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Contents

The Week	82
Editorials	
The Wooing of Labor.....	85
World Peace and World Politics	87
The Leopold-Loeb Decision	88
General Articles	
The Dawes Plan Myth....."Beaulieu"	90
Our Professional Patriots, V.....Sidney Howard	93
Old First Night.....Elizabeth Vincent	95
Autumn Wind (verse)	97
What Price Glory.....Robert Littell	98
Correspondence	99
The Bandwagon	100
Reviews of Books	
New Wars for Old.....Robert Morss Lovett	101
Leonid Andreyev.....Llewelyn Powys	102
Sociology and Politics.....Rodney L. Mott	103
Bacon: Literary Proteus.....Richard Aldington	104
Fiction Brief.....R. B. F.	105

The Week

GREAT BRITAIN has achieved nothing less than a master stroke of diplomatic strategy by the hint that her navy might be put at the disposal of the League of Nations for blockade against a power found guilty of aggressive warfare. Practical realization of any such proposal of course lies far in the future. Some sort of plan for outlawing war and compelling arbitration of disputes must first be worked out and accepted by the powers. The British offer, however, has at once and permanently diminished an embarrassment by which she would otherwise be confronted in all discussions of disarmament. The chief military forces in Europe today are the French and Russian armies and the British navy. For years the British have urged the desirability of reducing the French military establishment. MacDonald in his speech at Geneva a fortnight ago flatly declared that peace is always endangered as long as any armies whatever continue to exist. To this contention the French, if they cared to be rude enough, could reply with a pot and kettle argument, based on the British fleet. Despite all fine words about disarmament, the British believe that fleet to be a necessity to their empire. This dilemma, if not

solved, has been greatly bettered by the new suggestion. It was made, in the customary casual English fashion, in the course of an argument for the British reservation to the compulsory arbitration feature of the Permanent Court of International Justice. Great Britain did not wish to be held responsible under that clause, it was explained, for acts committed on the high seas, if the British navy were being used to enforce an embargo declared by the League of Nations against some recalcitrant power.

BY this innocent-sounding suggestion, the status of the British navy has been altered in public opinion if not in law; for if the obligation already existed under the Covenant, no one realized it. The navy continues to serve its useful purposes for the empire. But it also becomes, whenever the need arises, the beginning—and a pretentious beginning, too—of a supernational police force such as League of Nations advocates used to dream of. Moreover, to the French the suggestion contains at least a strong hope of that military alliance with Great Britain which they have sought repeatedly but in vain since Armistice Day, 1918. The French think always of aggression only as German aggression committed against themselves. They read the British proposal as meaning an offer to blockade Germany in case of another war. They would hesitate long before reducing their armament in exchange for such a guarantee, but they would be glad to have it. In fact, even a promise that Great Britain would not be found on the opposite side would be welcome to the realistic French thinkers, who have read history closely enough to know how often and how quickly partners can be changed in the quadrille of the great powers.

IF the British suggestion should become a reality, it would add to the embarrassment produced by the present foreign policy of the United States. Under it, Great Britain could act toward our shipping on the high seas in whatever way military exigencies demanded, without being held accountable before the World Court. Her existing treaties with the United States would, of course, remain in force, but she would know that in a dispute with this country she would have at her back the League of Na-

tions and all its members. Such an eventuality may seem remote, and perhaps it is; yet it could be brought about within a year's time. The policy of aloofness is one which becomes increasingly difficult as even a little reality begins to inject itself into the operations of the League in international affairs.

THE New York Times recently explained in an unusually frank editorial why it believes the voters should support Mr. Davis at the polls in November. It thinks the chief danger by which the country is confronted is the formation of a third party:

The special danger would be that if something like a labor party were to be launched in this country we should have a sharp division among our citizens, not according to sectional lines or political principles, but according to the supposed interest of a single body among our citizenship. . . . We see what is already happening in England. Steady-going Americans do not want that experiment repeated here. . . . The question comes down to this—will the success of the Republican party, or that of the Democratic party tend more to weaken and break up the third party movement? In our opinion, the weight of this particular argument is in favor of the Democratic party. . . . By tradition and inheritance, that party numbers within its ranks many more than the Republicans can pretend to of those representing the very kind of political material from which Senator La Follette hopes to draw his support. If these men and women see the Democratic party successful in the election, they will be strongly inclined to cling to it and work through it.

