

CONSERVATIVE AND UNIONIST CENTRAL OFFICE

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Text of speech by The Rt. Hon. Sir WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, K.G., O.M., C.H., M.P., Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury at a Mass Meeting following the Conservative and Unionist Annual Conference at Margate on Saturday, 10th October, 1953.

Water Sequence.

SNP
① I am sure you are all relieved by the news from British Guiana (all)
Sufficient forces to preserve peace and order have now been safely landed and indeed widely welcomed by the people they have come to protect. It is always a difficult question to decide at what point Communist intrigues menace the normal freedom of a community, but it is better to be in good time than too late. Jan. 79

The attitude of the Opposition here at home is remarkable. They say "There ought to be a Debate in Parliament." Well, what is Parliament for if it is not to discuss such matters and make sure that the freedom, prosperity and happiness of a British colony is effectively preserved? 115.

We shall certainly seek opportunities in both Houses to present to them the case as we see it and to invite their approval of what we have done. 138

I am very glad that this Conference yesterday expressed so decidedly its confidence in Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, who has so many troubles to bear a large proportion of which were inherited from the late administration.

It is now nearly two years since the Conservative Party became responsible for the Government and guidance of Britain. Two years is not a long time in human affairs. But it is nearly half the span of a Parliament and I think it is our duty to take stock of our position and to present to our friends and supporters in the National Union the main features of what we have done and are trying to do. If I compare our work with that of our predecessors to their disadvantage, it is not because I wish to raise ill-feeling and faction but rather to gain encouragement and strength for the future - for our future and for the future of our country.

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Certainly we have tried very hard to make our administration loyal, sober, flexible and thrifty, and to do our best to be worthy of the anxious responsibilities confided to us. We have tried to be worthy of the confidence and energy of our Members of Parliament and of the great political organisation which sustains them in the Constituencies. Never in its long history has it been so lively and efficient / never more free from class or personal motives.

Great reforms have taken place in the organization of the Party, and the Young Conservatives who carry with them the hope of the future are making immense strides forward.

We salute Lord Woolton, our Chairman, now that he has recovered from the long and dangerous ordeal through which he has passed since we separated at Scarborough. And I am sure I speak for this whole Conference in sending greetings to our Ulster Unionist friends who are about to hold their General Election. Ulster's loyalty to our country is famous. They kept the life-line open in the war. Now we wish Lord Brookeborough all success in his resolve to keep Ulster strong, prosperous and free within the United Kingdom.

We are a Party met together on a Party occasion and we have to fight as a Party against those who oppose and assail us. But faction is not our aim. Party triumphs are not our goal. We think it a high honour to serve the British people and the worldwide Commonwealth and Empire of which they are the centre. We are sure of our cause and not without some satisfaction in our performances. We are not electioneering. We have a deep respect for public opinion but we do not let our course be influenced from day to day by Gallup polls favourable though they may be, which may be true or false guides both upon the facts and upon the interests of the country.

When I spoke at Glasgow to the Scottish Unionist Association and opinion was said to be very favourable to us, I did not hesitate to say that there would be no General Election this year (unless the behaviour of the Opposition rendered the course of Parliamentary Business impossible.) I rarely heard at a public meeting a more sonorous wave of assent than this declaration received from the serious and representative Scottish audience which I was then addressing.

[Let me now repeat ~~what I said then, that~~ we have no intention of plunging the Nation into electioneering strife this year, and indeed so far as my immediate knowledge is concerned that applies to next year too. We have to do our duty. We seek to be judged by deed, not words, and we claim the time necessary to convince our fellow countrymen that the progressive Conservatism of Tory Democracy has an honourable part to play in the history of our native land and will play that part during a period when difficulties are many and resources are strained, and danger broods none too far away.]

Do you know that I think danger is farther away than when we went into harness? Certainly the sense of crisis in our world relations is less than it was two years ago, and we have the hope that if we persevere recovery from the convulsions of the past will grow surer and firmer as the clattering months roll by.

Take our finances. Surely they come first to our minds, for it is not much use being a famous race and nation with institutions which are the envy of the free world and the model of many states, if at the end of the week you cannot pay for your housekeeping.

/I see

I see the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He deserves our admiration and the respect of his fellow countrymen. No one has tried harder to handle and solve the intricate problems left by nearly 6 years of war and more than 6 years of Socialist Government.

We are not out of the wood yet, but we have the feeling of increasing strength, and certainly we have far larger reserves. Two years ago we were sliding into bankruptcy and now at least we may claim SOLVENCY. There is something more to aim at. I mean INDEPENDENCE. (Mr. Butler spoke of that on Thursday). We are no longer living on loans or doles not even from our best friends.

