

## WANTED—POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

### Major Douglas's Speech at the Dinner of Welcome on his Return from Alberta



MAJOR DOUGLAS

**I**N acknowledging your very kind welcome to Mrs. Douglas and to me upon our return from Alberta, I am immediately confirmed in my opinion that a really pleasant life must contain a certain amount of both light and shade. To-night is the light. When my friend the Earl of Tankerville was saying those kind words about me, I was thinking of a little incident which occurred in our train journey from Ottawa to Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, which had been preceded by a good deal of really cheering information as to the sort of reception we should get in Alberta. It was suggested that Albertans were a very wild sort of people who would not much appreciate the intervention into their politics of a mere Briton, and that if we got back with our lives it was as much as we could hope. On the trains which run out to the West, the situation after about the first day becomes similar to that on a boat—even the most insignificant person becomes well known—on the second day when I went into the breakfast car to have my roll and coffee in the morning I noticed at the other end of the car a gentleman with a bright red face and polished gold teeth regarding me with an affectionate smile. In answer to my enquiry, the conductor told me that this gentleman, who seemed so interested in me, was the Public Executioner, and was on his way out to Edmonton; so I could not help feeling additional sympathy with the movement for the abolition of capital punishment.

#### The Need for Reticence

I expect you would like me to tell you something of what is happening in Alberta, but I am under certain inhibitions with regard to talking about the political situation there, because Social Credit dominates it, and anything I might say about it would be given political significance. From certain points of view this is a matter for congratulation, but at the same time imposes upon me a certain amount of reticence for, as you no doubt saw from *The Times* yesterday, the elections in Alberta will be held on August 22, and there is very little doubt that anything that even we insignificant people might say will get to Alberta and will be used for political purposes. I can, of course,

talk about things which are common knowledge; and there is no doubt that in Alberta, as indeed all over the world, the conditions of life are absurdly bad considering the physical possibilities, and that they are definitely getting worse. I do not propose to dilate, but will give you one very obvious instance to show the absurdity of the present state of affairs.

#### You Don't Make Roads Out of Money

Alberta, as you know, is a prairie Province, although in fact parts of it do run into the Rockies, and there is a type of soil which, when the rain falls, makes the ordinary mud road become a *real* mud road. There is never any doubt about its being mud, but very often doubt about it being a road, and of all the physical deficiencies of Alberta the lack of good roads is the most outstanding. So far as I am aware there is only one length of waterproof road outside the large towns, and that extends for about 150 miles from Edmonton.

The rest of the Province is completely without any but dirt roads. The people, no doubt, imagine they cannot afford better roads for some reason connected with money, yet, in the north of Alberta, there is a remarkable deposit of over 100,000 acres of tar sand to a depth which is unknown, and this has merely to be taken out and put down to form almost perfect waterproof roads. So we have at one and the same time a country which is dependent for its everyday business upon roads—because the farmer has to get his produce, his shopping, and his social amenities on roads—and you have in the north this marvellous bitumen deposit, with a railway running up between the roadless district and the tar sand, yet they are thinking of shutting down the railway because there is not enough traffic! That is, I think, in very simple form, a laboratory demonstration of the absurdities of this so-called financial system.

#### Governments are the Very Devil

I want to leave Alberta for the moment for certain generalities which have been reinforced in my mind by my visit to Alberta, although perhaps they existed there, and in many other minds before. There is an old saying in Latin which reads: *Daemon est deus inversus*, which I will translate very freely as "Governments are the very devil." and when I say Governments I mean not only political, but financial governments, and perhaps more financial than political. I believe that this is a matter of very great importance; in fact it runs into very obscure metaphysics into which I don't propose to enter to-night. For my sins, I have been in contact with governments most of my life (hence I have not much hair, and what I have is grey) and I have noticed—and nobody who comes into contact with governments can fail to notice—that while individually the components of governments, financial or political, are generally—but not always—charming and amiable gentlemen, in organisations of which they are the titular heads, even in their own ranks, are included persons and policies which combine the charming attributes of the skunk and the tarantula.