THIS candid appeal to conservatism is at least more intelligent than the usual argument against a third party. Generally the hostile critic assumes that this development would mean the indefinite continuance of three parties, and the recurring likelihood that elections would be thrown into the House. But nothing of the sort is probable. For years political observers of all shades of opinion have been pointing out the virtual lack of any difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. A member of the right wing of either is far closer to a member of the right wing of the other than he is to a member of the left wing of his own. If a genuine third party should develop, it would draw into its ranks the liberals from both parties, while the country's conservatives would remain, perhaps in two camps but more probably united under one banner, very likely the Republican. Such a realignment would breathe new vitality into American political life. It would abolish, one may hope, the well nigh endless hypocrisy and cant which result at present from the fact that both the old parties try to be all things to all men. It should prove in this country as it has in Great Britain an effective safeguard against the propaganda of revolutionary communism.

THIS development the Times regards as a dreadful catastrophe, to be avoided at all cost. But the Times conveniently overlooks the point of view of some millions of Americans who would regard the creation of an American equivalent for the British Labor party as anything but a misfortune. It goes on to what we regard as a highly improbable assumption: that a Democratic administration under John W. Davis would be sufficiently liberal to satisfy those American citizens at present enrolled under the banner of La Follette. Is there any evidence whatever that this would be the case? The convention of 1924 proved, we think, that the liberalism with which Woodrow Wilson temporarily endowed his party has almost entirely disappeared. The South is the citadel of the Democracy; and the dominant feeling in the South today is a conservatism which differs on specific details of program but not in spirit from that of Mr. Coolidge's New England. As the South becomes more industrialized, its conservatism will increase. It seems to us outside the bounds of probability that Mr. Davis, if elected and given the support of a Democratic House and Senate, would be willing or able to conduct such a fight against special privilege and on behalf of the rights of the common man as would satisfy the followers of Mr. La Follette.

SUPPORTERS of the La Follette-Wheeler ticket will find themselves called upon to exercise unusual care and intelligence in marking their ballots in November. In a number of states there are candidates for reelection who deserve the hearty support of good liberals and yet for one reason or another have found it imperative to remain under the Democratic or Republican banner. In two states which lie side by side there are contrasting examples of this situation. In Idaho Senator Borah is running as a Republican; and in Montana Senator Walsh is running as a Democrat. The loss of either from the Senate would be a real public calamity. Those who watched Senator Walsh's magnificent work in the oil investigation last winter and saw the admirable qualities he displayed as chairman of the National Democratic Convention, will find it hard to conceive that the people of Montana could show themselves so insensible to his fine qualities as to fail to reelect him, yet the Montana situation is so complicated with local issues that this appears not impossible. We believe it would be most unfortunate, not only because the Senate needs men of Walsh's fine intellectual and moral qualities, but because his repudiation at the polls would be generally interpreted as a repudiation of his work in exposing the corruption of the Harding régime. Complaisance with venality is not confined to either of the old parties. We have in the past expressed our conviction that the most deplorable aspect of last winter's exposures was the number of important newspapers and public men who displayed no spark of moral indignation and indeed would have been

glad to have the whole malodorous mess covered up because the revelations were "hurting business." Senator Walsh's personal fortunes are bound up with this larger issue; and there are few equally important questions involved in this year's campaign.

