

Democracy and Foreign Policy

THE RIGHT HONORABLE J. KANSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

(From the Observer.)

The general peace of the world and the smooth working of the nations together must forever be one of the chief concerns of democracies. That after the last war we should all be armed to the teeth in a vain attempt to be secure, that our national industries should be loaded with excessive burdens of taxation in order to pay for armaments which, as has been proved, with such dramatic force, when used with the very utmost bring no comfort or tranquillity either to victors or vanquished, is one of those queer irrational futilities in which nations indulge when they have neither the courage nor the wisdom to follow the straight ways of simple common-sense.

At the root of this tragedy lies the fact that the conduct of foreign affairs in most States has been left to over-specialized departments and to the very small group of men who staff these departments, or who are foreign secretaries of priesthood, protected by the superstitions and the taboos that frightened our cavemen ancestors, has grown up to conduct foreign affairs. Diplomatic staffs pride themselves on the fact that they know nothing of politics and of public opinion. In recititude and devotion to their duties, in knowledge of their work and in their single-minded interest in it, they are unsurpassed.

As servants and advisers they are comfortable and a security, and the man who would do anything but value them beyond words can only confess his own incapacity to the world. But without firmly controlling public opinion these departments tend to become a menace to peace. Their pride in their efficiency makes them put that efficiency before national concern, though they would stoutly maintain that national concern is the one thing they keep before them. In that plea they are right: the error lies in the fact that in foreign affairs the democracies so rarely and imperfectly show what that concern is. Diplomacy as an over-specialized profession living in a limited world of its own, working upon its own notions of national honor, self-respect, and prestige, cannot in the end avoid war.

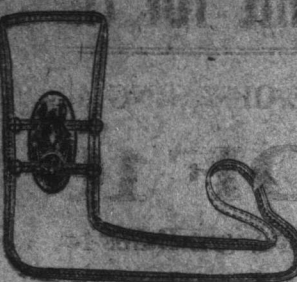
Therefore it is that from time to time new ways of controlling Foreign Offices are proposed, with the object of keeping them in touch with popular psychology and the opinions of the democracies, and so severely to limit what in some States has become the almost sovereign authority of Foreign Offices, War Offices, or Admirals.

The American system of treaty ratification by the Senate and discussion and consultation with a Foreign Relations Committee is, with modifications necessary by reason of the special features of the American Constitution, generally taken as a basis. Roughly, what is aimed at is a committee which will be consultative, but which will leave the Foreign Secretary absolutely responsible for decisions, and then a reference to the House of Commons of all treaties or instruments imposing obligations upon the country. To an outsider, at any rate, it does appear as though the American arrangement of absolute check could not work if America were more closely concerned with European politics, with their give-and-take and the necessity of making not the best conceivable, but the best possible, bargains. A two-thirds majority in a body that was not responsible for negotiating, but is possessed of the power to destroy, would never work in European conditions. Lord Bryce quite properly wrote when discussing objections to the powers of the Senate in treaty-making. The answer is that America is not Europe.

Our European needs require, I think, that whatever may be the authority that has the power of final ratification must be of the same political complexion as the responsible government. That ratifying authority must not be a body hostile to the government or independent of the government so as to take from the government its responsibilities, or, what is much worse, leave the government with its responsibility but deprive it of the exercise of its will. Its function rather should be to exercise a freedom of criticism and pressure in accordance with manifested public opinion. What is wanted is something that will be an instrument in the hands of the communities rather than those of political parties; the purpose of making government aware of the limits of their power to do just what they like. That is the justification for the Foreign Relations Committee which has found a place in the parliamentary machinery of every important European State except our own.

On general principles it is most desirable that foreign policy should not be revolutionized everytime that a government changes, but, as I have frequently pointed out, those principles are subject to many important exceptions. Supporting, for instance, that a Labor government were to succeed a Conservative Government that had been pursuing the policy of military alliance and had been taking on obligations which allowed foreign States to pursue courses that must lead to

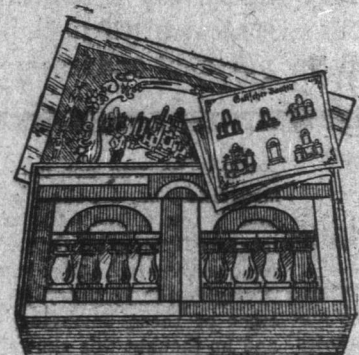
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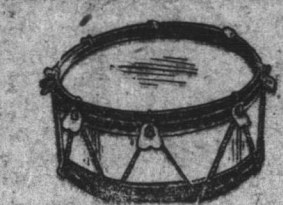
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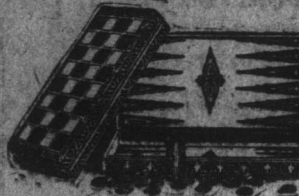


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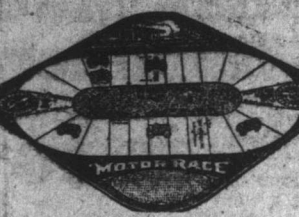
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war, it would be the duty of the new government to end such a policy.

They would arise the problem of how to handle such a situation, and upon that all I say is that the manner of doing it would distinguish an efficient from an inefficient foreign minister. When the present Government came into office, it made changes for the sake of showing that it was a new government, and that it did not share any of our progressive views; but that was a bad example which ought not to be copied. Had a consultative committee been in existence, some of these mistakes might have been avoided, because such a committee, changing its balance of views without changing the whole of its personnel, would tend to maintain just that amount of continuity which is good, while making the alterations that are necessary to express the differences in outlook of the incoming. Not only would the foreign minister have to report his intentions to it, and thus be prevented from doing what was obviously reprehensible, but the advice it could give from its experience would be invaluable to him in making up his mind as to his course of action.

