

Addresses by Earl Baldwin of Bewdley and Other Speakers at Forum Dinner

The text of the address of Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, former Prime Minister of Great Britain, before the Congress on Education for Democracy, and digests of the addresses of Winthrop W. Aldrich and Louis J. Tauber follow:

By Earl Baldwin

There is one thing our peoples—yours and mine—have in common: freedom in the air we breathe, freedom in our blood and bones: the independence of the human spirit. But we are so used to it, that if we ever think of it at all, we think it has dropped into our laps like manna from the skies, and unless we go a little beneath the surface in our questioning, we may feel that we enjoy this freedom because we are better than other people, and therefore more worthy of it. Indeed, we may give an impression to the world of that complacent self-righteousness which is said to be one of our most offensive and irritating characteristics.

The truth is that the vast majority of our peoples have forgotten that this freedom was bought with a great price; that it was obtained by the struggles of generations of those who went before us, by mental wrestlings, by endurance of persecution, by successive failures and triumphs, and we have entered into their labors, the labors of men far better than ourselves. And if we realize this, how can we imagine that what has been won at such a price can be maintained without effort and at no cost to ourselves? Can the lamp by the light of which our ancestors trod their upward path still show us the way unless we keep it trimmed and bright when it is handed to us? Some such thoughts as these have been in our minds in Europe since the Great War, and if they were not in many minds in America, you would never have called this great convention before which I have the honor of speaking.

Questions for the Democracies

Now the questions which you are putting to yourselves are questions which are being asked in the great democracies of the world, and an answer must be found. Have we fallen short of our ideals? What are our ideals? Is democracy safe in the world? What perils face democracy, within and without? The peril today from without is plain for the world to see. In Europe it may be a challenge to the death. But perils from within are common to us all. As I said in Toronto only the other day: "Ideas are on the wing," and ideas may be a greater peril to democracy than the sword. Only a democracy healthy in body and in every limb can be immune to that infection. You and I are probably at one in our ideals, but our problems are different, and the difference is due to certain obvious factors. You live in a vast country; I live in a very small one. Our population is homogeneous—living in an island, we have welded the different peoples who invaded us into a compact whole, and we have had hundreds of years in which to do this, with no fresh mixture of alien blood.

You are still in process of absorbing millions of your people and of making them into good Americans, people to whom freedom was but a name when they first landed on your shores.

Our industrial population, wherever it may be concentrated in Great Britain, can be reached at any point in a few hours at the most. Your problem, it seems to

me, is a far broader and more difficult one than ours. Politically, you have a written Constitution, we have not. The founders of your Constitution in their wisdom did all that human skill could devise to protect you from the—shall we say—abuse of power by a temporary majority; we are dependent on that spirit of give and take, of moderation that is characteristic of our people. But if they lose that, if a party majority were ever to play with the idea of forcing on the country their will before the country as a whole approved of that will, we might find ourselves near to revolution more quickly than you would.

Urges Work for Same Ends

These are a few of the obvious differences of environment and circumstances between us, and the more clearly we perceive them the less we shall be disposed to criticize and advise each other. Let us recognize that we both have a great part to play, and get on each with our own job at home, each convinced of the warm sympathy of the other, working for the same great ends, but not necessarily on the same lines. And I have come over to speak to you tonight because I was invited by a representative body of Americans who were good enough to think that I might say something to be of help to you at the present time. And I think I can help this great conference best not by offering advice, for which I am not qualified and which, indeed, would be an impertinence, but by telling you something of my own experience during the years when I was called upon to guide the destinies of a great democracy through that difficult and critical period immediately following the war.

Difficult as our problems are, there are many things in common, and the story may give you lines of thought which may be useful to you in adapting them to your own purpose. As the world is today, great events in one continent have their repercussions in another; no one can live out his life in a walled garden. In a short address on a subject on which volumes might be written I may at times sound didactic; that you must forgive. It is the last thing I wish to be, but I have not time in which to qualify and say with each statement "it seems to me." I speak for no one but myself; my public work is finished.

Now it was quite clear in Europe that after the war we were in a new world. The men at the helm of the various countries were sailing into uncharted seas, and seas not free from fog. Text-books were of no use; history had to be written as we went along. It was obvious that industrial history would be written at a speed never approached in its century-old evolution. Democracy itself and government had indeed become the "great adventure."