I care above all for the brotherhood of the English-speaking world, but there could be no true brotherhood without Independence founded on Solvency.

We do not want to live upon others and be kept by them, but faithfully and resolutely to earn our own living without fear or favour by the sweat of our brow, by the skill of our craftsmanship and the use of our brains. And do not let us underrate the strength and quality of British industry and inventiveness. The task of maintaining 50 million people in this small island at a level superior to the average European standards might indeed appal a bold man. But when the life and death of our country is at stake we have sometimes found ways and means of helping one another which no other society has been able to surpass, in peace or war.

Let us make sure that Tory Democracy is a fountain of activity and hope to our race and age.

And what about 300,000 houses a year. I remember well at Blackpool three years ago how you clamoured for a tremendous effort and an audacious target and how a gust of passion swept the hall when we proclaimed the goal of 300,000 houses a year. I remember also how we were mocked by the Socialist Ministers and told we were promising the impossible.

One can quite understand how a politician who thinks more than half his fellow countrymen are vermin cannot feel much enthusiasm for providing them with homes. "Homes for vermin" hardly seemed an inspiring theme for the Socialist Party. "Soak the Rich", "Jobs for the Boys" have a much more cheerful smack about them. But we persevered and now this second year at least 300,000 houses to let or sell will actually be built. Moreover we are building more schools than ever before.

Who is the man who did it? Mr. Harold Macmillan. A fine piece of work for which his countrymen will always respect him and the capable building industry and makers of building materials who have served the nation well.

Nor must we forget those vigorous and practical Ministers who have helped him - Sir David Eccles and Mr. Marples. But building new houses by itself is not enough. Old houses must be kept in repair. Our Socialist friends are always reminding us that both the repair of old and the building of new houses count equally. One cannot succeed without the other.

The building of new houses was difficult the repair of old houses might well be unpopular, so they stunted the one and neglected the other. We are well aware of the responsibility which falls upon us for the maintenance and improvement of houses which the conditions of war and wartime rent restrictions have robbed of their natural means of renewal.

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We must not be deterred from tackling this problem because of the prejudice excited by the word "landlord". The community as represented by the local authorities, is often the biggest landlord and charges often the highest rents. Funds must be drawn in from renewed private investment as well as supplemented by the State to enable dwellings which are falling or are in danger of falling into decay to be repaired, renewed and fitted with modern requirements.

And apart from these the work of slum clearance on which the Tory Government before the war was so busily engaged, should be resumed on an effective scale.

Well, what about meat? Even red meat! Lord Woolton cannot any longer be derided for what he said because it has been made good. But they tell us that if there is more meat in the shops it is only because the prices are so high and the people so poor that it cannot be bought.

Now I am always very chary about loading a speech with percentages. I like the simplest forms of statement. I have had this matter very carefully examined, and this is the fact with which I have been furnished by our Food Minister, Mr. Gwilym Lloyd George.

He is rapidly and skilfully reducing his Ministry and his officials. But he found time to work me out this fact which I asked for because I knew it would be plain and simple and could be well understood even by collectivist ideologists, (those professional intellectuals who revel in decimals and polysyllables).

Personally I like short words and vulgar fractions. Well here is the plain vulgar fact.

In the first two years of Tory Government the British nation has actually eaten 400 thousand tons more meat, including red meat, than they did in the last two years of Socialist administration.

Here at any rate is something solid to set off against the tales we are told of the increasing misery of the people.

The Conference debate on agriculture was most important. We quite understand that the derationing of various foods as abundant supplies become available means that new methods must be found to give farmers the confidence and security they need. We must see that the farmers have assurance against the wide fluctuations of world food prices.

Her Majesty's Government adhere to the principles of the 1947 Agricultural Act. The system of guaranteed prices remains and will remain, though sometimes in a changed and more flexible form than at present. This indeed was contemplated when the 1947 Bill was introduced.

The lessons and experiences of the last few years are having their effect on both Parties in the State. Nothing is more clear than that many large, important sections, who hitherto believed implicitly in collectivism are altering their opinion. The fallacy of the nationalisation of all the means of production, distribution and exchange, which we used to be assured was the eldorado of the working man - this fallacy has already become apparent to millions. There are now grave doubts about the theory of nationalisation and there is even more divergence about the practice.

The Trades Unions and Co-operatives are organisations in daily contact with reality. They are not hunting for votes and political notoriety, but facing facts. There is anxiety among them lest for the sake of political slogans the practical interests of the large masses for whom they are responsible will be endangered.

A few years ago nationalisation was the cure-all for social and economic difficulties - now there is a general feeling that it is an utter flop.