What we have to aim at is to secure for foreign policy some intelligent public interest, and at the same time, while in no way weakening the responsibility of ministers and cabinets, set up some machinery which meets the fact that governments under democracies are not only responsible but should also be representative. Of responsibility we hear much, of representation we hear little; but democracy demands both. Self-government is not secure when the hand of external authority is removed from a people; if an official function and its staff rule the people whom circumstances then compel to obey, that people can hardly be termed self-governing. The powers of the American Senate could only be given in this country to the body that creates the responsible government, but the Foreign Relations Committee might well be en-

grafted upon our expedients to make governments representative as well as responsible.

CONFEDERATION LIFE.

Mountains of the Sea

The discovery of a plateau only 150 feet below the surface of the water of the Atlantic Ocean was recently announced. This is only one of many discoveries made in the last few years, which show that our knowledge of the ocean bed is remarkably poor. In many books published a quarter of a century ago it was emphatically stated that the ocean floor is flat, sloping gently here and there, but never broken into ranges like the dry land. Then, in 1901, the cable ship Britannia discovered a mountain range in the South Pacific which was in every way like a range on the dry land. More recently a range of mountains, known as the Edward VII range, was discovered in the North Atlantic, its highest peaks only a hundred fathoms below the surface. In the Atlantic, too, is Mount Laura Ethel, whose summit towers near the surface.

Several small islands are only the peaks of a mountain range which have broken the surface. The Bermudas rise straight up from a depth of two and a half miles, while St. Helena and Ascension Island are also mountain peaks. On the Kuril Islands the bottom drops sheer to a depth of five miles, while only a mile or two from the coast of Porto Rico the depth is 37,366 feet. It is curious that, although the bottom of the sea has not changed for a million years, man still knows little about it. Many expeditions are now setting out with the object of

salvaging some of the \$1,500,000,000 worth of gold which is hidden in the depths, and these expeditions will, no doubt, make many discoveries concerning under-sea scenery.

Diving apparatus invented during the last few months enables man to descend to depths undreamt of ten years ago; but the terrific pressure at great depths is still a great obstacle. Quite as important is the invention of a mercury vapor lamp, which enables films to be taken at great depths. Experiments on a lamp that will illuminate a large area at a great depth are also being made. By means of this the diver will be able to see the hill-sides covered with olive-green seaweed, which a passing eddy turns into a wind-swept pine forest, mountains towering to the surface, volcanoes, plains, and many other features which are associated with the grandest land scenery.

A Christmas Present worth while: Thompson's Chain-Reference Bible, used by the greatest Bible scholars, yet simple enough for a child to understand. G. W. GUSHUE, Agent.—nov23,14,ed

Toads, bats, and snakes can live longer without food than any other creatures.

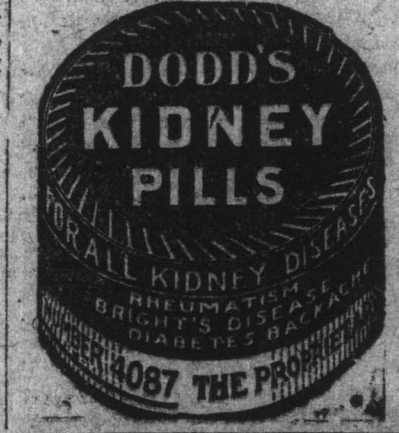
There are many ingenious ways in which the plain felt hat with turned-up brim which give the effect of a cape brim in the back and crown created is the newest.

Paris is sewing together long strips of different materials and making ed for evening in a fitted bodice and skirt of many ruffles.

Young girls are fashionably going to for evening in a fitted bodice and skirt of many ruffles.

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JEFF, WE CAN'T COLLECT ON YOUR ACCIDENT INSURANCE POLICY UNLESS YOU MEET WITH AN ACCIDENT. NOW WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IS TO CROSS STREET RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF TRAFFIC OR STEP INTO AN OPEN MAN-HOLE!

REMEMBER, THEY PAY \$25 A WEEK FOR A BROKEN LEG, AND \$35 A WEEK FOR A BROKEN ARM! NOW DO YOUR BEST AND AS SOON AS YOU MEET WITH AN ACCIDENT PHONE ME!

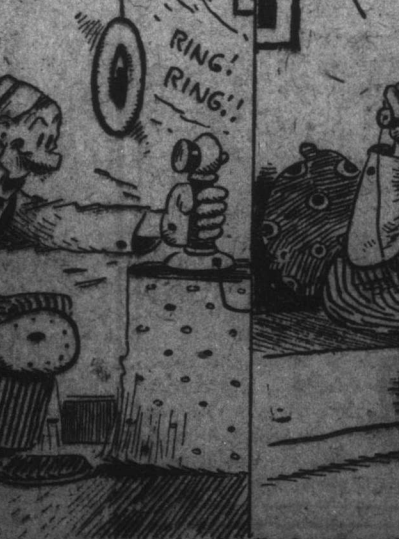
I CERTAINLY GOTTA HAND IT TO MYSELF FOR THIS ACCIDENT POLICY IDEA!

AH! HE CALLS! NOW TO GET AN EARFUL OF GOOD NEWS!

MUTT, I JUST HAD A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT!

FINE! DID YOU BREAK A COUPLE OF LEGS? TEE HEE!

NO! I SWALLOWED MY FALSE TEETH!



—By Bud Fisher