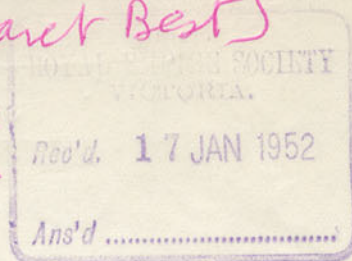


(Margaret Best)
Third Prize



ESSAY COMPETITION - CLASS A

6 FEB 1952

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2 - Commended

"Which, in your opinion, are the three main problems facing the British Empire today, and how do you think they may best be solved?"

SUMMARY :

2.

I. INTRODUCTION. "My lords, that Empire is no mean heritage, but....it must be maintained....by the same qualities that created it."

NATURE of present-day problems - "involved in mankind."

MAIN PROBLEMS : Colonial political independence; Sterling bloc - dollar area crisis; Path to peace through British ideals.

II.a) COLONIES. Are colonial natives mentally and psychologically able to manage their own affairs? - man of colonies is the problem.

Encourage native culture and institutions; gradually effect universal elementary education in two spheres. Meanwhile control affairs in co-operation with educated men from among natives.

b) STERLING AREA CRISIS. Need for stable basis for trade negotiations - sterling v dollar currency bloc. Reasons for dollar shortage. Remedial measures. Most recent developments. Solution proposed by Chancellor of Exchequer. Dominions are involved.

c) PATH TO PEACE. What contribution can British Empire make towards civilization? State of the world today. "Raison d'être" of the Empire : our proud "problem".

III. CONCLUSION. British Empire will survive, "pro rege, lege, et grege".

Disraeli,
House of
Lords, 8th
April, 1878

3.

"My lords, that Empire is no mean heritage;
but it is not an heritage that can only be enjoyed; it must be
maintained. And it can only be maintained by the same qualities
that created it - by courage, by discipline, by patience, by deter-
mination, and by a reverence for public law and respect for nation-
rights."

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The British Empire, the society of societies which has
fostered for 300 years a wider appreciation of the basic rights of
man, is faced today by ^{almost overwhelming} ~~prepossessing~~ problems, problems of a nature
different ^{from} and far more extensive in scope than any dreamed of by
our fathers.

The very fact that we are an Empire brings in its train
problems of the welfare and development of our colonies. The in-
creasing opportunity given to the Dominions to draw away could be
troublesome. The chaotic internal material (NOT PATRIOTIC) state of
the little island Mother-Country is a great problem. Many have been
the cynics' disturbing but happily groundless assertions that the
Empire is "done".

But to discuss the three main problems confronting us
at the present time, there must be considered the Empire- and
world-wide implications of such problems.

Of course, the few mentioned hitherto are certainly
important. But in the mainly psychologically-troubled world of to-
day, our troubles are mainly psychological. The primary task of
man is to achieve once again a great measure of faith in his fellow
human-beings. The old isolationism is dead. Interdependence is the

keynote of the age. In accordance with contemporary history, therefore, we must broaden our outlook.

So I have concerned myself here with problems mainly of policy; for what would help man most today is a clear statement of attitude, so that in a time essentially of tension we may have the basis for decisive action.

The three main problems fall, aptly enough, into three spheres : the colonies as a unit of the Empire, the Empire as a whole, and the Empire and the world.

In the colonial field, the most urgent matter is that of entrusting political control into the hands of the native peoples.

That aspect of the affairs of the Empire as a whole which calls for clarification is the sterling area crisis, in which all Empire countries (including dollar-using Canada) are "up to the neck".

With the whole world, and the Empire as an integral part, we find again that the main essential today is a clear declaration of policy - how best to effect "a just and lasting peace". To this end, let us adapt the lofty and down-to-earth ideals of the British Empire.

Abraham
Lincoln,
Mar., 1865

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As every advantage has its disadvantages, and as ~~any~~ ^{every} asset has its liabilities, so the British colonies present problems, problems for the entire Empire.

We are today most vitally concerned with the means of political advance in the colonies. Economic stability is, happily, becoming a reality in most British dependencies, allowing politics

to take first priority among colonial problems.

5.

The broad goal of political development in the colonies was defined by Mr. A.Creech Jones, Colonial Secretary, in his report for 1947-48. "The central purpose of British colonial policy," he declared, "...is to guide the colonial territories to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth in conditions that ensure to the people concerned both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter."

To my mind, the primary hindrance to this is the question simple in essence but complex in answer : "Are the millions of colonial commoners sufficiently able to manage their affairs, either by themselves or by their leaders' guidance?", this bearing in mind that we are all involved in every perplexity or trouble of every race or group.

It is essential that the Empire determine , without delay, whether it is truly wise to let loose the colonies, as it were, into the midst of the trouble-pot. Otherwise, all the good will in the world is in vain; and, which is paramount, the food-smeared hand of "Uncle Joe" Stalin is presented with eager takers. To achieve anything which is to be of lasting success, the Empire must get to know the man of the colonies himself; for he is the basic problem.

