

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

(Continued From Page One.) areas, debilitated moral fibre. The contemporary Scot would want us to quit being romantic and see things as they are.

Whether soundly or misguidedly based, the British tradition among Canadians is a great theoretic inheritance, and it has operated for

good. It has impartially operated as an ideal and has fed the quality of Canadian achievement in wartime activity, kept management and labour agitation free from the typical stridencies and excesses of this continent and steadied the objectives and methods in maintaining price controls and the structure of national financing.

Something that Canadians have decided is the British tradition still operates with power in Canadian Life.

But don't let us be misled. The British tradition now, in 1947, if not disappearing among us, is suffering a sea-change. A cultivated woman of judgement said to a group of us the other day, "I watched my boys grow up. I heard them talk. They are not British. I don't know what they are." When someone said, "Are they American?", she answered, "I hope not."

There you have it. But those boys who can never inherit the British tradition inevitably and unmodified anymore, may nevertheless as Canadians grow up to understand the total trans-Atlantic heritage as has never before been the case. We are perhaps ready for a new responsible realization of ourselves. It is no defence anymore against Americanism or any other "ism" to hold merely a blind and automatic loyalty to whoever may be reigning PM at Westminster. What if he should turn out really to be a Socialist, or one day, a British (or a Russian) Communist?

We are in trouble today, too, over our American environment and the influence of that expansive entity to our South. There is just now the continuous operation of the total American continental pressure. That fact of the continent is notably of course the one pervasive invasive fact of the United States of America, never more felt than now, as U. S. money is organizing the world and U. S. military strategy tends to assume the total North American continent, including Canada's north, as its functional base.

I think it is unfortunate just now that the U. S. influence tends to operate among us in just the opposite way from the manner of the British tradition. Whereas we Canadians tend to assume as ours the best of the British tradition, we tend, in the case of the United States, to recognize and accept the worst. The Universities have failed us here in not channelling to our Canadian students the really rich materials in U. S. literature and history. The inheritance from Jefferson, Paine, from Lincoln, from Emerson and Whitman, from the New England thinkers, has never really touched us. It is the best of the stuff bred on our Continent and we Canadians are ignorant of it. The result is we know the American union by her big money barons, her Henry Fords, her jazz moods, her advertising energy and her Hollywood and radio techniques. Not knowing the elements in the American tradition which may even today steady and still shape her, we miss much of her truer internal life and are influenced by and tend to imitate what is less than her best.

I know it is not easy to analyze the effects of American on Canadian life. But I believe I am suggesting to you something of how it works. I believe we are in danger of being a sort of colonial extension of the worst in American life without the checks and balances of its best. We are mightily envied, we Canadians, by that great nation to the South and from that great nation come stridently and powerfully many of the influences which shape us towards what we are becoming. Contemporary American politics, contemporary American big business, contemporary American social trends, contemporary American economic theory, all for ill or good, play upon us constantly. I have talked at some length of

these two things—the British tradition and the American environment—because the processes of adjustment as we seek our own community selfhood and our own culture, are immediate and obvious. But for me it is inevitable that as we forward the task of adjustment in relation to these traditional forces now being newly defined in a changing world, we shall also be led to face and try to understand the stimulus and the challenge from Rome and from Russia. We shall be led inevitably to consider our place on the world's stage in relation to the total human scene. The collective human task of searching for a world community and a culture pattern suited to preserve and enrich and not degrade and destroy that community will be also ours.

That leads me back to my title and my beginning. The job of humans in all times and in all places the world over has been the job of organizing a community and of realizing and maintaining its self-preserving culture. Under this is the vitality of a great assumption, the assumption that human life on the earth, taken individually and collectively, is a precious thing. In the Canadian Medical Journal Dr. Martin, Professor of Anatomy at McGill University, says simply, "Medicine's job is to save human life and relieve suffering, and we believe that the job is worthwhile." That's tremendous, and to some of us, greatly heartening in these days when we have slipped into an opposite negative fatalism where human death, individual or multiple, tends to be as incidental as the falling leaf.

If we are to be reassured, if our world is not to spend itself away in mad spasms of self-destroying action, the price is clear thinking and disciplined emotion in a time of change. We must make an intellectual and passionate attack on obsolescence for the attainment of world community and its self-preserving culture. We must discover what it is to be human, and how to preserve that humanity on our contracted earth. You may know the story of the French woman on a farm in Alberta. A Ukrainian book-seller called upon her. She said, "Go out to the barn and see my husband." After a while the book-seller came back baffled. He said, "I can't find your husband, there was only that Chinaman out there." She said, "That's my husband." The Ukrainian was aghast. She said, "Why what's the matter with that, my sister married an Englishman." That woman was our intellectual pioneer in human integration.

We are faced on every hand with the necessity for new thinking and new emotional attitudes. The enemy is obsolescence everywhere,—in our ideas of race and color, in our theology, in our ideas of economic process, in our ideas of education and National Sovereignty and military defence. Some of you may have seen the Marshall Report, a careful compilation, a beautiful product of the modern printer's art. I am convinced that the historians of the future will call that document a beautiful example of the obsolescence of the orthodox military mind in the mid-twentieth century. Universal conscription and standing armies and great navies and skeleton military and naval potential are all as obsolete in the Atomic Age as the British methods for mining coal, or as unequal pay for equal work for women.

We shall destroy what civilization we have unless we can readjust. Shelly made his protagonist in PROMETHEUS UNBOUND say, "I see a mighty darkness filling the seat of power." That mighty darkness today is obsolescence in the Atomic Age. Unless we can face it and destroy it, we are lost.