The Conservative Government have adopted a sensible and practical policy towards what we found on becoming responsible. For the success of those industries like coal mining and railways which we felt must remain nationalized we have done and will continue to do our very best. But steel and transport which had been so harshly struck at we have liberated just in time. It will be proved in the next two years that this is greatly to the public advantage and convenience.

You will remember how last year at Scarborough you were deeply concerned that we had not succeeded in passing either of these two de-nationalization Bills, and how I assured you of our resolve to do so. It has been a remarkable feat with our small majority to overcome all the resistance and obstruction with which we were confronted.

We owe a debt to the Leader of the House and to the Chief Whip and his able colleagues for their efficient management of Parliamentary business, and above all to our Members who have made so many personal and physical sacrifices to sustain the strength and stability of our Government.

Let me make an appeal. I trust that the Associations in all the Constituencies, in spite of the extra and ever-increasing efforts required from them will do their utmost to lessen the strain upon their Members while the Parliamentary fight is so sharp and the burden which they carry so heavy.

/But to return

But to return to nationalisation, there is no doubt that it has been proved a failure, hampering the competitive power of our industry, rendering an inferior service to the public and weakening the just and necessary influence of the Trade Unions by confronting them not with private employers but with the power of the State. All this is an illustration of the inherent fallacy of Socialism.

But our opponents have another theme on which they greatly count - I mean class warfare and the exploitation of jealousy and envy. This is of course a very serious feature of our national life, and we are striving to cure it not only by argument, but as Tory Democracy has always sought to do, by tireless endeavour to maintain and raise the standards of life and labour and to provide ever-widening opportunities for all and to bring aid and comfort to the weak and poor.

The Trade Unions play an important part in our national life. We are not seeking to bring them into the Conservative Party, but we are asking all Conservative wage earners to join Trade Unions and take an effective part in their daily work. I have often said that the Trade Unions should keep clear of both Parties and devote themselves solely to industrial matters. At the present time, however, I must admit they are doing very useful work where they are in restraining the featherheads, crackpots, vote-catchers and office-seekers from putting the folly they talk into action.

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[Our Conservative principles are well known.] We stand for the free and flexible working of the laws of supply and demand. We stand for compassion and aid for those who, whether through age, illness or misfortune, cannot keep pace with the march of society.

We stand for the restoration of buying and selling between individual importers and exporters in different countries instead of the clumsy bargainings of one State against another biased by politics as these must necessarily be.

We have made great advances in restoring this method of active, nimble, multiple private trading which should be allowed to flourish so long as the necessary laws against the abuses of monopoly are vigilantly enforced. We are for private enterprise with all its ingenuity, thrift and contrivance, and we believe it can flourish best within a strict and well understood system of prevention and correction of abuses. We are against State trading except in emergencies.

(Crawley
notes)

I am sure it is much better for the consumer to buy his food or raw materials from a private trader, who has to make a profit by good management and shrewd business or go into bankruptcy and out of business. That is much better than to use large numbers of salaried officials who, if they make a blunder and lose millions, have only to mark up the prices to the public or send in the bill to the House of Commons.

In a complex community like our own no absolute rigid uniformity of practice is possible. But we here speaking of Party causes and Party principles must make it clear we are on the side of free enterprise with proper safeguards and against State Monopoly in the hands of officials.

② Now I come to the vexed and formidable sphere of Foreign Affairs and we all rejoice to see Mr. Eden recovered from his cruel six months of pain and danger, and able to bring his unrivalled experience and knowledge to bear upon the problem which haunts all our minds - namely finding a secure foundation for world peace. I too have thought a great deal about this overpowering problem which hangs so heavy on the daily lives of every one of us.]

My prime thought is to simplify. We have lived through half a century of the most terrible events which have ever ravaged the human race. The vast majority of all the peoples wherever they may dwell desire above all things to earn their daily bread in peace. To establish conditions under which they can do this and to provide deterrents against aggression are the duties confided by the heart's desire of mankind to the United Nations.

Our first duty is to aid this World Instrument loyally and faithfully in its task. But the world also needs patience. It needs a period of calm rather than vehement attempts to produce clear-cut solutions. There have been many periods where prompt and violent action might have averted calamities. This is not one of them. Even if we entered on a phase only of easement for five or 10 years that might lead to something still better when it ended. So long as the cause of freedom is sustained by strength and guided by wisdom it might well be that improvement would be continued on an even larger scale.

