

LORD BEAVERBROOK SPEAKS

"A Double Rough"---Relations With the United States---Sir Edward Kemp and the Russian Hope---Other Speeches

(Canadian Gazette, April 11th 1918)

Some notable utterances, to which the report contributed to the Times and other London journals made no reference, were made at last Thursday's dinner at the Savoy Hotel in honor of Lord Beaverbrook on his appointment as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Information. It was Lord Beaverbrook's first public reference to his critics; gave him a as Minister of the Crown the opportunity of indicating the new role which Canada may occupy as intermediary in a new era of unity between the Anglo-Saxon peoples of the world; and it was made the occasion of interesting and informative speeches on topics of current interest by Sir Edward Kemp, Sir George Perley and others.

The hosts were the Agents-General of the Provinces of Canada, of whom there were present the Hon. J. H. Turner, Acting Agent-General for British Columbia, in the chair; Lt.-Col. Richard Reid, Ontario, and Mr. John Howard, Nova Scotia, in the vice-chairs; Lt.-Col. P. Pelletier, Quebec; Mr. J. A. Reid, Alberta; Mr. Harrison Watson, Prince Edward Island; and Mr. W. R. Bowdler, representing New Brunswick. The guests were:

Sir George Perley, Sir Edward Kemp, Lt.-Gen. Sir R. Turner, V. C., Maj.-Gen. A. D. McRae, Maj.-Gen. G. B. Hughes, Maj.-Gen. G. L. Foster, Brig.-Gen. D. M. Hogarth, Brig.-Gen. J. A. MacDougall, Brig.-Gen. H. F. McDonald, Brig.-Gen. J. F. L. Embury, Sir J. M. Gibson, Col. Sir Campbell Stuart, Lt.-Col. Sir H. Montagu Allan, C. V. O., Lt.-Col. G. McL. Brown, C. Cambie, J. H. Horsey, Lt.-Col. W. Gray, Morden, Col. Murray MacLaren, Col. A. G. Cameron, Col. G. W. Badgerow, Col. Arthur C. MacDonald, F. Orr-Lewis, T. R. Whitely, Col. J. G. Ross, Col. B. R. Hepburn, Col. Donald Armour, Col. Chas. A. Blodgett, Col. Claude Bryan, F. C. Salter, Col. W. R. Ward, J. A. Turner, F. W. Ashe, Lt.-Col. R. M. Peniston, Col. K. C. Folger, Percy Hurd, Lt.-Col. J. Obed Smith, Capt. W. H. Hayward, M. P. P. Lt. G. S. Haines, M. P. P. T. Terry Champion, S. Perdue.

The Agents-General.

After the toast of "The King" had been honored by Mr. Howard proposed "Canada," and urged that Canadians in London should meet more frequently and keep better together. Both he and the Chairman expressed the hope that, despite obvious difficulties, the Canadian Agents-General, representing as they

did important communities overseas, should be given a more definite status in the official life of the Empire as concentrated in London, such a status as is now accorded to the Agents-General of Australia under a constitution which, of course, differs materially from that of the Dominion of Canada.

Sir Edward Kemp, in response to the toast, spoke with enthusiasm of the wonderful achievements of Great Britain in finance, industry, and other ways to meet the stupendous needs of operations in so many theatres of war. He also paid a tribute to the heroism, not only of the Canadians, but of British and Allied soldiers. Proceeding he said: "Germany wants an early peace, and wants it for more reasons than one. For instance, Russia is a great country, and there is a spirit in Russia which is as sure to rise as to-morrow's sun. The Russian people are a proud people; their soldiers are brave, and I believe Germany wants an early peace because she fears that the Russian people will yet rise and kick her out of their country. That is what I hope to see, but so far as we are concerned there is no humiliating peace, and Germany may just as well understand that now as at any other time. (Cheers.)

"I am asked, What are you going to do about the Military Service Act in Canada? It is the intention to enforce that Act. (Hear, hear.) The Canadian people stated their views in no uncertain way. I regret the Quebec incident, which I believe only reflects the actions of a few badly advised young men; and, as Sir Robert Borden has said, there is no reason why they should not be given the opportunity of indulging against the enemy their propensity for fighting. Meanwhile the privilege of appealing to the tribunals will be withdrawn from men of military age who endeavour to obstruct the operation of the Military Service Act in any form. (Cheers)

The Canadian Overseas Minister went on to bear witness to the splendid work done by Lord Beaverbrook for Canada as Eye-Witness and Canadian Record Officer. He referred especially to the original way in which the cinematograph had been used to spread a knowledge of Canada's war efforts.

