

short lived. He would later find on the statute book an Act providing that the new taxes should be held to have come into effect on the morning after the delivery of the Finance Minister's budget speech. In view of the knowledge that, in accordance with practice, this covering legislation will in the end be passed, nobody feels inclined to enter into a legal fight with the Government, who have it in their power to legalize their actions.

It is not easy to see how our taxation system can be effectively carried on in any other way. If after the Government had announced their purpose to impose certain taxes, people were free to buy goods irrespective of the new duties, the Government's purpose would be largely defeated. Assuming that a new tax of say ten per cent on an article is proposed, if it did not take effect at once there would be immediate purchases of the article on a large scale to anticipate the tax. Merchants would fill their warehouses with the article, which they would sell as required from time to time. Many months might elapse before new goods would arrive from which the Government could collect the new tax. In the meantime the knowledge that the tax would soon become operative would enhance the price of the goods. The people would really pay the tax, but it would go into the pockets of the speculators, not into the Dominion treasury. The only way to prevent this and give the treasury the benefit of the new tax is to have it take effect from the moment it is announced and legalize the proceedings in the final enactment of Parliament. The illegal proceeding—for such technically it is—becomes necessary for the protection of the public interests.

Looking For Oil

In his speech last week at the Pilgrims' Club in New York the new British Ambassador, Sir Auckland Geddes, endeavored to set his hearers and the American public right with respect to a number of things in which he claimed that the attitude of the British Government had been misrepresented. One of the matters to which he devoted considerable attention was a report that the British authorities and their friends of the same national faith had acquired a dangerous control of the oil fields of the world outside of the United States. Sir Auckland reviewed the operations of the various important oil fields and claimed that in each case British folk had but a moderate interest in them. In this case, at least, it is a mistake to assume that the Americans are responsible for the story of England's control of the oil supply. More than one of the British Cabinet Ministers have spoken of the importance of securing large sources of oil supply. It was a citizen of London—a Canadian, by the way—Sir E. Mackay Edgar, who lately, in the London

Times, proclaimed Britain's control of the oil fields. In view of the trouble that the Ambassador has taken to assure the Americans of the modest character of British oil operations, the previous statements of Sir Mackay Edgar are of much interest. "Within a few years," he said, "the United States will be paying British oil interests one million dollars annually for oil for the United States Navy and for home consumption. With the exception of Mexico and, to a lesser extent, of Central America, the outer world is securely barricaded against United States invasion in force," he said. "There may be small, isolated sallies, but there can never be massed attack. The British position is impregnable."

Sir Mackay declared that all known oil fields and all likely or probable oil fields outside the United States are in British hands or under British management or control, or financed by British capital.

Americans who have been disturbed by the reports of Britain's control of the oil supplies will have some difficulty in reconciling the statements of the two distinguished British citizens.

The Divorce Question

At a former session of the Dominion Parliament, Mr. Nickle, the then member for Kingston, introduced a bill to provide for establishing divorce courts in Provinces where there are none. The bill, after full discussion, was carried through its critical stage. Then, for some unexplained reason, the bill dropped and nothing more was heard of it. This year the question was taken up in the Senate. A bill, different in form but for substantially the same purpose, was passed at an early stage of the session and sent down to the House of Commons. There, the bill seems to have been jockeyed out of position, and now there is small prospect of its enactment this session.

Meanwhile, from some denominational assemblies and some denominational authorities come protests against alleged efforts to "make divorce easy" and pious warnings to beware of the laxity of the divorce laws of Reno, Nevada. Is not this much like the time-dishonored device in argument of setting up a man of straw so that he may easily be knocked down? Nobody in Canada is trying to adopt the divorce laws of Reno. Nobody in Canada is endeavoring to permit divorce for any causes other than those which are universally recognized, except by the people who hold that there should be no divorce for any cause. One can understand and respect the views of those who, on religious grounds, raise unqualified objection to divorce. If there were any prospect of their view prevailing, their continued and persistent hostility to divorce bills could be better understood. But, as they well know, their view does not prevail

in any British country. Divorce—the divorce evil if anybody prefers to so designate it—exists in Canada and will continue to exist. All that the advocates of divorce reform are asking is that, since there will be divorces, they shall be governed by laws which will ensure decent and orderly proceedings in out courts of justice, instead of the system that now exists for the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, a system of divorce by Act of Parliament which is a burlesque on justice and a scandal to the Dominion. It is much to be regretted that the measures which promised to put an end to this scandal are not to become law.

An Eloquent Ambassador

Whether the power to speak or the power to be silent is the greatest virtue in an ambassador may be a debateable question. Oratory is not usually regarded as an essential part of diplomacy. Silence seldom produces trouble. Danger is more to be feared from talk. The British ambassadors at Washington have practiced largely the virtue of silence. One of them not very long ago, who was usually silent as respects speech-making, was not as wise in the use of his pen. His foolish answer to a trick-letter on an American political question led to his dismissal from Washington. Lord Bryce was a frequent public speaker in the United States, but his subjects were usually of a historical, social or educational character; international questions were rarely touched. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice exhibited the virtue of silence. Sir Auckland Geddes is taking a different course. At the moment of his landing he yielded to the temptation of the interviewer and expressed himself freely on the relations between Great Britain and the United States, and he has since made several speeches along the same lines. So far he has said much that is good and nothing that can be complained of. Perhaps he is the fortunate possessor of a discretion which will enable him to talk freely without saying anything questionable. But he will need to watch his step.

At Ottawa

The House of Commons is in the midst of the Budget debate. With a view to hastening business, the Government have given notice of a motion to hold morning and Saturday sessions. There is a stage of the business of Parliament at which such a motion may be made with something like general consent. But has that stage been reached? The Government's delay in bringing down the Budget has naturally protracted the session, and the other really important measure, the Franchise Bill, is still far from finished.—Experience has shown that nothing is gained by driving the House too much,