Talked Democracy for 15 Years

I tried with many others at least to prepare the way for the new age. And I talked to the people about democracy for fifteen

years without pause. It was an attempt at that education of democracy, to forward which is now the object of great associations formed of men from all parties on both sides of the Atlantic. No student of history can have any doubt but that democracy is far the most difficult form of government that has ever existed. In a totalitarian State the citizen has only to do as he is told; he has not to think, to make a choice; no direct responsibility

rests on him. The machine is effective so long as he obeys. The success of a democracy depends upon every one realizing his or her responsibility to it; thinking of his duties and forgetting for a time his rights. If he recognizes no duties toward the form of government to which he is ready enough to pay lip service and to shout for, the day may come when he will lose his rights by dangers from without or within. That calls for education and character; education in problems domestic and foreign so as to have material wherewith to form a judgment, and character to concentrate on the essential and to look beyond the immediate effect of particular action on the fortunes of a favorite politician.

A democrat should work for and be prepared to die for his democratic ideals, as the Nazis and Communists are for theirs. And he will never work for it, much less die for it, unless he is convinced that democracy is capable of making a country worthy of his ideals, and if that democrat be of British stock, making a country worthy of his spiritual ideals. He may not recognize easily those ideals; he certainly cannot easily express them, but the Bible reading of his ancestors has left so deep a mark upon him that subconsciously he can never embrace a cause that grips his whole being unless he feels in his bones that it is morally right.

Believing this, I would always stress the spiritual rather than the political foundations of democracy. It is a recognition of the dignity of man and of his individuality, and that dignity and individuality are his as a child of God. There is the unbridgeable gulf between the democracy and the isms that are for the time being in control of so large a part of Europe. If that be our conviction, with what different eyes we regard our work! Each individual man becomes a human soul with his life to live, and you feel that no work is too hard, no drudgery too dull, if you can do your little bit to make your country a place in which the environment will help him to that end.

Differences and honest differences as to how that end is to be accomplished there will be, but with the common purpose there should be a deep national unity. That is a unity of divine purpose, springing from the people themselves, not imposed, and therefore in time of strain infinitely more binding.

The Recognition of Duty

People thus inspired will be more disposed to recognize their duties. Every free human institution, if it is to be preserved, needs its watch dogs, and no institution more than a democratic government, and the people must realize that their responsibility under a representative system is the choice of candidates and the honor of their representatives. And for the maintenance of that honor there must be a continuing interest and unsleeping vigilance on the part of the electors. There should be no higher honor than to be a representative of the people; it should be a legitimate object of ambition to the best men in the country, and the position of such men should be respected by the community.

Are these things beyond us? I have often thought many of us are apt to underrate the quality of the ordinary man. Two things have impressed themselves on me as the result of my own experience as a political leader. One is the extraordinary instinct of our people to see clearly and to make up their minds quickly and surely on a critical issue. I have seen it many times. It does not surprise

me but it fills me with admiration. It makes a man proud to work for such a people. The second thing is their openness to appeals on the highest grounds. There are some politicians, as there are some newspaper men, who have a contempt for the ordinary man and think that any garbage is good enough for him. The politician may draw cheers; the newspaper man may make money, but power and influence they will never get by such means. The ordinary man in the main wants to do the right thing, and if the politician doesn't believe that, he is himself one of the greatest obstacles to the successful working of the democratic system.

Now I spoke a few minutes ago of the perils that face democracy from without and within. These perils are real; they are at our doors. Of these things I have been speaking at home since the early years after the war; I have never addressed an American audience; probably none of you have read anything I have said, so I have no need to apologize to you for going over some of the ground I have so often covered at home.

Ideas are on the wing. Science has brought the nations of the world jostling together and ideas laugh at boundaries. And there are ideas so loaded with dynamite that they may blow systems that appear founded on a rock into fragments. I need not tell you that such ideas are those of Bolshevism and those propagated by the Nazis and Fascists. No one can foresee what effect they may have on the future of the world; how far they may spread; what their ultimate form may be. But of one thing be clear, they cannot exist within the same boundaries as what you and I understand as democracy. Under such systems there may be good things. The good things should be equally attainable by us.

Totalitarian Price Too High

But in totalitarian practice the attainment of what is good is achieved by paying a price we cannot pay. The triumph of these ideas is bought by the suppression of the liberty of the individual human soul, the very life and spirit of the ideas upon which our conception of democracy is based. The Bolsheviks, whose original leaders were men of great though narrow intellectual power saw clearly that the greatest obstacle to the enslaving of the human will was the Christian faith, made that faith the object of their bitterest attack from the first. Only

by the elimination of a power which in the human heart they knew to be greater than their own could they create a generation malleable to their influence. And it is a terrible thing that in the extreme Nazi teaching you see this tendency in Germany today.

Now these things may seem far from us. But he would be a bold man who would say that they are not perils without which may become perils within. Whether this happens depends on ourselves. As far as my own country is concerned, I think the worst danger from Communist propaganda is over. I will say something of that and then consider the danger of the Nazi and Fascist ideologies.

