

"SENATOR MEIGHEN AND THE FUTURE"

REGINA LEADER-POST

February 24, 1941.

\*\*\*\*\*

Elsewhere on this page appears a letter from Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen in which the senator takes The Leader-Post to task for its recent editorial, "Study in Solitude," and charges us incidentally with craft, malignancy, bitterness and misrepresentation.

The article in question was based upon a speech by Senator Meighen in which the following passage occurred as a commentary on the need for post-war social reform as advocated by Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin and other British leaders:

"If property, profit, the reward of toil, the fundamental instinct of the human race to gain, to acquire, to have, to reach somewhere, is taken away, then I for one do not feel that we have anything worth fighting for."

Mr. Meighen desires to call attention to a fact which was certainly not widely publicized and which we emphasize now in fairness to him and because it rather modifies the impression which the quotation in vacuo seems generally to have created. He made it clear, he writes, that he was "by no means satisfied with things as they stand, and went so far as to say that as soon as any specific legislation could be shown to lead to a wider and more equitable distribution of the world's goods among the people who work therefor, that moment the case for such legislation was established."

Very well. Yet the preceding utterance still appears to us objectionable and that for three reasons.

In the first place, the statement was tactless and inexpedient, tending to antagonize large groups of well-meaning citizens who are strongly in favor of the war effort and not satisfied with conditions as they have been.

In the second place, this war for democracy is being fought in defence of the right of peoples to decide their own destinies. If the British people really wish to achieve social change along the lines indicated by Mr. Bevin, that is clearly their right and privilege.

Finally the statement clearly conveys the impression that if the system of private enterprise is not to be maintained, the war is not worth fighting. To that The Leader-Post takes vigorous exception. Surely Mr. Meighen would prefer to live even under a constitutional socialist regime headed by his own countrymen than under the Nazi heel.

Hitler, prophet of Nihilism, stands for much more than an economic system, and as Mr. Meighen himself said in the senate on Sept. 9, 1939:

"If the principles of Hitler are to prevail--and they will prevail unless the Allies win--then the world as we have known it will have passed away. It will mean not just another dynasty in Europe; it will mean another form of the whole constitution of humanity. It will mean that there is nothing left to us worth living for."

Let us be clear on one point. The Leader-Post has not and does not advocate socialism, though, like Mr. Meighen, this newspaper is acutely aware of existing inequalities.

It seems grossly unfair to assume that British leaders like Mr. Bevin and Mr. J. B. Priestley envisage anything resembling that which Stalin is still pleased to call socialism. That is a nightmare; a ghastly, blood-thirsty Asiatic despotism, repellent even to these not-so-squeamish people who once believed in Lenin. Can Mr. Meighen imagine any government in tolerant, easy-going Britain starving millions of its own people into submission, hunting down others with its OGPU bloodhounds, maiming them in torture chambers, banishing them to the Arctic wastes, deeming them for political offences and without trial to labor on chain gangs building roads and canals?