

MacDonald Following the Old Traditions

By J. T. MURPHY

EDITOR'S NOTE:—Today we publish another article by J. T. Murphy, the British Communist and trade unionist, telling of the conditions confronting the working class in the British Isles. This article will be followed by another tomorrow.

A FEW weeks ago, I ventured to write, "The traditional policy of Britain is taking its own inevitable course whether under the garb of pacifism or war. She must combine against the dominant power in Europe, whoever it may be." France dominates the situation and MacDonald perforce must aim to bring her to heel. Within a single week three important steps have been taken in this direction. The reduction of the reparations tax from 26 per cent to 5 per cent has been confirmed. A further letter has been exchanged with Poincare. The air estimates have been increased.

The first item can be counted one up for Germany and British trade. It met with slight opposition. Lloyd George divided himself from the Liberals against it, indicating by the way that the united household of liberalism is not so happy as it might be. But his opposition was only a question as to the value of this concession to Germany as a bargaining weapon. The test was the opposition of Toryism to what might be deemed the abolition of a little tariff reform.

MacDonald Aping Wilson.

But the letter to Poincare gets us on to another plane. This is MacDonald's first big effort to step into the arena of European politics as the re-incarnation of Wilson. Wilson fell before Clemenceau and Lloyd George thru making concessions in order to preserve a dream. Not only were his concessions accepted but his schemes were seized by others as the means to outwit him and the forces he represented. His League of Nations scheme was taken out of his grasp and made the instrument of the Allied Supreme Council which left Wilson out in the cold. From that day forward there has been a constant struggle within the League for the domination of its policy. MacDonald's emphasis on the League is as much a part of the rivalry between France and Britain as it was when Lloyd George sounded a similar note. MacDonald wants Germany in the League because it is perfectly clear that any rehabilitation of Germany is going to give Britain a fairly good grip upon the actions of Germany. His plea for international control of occupied areas is directed towards limiting the military power of France. His concession which alters the British government's attitude to the relation of debts and reparations from that as defined in the Balfour letter, is no concession in policy but only an indication of change of circumstance which he aims to use in a dual direction. First to get as much as possible out of reparations and second, to draw America into joint action with Britain with a view to modifying the debt relationships.

A Dangerous Step.

He is treading on exceedingly dangerous ground. It is one thing to outmaneuver a Wilson in a European combination at a time when the economic penetration of Europe by American finance was relatively weak. It is another thing to outmaneuver American financiers when they have got their talons into Europe and Britain too. The great plea for American intervention has always been, so far as MacDonald is concerned, on the grounds of world democracy and democratic idealism. But great powers do not move in response to idealism without there is a very material basis for their actions. And America will only participate in the European competition for something other than the dreams of MacDonald or Wilson. America has up to now kept herself free from every attempt on the part of Britain to play her off against France.

The forces behind MacDonald, I do not mean the working class forces in this case, but the imperialist forces realize these facts and the so-called replacements in cruisers have now to be reinforced with increases in air craft and forces. The figures of the new estimates show an increase of 2½ millions. 1923-4 estimates totalled £12,011,000; the 1924-5 estimates total £14,511,000. There is a decrease in the cost of the air forces and auxiliary services in Iraq and Palestine of over £1,300,000, which affects the gross but not the net figures of air votes. The effective increase of £2,808,000 on the net air estimates is attributed to:

"The progressive expansion of the air forces for home defense recently decided upon; to the increased requirements of Navy and Army co-operation and to the replenishment of stocks of technical equipment and other material."

Eight new regular squadrons will be completely formed during 1924-5 which will bring the number allotted for that purpose to 18 by April, 1925.

Provision is also made for the initial equipment of six more squadrons which under present arrangements will be formed in 1925-6.

By vote A the establishment of the air force is increased by 2,000 to a total of 35,000. It is reckoned that in a few years it will be 40,000.

No Change of Imperialist Policy.

The reduction of cost of forces for Mesopotamia must on no account be taken as a change of policy, whilst the home defense building of air craft forces is obviously directed against France. There is no other formidable air force to be reckoned with so far as Britain is concerned. There is not the slightest doubt that Poincare can read the air estimates as clearly as he has read MacDonald's letters. The one he will reckon with materially; the other he has answered with one of his Sunday speeches which concedes nothing. When all the phrases of MacDonald's statements have been cut away there is nothing left but the bold fact that he is following the old traditions of British policy more effectively than the Conservatives and the Liberals. His cruiser policy has roused Mussolini to action. His aircraft policy has met with the ap-

proval of every imperialist organ in the country while his Wilsonian phrases have tickled the palates of social democracy and liberalism as nothing else has done since Wilson announced his fourteen points. "Back to Wilsonism" is the slogan under which the new armament race is to be conducted.

