

Population and War

John A. MacDonald, '38

(The following is a condensation of a lecture given before the officers of the Army and Navy Club of which the writer is a member).

Almost daily the close reader of the newspaper and periodical comes in contact with some phase of the population problem which, although it is seldom headline news, may be, nevertheless, of critical importance to a country either at peace or in war. Such items are usually glossed over. It is true that, at first sight, such a topic of study suggests dry statistics, census tables, and obscure stippled maps; but it becomes more inviting when it is pointed out that population problems also include, among others, such practical questions as war, wages, immigration, distribution of wealth, education, birth control and other topics. To treat of such a question, with regard to war from a true sociological viewpoint necessarily involves touching the many aspects of the question just enumerated.

Although the development of our present efficient system of "taking the census" from the first crude efforts of the ancients would be of interest, we shall pass that over and begin with the theory of Robert Malthus who, at the time of the Industrial Revolution, stimulated the first serious scientific thought along these lines. Amidst the turbulent economic stress of his time he raised the clarion call of overpopulation which had been silenced since the days of paganism. Arguing that populations tend to increase faster than material sustenance can be increased and made ready for them, he said that if humanity is to avoid the terrible evils of overpopulation, namely—war, famine, and misery, population increases should be controlled. As a means of limiting population, he vehemently opposed birth control and advocated moral restraint, which, to him, meant postponement of marriage. The theories of this important pioneer were later proven unsound, as Malthus, from the misery of his surroundings, could not foresee the vast improvements in agricultural and manufacturing technique, nor the opening up of foreign territories for the raising of food.

Present-day sociologists agree that the increase or decrease in the population of a nation depends on many

factors, but primarily on two, namely—the increase or decrease of births over deaths and the immigration policy of that country. Until quite recently immigration and emigration were carried on freely until the apparent pressure of population caused some countries to raise the bars against aliens. By such action these create international friction and decrease their population. In many countries, too, rate of increase is being gauged by that desirable position known as the “optimum density,” which will obtain the largest income per head attainable. An effort to attain this ideal has been the excuse of an increasing number in America and in Western Europe to adopt the pagan procedure of birth control with all its attendant unnatural and pernicious practices. A writer in the Reader's Digest viewing this alarming trend says: “It seems rather generally agreed that Western civilization is committing race suicide through the widespread adoption of birth control.”

The difficulties which arise from a stationary or declining population are many and varied, effecting adversely the whole economic and political life of a country; in international life, they center round the question of power and prestige, and are a most important factor in determining the amount of such possessed by a nation. Napoleon once made the remark that even God seemed to be on the side with the most legions. Among the fully industrialized countries of Western Europe, other things being more or less equal, those having the largest populations are the most powerful and cut the biggest figure in the eyes of the world. The story of the “Big Four” and the proceedings at Versailles in 1919 provide good examples. In fact, the same principle may be seen at work in any international conference. There is nothing mysterious about the advantage which numbers give. Behind the representatives of big nations at the international conferences are big battalions. Numbers make possible the erection of force, and the big nation is tempted to wave the big stick. As a result of this, international bullying is encouraged and too often actually takes place.

Let us see just what an analysis of our question will show when applied to the causes of the War of the Nations. It is found that the World War was essentially an outgrowth of a pressing population problem which confronted the nations of Europe twenty-four years ago. The peoples of central Europe were overcrowded. Each country needed

room for expansion and desired new colonies where surplus peoples could be accommodated and additional markets where food could be raised for the use of the homeland. Germany more than any other country was striving for a place in the sun, and found her borders shadowed on the one hand by France and on the other by Russia. Then too, she felt a sense of superiority over France whose population she had far outstripped in number since 1860. The year 1914 seemed an opportune time to strike for more territory. The fears engendered in France and Russia by an ever-growing Germany contributed to a state of mind that made war inevitable. This is an outstanding example of what was an almost universal condition. In the Balkan countries, the same situation prevailed; each, as the case might be, dreamed of a greater Greece, a greater Bulgaria, or a greater Rumania,—a dream which could be realized only at the expense of a neighbouring country. At last the melting pot of Europe boiled over and its seething venom of nationalistic hatreds and avaricious covetousness poured not only over the whole of that continent but indeed over the whole globe.

