

realized that three and a half million houses were to a greater or lesser extent damaged in the blitz, and of these a great number were entirely destroyed. My own constituency of Limehouse in East London was formerly a dense mass of working-class houses with hardly any open space at all. But at the recent general election my constituents walked through the fields to vote for me—fields strewn with rubble, beginning to be covered by the weeds that had grown up in the spaces created by German bombs. It will take years to catch up with the housing shortage. It will take a long time to get our industries fully at work, and even then we shall not be able to devote all our energies to our domestic needs. We have the problem of paying for our food and raw materials. For that purpose it is essential that as soon as possible we should build up our export trade. We shall not have in the future those invisible exports on which we used to depend before the war. Those resources built up by past prosperity were used up in the grim time when the British commonwealth and empire stood alone in the field against the barbarians and in the years which followed.

You may think I am painting you a somewhat dark picture. I do not minimize to you or to our own people our difficulties, but I should like you to know also the spirit in which we are tackling them. I was talking the other day to a distinguished American editor who had been visiting Britain, and he said to me that the thing that struck him most was the spirit of energy in our country. It recalls to me what Emerson said a hundred years ago about Britain:

So . . . I feel in regard to this aged England . . . pressed upon by transitions of trade and . . . competing populations. I see her not dispirited, not weak, but well remembering that she has seen dark days before; indeed, with a kind of instinct that she sees a little better in a cloudy day, and that, in a storm of battle and calamity, she has a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon.

I believe that that is true to-day. We have a new parliament, very largely made up of young men and women, a big proportion of whom are drawn from the fighting forces. I believe that this parliament, with its youthful energy, drive and idealism, and its readiness to embark on new experiments, fitly represents the spirit of our old country. At the general election the electors returned to power a party which believes in a planned economy, which believes in developing to the full the resources of our country in the interests of all the people, which believes that every individual in the community should be given a fair share of the good things of this world in return for a fair contribution of

effort. We are therefore embarking on new policies. We are putting forward complete schemes for social security designed to remove from the homes of our people the fear of want; but we know well that our ability to provide this economic security will depend on the degree to which we are able to apply the skill of our workers, of our scientists and managers, to our natural resources. That is why we are seeking to reorganize our basic industries, such as coal, as services owned and controlled in the interests of the nation. We cannot afford to waste our resources. We cannot afford inefficiency. We are seeking to direct capital into those channels where it will fertilize trade and industry in the interest of the whole community. We have an agricultural policy designed to see that the workers on the land get a fair return in price for their efforts, and that the food of the people shall be obtainable at a reasonable cost. We shall of course always have to import a large amount of our food supplies from abroad, but we believe that prosperous agriculture at home is compatible with that exchange of food and raw materials from overseas in return for our manufactured goods which has for so long been the basis of our inter-commonwealth trade. Therefore while we follow no exclusive policy, we believe that in the future as in the past, the general well-being of the countries of the commonwealth will be enhanced by their economies being complementary. In saying this I do not lose sight of the fact that Canada, perhaps to an even greater extent than other countries in the commonwealth, has become during the war an important manufacturing nation, and that it will expect to see in post war years an increasing export of its own manufactured products. But past experience has shown that the greatest volume of trade has been built up between highly industrialized countries, and I see no reason therefore to think that the development to which I have referred will place any obstacle in the way of a steady and increasing trade between our two countries.

We of the Labour party believe in an expansionist economy; we affirm that if we all act wisely we shall never again, see as we did in 1931, the tragedy of starvation and want in the midst of abundance. We hold that it is of vital importance that there should be a steadily increasing standard of life for the masses of the people throughout the world.

In particular, we believe it to be essential that the producers of primary products all the world over shall be assured of a fair reward for their labours and should not be at the mercy of the vagaries of uncontrolled prices.