Even before the war certain ideas well known in Communist propaganda were spreading in England. It was believed by many that force could win what arguments would fail to do, and the industrial workers began to experiment with the big strike, that

is, a strike covering a whole industry, and the bigger strike covering more than one, with a distant object in view, that is, the general strike, by which a whole nation might be brought to its knees to concede whatever demands might be made on the part of one or more of the great branches of industry. But before these things had gone for the great war broke out, and for four years we were fighting as one man for our lives.

Into those four years, as I have often said, were packed fifty years of political evolution, and when, with the advent of full manhood suffrage, we began to pick up the threads of our old life, I knew that we were in a new world, and my wonder was whether we could advance by orderly progression or whether we should dash our heads against a stone wall, for our evolution might prove to have advanced too far beyond our education.

It was obvious that great changes were at hand in the industrial system; as I said before, we were in an uncharted sea; we had no precedent to guide us; no one knew whither we were going. The spirit in the country was bitter, and the strain of these four years had left its mark on all the country's leaders, politicians and trade union leaders alike.

Need for Change of Spirit Seen

Many of us felt that what was wanted was a change of spirit; that a national unity was essential—essential to face our problems at home and to meet whatever might be in store for us in that post-war world. And it was clear to many of us that force was no good and that if our country was to be immune against the germs of alien ideas, that could only be achieved by trying to make our people play their part in making that country one better worth living in; by making life more tolerable, by better housing, better conditions of labor, and in short, to work in the spirit that all classes should realize the brotherhood of man, and not in the grudging spirit that has political expediency for its motive power.

But we had to pass through a period of very grave industrial unrest which culminated in the now historic general strike. I had held the view before the war that a general strike was bound to come, and after the war it was obvious that the great experiment would be tried at the first convenient opportunity. I was talking with an old House of Commons friend of mine a few months ago, himself a miners' leader in his own area, and I was relieved to hear him say that the general strike was inevitable.

It was inevitable, and I think nothing was more typical of our people than the reaction when the danger was past. The people as a whole realized that any general strike is a challenge to their own freely elected government, and their political sense showed them where that might lead them and the industrial world, both sides—employers and employed—realized that they had stood for a moment on the brink of an abyss, and at the bottom of that abyss was anarchy. And they didn't like it. There was much thinking done. There were wild men on both sides, survivors, I like to think, of an age that is passing if not past. But the wiser man won, and after that year, I rejoiced to see slowly growing, a different outlook and a different spirit in industry. The remarkable progress that has been made recently in the matter of holidays with pay has been achieved in my view by the close cooperation of men from both sides who have an intimate knowledge of the conditions of the particular industry concerned and who bring to the solution of the problem good sense and good will.

I have dwelt at some length on industrial relations. My country is highly industrialized and when such a State can work out her own salvation without the threat of forcible action, but by reason and good-will, she knows that her people are working in the best spirit of democracy and one not likely to surrender their birth-right to the Communist.

Dangers From the Right

But what of danger from the extreme Right? That is different in its origin and in its appeal. Dictatorship of the Right, in Italy and Germany, has been the aftermath of communism. In England I believe the only possibility of the success of fascism would be as the result of an open fight with communism, and of that happening I have little fear. But there might be a danger in a democratic country in certain conditions which have not as yet arisen. For instance, picture to yourself a country in which there is large scale unemployment. Men look abroad; they are told there has been such unemployment in Germany, but that since the Nazis came into power it has disappeared. They read of great national improvements being carried out in Germany and Italy, absorbing vast numbers of unemployed, of waste and unhealthy areas being reclaimed and occupied, and they begin to contrast what they hear and read of these foreign countries with what they find being done or maybe left undone at home.

If such a state of things arises, hoist the danger signal. You have a mass of men ripe to listen to any one or anything. And, given the man of genius who can make the masses believe that he alone can make the work they need if he has a free hand—if you get to that point, you are within sight of revolution by the Fascist. You have to answer the question "Is

democracy as sufficient as fascism?" and the answer depends upon the leaders of the people and on the people themselves.

The world is not safe for democracy today. We cannot make our own countries safe for democracy by letting things slide, nor can we educate our peoples by holding up our hands in horror at the actions of totalitarian States. How a country is governed is its own concern; it is when the totalitarian country imposes or tries to impose its system on a people outside its borders that their action then becomes the concern of all free men.

Now when I consider the composition of this great gathering in New York this week, I know that by your very presence here you show that you are all eager to help in making your democracy an example to the world of what a democracy should be. You desire it to be great, not only in population and in wealth, but in spirit; a country in which the light of ordered freedom shines with a clear white light to which the lovers of such freedom may look with hope from every corner of the world.

You feel this for your own folk as I do for mine. As the lights are quenched in one country after another, there is hope in the world so long as our lamps are trimmed and their rays may be seen penetrating the gloom. What a responsibility rests on us!

