort is being made by our government to prevent the latter from securing war munitions of their own. From such a policy it is only a short step to the use of American troops in support of the Obregon régime. Indeed, if the federal government is unable in the next few months to put down the revolution, the pressure to send American soldiers will become almost irresistible.

Without any consultation of Congress, without even the suggestion of an attempt to discover the wishes of the American people, the President and the Secretary of State have embarked, almost at a moment's notice, upon a course which could easily lead us into a war, and one as troublesome, expensive and long-drawn out as that, for instance, upon which the British entered so lightheartedly in South Africa. It is an extraordinary illustration of the irresponsible character of our governmental system that the executive branch should thus have the power to commit the people to a national policy of the greatest importance, with the certainty that the tides of patriotic emotion which will be released by this action will sweep away all subsequent questioning as to the wisdom of their procedure.

The action taken is, to be sure, not without precedent. In 1912, when Huerta deserted to the rebels, after having been head of the federal army, we placed a similar embargo on all shipments of arms except to Madero. It is worth remembering that this action was not sufficient to save the latter's government, which was overthrown in the following year. In 1914, when Carranza was in rebellion against Huerta, another embargo was laid, this time without any exception. The present Hughes policy does not represent a sharp departure from precedent, except in its theoretical extension to all the Latin-American states. In fact, ever since the 1911 revolution which overthrew Diaz, our government has actively interested itself on behalf of whatever group, from time to time, seemed to represent the forces of law and order. It has been a half-hearted policy; our assistance has counted for little, in the long run; but our attitude could at no time be described as neutral.

In the present situation there are no elements which are new, or surprising to those with any knowledge of Mexican conditions. The existing constitution, wisely, no doubt, in view of Diaz's eight terms in office, requires a presidential election each four years, and forbids the incumbent to attempt to succeed himself. It also forbids the candidacy of anyone who has been a member of the Cabinet during the twelve months preceding the election. De la Huerta and Calles both resigned from the Cabinet last summer in deference to this

law. Calles, of course, is General Obregon's choice. If you choose, you may describe the situation as an attempt to restore the Diaz methods, one incumbent forcing upon a country his successor.

But it might also be argued that the action is as natural, and no more menacing, than was that of Roosevelt in selecting Taft in 1908. De la Huerta chose to put the former interpretation upon it, and has plunged his country into a bath of blood in consequence, though he makes no general criticism of the Obregon policies or actions, of which he was a loyal supporter until a few months ago. Americans most closely in touch with Mexican affairs dismiss as of no significance de la Huerta's proposal that he would retire if Calles would do the same, leaving the field to someone like Vasconceles. This proposal might be taken seriously, they say, if de la Huerta had made it before taking up arms, and not afterward.

In this instance, then, the American government is supporting the Mexican régime which on the whole seems most to merit support. The Obregon government is a long way from perfect; but as far as can be judged from this distance, after disentangling the numerous skeins of propaganda, the average Mexican fares better under it than he would under such a reactionary, capitalist-controlled, clerical government as de la Huerta is likely to set up if he wins. Obregon has undoubtedly given Mexico the best, most democratic government it has ever had, and the best it is likely to get for a long time to come.

It is easy to grant this, however, and still maintain grave reservations as to the desirability of American intervention on his behalf. The New Republic has already pointed out that Obregon's successful appeal to the hated gringos for assistance will help to turn popular sentiment toward de la Huerta. How can Mr. Hughes be sure, as he seems to be, that he is "backing the right horse?" Obregon asserts that the rebels will soon be crushed; but similar statements have been made in every previous revolution and have usually proved false. If precedent counts for anything, the rebel has a better chance than the constituted authority, in Mexico. Madero revolted against Diaz—and was successful. Huerta revolted against Madero—and was successful. Carranza revolted against Huerta—and was successful. It is unwise, to be sure, to argue from analogy. But it is even more unwise to ignore the fact that de la Huerta may win; and that if he does, the policy we are pursuing is one which could easily end in war.

But the case need not be put on such narrow grounds of expediency. If in this instance we happen to be backing the best government Mexico has had, and a government the alternative to which is probably long continued chaos, we shall never be

able to convince Latin America that we are doing so from any lofty motives of pure humanitarianism. Central and South America will accept our action as another instance of economic imperialism such as has been responsible for our attitude in the Caribbean. In Mexico itself, the same interpretation will be put upon our conduct even by those who will benefit from it. We have in fact bartered away a great part of our already dwindling prestige in the eyes of Latin-America—and for what? In order to bring assistance to a government which will be injured and not helped thereby, unless it proves to be so strong that it could have won without us. We have made a bargain which, the New Republic believes, we shall have continued and increasing occasion to regret.

Overworking the Tax Exempts

THERE are two good and sufficient reasons why the taxes falling on the smaller business and professional incomes should be reduced. The Treasury does not need the money, and the taxpayer does need it. The second reason does not hold so obviously for the higher incomes. The rare recipient of a million dollar income can give up half of it in taxes without sinking into rags and malnutrition. Therefore Secretary Mellon had to find a supplementary support for his proposal to cut deeply into the surtaxes. And he found it in an alleged flight of the capital of the rich into the safe refuge of the tax exempt securities. Our fifty percent surtaxes, Secretary Mellon assumes, have the effect of drying up the sources of our revenue. If we taxed more modestly, we should get more revenue in the end.

In support of this thesis the Secretary presented in his annual report a little table that spoke with all the solid eloquence of arithmetic. In 1916 we had 1,296 taxpayers with incomes over \$300,000. In the next five years the numbers declined rapidly: 1,015, 627, 679, 395, 246. Their aggregate net income in 1916 was \$992,000,000. It had dwindled to \$153,000,000 by 1921. What became of these taxpayers? The Secretary does not grope long for an explanation. They betook themselves, with all their worldly goods, to the field of tax exempt investments.

This explanation passed current until the critics of Mellon's financial policies began to apply arithmetic to it. Is the field of tax exempt securities spacious enough to hold all the capital that is assumed to have sought refuge there? Senator Couzens presses this point home in his challenge to Mellon published on January 12. Any careful quantitative analysis will show that Secretary Mellon has jumped prematurely to conclusions that can not stand.

According to Secretary Mellon's own estimates