

Notes and News

Another Tribute to Lord Lugard

MEMBERS of the Institute will read with pleasure the following extract from a letter addressed to the editor by the Rev. Father Dubois, S.J., who has been a most valuable member of the Executive Council from the beginning.

'Avec notre cher President mon ignorance de la langue anglaise a forcément réduit nos relations que j'aurais tant aimé à rendre plus intimes, car rien que dans son accueil, dans les quelques lettres qu'il m'a écrites, dans l'intérêt qu'il voulait bien prendre à mes communications, en particulier à celles qu'il m'a fait l'honneur de me demander sur l'Institut, son travail et son esprit, je sentais une telle sympathie, que j'entrais aussitôt, auprès de lui, en pleine confiance et donnais en toute simplicité toute ma pensée. Je l'ai toujours admiré dans sa présidence, dans sa manière de conduire les débats nettement, clairement, logiquement, faisant à chaque partie du programme la part qui répondait à son importance, détournant les inutilités ou les digressions, ramenant les échanges de vue au point exact de la question et nous conduisant avec fermeté, mais sans heurt, par chemins parfois un peu difficiles et situations un peu délicates, au but essentiel de chaque réunion; tous s'y retrouvaient dans le même esprit d'entière cordialité et de parfaite entente.

'Vous vous rappelez peut-être certain incident de l'audience de Pie XI au Vatican. Le Saint Père fit le tour de notre groupe et il se trouva que le dernier présenté fut notre Président. Ni l'un ni l'autre n'y "perdirent la face" (comme on dit en Chine) et Pie XI se contenta de faire remarquer, que dans les grands cortèges, les plus hautes autorités sont toujours à la fin.

'J'ai été d'autant plus ému par la mort de ce grand colonial à glorieuse carrière, qu'avait été Lord Lugard, que le bon Monsieur Vischer lui-même venait de me le dire encore plein d'ardeur et d'activité. La Providence a ses raisons!'

French Colonial Policy

THE report has now been issued of the French African Conference which was held at Brazzaville early in 1944. The importance of the assembly can be measured by the fact that General de Gaulle travelled to open it and that it was attended by the Heads of all the French colonies in Africa, together with a delegation from the Provisional Consultative Assembly and representatives of Algeria, Tunis, and Morocco. The President was M. René Plevin, Commissaire aux Colonies. The Conference bore striking testimony that France, still *dans les heures noires de son malheur*, had faith in the future of her empire.

The Conference as its first act reaffirmed the principle that France aims at the incorporation of the indigenous masses into the French world. 'Les fins de l'œuvre de civilisation accomplie par la France dans les colonies écartent toute idée d'autonomie, toute possibilité d'évolution hors du bloc français de l'Empire; la constitution éventuelle, même lointaine, de self-government dans les colonies est à écarter.' It declared in favour of a wider and more effective representation of the colonies in the metropolitan parliament and also of a progressive decentralization of powers. It asked for representative assemblies, composed of Europeans and Africans, elected where (or as soon as) possible by universal suffrage, and with consultative and deliberative functions. The interests of the African population are regarded as paramount; and the activity of non-Africans must be regulated to respond to that condition.

It is clear that opposing views regarding native institutions were presented to the Conference. The divergence is manifest in the memoranda submitted by African notabilities.

The Cercle des Évolués of Brazzaville pleaded for a profound study of all African custom, *pour en dégager le bien-fondé*; if a custom is good, leave it alone; if not, modify it; but it advocated integration by means of assimilation in stages. On the other hand, M. Fily Dabo Sissoko, Chief of Niamba, A.O.F., argued strongly against assimilation and in favour of adaptation (the term he preferred to 'association'): he concluded: Let the Black remain black; let the White try all appropriate means of allowing the Black to develop on his own lines. The decision of the Conference appears to lean towards the former view. It was aware that the great mass of Africans remain faithful to their customary institutions; but also that there is an élite which is drawn towards a French way of life. The problem is to find the best way of ensuring the development of the masses towards French civilization and at the same time to give the élite every chance to show their capacity for administration. This is what the Conference recommended: 'Les institutions politiques traditionnelles doivent être maintenues non comme fin en soi mais en tant que mode permettant à la vie municipale et régionale de s'exprimer dès à présent avec le maximum de vigueur. L'Administration doit suivre et contrôler le fonctionnement de ces institutions, de façon à diriger leur évolution vers l'accession rapide des indigènes à la responsabilité politique.' It recommended that administrators should give personal attention to questions of marriage with the object of directing customs towards the liberty and dignity of women. As for polygamy—*ce fléau de l'Afrique*—the Administration must fight it with every means at its disposal. Every tribunal before which these family cases are brought should be presided over by a European official; in other civil and in commercial affairs native judges should for the present administer the customary law. A penal code for the whole of Africa is advocated. Education must reach the masses; a school should be opened in every village where fifty pupils are available as soon as the necessary teachers are trained; and girls should share equally with boys in the instruction. As for the school-language: 'L'enseignement doit être donné en langue française, l'emploi pédagogique des dialectes locaux parlés étant absolument interdit, aussi bien dans les écoles privées que dans les écoles publiques.' On this point, as M. Plevin has said, the Conference showed a tendency *nettement assimilatrice*, revealing its ambition that the natives in French Africa should evolve by stages into African Frenchmen.

The Conference recommended that a maximum delay of five years be allowed to re-establish the liberty of labour which the needs of war infringed. And to give labour an honourable place it was recommended that there be instituted an obligatory service of one year 'pour les indigènes de 20 à 21 ans reconnus aptes et qui n'auraient pas été pris dans la première portion du contingent militaire'. The men should be employed solely upon public works; and any man should be exempt who could prove that he had worked for a private employer eighteen months. Pensions should be assured to all native workers after 15 or 20 years of labour.

The Conference dealt with other matters which we cannot here refer to.

Political Developments in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan

In a lecture delivered at Makerere College (printed in *The Bulletin of the Uganda Society*, December 1944) Sir Douglas Newbold reviewed the steps which have been taken towards self-government in the Sudan, particularly in the six northern provinces with a population of 4½ millions, mostly Arab-speaking and Muslim. In view of the chaos found by the new government when it came into being after the battle of Omdurman the period of twenty years from 1899 to 1919 was necessarily a period of direct rule, though even then a beginning was made in recreating the tribal system and there was some devolution to native authorities. A more definite policy of devolution followed the close of the first world war. It was soon found that native authorities could not rest on a basis of pure tribalism, or on the powers of the chiefs, but must be territorial on a local basis. In the last seven years there has been a development into something like the local government which obtains in civilized countries.