

CO-OPERATION—NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Address by H. G. Chancellor, Ex-M.P.

(At the Oxford International Conference, as Chairman of the Evening Session, 14th August)

The basis of any true civilization is justice, which involves equality of opportunity to the citizens of States, and to States themselves. That would rule out deceit, violence and plunder, and substitute truth and co-operation with free competition, which, when really free, is the most effective form of co-operation by which men and nations can serve and help one another.

Even the imperfect application of justice with freedom in the realms of thought and civil and political life has made bloodshed obsolete in most civilized States. Its extension to the economic sphere would eliminate nearly all the causes which now breed violence and class warfare within those States. Till so extended, competition cannot be free and therefore cannot be really co-operative, because it will continue to be what it is now, a struggle between different interests, not to get the best out of men by securing to each the full reward of his labour, thus stimulating the economic motive to produce, but to monopolize opportunity in order to restrict it and thereby keep him in a state of serfdom.

As things are that is true not only of individual monopolists, but of collective ones also, not only of rings and trusts but of trade unions and guilds. The one set seeks control of the sources of wealth in order on the one hand to restrict output and raise prices, and on the other hand by controlling opportunity to control labour and wages. The other set seeks to monopolize such opportunity as remains within each trade by withholding it from all except their own members. Both deny justice and natural freedom in order to maintain privilege.

Privilege whether exercised by millionaires or working men, is the denial of justice. It consists in the power to refuse men the exercise of their natural powers in the way they judge best, and thereby to enforce upon them submission to the will of others, to whom, under whatever legal form, they are virtually slaves. Within States, that is the bottom cause of conflict between employers and employed, and among different classes of employers and different classes of workers.

Within civilized States, law has changed the nature of the struggle and almost eliminated from it the element of bloodshed. But between States, almost the sole ultimate arbiter till now has been force. And the motive behind the use of force has been one all down the ages. National Honour, Patriotism, Religion and all the other cries used to delude and compel people to butcher one another are and have been mere lying pretences. The underlying motive has always been loot. In our own history that is true of the invasions of the Romans, the Saxons, Danes and Normans. It is true of our wars with the Dutch and the French by which South Africa and India and Canada passed into our hands. It was true of the Boer wars which gave us the diamonds of Kimberley and the gold of the Transvaal. And in spite of the fine phrases used to justify the war to end war, judged by the secret treaties and by results, it is true of that also, for it has transferred to the victors all the overseas colonies of the vanquished, and is being continued in the Ruhr to transfer from one set of monopolists to another the control of their natural resources.

Now our movement aims at securing peace within States and between States, *i.e.*, goodwill between citizens and between nations. We know that the root of ill-will is not human nature, which all people share alike, but injustice, which confers on one the power to profit by oppressing others. We know, too, that that inheres in the monopoly of natural resources, or in terms of economics,

land, with its ability to deny liberty and even life by withholding it from those who do not share in the monopoly. Our remedy is, by transforming ownership into trusteeship, with all the obligations of trusteeship, to destroy the power of monopoly to withhold, and thereby open up to every willing worker opportunity, the one thing which will make him free to produce for himself and no longer under necessity to sell his labour for less than its worth. That once secured, oppression would become impossible, and the fear, mistrust and hate that now find expression in class war would not live long.

Profit by oppression being barred, the only alternative by which the owner of wealth could profit in using his fellow is co-operation. But co-operation means mutual interest and produces not only mutual profit but friendship, goodwill, peace. The conflict of capital and labour would end in co-operation, and both alike would share in the income of the trust—the land value they had jointly created.

Now the principle of trusteeship as regards mandated territories is recognized in the Covenant of the League of Nations. These are to be administered for the benefit of the population and not exploited for the profit of the mandatory, which is not the owner of the territory but undertakes its administration "as a sacred trust of civilization." At first I fear each trustee will interpret the trust in its own interest, though account must be rendered each year to the League. In only one way can it be carried out in letter and in spirit. If they refrain from taxing the natives, leave them free to trade with whom they will, collect from every landholder, European and native, the annual value by way of rent, and spend it on public objects within the area, the abuses of colonization cannot arise. These abuses consist mainly in forcing natives into the service of white settlers by the ancient method of taking away their land. That is the only thing necessary to insure tyranny and sow the seeds of revolt.

The principle of trusteeship universally applied to land, with its obligation to pay into the public exchequer the economic value of every concession, would make holding for exclusion ruinous and therefore unattractive. If loot were made impossible under whatever government, change of sovereignty would no longer matter. It would thus destroy the chief motive animating those who pull the strings and manipulate the Press to bring about war.

It would make success in exploitation, whether in Mosul or Morocco, the Rand or the Ruhr or the Caucasus, dependent not on force but on efficiency, and by opening up natural resources wherever they exist to labour and capital whencesoever they come, make competition free and thereby co-operative and productive.

It would make conquest objectless and populations free, whatever their colour or race, thereby breaking down racial prejudice and hate. It would provide revenues that would make ridiculous all excuses for taxes and tariffs, and tend to break down the artificial barriers which vested interests now interpose between consumers and their needs. More than anything else, more than all other things put together it would make natural and easy the growth of friendship based on the interdependence of peoples thus delivered from fear of oppression and the burden of defence. Under it international relations would be transformed, the League of Nations would live and war would die.

The membership roll of the International Conference has been brought to 340 names by the addition of Mr. F. T. Hodgkiss and Mr. Alexander Chalmers, both of Victoria, Australia.