

NATIONAL LEADERS: Malcolm Macdonald



THE latest warning of an impending attack on Britain comes from Mr. Malcolm Macdonald, Minister of Health in the Churchill Cabinet. With his sister, Ishbel, he made a tour

of New Zealand some years ago when he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the Dominions Office.

Mr. Macdonald is a son of the late James Ramsay Macdonald, first Labour Prime Minister of Britain. After attending a private school at Petersfield he went to Oxford, where he took his B.A. degree and prepared himself for a Parliamentary career. At the age of 28 he won his first contest as a Labour Candidate. In 1931 he was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the Dominions Office, leaving that office in 1935 to become Secretary of State for Colonies. After spending three years there he was appointed Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, a position he relinquished in 1938 to become Secretary of State for Colonies once more. When Mr. Churchill became Prime Minister Mr. Macdonald took over the portfolio of Health. One of his most difficult tasks during recent years was the trouble in Palestine before the outbreak of the present war. Mr. Macdonald is 39 years of age. His sister, Ishbel, now Mrs. I. M. Ridgley, is "mine host" of an inn at Sheen.

Sir Arnold Wilson Missing

Among the many brave men who have not come back from Belgium is Sir Arnold Wilson, M.P. He is reported missing: "I hope this means that he may live to read these remarks," writes Critic in "The New Statesman." "For some years, Sir Arnold has interested men as much as anyone in English public life. He is a curious mixture, a very tough soldier, with an almost legendary reputation for swimming the Hellespont, a scholar with an astonishing memory, and at the same time, the most inaccurate of reporters, a man who preferred to learn America by striding along the roads instead of dining with the great, an admirer of Hitler and an unscrupulous propagandist for Mussolini and Franco. He also took immense pains to produce the best exposures of one of the most shady sides of the city. He had, I think, a strong strain of brutality, and a natural liking for regimentation. In his last speech in the House of Commons, he showed that his British loyalty overcame his Fascist inclinations." Sir Arnold joined up as a rear-gunner in a bombing plane, one of the most dangerous tasks in the Royal Air Force. Sir Arnold was 55 years of age, traveller, diplomat, soldier, author and Member of Parliament. He lived a great deal in the East—India, Turkey, Persia—and has written numerous books on his travels and observations.

Martinique

Martinique, island of 385 square miles in the West Indies, has belonged to France since 1635. Since the outbreak of war, ships of the French Fleet which have been operating with British ships in the Atlantic have been calling there and some have remained in port at Fort-

de-France since France capitulated. Sugar, molasses, rum and cocoa are the principal exports. Martinique was the scene of a terrible tragedy in 1902 when Mont Pelee, a volcano which had been quiet for over 50 years, suddenly burst into eruption, destroyed the town of St. Pierre and even burned the ships lying in the harbour. A terrific whirlwind of incandescent gases, charged with red hot particles of lava, overwhelmed the town before the residents had time to escape. Over half the island was destroyed by this eruption. Fort-de-France was built on the site of the former capital of St. Pierre. The British islands of Dominica and St. Lucia lie north and south of Martinique.

CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH

All Returned Men To Be X-Rayed

EVERY New Zealand soldier, sailor, or airman who returns from this war will be X-rayed, medically examined, and passed fit before he is discharged from the forces at the conclusion of hostilities.

This statement was made recently by the Minister of Defence, the Hon. F. Jones, who went on to say that no man would be discharged from the Forces until he had a clean bill of health.

After the last war no such action was taken by the Government with the result that many men who broke down afterwards as a result of war strain found that they could not obtain pensions without some difficulty arising, because they had been classed fit when they were discharged.

Mr. Jones stated that to-day there were 25,923 war pensioners and war veterans and that the annual pensions bill amounted to £1,886,537, which was almost equal to the cost in 1921. A recent Act provides for an increase in pensions. For instance, the original Act provided that a totally disabled private returning from the last war received 35/- a week, plus 12/6 a week for his wife and 5/- for each child. Since then the pension has been increased and at the present time such a man is entitled to £2 a week for himself, 30/- economic pension, £1 for his wife, and 10/- for each child, making a total of £5 a week. Corresponding increases apply to all other ranks in the service. Mr. Jones said he thought that such provision for disabled men was better than that paid in any other part of the British Commonwealth. He felt that the Government had been generous to men who had suffered in the last war.

Another recent improvement to the Pensions Act provides that the date of an ex-soldier's marriage makes no difference to his wife's eligibility to draw a pension, nor to that of the children of the marriage. Previously no wife or child of a marriage taking place after July 31, 1936, was eligible for a pension. The only exception retained is that of a "death-bed" marriage which means that if the death of an ex-soldier occurred within one year after the date of marriage the widow or child of that marriage would not be regarded as a dependant and would not be entitled to a pension under the Act.

THE WAR AND "RUIN"

THE "experts" are always making these two statements:

- (1) This is the most expensive war that has ever been waged;
- (2) We shall all be ruined at the end of it.

So far this war has proved most of the "experts" to be wrong. Ever since 1700 experts have been saying the same things about expense and ultimate ruin. The first has always been true, because each war has been fought by greatly increased armed forces and with more highly developed munitions of war; the second has always been false.

Here are some figures:

The Duke of Marlborough's campaign cost £50 millions. Britain paid off £30 million and carried the remainder over to the national debt. The population of Britain was then six million people and the national revenue £6 millions.

The Napoleonic Wars lasted for 21 years. They cost us £830 millions, of which £620 millions was added to the national debt.

The Crimean War cost £70 millions and another £43 millions of that sum went to increase the national debt.

The Boer War cost £200 millions.

The Great War cost £9,000 millions.

Britain now has a population of 41 millions and a national income of £942 millions.

During the last 240 years Britain has had 170 years of peace and 70 years of war. Yet she has never been ruined. Her population has multiplied by eight times and her national revenue has increased 150 times. Both revenue and population have increased after every war. Taxes have never been so heavy that the people have been crushed, since the standard of living has increased by at least 500 per cent. since 1700.

After the Great War, which was the most ruinous of all wars, the male rate of wages increased by 200 per cent. and the female rate by 190 per cent.

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