

Communist Activities in Canada

because no one who is even semi *compos mentis* doubts that today we live in a very dangerous world. Years ago I was a practising member of the civil liberties association in Toronto. That is regarded by some of my hon. friends, I must admit, as a very strange organization; nevertheless I think it did no harm and considerable good. But we had some very strange members. Whenever an organization of that kind, good, bad or indifferent, is set up, the communists crowd in. I remember that I had a friend, quite a respectable businessman, come to me and say, "Don't you know there are communists in that organization?" I said, "Yes, I do know; they keep us there until twelve o'clock every night." One of the things about the communists is that apparently they have an unlimited amount of time to spend at meetings. My friend replied, "What are you going to do about it?" I said, "The only thing we can do is get you and a lot of other sensible people to come in and vote them down," but he thought that was a silly idea and never did come.

Sometimes we had a great deal of trouble with those people. At that time I became aware of something that has perplexed and puzzled me ever since; that is, that there are people whom you could hardly deny are agreeable people in almost every aspect of their lives—intelligent people, humane people, socially minded people—who still go after this crazy thing. I was rather naïve about it for a long time, I am afraid. I could not understand how men with civilized minds and sympathetic hearts could ever be attracted to a brutal dictatorship. At one time I was inclined to think they were just abnormal, and we did not need to pay any attention to them. Now, however, I do not think that is good enough. As a matter of fact we cannot wash out intellectuals like that, because when we take for the long pull, twenty, thirty or forty years, we may as well recognize that the people we sometimes criticize and are impatient with, people who can speak and write and at any rate appear to think, do exercise great powers of leadership.

At one time I had thought rather naively that if you could just meet those people and have a frank discussion with them, they would admit it was all crazy. Of course I was wrong; and, as I say, I went on being perplexed. But my trouble was to some extent resolved by a book that appeared recently, which I commend to all hon. members, called "The God that Failed." It is a recantation by six people, I think high-minded individuals, who went off after this creed but found that they were pursuing false

[Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood).]

ideals, and were courageous enough—and it takes some courage—to come out and expose the thing and give their reasons against it. I should like to read one or two brief extracts from the book; in fact I would prescribe a few pages of this book per day to anyone who is now thinking of following this belief. As a matter of fact, while it would be against my principles, I would be willing to become a dictator for the moment in order to force them to read this book. Perhaps I might have the support of the leader of the C.C.F. party for that purpose.

Mr. Coldwell: I have read the book.

Mr. Knight: Would the hon. member tell us the name of the author?

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): There are six authors. The preface is written by a man who is pretty far to the left, of whom some hon. members may be critical. I am referring to Richard Crossman, member of the British House of Commons. If anyone wishes to know the names of the six authors, perhaps I could give them later. They are well known, and include one Frenchman, one German, two Americans, and one Italian, perhaps the most interesting of all, whom I shall quote later on. I want to read one or two brief extracts, and I suggest that the considerations brought forward here are vital, and that we disregard them at our peril.

An hon. Member: What is the name of the book?

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): "The God that Failed," and the name on the back is Crossman, who wrote the introduction. On page 6 of the introduction this question is asked:

How could these intellectuals accept the dogmatism of Stalinism? The answer is to be found scattered through the pages which follow. For the intellectual, material comforts are relatively unimportant; what he cares about is spiritual freedom.

Let us not forget that sometimes, not always, this is true. Then the writer goes on to speak of—

—the communist novice . . . wearied and worried by the privilege of freedom—getting relief by subjecting himself to the canon law of the Kremlin.

Mr. Coldwell: Is that Crossman speaking?

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Yes; he says the communist novice finds a release from this worry by subjecting his soul to the canon law of the Kremlin. It sounds crazy; yet here are capable men, some of them very distinguished, who did it. Then there is this brief further quotation:

But it is clear that, as soon as the intellectual convert began to know more about conditions in Russia, his mood changed.