Sir George Perley also responded. He assured the Agents-General of his desire to co-operate with them in the interests of Canada, and spoke of the excellence of the campaign of enlightenment in regard to Canadian war achievements which they owed to Lord Beaverbrook and his associates. Notwithstanding the wonderful effort of every section of the Empire, Canadians were able to stand up and say, "We have done our share, and Canada has played a man's part." (Cheers)

In saying this he was thinking primarily, of course, of the imperishable record of Canadians in the field, but they might also reflect with pride upon what Canada had done in her industrial, agricultural, and financial support of the Allied cause. It was fortunate that in so critical an hour Canadian finances were in the hands of a man of the calibre of Sir Thomas White. (Hear, hear.)

"We borrow from the United Kingdom the money to pay our troops, but we have lent to the United Kingdom the money to pay for our wheat, munitions, &c., and the amount are now practically the same. Thus the Dominion, borrowing from its own people, has been able to finance itself, and that is a great feat. (Cheers) And for this and other reasons Canada stands to-day on a far higher plane than formerly in the estimation of the British people, who now realize as they never did before the great future that lies before our country, and are willing to pay due attention to our views and wishes." (Cheers)

Lt.-Col. Reid, in proposing the health of Lord Beaverbrook, said this was in a sense a Canadian family gathering to do honour to one of Canada's sons who had rendered eminent public service. Lord Beaverbrook was the first Canadian born and bred--indeed the first native of an overseas Dominion--to enter the Imperial Cabinet. Certain criticism had been directed against him; that was one of the penalties of attaining high position and possessing exceptional abilities. But Lord Beaverbrook could contain himself. They knew the motto: "Never complain; never explain."

By the dinner of that evening the Agents-General wished to give a public opportunity for Canadians to express their confidence in their fellow-countryman. Many of those

present had known Lord Beaverbrook from his birth and youth in New Brunswick up. They had fought with him or against him in business and in politics, and if they had found him a keen fighter and hard hitter they had found him a clean fighter. Possibly he did not say do things in the ordinary way. He was untrammelled by tradition and dependencies on precedent. But originality was not a crime; and when originality was combined with an abundant fund of Canadian initiative and optimism they had qualities which would carry any man into almost any position (Hear, hear.)

The machinery of propaganda had been creaking sadly, but Lord Beaverbrook's talents for organization might have been created for the specific purpose of putting it right. Canada knew what he had done for Canadian publicity. The other day he overheard a discussion between British officers as to the relative merits of national units at the front. One declared for the Canadians. "Ah, well," was the other's rejoinder, "I admit that they have been better advertised." (Laughter and cheers.) Canadian soldiers knew and appreciated what Lord Beaverbrook had accomplished for Canada, and they wished him every success in the work he had now undertaken for the Empire as a whole. (Cheers)

Sir John Gibson, whose name was not upon the toast list, was called upon from the chair to say a few words. He said: I was trained in a school very adverse to Lord Beaverbrook in his political operation. As Grits we were taught by our organs and by our fellowship to consider him a very dangerous man. (Laughter) A change has come over our dream. We have a Union Government in Canada, and I have turned over a new leaf--(laughter)--and am proud to be a supporter of that Union Government and of Sir Robert Borden, who is, I believe, a sound, safe man. (Cheers) I hope that Union is not alone for the purposes of war, and that parliament in Canada has met its death. When we read of what Lord Beaverbrook has done we admire his achievement. The British Government knew what they were doing when they called him to his present high office. They did so because they thought him to be the right man, a man of great resource and originality, and I have faith in the wisdom of the Prime Minister of Great Britain in making this selection. (Cheers)

