

## Imperial Federation

By T. J. OLIVER.

**"A** CONSOLIDATED Empire" will not ever remain a dreamer's ideal. While it may appear to be a fanciful scheme to the onlooker: to the economist the proposition for a British Federation is in no way a mere foible affording a pretext for the rise and down fall of ministries, but rather a piece of deserving statesmanship which will bring forth another Disraeli or mayhap another prince of Federationists—a Macdonald.

Twenty-seven years ago the question of Imperial consolidation, was I believe, alluded to for the first time by Lord Beaconsfield in a speech in which he compared the policies of the existing government with the then opposition. While I agree with the speaker that the policy which he advocated should have been adopted, viz. "Self-government, in my opinion, when it was conceded ought to have been conceded as a part of a great policy of Imperial Consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied by a Tariff, by the securities of the people of England for the enjoyment of the unappropriated lands which belonged to the sovereign as their trustee, and by a military code which should have defined precisely the means and responsibilities by which the colonies should be defended, and by which if necessary, this country should call for aid from the colonies themselves. It ought further to have been accompanied by the institution of some representative council in the metropolis, which would have brought the colonies into constant and continuous relations with the home government."

As I stated, while I agree with the speaker in the foregoing statements I am not prepared to impute the motives which he gives expression to elsewhere in his speech, as being the causes which actuated an entirely different policy on the part of the Liberal Administration of the day. I do not wish to discuss the question from a partisan standpoint but rather from a national, an inter-national, an Imperial and a Utilitarian point of view.

Imperial Federation has never as yet been adopted as a policy by any one of the parties in either the colonies or the mother land that I am aware of. I am free to say that I believe that such should not be the case but rather that all members of all political parties should be free to discuss the question on the broader basis of national progressiveness.

The Imperial Government and the world at large can well afford to take a few lessons from the self governing colonies. It is quite true that the Colonies owe their privileges of self-government and their all but independence to the generosity of the Imperial Government. It was not, however, until the experience bought lesson had been learned at the hands of the now flourishing Republic that the Colonies were free from the rigorous administration of Downing Street.

The Peace of Paris of 1783, may not only be said to have ratified the Independence of the Thirteen New England Colonies, but also to have been the charter of self-government to all the other colonies. It is true that the Colonies did not receive free institutions all at once, but a mistake had been made, and it had to be condoned for. The Canadas were never anything else but loyal despite cries to the contrary a few years ago.

The policy of the home government in dealing with the Canadas has been quite the reverse of that adopted with the

original thirteen colonies of the Atlantic sea board. That genial treatment has been conducive of good results, although the intercolonial difficulties were greater in Canada than in any other system of British Colonies because of the great differences in race and religion.

In the face of all these difficulties, however, we have been successful in Canada in thirty-two short years in building up a nation in the north of men of all nationalities all yielding a faithful and loving allegiance to the gracious sovereign of the land which has granted a free home, a free speech and a free worship. What more can man wish for; what more can any federation accomplish?

I am glad to learn that our Australasian consins are seriously contemplating similar action, in fact have declared by large majorities in favor of union.

This is as it should be. All similarly situated and adjacent colonies should be united for the purpose of facilitating education, commerce, and defence. This union in turn, should be completed by a great union,—A Federation of Federations. Napoleon in his day called England a nation of shop keepers. If he were speaking of the Federation that is to be he would call her a nation of nations.

The question arises which is to take the initiative, the Mother Country or the Colonies. Just here is where opinions differ but the difference need not be so great as to jeopardize the prospects of being over come. Personally I believe that after the colonies have perfected their systems of government as we in Canada have done that the initial steps for an Imperial Union should come from the Imperial Parliament. It is certainly the highest court in the realm. It is from thence that our authority comes (and rightly so) for the consummation of our Inter-Colonial Federations. It should be from thence that the invitation to become a party to an Imperial Union should come.

We have no representation in the Imperial Parliament as yet. They levy no taxation upon us. It would be somewhat unpopular therefore for the Colonies to ask Federation: 1st—Because of their subordinate position; 2nd—Because they have no representative in the Imperial House, and ought not to be subject to taxation, as they would be in case of Federation, without such representatives.

Possibly one of the most difficult tasks of the Union would be to settle the basis of representation. Some would propose representation by population, others representation based on the wealth of the countries represented. In either event the representation would not be large compared with that of the mother country. My own opinion is that a representation based on population is more in keeping with our democratic form of government than a representation based on some other principle would be. This method would necessitate, as it does at present a periodic adjustment or redistribution. It would certainly transpire in time that the Colonial representatives would increase, whereas I have doubt that representation in Great Britain and Ireland would remain approximately the same as at the beginning.

I have however been slightly diverging from the point in question, that is the propriety of the Colonies taking the initial step in the matter of Federation. From the standpoint of utility and subsequent commercial advantage I believe that colonies stand on a par with the Home Land and if you wish *vice versa*. So that if we only look at the utility and mutual advantage of the project, disregarding propriety in the matter, the colonies would have as good reason to make advances or rather to continue to make advances (for the Colonies alone seem to be moving in the matter) as the Imperial authorities would have.

In subsequent letters I shall deal with other phases of the question.