

MUSSOLINI'S LATEST SPEECH

(By Prof. W. K. Hancock)

The English newspapers have been arriving with summaries of a great speech made by Mussolini on May 20. They do not do justice to either the quantity or the quality of the speech. It took four and a half hours to deliver. It dealt with every aspect of the situation in Italy which could possibly interest Italians—with local administration, police, the Fascist militia, the destruction of the old Opposition and of free speech, the exchange situation, and the new syndicalist assembly which soon will succeed Italy's "Rump" Parliament. It dealt with the birthrate and the bachelor tax, with the "danger of urbanism," and "the duty of preparation."

Preparation for what? Mussolini spoke plainly. "We must be able to mobilise at a moment's notice five million men, and we must be able to arm them. We must strengthen our navy. Our air force, in which I believe increasingly, must be so numerous that the roar of its engines will drown every other sound in the peninsula, that its spreading wings will obscure the sun above our soil. Then on the morrow when, between 1935 and 1940, we are at a crucial point of European history—then shall we be able to make our voice heard, to see our rights finally recognised."

War and Birthrate

It was this sentence of the speech which most delighted supporters of Mussolini and most alarmed foreign journalists. Mussolini, they said, must be plotting war. Why had he mentioned the years 1935-40? The French reminded themselves that in 1935 their conscript army would be at its lowest strength; the low birthrate of the war years would then show its effect.

Why was Mussolini himself talking so much about "the birthrate, a nation's strength"? Why had he imposed a tax on bachelors? Why was he now threatening a tax on childless marriages? The French could think of only one answer to these questions—cannon fodder!

"Let us speak clearly," said Mussolini. "What are 40 million Italians face to face with 90 million Germans and 200 million Slavs? Turn to the West. What are 40 million Italians face to face with 40 million French, and an additional 90 million colonial subjects? Or in face of 46 million English, with 450 millions living in the colonies? Gentlemen, Italy, to count for something, must appear on the threshold of the second half of this century with a population of no fewer than 60 millions."

"So, by all means resist the childless. By all means resist the menace of urbanism. Statistics show that city families are less prolific than are the peasantry. Moreover, people of the cities get strange diseases, physical and mental. They are restless, unstable, politically minded, intolerant of discipline. But the peasantry obey orders in peace and in war. They have physical vitality and the wisdom of submissiveness."

Policy of Mussolini

Perhaps Mussolini is in many things wiser than his critics. Perhaps in the long run agriculture is the strength of a nation, and those nations which maintain their agriculture will have the greatest staying power. Mussolini, alone among European statesmen, believes this and shapes his policy accordingly. Yet he is more concerned with quantity than with quality. What he wants is numbers. To those who cry, "There are too many of us," he answers, "We are too few."

Too few for what? For happiness? But happiness does not depend on the density of population to the square mile, and Italy has grown to look on emigration as a safety valve. Too few for safety? It is true that there is safety in numbers.

In Australia we watch our population figures because we feel that we shall not be safe until we have effectively occupied the length and breadth of our continent. Italy, like Aus-

AFFORESTATION IN THE MOUNT LOFTY RANGES.

Sir Douglas Mawson offered a valuable suggestion to the Government with regard to the afforestation policy, when speaking at the annual Association Day dinner of the Commercial Travellers' Association on Saturday night. In proposing the toast of "Australia," he said he had been interested in afforestation, and after a study of the question was satisfied that it was a mistake to plant trees from which it was desired to obtain revenue in far-away districts like the South-East. "Trees should be grown in our backyards," said Sir Douglas. He pointed out that the cost of hauling timber from the South-East was the same as the freight from Vancouver Island to Port Adelaide. It would therefore be seen that it would be ten times cheaper to push the policy of afforestation in their own hills on the outskirts of the city itself. In addition to beautifying the scenery, trees in the Adelaide hills would prevent erosion and conserve water catchment areas, besides proving a profitable investment. They should profit by the mistakes of the past. He pointed out that over £60,000,000 had been lost to Australia by the error of judgment which caused the break of gauge difficulty. Adelaide had, in his opinion, been built in the wrong place; it should have been near the mouth of the Murray. It was too late to move Adelaide, but they could at least have sufficient foresight to realise that to have their forests near the market would be an advantage which might mean the difference between the success or failure of the industry.

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"OUR INHERITANCE."

Australia's Obligations.

Appeal by Sir Douglas Mawson.

At the annual "Association Day" dinner of the South Australian Commercial Travellers and Warehousemen's Association, which was held at the association rooms, North terrace, on Saturday evening, Sir Douglas Mawson (Professor of Geology at the Adelaide University) delivered an illuminating and practical address in proposing the toast "Australia."

