

51/82

“The Government has seen fit, and rightly I think, to appeal to the country, and to submit itself to the grand inquest of the nation.

Supposing they win, supposing they come back on the 25th October - now you tell us, will you shouting “Here Here”, who’s going to be Prime Minister? Mr. Aneurin Bevan or Mr. Attlee? Mr. Gaitskell will be sacked, Mr. Wilson then be Chancellor of the Exchequer, there’s your new government.

The principle of liberalism is to be found in the spiritual value that it puts upon every individual man and woman and that’s why I fight on, paying more attention to the dignity of my fellow man than to any material wealth however great that may be.

So it is we are proud of our tradition, we are proud of principles we are here to tell the people what we think the right thing to do. If it’s sacrifices that have to be made, then we will face up to them. It’s in that way that this country built up its great strength, Aye, and its influence, not only upon the Commonwealth but upon all other free nations. It’s for that, ladies and gentlemen, I still fight on, and will fight on, and I give you the assurance that as long as there is a breath in my body I will fight for freedom and for liberalism.”

Issued with the Compliments of Miss Phyllis Preston, Press Officer to
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VICTORIA 7681

Rt. Hon. Clement Davies, K.C., M.P.,
Leader of the Liberal Party, speaking at the
Kingsway Hall, London, on Tuesday October 2nd.
at 7.30 p.m.

"The Government have appealed to the country. They have submitted themselves to a trial by the electors. By their record and by their acts they should be tried.

We, in a democracy, are entitled to criticise our Government. Criticism is good for us, good for the Government and, what is more, is good for the country. When, however, a Government appeals to the country it is our duty then to examine with greater detail their record during the period when they have been entrusted with the conduct of the affairs of this nation."

"Ever since they came into office in '45, we have experienced year after year one economic crisis after another. Of course they had a difficult task when they came in but they have been there for over 6 years. What is more, when we were pointing out when they first came in that the tasks confronting them were difficult, they sneered and said that we did not know how capable they were. They were arrogant and smug in their own self-satisfaction.

What happened? In '46 they were in such difficulties that we had to go cap in hand to America. We, this proud country, beg for a thousand million which we got.

In '47 that had gone and we were in worse difficulties and again America came to our aid with the famous Marshall Plan.

Then having devalued the £ sterling, we were told that we were now quite all right. No trouble would now arise and yet here we are this year face to face with a crisis which is as acute as any we have ever had to face. We are running daily into debt. Already, in 8 months, we have had to pay £800 M. more for the goods we imported than for the goods which we sold.

True, we can set against that services which our people are rendering on the high seas, in insurance, and so on but the fact is that we are importing more than we can pay for.

Are we again to go to America? Even if we do I am not sure that we would get any. America has spent more than it had budgeted.

But we are in debt to all of the other countries in the sterling area. And what are we to do? Just go on? If we do we shall outstrip our credit and we will find it very difficult to get raw materials and food, without which we cannot exist.

I cannot repeat too often that we have to buy the food for nearly 3/5 of our population or, if you like, 3/5 of the food that we all eat, has to come from abroad and be paid for. True that can only be paid for by goods sold by us to those other countries. We are not producing enough goods for sale, either for sale abroad or for use here at home. Of course, to a very large extent this is due to our enormous armament programme.

What I am all the time pointing out is that we cannot in this country carry out at one and the same time both a tremendously heavy armament programme and a very full home programme of expenditure. The two together, the home expenditure and the armament expenditure, are more than we can possibly provide. Something has got to give way.

Mr. Aneurin Bevan and Mr. Harold Wilson took the same view. Their colleagues in the Cabinet were convinced that they could carry out both full programmes. Mr. Bevan and Mr. Wilson left the Cabinet on that ground. They said we could not carry out the two full programmes.

I agree. Where do I disagree with them? Those two would cut down the armament programme. I refuse to do that. The danger is too great. Freedom to me is more valuable than anything else. Take freedom away and nothing else matters. Give me freedom or give me death.