I hope no one will accuse me of over-stating the case. What I am trying to say is that so far as I, personally, have come into contact with the upper ranks of politicians, they have generally been composed of men who were trying to do a difficult job, and who in their private lives were honest and respectable citizens, yet they appear to be controlling an organisation which, once it is out of their sight, becomes a nuisance rather than a help, and is devoid both of decency and common honesty. I hope that I am not rating myself too highly, but I think I know how this comes about. Organisations tend to become the prey of interests, and these interests become things which are run by experts, so that those particular heads of governments with whom we come into contact, or whose names we see in the paper and perhaps even, if I may so greatly dare, those whom you have the honour and pleasure to entertain to-night, become the unwitting tools of

interests which, even if they could, they have not, perhaps, the time to control. Certainly experience tends to confirm this.

There can be, from an unbiased point of view, no doubt as to the wide divergence between the really honest good intention of most of these individuals, and the results which they obtain; and if that is so, the chances of obtaining a better world through the agency of government *as it exists* are just about the same as those which are involved in the statement that, if a monkey played upon the keys of a typewriter for long enough, it would write the sonnets of Shakespeare. Given sufficient time, no doubt it would, but it would require a long succession of monkeys and many typewriters; and the methods upon which we are carrying on the government of the world at the present time are likely to prove just about as rapid in producing the results that we want. If that is so we have to make some sort of change.

### The Importance of Social Dynamics

Of course I may be wrong, anyone may be wrong, but certainly so far as my experience goes I am more and more convinced that **what is urgent in this world, with an urgency that transcends any other urgency, is a study and practice of the science of social dynamics.** I do not really believe myself that forms of government matter very much. It is the way, and the source from which, control and power are exercised that matters. Just so long as you have the machinery of government without a dynamic will in control, you have a body without a soul. We have in this, as in most Western countries, quite a good body—good enough at any rate for practical purposes—but it has no dynamic will, and a body without a soul is a lunatic; and that is what governments are at the present time. It is immensely urgent, not that we should change the form of the body, but that the mechanism should be controlled by a political will; and I am grateful to your Chairman, whose speech, I need hardly say, owes nothing to me, for taking exactly the line that I should have wished him to take if I had been presumptuous enough to suggest it. I am quite sure he is right. I am sure than we now know enough about these various agencies of political action to be certain that if we get the power we can achieve the result; and to discuss mere mechanisms, without getting control of the steam of the boiler, is just a childish game which ought to be beneath the attention of any adult person.

The keynote, I am convinced, of this situation is personal responsibility. You have got to get your representatives—and I am talking now of the democratic system of government which exists throughout the British Empire—you have got to get your representatives to realise that they have the immensely honourable position of securing for you the distribution of your wealth in accordance with your desires, so far as it is physically possible to do so, and to realise that they should not attempt to be the technical advisers who say how things should be done. Nothing is more depressing to me than some of the conversations I have had with the politicians in various countries who propose to inflict their half-baked schemes upon a long-suffering populace.

### The Problem of Control

All over the world at the present time there is a spate of action, which can only be compared to that of a child operating a machine-gun and slewing it all round the horizon. Governmental powers in this complex modern world are so great, and they can be exercised with so little knowledge, that to contemplate the risks which we incur, whilst they are wielded by those now in charge of them in many places, is one of the most depressing spectacles that anyone can experience. I am quite sure that we are obliged—and I mean obliged by necessities that threaten our very existence—either to endure the break-up of the modern systems of organisation, because we recognise that we are not sufficiently advanced to control the forces which they have at their disposal, and revert perhaps into a period like the Dark Ages until we regain an opportunity, after a long struggle, to

solve our present problems; or else we have to recognise that all these forces must be made responsible to the over-riding necessities of the human spirit, and must not be subordinated to the interests of any sectional ideal.