Sir Douglas said that, in looking into the dimly visioned beginnings of earth history, they found in that region of the globe, not the Australia of to-day, but a land area including only half the western half of the continent, while the eastern States, as slimy ooze, lay deep beneath the grand Pacific Ocean. That land was not their Australia Felix, but an inhospitable barren shore, the grey rocks unrelieved by vegetation, and no stir of life. After the crustacean period, with the passing of the ice, a warm dry climate heralded in the age of reptiles. In these times Australia passed through an age of great fresh water lakes. In the strife for existence and survival of the fittest, mammals later became dominant. Millions of years ago Australia had risen somewhat from the sea and poured back to the oceans the water that had formerly flowed in from the north as a great inland Mediterranean Sea. Since then Australia had undergone many physiographic changes, but remained throughout isolated from the other great lands of the world. That condition of insularity, combined with limited change in environment and climate, had resulted in the preservation of archaic types of mammals and plants. Man by his supreme efficiency was able probably during the last great ice age, some 100,000 years ago, to bridge the gap between Asia and Australia. As the ice age waned, the thawing ice steadily restored the level of the sea to its former stand, and effectively cut off the stream of migration that had been inaugurated.

"Australian Man Has Stagnated."

Thereafter, continued the speaker, for possibly 50,000 years Australian man had existed in a land of abundant game and genial climate, but he had not been subjected to the stimulation of competition from the outside world, and had stagnated; or, if advanced at all such progress had been but a fraction of that induced in other lands where free competition had

prevailed. Hence with the arrival of Europeans, in the present days of extended maritime transport, the aboriginal had become almost a memory of the past. "Covetous eyes might well be turned on Australia," he added, "for here is a wonderful prize for the inheritors of those first gallant pioneers who, without a Government dote or assisted immigration, embarked upon the long and risky journey across the seas to find themselves in a new and raw land. The homogeneity of the people, and the island nature of the continent, secured for our people a degree of immunity from foreign aggression, but that factor cannot be effective until the land is adequately populated. Australia's very riches tend to slacken man's effort." To counter-balance the value of the natural assets, was the additional expenditure in the public services consequent upon widely scattered, meagre population. Their initial assets were of two denominations—exhaustible and non-exhaustible. The former included the mineral and original forest wealth, as well as the game and fisheries, and the latter water power.

"A True Balance Sheet."

Proceeding, Sir Douglas Mawson said that if they wished to make out a true balance sheet for the Commonwealth to-day the exhaustible assets should show on the debtor side of the ledger. The Prime Minister recently told them that, of about 1,000 million pounds owing by the Australian Governments, the bulk was borrowed for remunerative public works, and only about 300 millions, arising out of the war, stood unbalanced as a dead-weight debt. The interest bill on that amount appeared at present to be safely within their capacity to pay, though it was not pleasant to contemplate that they were cashing their exhaustible resources and at the same time hanging an interest bill around their necks. All was well only so long as those public works for which money had been borrowed were running on a paying basis, and so long as the people, over and above the cost of maintaining themselves, produced a surplus sufficient to pay for the annual cost of government and the further interest on the dead-weight public debt. "To effect this," he continued, "a definite output of production at world's parity value a head is required, and the necessity for that cannot be varied one iota by legislation or arbitration in regard to hours to be worked and rates to be paid." They had tasted luxury and developed wants. The daily wage-earner required housing, clothing, and food, in addition to which there was more or less a demand for beer, tobacco, motor cars, and sports—the latter embracing chiefly diversion at the picture theatres and the weekly loss on the totalizer—every one of which necessitated from the individual an equivalent output of work in some form or other. "If these continually expanding demands are to be satisfied, the wage-earner cannot expect shorter hours, when in the past production has not been sufficient to clear the adverse balance in the ledger."

"Increased Efficiency Demanded."

The speaker said the only solution of their problem was to produce more an hour over the shorter hour period. That demanded increased efficiency. Labour could not gain its proper objective by merely demanding an increase in the daily wage, but must find a means of increasing the daily output that fraction which was equivalent to the additional wage required. That might be effected by greater personal efficiency, or by the employment of machinery. The employer of labour, either in the capacity of a private individual or Government, had an obligation to the community to see that the most economic plans and methods of procedure were employed to attain the end in view. It was the high state of efficiency everywhere practised in the United States of America that rendered it possible for the labouring man to live on the satisfactory scale which prevailed there to-day. Fortunately, the Australian could hold his own with the labour of any country, so that he should not fear competition, provided he was given full opportunity to demonstrate his capacity. The attention which both the Government and capitalists had recently bestowed upon investigating the application of science to industry was a definite indication of their earnestness in regard to increased production and improved methods of production. What they needed to vision mostly was concerted action by the labour unions and capital to secure the greatest possible efficiency. Then should the worker have more luxury and more leisure hours to bask in the sunshine of that great inheritance—Australia. (Applause.)