I am not making the often fundamental assumption that colonial coloured races are psychologically different from - and therefore inferior to - the white man. On the contrary, I ask, "are they constitutionally incapable of acquiring the knowledge and understanding necessary for the political administration and the economic organization of every country in the complicated and in-

L.Woolf:
Polit.Ad-
vance of
Backward
Peoples

tegrated society of the modern world?"

6.

Hinden:
Empire &
After

The view generally accepted today is that reconstructive steps must first be taken, for "alien rule has disintegrated the native society, with its old customs and cohesion, but it has not succeeded in replacing it with a new society with any organic unity of its own."

The majority of the millions and millions of colonial peoples, especially in the African dependencies, are so far away from "civilization" that they have no idea that life could be any different from what it is. From birth they have learnt to respect the authority of the head-man - to have unshakeable faith in the brews and incantations of the medicine-man - and not until some missionary or trader has stumbled upon them have they received the faintest notion that there is, going on all about them, an entirely different and wonderful world, a world to which nevertheless they will still always remain largely ^{oblivious} ~~in oblivion~~.

Massinger:
"Duke of
Milan"

So how can they appreciate any political liberties? How can they realize that, in the political sense, they have extremely little of that which Voltaire believed to be an essential part of civilization - freedom? They have not at present any ability to beg, demand, or otherwise ask, "Pray you use your freedom and so far, if you please, allow me mine."

But it can be, and is being done; for the very men who want self-government for their colonies are in almost every case natives educated in Western ways as well as in tribal lore.

If we fulfil our obligations to them, and entrust to them the reins of administration, however, they may use their power against the illiterate and uneducated man of the interior; this danger at

home would be synonymous with danger for the whole Empire.

The position is summed up admirably by Leonard Woolf (previously quoted):

"An illiterate and uneducated people are totally incapable of self-government, under modern conditions, unless they are given the knowledge of Western Civilization without which all attempts are useless."

Therefore the "sine qua non" is universal elementary education, both in basic human relationships - as taught from time immemorable by native law - and in the structural principles of the modern democratic world; so that eventually each native will have assimilated the arts and crafts of his own race, and will in addition have laid the foundation for training in Western-type positions.

Of course, this ~~pk~~ policy will need two or three or perhaps more generations to work itself out; and the quandary in which we now are is that the retention of Imperial control for any further time at all is in itself an evil.

Can we risk continuing to uphold this wrong - to safeguard the natives' own interests, during their period of "preparation"? Or should we forgo completely all relevant Empire powers, meanwhile still instilling the above principles?

The only solution is to introduce in the interim a form of co-operation in administration between British and natives, the latter gradually taking over complete control, both in local and central government, as they become sufficiently advanced.

I do not doubt, either, that the colonial peoples will always afterwards choose to acknowledge their British "oblig-

ation for influence" - and they will thus certainly manifest their deserving of self-government - that noble right and just claim.

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A problem still more disturbing today, however, is the rapidly deteriorating financial situation.

The trouble has arisen with regard to currency payment for import and export dealings with foreign countries.

Egypt
(?)
The British-influenced countries (with the exception of Canada, and including also Burma, Iceland, Iraq and Jordan) operate their finances in agreement with the gold-based English pound, to form a bloc known as the Sterling Area (or officially, Scheduled Territories).

The U.S.A., on the other hand, has its own group of associates (including Canada) who use the American dollar.

All Sterling Area countries pool the dollar earnings which arise from transactions with the American-order countries, and receive in exchange a credit in sterling currency. The withdrawal of dollar funds, however, depends on agreed priorities, regardless of the country concerned.

Thus it was that the Empire's continued war-time demand for mainly American-made equipment and the like took heavy toll of the comparatively few available dollars, and exports did not return sufficient to ease the position. When the crisis came at last, the U.S.A. came to the rescue with its Lend-Lease programme, whereby the British countries together were able to reduce exports during the war to about 30% of the 1938 pre-war figure.

The end of the war brought requests from all over the Empire for ^{dollars for} relief and rehabilitation, and reconstruction. But the pool was nearly empty.

Remedial efforts were made; American aid was proffered; Canada offered to co-operate to the fullest extent.

Still the sterling countries urgently needed dollars from the central bank. When convertibility of sterling in any currency bloc was restored to aid colonial development and welfare schemes under the 1945 Act, the result was a fall of £618 million in British gold and dollar currency reserves.

4th Un-
official Com.
Relatns. Con.
Sept., 1949

A reviewing conference held soon afterwards reached agreement on the nature of the problems. These, the delegates agreed, were of two main, complex groups: the problems of adjustment to post-war world conditions, and the problems of achieving sufficiently rapid economic progress in under-developed countries of the Empire, to give stability to democratic institutions and to combat the attractions of Communism. (Of these, the first is now to be considered more fully, as the colonial economic problems are being adequately dealt with at present under such schemes as the Colombo Plan.)