In Mr. Attlee's speech here a week ago there were several sensible statements on foreign policy. There was one that struck my attention particularly, when he said that in all international matters it was well to remember there was a limit to what could be done by one Government. But I view with some concern the attitude which the Bevanite faction and some others of his Party are adopting not only against the United States but also against the new Germany. Mr Robens, a former Minister of Labour - the man who predicted that we should have a million unemployed by last Christmas - (that shows you what his judgment is worth even on matters where he may claim to be an authority) Mr. Robens argued at Strasbourg that there must be no German Army as a part of the European Defence Community for five years.

There are no doubt some Socialist politicians who hope to win popularity both by carping and sneering at the U.S. and by raising hostility to the new Germany. Of course it is vital to maintain ever-strengthening ties of friendship with the United States. I should also be very sorry to see Germany made an enemy against her will.

It is nearly four years ago since I said that Western Europe could never be defended against Soviet Russia without German military aid.

Mr. Attlee denounced that statement as irresponsible. But a year later he and his colleagues committed themselves and all of us to the arrangements for European defence which involved the creation of 12 German Divisions.

We inherited these arrangements, and pledges which involve British good faith, from our predecessors, the very men who, some of them because they are not in office think they are entitled to cast aside the work that they have done and the position to which they have committed us.

At the present time the Soviet Armies in Europe, even without their satellites, are four times as strong as all the Western Allies put together. It would indeed be an act of unwisdom to weaken our efforts to build up a Western defence. It would be madness to make our heavily-burdened Island take up an attitude which if not hostile was at any rate unsympathetic both to the U.S. and to the new Germany which Dr. Adenauer is building, and yet remain bound by the treaties which the Socialists have made to defend friendly European Powers who are incapable of maintaining themselves alone.

I am sure that the decisions taken by the Socialist Government, which were supported by us at the time and are now being carried forward steadfastly and soberly by Her Majesty's Government, constitute the best chance, (and indeed I think it a good chance) of getting through this awful period of anxiety without a world catastrophe. We at any rate are going to adhere faithfully to them, and do our utmost to promote the formation of the European Army with a strong contingent of Germans in it. We, like the Americans, shall maintain our forces in Europe, thus restoring the French balance of equality with our German associate. If E.D.C. should not be adopted by the French, we shall have no choice in prudence but to fall in with some new arrangement which will join the strength of Germany to the Western Allies through NATO.

/Five months

Five months ago, on the 11th of May, I made a speech in the House of Commons. I have not spoken since. (This is the first time in my political life that I have kept quiet for so long). I asked for very little. I hold out no glittering or exciting hopes about Russia. I thought that friendly, informal, personal talks between the leading figures in the countries mainly involved might do good and could not easily do much harm, and that one good thing might lead to another. This humble, modest plan announced as the policy of Her Majesty's Government raised a considerable stir all over the place and though we have not yet been able to persuade our trusted Allies to adopt it in the form I suggested no-one can say that it is dead.

I still think that the leading men of the various nations ought to be able to meet together without trying to cut attitudes before excitable publics or using regiments of experts to marshal all the difficulties and objections, and let us try to see whether there is not something better for us all than tearing and blasting each other to pieces, which we can certainly do.

Her Majesty's Government -(as Mr. Eden and Lord Salisbury told you on Thursday) still believe we should persevere in seeking such a meeting between the Heads of Governments.

The interest of Britain, of Europe and of the NATO alliance is not to play Russia against Germany or Germany against Russia, but to make them both feel they can live in safety with each other in spite of their problems and differences. For us to have a very definite part in all this our duty is to use what I believe is our growing influence both with Germany and with Russia to relieve them of any anxiety they may feel about each other.

Personally I welcome Germany back among the great powers of the world. If there were one message which I could give the German people as one of whose life has been spent in conducting war against them, or preparing to do so - I would urge them to remember the famous maxim. "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." We mustn't forget that either.

When in this same speech I spoke about the master thought of Locarno I meant of course the plan of everybody going against the aggressor whoever he may be and helping the victim large or small. That is no more than the United Nations was set up to do. We are told the Locarno Treaty failed and did not prevent the war. There was a very good reason for that. The United States was not in it. Had the United States taken before the First World War or between the Wars the same interest and made the same exertions to preserve peace and uphold freedom which I thank God she is doing now, there might never have been a First War and there would certainly never have been a Second. With their mighty aid I have a sure hope there will not be a third.

A word about myself. ~~If~~ If I stay on for the time being bearing the burden at my age it is not because of love for power or office.

I have had an ample ~~feast~~ ^{share} of both. If I stay it is because I have the feeling that I may through things that have happened have an influence on what I care about above all else, the building of a sure and lasting peace.

Let us then ~~go~~ go forward together with courage and composure, with resolution and good faith to the end which all desire.

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