"What Might Have Been."

In conclusion, Sir Douglas said as they looked back on things that had happened in the past, they could see how much better things might have been. If there had been no such trouble as the break of gauge system in Australia, they would be about 60 million pounds better off. Instead of having a railway running from Adelaide through the Meadows, they had selected the highest point in the State—Mount Lofty—to travel through. Again, Adelaide, might have been a very much better city had it been located at the mouth of the Murray. Sydney was also built on the wrong site; it should have been at Port Stephens. Canberra might

then have been built where Sydney now is. He advocated afforestation. They would pay to grow in the south-east, they would pay 10 times more by being planted at their "back door," as that would be closer to the market. By planting trees on the hillside they would lessen erosion, and also conserve the water. Those parts needed to be planted for that reason.

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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ORCHESTRA.

A Splendid Concert.

For the South Australian Orchestra concert on Saturday evening the Town Hall was filled to overflowing, and many of those who had deferred obtaining tickets until the last minute had to go away disappointed. Lady Bridges was present, accompanied by Miss Avilde Bridges and a party from Government House. The programme was a very exacting one. Richard Wagner's writings demand consistently vivid and strongly handled presentation. His work must be made warm, real, and living, and that is exactly how the orchestra, under Mr. W. H. Foote, presented the ten numbers which went to make up the capital programme, Miss Sylvia Whittington, A.M.U.A., was, as usual, principal violinist, and to her adequate leading the orchestra and the audience owe much. Mr. Foote was received on taking his place with merited applause.

The opening number was the overture to "The Flying Dutchman," and the way in which this was interpreted was excellent. The decision of attack, volume of sound, complete control, and the contrast of the subdued music which follows, were noticeably good, while the descriptive storm passages and the rugged melody of the sailor's chorus were artistically rendered. "Siegfried's journey to the Rhine," from the "Gotterdammerung," made up as it is of leitmotifs from the earlier music dramas and the earlier scenes of Gotterdammerung, gave ample scope for impressive treatment. Some of the horn passages were most effective, and the soft staccato passages for the strings delightfully handled. The Rhine motif was very beautiful, and the whole was given in a manner of which Mr. Foote and the orchestra had every right to be proud. A lighter atmosphere was introduced in "Ein Albumblatt," an orchestral arrangement of a piano piece. The character of the music was wonderfully well conveyed, enriched by orchestral colouring, expressive and graceful, but completely contrasted with the dramatic qualities of other numbers. This was encored. The descriptive and dramatic "Entrance of the gods in Walhalla," from "Das Rheingold," was another triumph for the orchestra. The tumult of sound, the pathetic plea of the Rhine maidens, the pompous march and the rainbow motif, made a fine climax to an impressive performance. The one vocal number was "Elizabeth's greeting," from "Tannhauser," Miss Marjorie Walsh, who was the soloist, gave an artistic rendering, her singing being marked by sincerity, purity, and evenness of tone, and clear enunciation. Her voice told well against the orchestral accompaniment. This number had also to be repeated. The other orchestral writings were "Prelude to Act III of 'Die Meistersinger,'" the first melody being introduced by the cellos and taken up by the violas. The "Tannhauser Overture" was another effective number, enthusiastically received. The effects were well attained, and a perfect tempest of sound achieved. The dreamy poetry of the "Lohengrin" prelude and the wild descriptiveness of the "Ride of the Valkyries" were well characterized, and the programme concluded with a fine rendering of the overture from "Die Meistersinger."

MAIL 6-8-24

"HANSEL AND GRETEL"

The Conservatorium Opera Class is getting ready for a performance of Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel," which is to be given in King's Theatre toward the end of the month. It is well that an opera which is likely to be of some use to students who mean to go on to the professional stage is forming the subject of study for the forthcoming performance. Although the work of little-known English writers, such as was presented on the last occasion, may be of passing interest it provides nothing for a possible repertoire, nor does it tend to explore the possibilities of standard operas.

That the performance is to be given in a theatre which allows for the provision of needful accessories for a good production, is also a distinct advantage, as nothing could be worse than the acoustic properties of the Elder Hall as applied to the speaking voice. "Hansel and Gretel" is a charming opera, melodious and bright.