Loans from the dollar countries, added to E.R.P. (Economic Recovery Programme) helped to some extent, and the sterling devaluation of September, 1949, helped further to increase exports to America from Scheduled Territories.

The need to persevere with measures designed to restore the central gold and dollar reserves to an adequate level was one of the main points in the Economic and Financial Discussions held

in London in September, 1950, when agreement was reached on strict economy in dollar expenditure.

This showed some effect in the early months of 1951. Dollar expenditure was curtailed by Empire countries; in addition to which the prices of sterling area commodities, such as wool, rubber and tin, rose more than did those of dollar commodities, such as aluminium, cotton and wheat. As a result, the sterling area (with the exception of Great Britain) had a considerable surplus in these first few months, both with the outside world as a whole and with the dollar area; which surplus more than offset Great Britain's gold and dollar deficit.

Chancrlr. of
Exchequer, Mr.
Butler, Jan.
7th, 1952.

But after March, our prices fell sharply. The export dollar earnings of the sterling area fell correspondingly; at the same time expenditure abroad rose through "extravagance and excessive spending, whether on ordinary personal consumption, Government services or major capital projects", and the slowing-up of stock-piling both by the U.S.A. and European buyers.

The losses in reserves of the United Kingdom for the fourth quarter of 1951 totalled £426 million, the total reserves of gold and dollars having dwindled by the end of the year to £1030 million.....

The root of the trouble is that the U.K. needs raw materials - from America. America has no use for the majority of British products, as she can produce same at a comparatively much cheaper rate. Even the Dominions, having established their own industries, have not a great demand for United Kingdom-made goods. So there is no semblance of a natural balance in £ - \$ trade.

The most practical proposals for immediate 11.
stabilization are those of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Richard Butler, who advocates movement of manpower to industries concerned substantially with import reduction and export increase, intensification of production and selling overseas of products especially from the booming metal-using industries, and further reductions of imports. (To these, may I add the research into, and wooing of, further "novelty-utility" industrial products such as the plastics group, which was developed mainly in the immediate post-war period.)

Mr. Butler is expected ^{to announce} ~~also~~ in the near future, that Britain requires the Dominions to do likewise.

The members of the Empire must consider the problem carefully (as Australian Prime Minister R.G. Menzies gave evidence of having done, in a recent statement); for the sterling crisis is the Gordian knot on which hang all their fine aspirations.

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The third main problem confronting the Empire today is again one of "theory". Yet it is one which not even a concert of the principal political Powers of the world could rectify. It is of such inestimable gravity today that unless we determine and define its scope we are likely at any minute to be fighting at cross-purposes, struggling disconsolately all the while for knowledge and discernment.

The problem is the future of civilization, and what contribution our British Empire can make towards this. In our tumultuous and exasperating world we do not want much more than to find (or, in the more expressive German phrase, *spüren*) the

Self. pacific Paradise, in which the intricacies of selfish national jealousies will be forgotten for ever.

At present there are being fought in Korea, Malaya and Indo-China, wars - "contests of differing aim, of self-praise but not self-blame". To combat the "rebel" forces, generally the peoples of the United Nations have combined for a moment. But what will happen tomorrow? Can the Empire, as such, help?

Tension, fear and panic are the order of the day. Men and women in all walks of life, in all peace-loving countries, know that peace may only be achieved by common striving. Nevertheless, the cheerless prospect is of further rifts, because the human-beings who inhabit the world have not had an opportunity to realize or to recognize or to see what they should do.

"Peace," says L.S. Amery in his "The Framework of the Future", "is something more than the mere negative absence of armed conflict. . . . A sense of justice and fairness, a spirit of toleration, a readiness to compromise, coupled with a no less firm determination to enforce the observance of these things against the extremist, against the law-breaker and the aggressor - these are the true foundations of peace."

L.S. Amery has here enunciated the position for man, for all time.

Is the situation not relevant to the British Empire - the living evidence of the practice of fair-play for over three hundred years? Our Empire shows that every national diversity may be made to unite with the other, to labor towards a common objective.

This, I believe, is the entire "raison d'être" of the

Empire. This is our Divine mission - and this is also our urgent problem.

McGuire: The
3 Corners of
the World.

All the "citizens of the world" are humans, men and women who are trying to discover the nearest way to a "world community". Let us, therefore, show the world how man may truly "love his neighbour". Let us teach the British Empire ideals.

Bible.

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Mr. Churchill,
Bristol Uni.
Dec. 14, 1951.

Let us "weave and band together, so that we may face the problems of the future united as never before".

HM THE KING
Xmas, 1951.

The problems are certainly great in complexity, and our span of life is short; but we may have no fear, the British Empire will survive as a voluntary association of free, democratic nations - for we "are a friendly people", and we have much with which to guide the world to a higher and nobler life, to assured contentment; for ever "pro rege, lege et grege".

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