RAMSAY MACDONALD is learning with some pain how fierce is the white light which beats upon the occupant of high public office. No one who understands the character of the man can believe that there is any sinister connection between the baronetcy given Sir Alexander Grant in June and the latter's gift to Mr. MacDonald of a life annuity, the interest on £30,000, invested in the shares of McVitie and Price. The explanation made is that Sir Alexander, an old and dear friend of the Prime Minister, noted with regret that the latter, despite his high office, was obliged to use the subway to get about London. Sir Alexander demanded the right to "subsidize" a motor car for him; and to this Mr. MacDonald at last and reluctantly consented. There is no reason whatever to go behind this explanation which does credit to Sir Alexander's heart, if not to Mr. MacDonald's worldly wisdom. Nevertheless, Great Britain has been so profoundly stirred in recent years by stories of scandal in connection with the sale of honors that the incident will undoubtedly hurt the Labor party at the next general election.

ON Friday, September 12, newspaper dispatches from Geneva recorded the fact that the Assembly of the League of Nations is interested in the effort of "the Republic of Georgia" to secure its independence from the Moscow government—an effort which has been in progress for the past fortnight by force of arms. France, Great Britain and Belgium introduced a joint resolution, which was adopted, stating that the League would aid Georgia by all possible peaceful, legal means. On Saturday, September 13, a Paris dispatch to the New York Times stated that "it is understood, according to well-informed persons, that the revolution [in Georgia] is being financed and directed from Paris, where powerful international financiers are backing a group of former members of the Georgian government and former proprietors of Baku oil wells." Three million tons of oil are supposed to be in storage in Baku at present. We should like to wager a large homemade cookie that the League is about to have its motives misunderstood. It is cruel that this should happen; but that is what coarse, malicious human nature is like.

CAPTAIN PAXTON HIBBEN is at last receiving from the War Department the formal trial which he has so long and vainly sought. Since 1920, the Department has from time to time intimated a general belief that Captain Hibben is an unfit person to hold a commission in the Officers' Reserve Corps, the alleged reason being that he is a Com-

munist or has undesirably close relations with the present government of Russia, or both. The story of his struggles to get a fair and open hearing on definite charges is a curious record of unexplained mischances which would be funny did it not involve such serious issues for the Captain. Important documents have disappeared from the War Department's files and no one has known where they were. Documents long missing have suddenly turned up to be used against Captain Hibben on the instant, without any opportunity for him to secure evidence refuting the charges they contained. These tactics have been continued down to and including the present formal trial. Colonel John J. Bradley, his counsel, stated at a recent hearing that despite the long effort to secure a bill of particulars and definite charges against Captain Hibben, "neither this board nor the War Department had been willing to do this simple thing required by procedure in any manner of law or justice the world over. Instead, a mass of material has been first presented, then part of it withdrawn, then again presented with additions and now again presented with new additions and new subtractions. No sooner has counsel for Captain Hibben prepared a case than the documents submitted by the government are changed."

CAPTAIN HIBBEN expressly and categorically denies that he is a Communist, or has had questionable relations with the Russian government. He has called numerous reputable witnesses in support of his assertion that his business in Russia was strictly confined to famine relief. The War Department and the Department of Justice have long been guilty of something which on the face of it looks very much like persecution of a private citizen. He has been spied upon, his papers have been secretly tampered with, and charges against him of the gravest sort have been put into private hands for public use. The present trial offers an opportunity for the authorities, in western idiom, to "put up or shut up." We trust that they will.

THE announcement of a new and "independent" college to be organized by Dr. Alexander Meiklejohn is obviously unauthorized and premature. The first account, printed about the first of the month in the Boston Transcript, contained all the information that has been forthcoming, namely that Dr. Meiklejohn has been discussing the matter with various friends and former colleagues. Neither he nor any of his intimates has given out any statement of the form which the proposed college is to take or any information as to the stage at which the discussion has arrived. Meantime Dr. Meiklejohn himself has gone abroad.