The Government, apart from Mr. Bevan and Mr. Wilson, also agree that we should not cut down armaments but they say that they can and will carry out the full home programme as well.

What has happened since this quarrel? Mr. Bevan and his colleagues issued a tremendous statement called "One Way Only" making it quite clear that we could not do all here and they were prepared to cut down the armaments and said that those armaments were not necessary. Since then, only a very short while ago, they published another document denouncing their colleagues, not only actually in the Government, but their Trade Union leaders.

Now, what is happening? We read that Mr. Bevan has been called in to draft the policy of the Government upon which they are to go to the country. Supposing that the Socialists get a majority in this Election, who is going to form the Government? Mr. Attlee and Mr. Morrison or Mr. Bevan and Mr. Wilson? Somebody has got to give way and I do not believe for one moment that it will be Mr. Bevan that will give way.

I say, with all the sincerity that I can command, that the road which the Socialists are treading is really the road to ruin. It is the road of continued devaluation of the £, both at home and abroad. We must pay our own way. We must export more in order to buy our goods and materials, otherwise there will be unemployment, suffering, and there could be hunger.

We must cut our coat according to the amount of cloth that is available to us. By all means let us do our best to produce more of that cloth but that will take time.
and should

In the meantime we can cut down expenditure. That would mean releasing men and materials to produce goods which are needed both for export and for home consumption.

Socialism and the Liberal Party

I see that Mr. Attlee went up to Colne Valley and attacked Lady Violet Bonham Carter. There is no need for me to take part in that personal battle. Lady Violet is quite capable of defending herself and I am perfectly sure she will do so and I am also equally sure that the Prime Minister will deeply regret his foolhardiness venturing up into Colne Valley.

But I have to deal with something else, namely, the Prime Minister's attack upon the Liberal Party. He puts the decline of the Party entirely at the door of the Tories. What nonsense! When we had only the Tories to fight we usually won. We were the strongest Party in the State on far more occasions in the period from 1832 to 1914 than were the Tories and in 1906 we had the biggest majority ever given to a Party in the House.

No, it was not the Tories that weakened us. It is Socialism that has undermined Liberalism. The Labour people worked alongside us in those days and we had very full support, first in winning freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of association. We established the Trade Unions for them and the very acts under which the Trade Unions work to-day are Liberal Acts of Parliament, the youngest of them being now about 40 years old, and they have not been able to improve upon them since.

They worked alongside us when we started to strengthen those freedoms by a better division of wealth, by our provision for better education, by our Acts dealing with the poor, the hungry and the old, the sick and the suffering. They worked alongside us in bringing about the welfare state about which to-day they boast.

Then came the Socialist bug into them. Thank Heavens we Liberals were immune from that bug and still are immune. We will not barter our freedom for any material position or wealth.

The doctrine of Socialism is a doctrine of materialism. The doctrine of Liberalism is a doctrine of the spiritual values of the life of every individual.

What did they, the Socialists, set out to do? Deliberately of malice, they sat down in caucus here in London, to destroy Liberalism as certainly as Lenin ever sat down to destroy freedom in Russia, and I challenge anyone to deny it who was party to it at that time. What they said was "Let's kill the Liberal Party and kill Liberalism. We prefer the Conservatives to get in for a while. When we have killed Liberalism and killed the Liberal Party we can easily deal with the Tory Party." And now they have the hypocrisy

to weep crocodile tears over the smallness of our numbers.

Socialism is a German disease, made in Germany and fostered in Germany. It is the Socialists, working amongst us as Fifth Columnists, that set out to break and overthrow the Liberal Party.

I never mind the enemy in front, however strong he is; it is the one who pretends to be my friend and stabs me in the back that is the danger.

We may be small, we may be few in numbers but it is only in numbers and in wealth that we fail. In ideas, in principles, we are second to none and it is for those principles and those ideas we go on, prepared for any sacrifice, until once again Liberalism shall be the accepted doctrine as it was in the past, of this old country, for we remember that Liberalism made for the greatness of this country, and that it was, through Liberalism, it became the acknowledged moral leader of the rest of the world.

October 2nd, 1951