There is a dreadful creeping paralysis of human malaise abroad in the world. Perhaps I talk to the wrong sort of people, but I talk to many of them, most of them, back from the Hell of the picnic overseas. In either case I seem to find within them a kind of quiet emptiness. They seem to have developed some awful private poison which is not alive enough for cynicism or troubled enough for despair. They are just withdrawn and lost. They look on at what we call the housing problem, but what is really the non-housing crime, at parental affection, at human mating and domestic ways; they simply look on. They seem to have the kind of aloofness that should be only in Dante's Vision. But it is not only our young

people back from the wars. A man said to me after he had watched closely the goings-on at the United Nations Organization in New York, "I suppose it's all useless." He saw the irony of all the verbal pretension combined with the lack of actual achievement. Brock Chisholm, seeing things in his field, says, "There is so little time." Matthew Halton, our CBC correspondent talking from London says, "You can have one world or no world." A labour leader, honestly the spokesman for human equity, said, "I think the men are basically right in their strike, but I guess they'll be licked."

In these days something has happened to put us all on our skids. The thing that has happened has cut into all our theologies, all our theories of value, all our definitions of reality. Man has no longer any comfort on his earth amid his natural forces. The forces of nature, as now unlocked, have Hiroshima'd man into nonentity. In one of his poems Thomas Hardy makes God say, "I do repent me that I made the earth and man." The cynic might say, "Well, God's experiment is over."

I think we must face it. We are able to make a new community of life on the earth and call it our own, or, we are about to throw away the possibility of Community life anywhere.

Yet the very misgiving can be our reassurance. There is a tremendous momentum from the accumulated idealism of man's art and science and religion of the past. If it can in time throw up leaders sensitive enough and imaginative enough (I believe Sir John Boyd Orr is one; I don't believe now that Mr. Churchill is another) we may move on and not backwards. Our hope is that the world has in it great and frightened men of whom our scientists are among the chief. The scientist has become today the ter-

ribly concerned citizen. He has become our seer and our prophet. He has pled with Governments with principalities and powers, to find a higher loyalty to humanity itself as a motivation for the control of our new techniques. He has put it up to us that the world is no longer safe in the hands of the unenlightened business men and the unawakened politicians. Indeed it seems that the world is waiting not for the concerned scientists and the men and women with creative artistic imagination to take over. There may be more hope in Unesco than in the Security Council.

In all this I have not forgotten Canada, my country, and you and me. We are the Canadians who find our immediate and first responsibilities within the framework of a particular geographical area and a particular parliamentary and judicial system which we call our own.

This is no time for petty provincialism or a strident pathetic Canadianism. It is rather a time in which, as Canadians, we see ourselves missing Nationalism in the old sense of sacred soil and inviolable sovereignty and chauvinistic armed forces. Missing that Nationalism, we may move, without turning our backs on our proper localism (there is no necessary antithesis between the sense for locality and the sense for world community) we may move into the sense of world community and play our part in finding the cultural pattern for self-preservation in that community. We were good in making and using the axe-helve. We might be good in our contribution to the making and use of muscular energy. In so doing we should not only newly discover ourselves. We should help in the realization and self-preservation of a community cultural pattern for our modern human world. If that is worthwhile.



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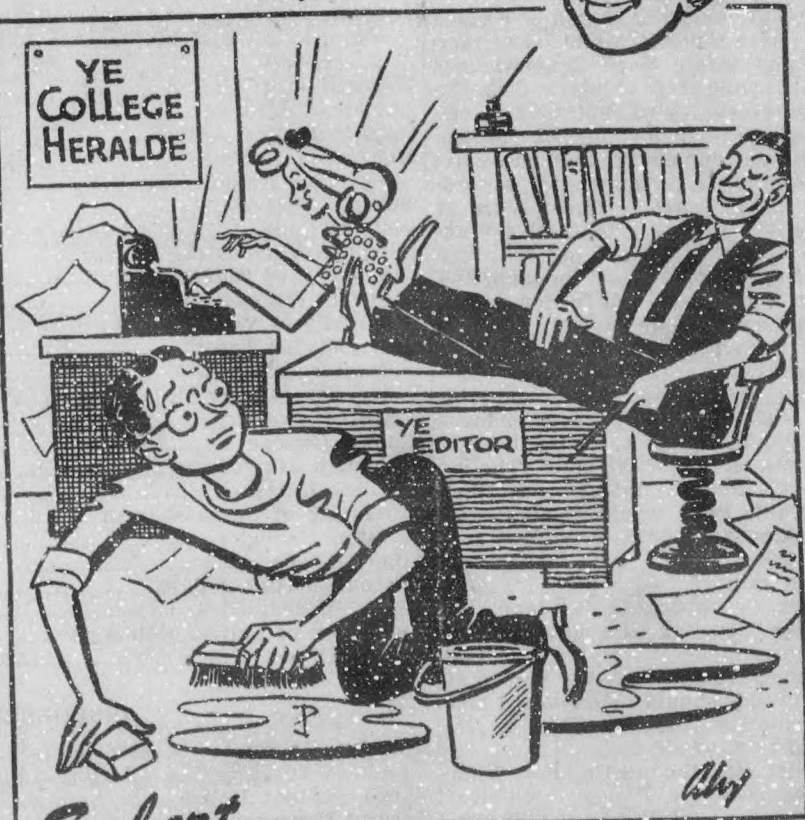
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