Let us glance briefly at the far East situation and note the present day parallel. Between 1910 and 1920 the population of Asia increased 15.4% as compared to an increase of 1% in Europe. Russia and China through birth control and infant exposure have limited their numbers considerably, but Japan abhors any such practices as being against her strict religious tenets. In 1932 the surplus of births over deaths in that country reached the huge figure of one million, the largest ever achieved by any nation and considerably larger than the increase (during the same year) of the United States whose population is twice as large. The intense pressure of population on the Island kingdom accounts for its desire to spread out to unsettled areas near at hand and to seize opportunities for migration to America and Australia. In these nations the doors of immigration recently have been closed. The mistrust thus aroused is partly responsible for the rapid growth of the war spirit in the far East, a spirit which may become worldwide. Japan is still engaged in her undeclared and unjust war with China while British and American interests are being provoked and threatened daily.

The importance of population as a military necessity has been noted, and, in considering it, we must not let

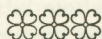
hopes and ideals blind us to the facts of what is going on around us. Thus we see that perhaps one of the toughest and most fundamental problems that the world has to solve to-day is to harmonize national safety with per capita efficiency. Economically, this is the basic significance of the problem of international peace. Nationalistic sentiments and frictions counsel a "safety-first" policy and safety, as we have been told, is supposed to reside in overwhelming numbers. Prof. A. B. Wolfe, of Ohio State University, sums up the whole situation in a rather pessimistic way in the following paragraph.

"In the absence of an effective method of adjusting international differences, we are, as the world now reasons, caught on the horns of a dilemma. Unless our population increases freely, regardless of economic consequence, we shall be in danger of attack by other, and envious nations in which unlimited multiplication will have afforded both a reason and a means for aggression. And if we do so, we shall reach the subsistence level in which death will continuously reap a fat harvest without any foreign assistance. Economically, each nation will be caught in a vicious circle. It will have to have a teeming population from which to recruit the cheap labor necessary to retain its foreign markets; and the military protection of these same markets will be necessary because of the teeming population which will starve if they are lost."

The danger to America and Western Europe seems to be greatest, however, from their present decline in birth rate. Dr. R. R. Kczynski, outstanding English authority on population problems says: "In a very few years the Government very likely will be compelled to embark on a population policy which may become as costly as its rearmament policy." Another noted authority Prof. Carr-Saunders asserts that "the aim should be to place the family where it ought, on all grounds, to be, in the center of the social field, and to bring all other institutions into appropriate relations to it."

The whole political and international aspect of the subject needs extended treatment rather than the passing notice which it receives to-day. Many pertinent questions might be asked as: Will might of number win over right of possession in the case of Canada which possesses one-sixteenth of the earth's land surface but only one-half of one per cent of the world's population? Such a question

and the many others arising from this problem of population should be threshed out at an international conference before it becomes too late. International conferences have been devoted to subjects of less importance, and it is not impossible that agreements might be made so that some action may be taken in pouring the necessary oil of friendly arbitration on the turbulent and troubled waters churned up by the vexing population problems of the day.



Canadian Radio Licenses

Thomas Holland, '40

The recent announcement that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had again raised the radio license fee, this time from two to two dollars and a half, is causing no little comment through press and microphone. The announcement was made at an inopportune time. The Corporation had just sold much of its popular broadcasting time to American business firms for programs featuring American artists and originating in Hollywood or New York. Since one of the primary aims of the C.B.C. is to develop home talent the flooding of Canadian ether with American programs is bound to cause some comment. Apparently the Corporation's policy is, as some wit has put it, "Ads. across the border," until the financial embarrassment is alleviated.

The increased fee, we are told, is necessitated for the building and maintaining of at least four fifty thousand watt stations erected at centers throughout Canada where they will serve the greatest area. Two of these have been built at a cost of three hundred thousand dollars each in Ontario and Quebec. The West as well as the Maritimes have the same need. The purpose of building these powerful stations is to maintain a dependable radio service for Canadian listeners, especially those in remote districts where privately owned stations operate chiefly for gain.

Money is also needed for the development of radio talent in Canada. The Corporation plans to increase its broadcasting time to sixteen hours daily in the near future. There are also about three hundred and fifty persons, ex-