Out-jingoing the Jingoos.

There appears to be no depths to which the Second International leaders will not sink to serve their masters. Having repudiated their own international, not only severing their connection with it as leaders, but also severing themselves from its declarations and insisting upon a nationalistic policy governed by the "interests of the Empire," they are doing their level best in every department of activity to prove themselves better imperialists than the advocates of imperialism.

The reduction in the Iraq estimates is explained by Winston Churchill, whose policy they are pursuing. Attacked in the Westminster by-election he retorts:

"If the policy I adopted in Mesopotamia is wrong why is the present government carrying it out? When for the first time I had any responsibility for Mesopotamia, at the beginning of 1921 the expense was nearly £40,000,000 per year. I immediately formed a native state and set up a home rule government under an Arab king. I withdrew practically the whole army and reduced the expense within a year to less than seven millions and prescribed a policy which would reduce it to about three millions. This policy has been pursued ever since by three separate ministers—Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. MacDonald."

The reason of British connection with Mesopotamia is well known. It forms one of the chain of countries on the all red route of empire from Cape Town to Calcutta which MacDonald is as keen on preserving as is Mr. Winston Churchill. The only difference, of course, is in the tune which the respective conquerors render to the listening world. One sings the song of education for the native with good dividends for British Industrialists, and work for the workers, and the other sings the song of Imperial expansion. The difference lies in the degree of hypocrisy only.

"By Their Deeds, Etc."

Forgetting the songs for the moment and getting back to their deeds we have now got the key to the increase of the air forces, the reductions in the estimates for Mesopotamia, the maneuvers with America, the sparring with Poincare. But what of the annoyance of Mussolini? It needs more than the cruiser replacement program to annoy him to the extent of joining with Spain in a navy campaign, and offering terms to France for a Latin combination in the Mediterranean Sea, and to proceed with a big navy program. This will be found in a further part of the "continuity policy" of MacDonald.

Before the war of 1914 and the development of the German navy scare Britain's strongest fleet was stationed in the Mediterranean as the great highway of the Empire.

Now that there is not the same necessity to keep the strongest part of the fleet in the North Sea, and Gibraltar is not the fortress it was in the years gone by, attention is being given to the concentration of the strongest forces in the Mediterranean. It is proposed by the Admiralty that eight of the most powerful battleships, to which the two new ones now being built may be added, are to concentrate in the Mediterranean. In addition the lighter forces are to be reinforced and the aircraft carrier Eagle, the largest ship of her type afloat, is under orders to proceed to the same station at Malta. At present no submarines are attached to the fleet in these waters but a flotilla is reported to be earmarked for the job. Some time will elapse before the whole of this plan can be carried out because of the smallness of dock facilities. But it is to be carried out, we are told.

Mussolini Jealous and Hostile.

It is this concentration which is annoying Mussolini, along with the dissatisfaction over the delay in the sharing of the spoils of war in Africa. According to the settlement of the victors, Italy has to have a slice of territory in Africa known as Jubaland, a part of Kenya now under the control of Britain. This reward does not appear to be coming to Italy quickly enough and so he regards the Mediterranean concentration as representative of a spirit of antagonism directed against Italy which justifies him in standing no nonsense. So he is going ahead with the armament policy.

Much as he would like to get the French to line up with him on this matter and to make a general Mediterranean combination, and much as the French foreign office would like to do so, the conflict between the dominant economic forces in each country are so much in opposition to each other that the proposal won't work. The Comités des Forges may be a competitor of the British industrialists, but it is getting too much out of her monopoly of the raw material, supplying the steel industry of Italy and the large market for her manufactured goods thruout Italy that there is not much likelihood of the combination being brought about.

Nevertheless the further we penetrate thru the "atmosphere favorable to peace" which MacDonald has been talking so much about the more the realities of warlike preparations and maneuvering for positions becomes discernable. Each of them are talking of the Versailles Treaty. All of them are pursuing their own National and Imperial aims.

Disaster Ahead.

The forces which underly the predatory aims are inexorable. They will not give way to MacDonald's rhapsodies, whilst in action he simply follows the old traditions. Imperialism has got him in its grip and all his colleagues with him. We are moving towards catastrophe and the Scotch ghost of Wilson leads the way with palm branches at the helm of the battleships, with puritan sermons and peaceful psalms to dull the christian conscience and the policy of Imperial Continuity as his chart. He says it is the path to socialism. It may be. But not in the sense in which he means it.