Lord Beaverbrook was much cheered on rising to reply. He said: Col. Reid has said that I never explain. If I were to make explanations regarding all the accusations made against me I should take up your time far beyond the closing hour under the new regulations. But this I can say to you: I have an almost pathetic interest in the good opinion of my country people. It is not a strange thing that a man should look for the good opinion of his fellow-countrymen, and never have I heard as much praise as I have listened to this evening. In the years of my political struggle I have not been looked upon too favorably, and perhaps I may hope that the tide has turned and that in the future I may get from my country as good and as had a chance in English public life as every Englishman receives. I have been touched by the remarks of Sir George Perley. The Canadian Record Office could not have done what it has done but for his support and encouragement, and when he praises that organization he praises himself. To Sir Edward Kemp also, and to you all, I give my cordial thanks for coming here to-night to give me your encouragement. Sir John Gibson's words have been sweet music to me. It is indeed a satisfaction to know that having weighed me in the scale, the balance is not to be turned against me. I am afraid he and you all take too favourable a view of what I have been able to do. I remember when I left Canada and came to England I was most anxious to engage in public life, as in the ambition of most young Canadians. They do not often get the opportunity that I had of doing so without the predominant preoccupation of business affairs. I secured a constituency through the influence of friends here, but when I became M. P. my heart turned back to Canada. I wanted to go there and seek the suffrages of the Canadian people, to find my opportunity in Canadian public life. (Cheers.) And when the chance of taking office in England came to me, for the moment I put it aside because I wanted to go back to Canada and seek responsibility there rather than take up new duties here. I wanted the endorsement of my own people. (Renewed cheers)

The time came when the Department of Information, now turned into a Ministry, was formed. The Prime Minister asked me to undertake the duties. I was loath to do so. My heart still went back to Canada, and for days I came to no decision. I tried my best to avoid the responsibility, but I was pressed in no theatrical way, and so I took the post here.

Thus the Canadian book is closed.

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("No, no.") And now I wonder what the outcome will be. It is my anxious desire to achieve results and to be useful. Something, perhaps much, depends upon the support of Canada. I have been playing a game of Bridge in which there has been a double rough against me. Those Englishmen and their journals who also do not view me favourably have turned these Canadian criticisms to full use against me here as the opinion of Canada, and passing to England these English echoes have been used as the opinion of England. So the double rough has gone on. The speech of Sir John Gibson and others this evening may have done something to end that unfair deal. There may be a reshuffle and a new deal (Cheers)

Sir Edward Kemp has spoken of the achievements of Canadians at the front, and reference has also been made to the Canadian military organization in this country; and at the front. Let me say that, standing as she does between the United States and Great Britain, Canada occupies a peculiarly powerful position. It is Canada's part to act the mediator and bring about that understanding between the Anglo-Saxon nations which will make for freedom. (Cheers) In the last few days there has been a wonderful incident. A new Chesapeake and a new Shannon have conveyed across the Atlantic American troops hurrying to France to serve under British generals. The descendants of the men who fought British generals in 1779, and fought for liberty as they conceived it, are now fighting under the descendants of the same British Generals in the same cause of liberty. (Cheers) It is a wonderful reunion, and there is to be no end to it. (Renewed cheers) Canada understands the United States and shares some of its qualities. Canada appreciates the good points of the British nation and shares some of the characteristics of this people and their traditions. Holding this position, it is Canada's duty and privilege to play the greatest part in welding together the Anglo-Saxon peoples in common unity. (Cheers)

And now that Canada is to play this great part she must assume new responsibilities. Although Canada was not consulted when the determination was taken to enter this conflict, Canada came to an immediate decision to take her place at the battle front. The experiment must never be made again. (Hear, hear) It is not certain that Canada would conform to the decision of Great Britain alone, and the risk is too great. How can we overcome the difficulty? In my opinion the course is quite plain. It is the duty of the British Government before the war is over to take Ministers of Canada into their regular councils. (Cheers)

Lord Beaverbrook went on to speak of the beginning which he hoped had been made by the Ministry of Information, in a new era of intimacy between the nations of the Empire. With the approval of the Prime Minister he had placed a number of Canadians in positions of responsibility in the Ministry, and they would there become acquainted with the machinery of Empire administration. He hoped something of the same kind might be done in the Foreign Office. Finally, he spoke, not without emotion, of his deep appreciation of the kindness done to him that evening.

Other Toasts.

The toast of "Our Hosts" was cordially honored in the proposal of Lt.-Col. Grant Morden, who made a vigorous plea for a more active association of Canadian in England in cause of mutual concern and public importance. At the instance of Lt.-Col. Armour Lady Beaverbrook was toasted with enthusiasm and the Chairman was similarly honored.

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