**It is no use at the present time to put forward schemes for Social Credit, or any other scheme, until you have got the dynamic power to make those people in control apply it. I am convinced, after fifteen or sixteen years of continuous experience in these matters, that the attractions of those usurped powers, used for anti-social purposes, are so great, even to men who otherwise appear to be men of common decency, that they will never give them up unless forced to do so.**

I feel, in speaking to an audience of the calibre of those gathered here to-night, which is, I imagine, drawn from the more fortunate ranks of life, that I should insist on the obligation which rests on those more fortunate people to take a hand in this matter. Nothing can be more lacking in common sense than to suppose that there is an alternative, at the present time, between change and no change. There is no such alternative, in spite of what perhaps Mr. Baldwin might tell you. There is only the alternative of what sort of a change we are going to have; and I have been appalled at the nonsense which has been talked to me by responsible people as to the sort of changes which they think will be brought about. Changes which involve the sacrifice, probably for hundreds of years, of the freedoms and the privileges upon which the British race prides itself, simply and solely to obtain something which can be obtained without a single sacrifice.

### A Great Responsibility

Unless those people in the more fortunate ranks of life at present, will justify the opportunities they have had of obtaining a wider outlook, not only will they not prevent a change, but they will have no hand whatever in the kind of change that will be made. That change will be put over; it will be a change not only worse for you but worse for those who have put the change over.

**I am making an appeal to your selfishness, but not only to your selfishness; I appeal also to your altruism to place yourselves at the service of the change. The fact is that a change can be made without any shadow of doubt, a change which, in the real sense of the word, would benefit everyone and hurt no one; but that change on the lines of which I am speaking will not be made as a result of hearing people talk, and it won't be secured unless you take a hand in it. A change more unpleasant and with far worse consequences to everyone will take place unless you live up to the responsibilities placed upon you.**

This is not a matter of abstract importance, one to which you can attend when you have a little time, it is a matter of such urgency that I agree with something Lord Tankerville said to me this afternoon, that it is extremely doubtful whether we have time. All we can say is that the time is so short that **we must use all those energies and all those abilities and possibilities which we possess, wisely—not madly in rushing off expecting to do it in two days—but continuously, with a recognition of the gravity of the situation; in the hope—I believe it to be a forlorn hope—that we may avert a great catastrophe.**

If we cannot avert that great catastrophe we shall, at any rate to a considerable extent, in men's minds, and perhaps even in men's actions, start such things as may carry over the catastrophe to produce something approaching a millennium after the catastrophe has passed.

### The Parting of the Ways

Within the next two or three years; I will say, in spite of my well-known objection to prophesying in terms of time, certainly within the next five years, the future of social life on this planet will be fixed for hundreds of years to come. It will either take a line which will mark the beginning of a completely new epoch, in which ultimately, although not immediately, material issues will become trivial—something of about the order of cleaning your teeth or putting on your clothes in the

morning — they will not disappear, but we shall have release from those present ills which dominate our lives, and leave us free to develop in a manner about which I am not going to prophesy, as it is not my business. Alternatively, if we persist, and allow matters to go on as at present, we shall be involved in one catastrophe after another, and I have no doubt we shall descend again into something approaching the state of the Dark Ages.

We shall enter this critical period in the autumn, for if it has not already actually begun we are at any rate in what might be described as the foothills. I should not be at all surprised if the course of events in Canada—not only in Alberta, but in Canada generally—and in that great country which lies to the south of its territorial boundary, and the state of affairs in general as they develop during the remainder of 1935, will form the opening of a quite definite period; and I would assure those of you who have by your presence here shown your interest in this matter that **a very great responsibility rests on every one of you individually.**

If you really do not regard this matter merely as a parlour game to be played as a good substitute for contract bridge, and costing rather less, then I really

urge you not merely to think or write about it, but to do something and to do it quickly.