SUCH details as have appeared, furthermore, are obviously inaccurate. One newspaper account derives a fanciful picture of the new institution from

the presumed antipathy of its founder to semester examinations. The "precise issue" upon which Dr. Meiklejohn resigned from Amherst, it says, was the mid-year examination and the separation of "junior and senior colleges." This is a new theory of the liberal college. Neither the triviality nor the palpable irresponsibility of such descriptions of the new college have deterred editorial comment, however. The New York Times has solemnly frowned upon the mid-yearless innovation. In Abelard's time, to be sure, "there were no Carnegie units of admission; there was no college examination board." But we have travelled a long way upon the road of progress since those days. Our colleges have "evolved into stable institutions with trustees and bursars, with endowments of tradition and funds, with buildings upon which ivy has grown and around which affection has gathered, with 'counts' for admission and semester hours for graduation." All this progress (this progress from Abelard to ivy) Dr. Meiklejohn proposes to abandon.

ALL of which is solemn nonsense whether or not Dr. Meiklejohn is actually about to organize a new college. It is also evidence that he had better. We seem to need something to show us what a college is and ought to be. The fact that the mere suggestion of an independent, by which we mean an innovating, college can arouse such intense discussion shows that we are in no very certain state of mind about our educational institutions, while our inveterate propensity to higggle over trustees and examinations indicates that we are living in an educational Macedonia. Some one will have to come over and save us. If Dr. Meiklejohn will undertake the job he will find plenty to do.

EDWARD N. HURLEY, once of the Shipping Board, has produced out of his own head a plan for paying off the French debt to the United States. Mr. Hurley suggests a five-year moratorium as far as interest is concerned, and a much lower rate thereafter, so that payments of \$100,000,000 a year would meet the carrying charges and amortize the principal in about sixty-seven years. Of these annual payments, one-half would not be transmitted to this country but would be invested in French commercial securities every year for twenty-five years. This would help to develop France commercially and would avoid depressing the franc. It is an ingenious plan; but we need not become unduly excited over the prospect of payment under it. French government finance is in a situation which may fairly be described as critical. Payments by Germany under the Dawes plan, as a contributor points out in this issue of the New Republic, are certain to be far smaller than the French expect, if indeed there are any at all. Add to this the undisputed fact that France believes her debt should be

forgiven, on the ground that she was fighting the common cause of all the Allies, and you have ample reason for not getting excited prematurely over Mr. Hurley's neat little paper plan.

THE most useful thing John W. Davis could do at the moment to aid his candidacy would be to issue violently worded orders forbidding the acceptance of A. Mitchell Palmer's offer to take the stump for him. Mr. Davis, against the heavy odds of the Democratic platform and his own New York career, is trying to make himself out a liberal; and A. Mitchell Palmer is about as far from being a liberal as anyone in the United States. His history as Attorney-General is the blackest blot on the record of the Wilson administration. The Department of Justice in his hands became a tool of reaction which exercised the cruelest injustice against scores and hundreds of innocent men and women. The Bureau of Investigation became a nest of busybodies, spies and informers; Palmerism laid the groundwork for the delightful activities which subsequently flourished under William J. Burns. About the worst thing that could be said of John W. Davis in this campaign is that he is the kind of man of whom A. Mitchell Palmer approves.

The Wooing of Labor

AMONG the unfamiliar turns which the Progressive candidacy has given the campaign, none is more striking than the attention it has directed to organized labor's status and grievances. Both Mr. Davis and President Coolidge have gone out of their way to compete with Senator La Follette for the votes of union members, and in doing so have discussed trade-union problems to an extent previously unknown in a presidential canvass. Organized labor, for five years buffeted or ignored by most of those in authority, suddenly finds itself courted with a silken politeness reminiscent of the war days. Then its economic coöperation was essential, now its political support is desired. Political organization leads to political attention, just as economic organization forces consideration in wages and hours. The mere advertising which labor has received in the past few months is a sufficient gain to justify its support of the independent Progressive movement.

President Coolidge, in a Labor Day speech to a group of "labor leaders" hurriedly scratched up from the highways and by-ways, dressed the "full-dinner pail" argument with modern statistical trimmings. Wages have shown a net rise greater than the cost of living since 1913; hence the purchasing power of labor has increased. If the independent Progressive movement were seeking to substitute communism for capitalism, or to bring about some equally fundamental economic revolution, this ar-