**For anyone to suppose that any useful purpose can be served at this time by putting forward Social Credit, much less any detailed proposals for its application, without a clear idea as to the powers which must be invoked for its success, is absolutely childish.**

So far as I am aware, and so far as my thinking will take me, certainly in this country there is no better method (in fact as far as I can see it is the only method) by which you can achieve results, than to **take action along the lines of the Electoral Campaign, which was explained to you by Lord Tankerville, and insist that your Parliamentary representatives shall do what you want, and that you shall not be asked to vote on something that they want you to have until you have made your own agenda.**

If you do not express your will, then the position is this: Unless you have a corporate will you cannot have a corporate body, and you must either develop that corporate will, or the corporate body becomes an insane body and will undoubtedly destroy itself and you.

## Overseas Notes

### New South Wales

The Editor of *The New Era*, the Sydney Social Credit weekly, contributes a leading article to the issue of May 23, entitled "Bringing pressure to bear." *The New Era* acts in many respects as the mouthpiece of the Douglas Credit Association and Party in New South Wales, an amalgamated body which fought the Federal elections last year, but which did not attempt to contest the State elections this spring, although a few individual members did so in their private capacity. That the unanswerable logic of Major Douglas's Buxton speech is beginning to affect the Australian situation may be seen by a few quotations from "Bringing pressure to bear."

"The several addresses given by Major Douglas since his return from his world tour all have as their focal point the arousing of public opinion to a point where it will dictate what it wants—a point at which it will DEMAND RESULTS of those whom it appoints to govern *The New Era's* capitals) . . . The Social Credit Movement in Australia has attempted to mobilise this power by gathering it under the banner of a political party, and there is no doubt that this demonstration was sufficiently successful to give all other political parties a lively sense of the wrath to come. Having made the demonstration, we suggest that the more intelligent policy for the immediate future is not to work within the limited ambit of one party, but to attempt to mobilise the electoral power of all parties towards a definite political objective. Such a policy would not only widen the entire scope of our campaign, but it would remove from the Movement the stigma that attaches to the party game."

The writer proceeds to emphasise the extreme importance of recognising the principle of individual responsibility, and suggests various lines which might be taken to produce results. He divides the task before the Movement into two "phases," the need for extending knowledge of Social Credit among the population, and the need for mobilising public opinion and bringing pressure to bear upon Governments. We in this country can guarantee (though we could not have done so six months ago) that if the New South Wales Movement takes the first on trust and goes all out for the second objective, it will within a few months be producing results which will astonish and delight it. Any Australian reader of these words may feel inclined to retort that what suits people here will not necessarily do so there, and that is undoubtedly true of *applied technique*. But what Major Douglas has staked his reputation on as a leader ever since his Buxton speech is the simple but tremendous proposition that economic policy, in this case a refusal to tolerate the unnecessary

twin evils of poverty and regimentation, is the proper business of the plain men and women of every democratic country. Indeed, the article appears to recognise the paramount importance of Electoral Campaign methods once again, when it suggests later on that something along the general lines of the New Zealand Charter of Freedom might be applicable to Australia's case, and continues, "A volume of opinion can and must be mobilised in every constituency that will be sufficient to ensure that every parliamentarian of all parties makes his voice and his vote heard to such purpose that no Government dare deny or withhold reforms which are long overdue." And, we might add, demanding results forestalls the otherwise real possibility and grave danger that the money monopoly, at the very moment of democracy's apparent success, may put forward its own version of Social Credit, *ensure that it fails*, and then be in a position to say to the bewildered electorate, "We told you so—now what about a return to Sound Finance?"

It would, of course, be hard for Social Crediters in New South Wales to switch over from talking technique for so long—there is not one in this country who has found it easy—but wherever a campaign for demanding results is undertaken, all discussion of technique must be kept strictly separate from it. Not eliminated, but separated. If New South Wales, with the energy and enthusiasm of its Social Crediters, were to initiate a campaign to demand those results which (as we know) only Social Credit can give, a very long step would be taken in Australia's fight for economic liberty.

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