The Power of Christianity

Many of us, as we get older and look back, come to realize that the motive force of Christianity is the life of the Christian. We can think of individuals, often in the humblest walks of life, who by their lives, all unconsciously, have strengthened us, given us purpose, have made the struggle, the daily struggle of life, seem worth while. And is it not true in the democracy we would all wish to see? The example of the good citizen is the preserving salt. And what power might not go forth throughout this great land if every one of us here went home to our daily avocations resolved to be good citizens? To be true and faithful servants to the people? And that with no thought of

our own advancement but because we are members one of another, integral parts of that whole creation which grows and travails together.

Whether there be war in Europe or not, wars settle nothing; they unchain evil passions for the years to come, violent as the passions that begat the war itself. But the struggle for the soul of man will go on whether there be war or not, and, Englishman as I am, I know that in this I speak for you who hear me tonight. We have to show the world that we have ideals no less than the rulers of the totalitarian States; that our ideals are harder of accomplishment because they are far higher; they involve the cooperation of men of their own free will endeavoring to work with God Himself in the raising of mankind. In a totalitarian State the will must be surrendered, surrendered to the will of one fallible man. And no man is fitted for absolute power over the wills of his fellow men.

And I believe that many of these things of which I have been speaking are in the minds of many who perhaps are not ready at finding words to express them.

I do not know how it may be with you, but I am clear that it is so with me. I have addressed meetings in England since I was a young man, and throughout England and Scotland and Wales in the last twenty years, and I am not singular in detecting a remarkable change in the post-war audiences. They are not satisfied with the kind of stuff to which they used to listen years ago. They are not amused by mere abuse of the speaker's opponents, by sarcasm, by special pleading and the tricks of the old school. Vast numbers of our electorate are not attached to a party, and in great mass meetings you get men and women of all parties and of none, and the quiet hearing you get is remarkable.

I have had interesting confirmation of this from unexpected quarters. A Labor friend of mine was discussing this very subject with me not long ago. He has been many years in the House of Commons and he represents a strongly Labor constituency in a wide industrial area. He said: "People wouldn't listen today to the stuff I gave them twenty years ago. They want solid food."

There are, of course, and probably always will be, men who will play down to ignorance and prejudice, especially at election times when they get excited, but to me there is something profoundly touching and humbling in a vast crowd, troubled in its mind and prepared to listen to what you have to say, in the belief that you will deal with them honestly and with sincerity. Perhaps we have much to learn from each other. I

know they have taught me much. It has confirmed my faith in my fellow-countrymen, and my faith that, given peace, we can make a better job of democracy than we have yet done.

Now I may have no other opportunity of speaking to such an American audience as I have tonight, and it is a privilege that I value more than I can express to you in words. I want, therefore, in my closing remarks to emphasize once more a fundamental difference between our Constitutions, a difference which in my view is essential to bear closely in mind. Let me first remind you of a pregnant paragraph of James Bryce, our one-time Ambassador to Washington, who wrote "The American Commonwealth." "The American Commonwealth," he said, "is no exception to the rule that everything which has power to win the obedience and respect of men must have its roots deep in the past, and that the more slowly every institution has grown, so much the more enduring is it likely to prove . . . there is a hearty puritanism in the view of human nature which parades the instrument of 1787. . . . No men were less revolutionary in spirit than the heroes of the American Revolution. They made a revolution in the name of Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights."

I was speaking in Tewkesbury Abbey only a few days ago, and in the choir of that great Norman church is a small flagstone on which is cut an inscription in Latin in seven words to Gilbert de Clare, one of the barons who signed Magna Charta. I translated those words for you: "Magna Charta is the Law; henceforward let the King look out."

There is an epitome of English history. England has never tolerated dictatorship. When the king sought to gather all power into his hands, he had to look out—then and later. And so with the barons and so with the medieval church and so with the dictatorship under Cromwell, and so it will always be. Whatever it may call itself, the thing will never be tolerated by our people. And I rejoice to think that we have lent you for your great Fair in New York a copy of that Charta, knowing that it would be an object of reverence to you as it has been to us through the centuries and is today.

American Liberty Safeguarded

But when we separated one great change came. Bryce quotes a sentence in his great work from Judge Cooley. "America," says the judge, "is not so much an example in her liberty as in the covenanted and enduring securities which are intended to prevent liberty degenerating into license, and to establish a feeling of trust and repose under a beneficent government, whose excellence, so obvious in its freedom, is still more conspicuous in its careful provision for performance and stability."

I could not find two more apt quotations to illustrate what I want to say. Our common constitutional growth was like the trunk of a great oak tree, springing from small beginnings. That tree has now two great branches represented by our two great democracies. Your Constitution is a written one, safeguarded against sudden change, more rigid; ours is unwritten, therefore more flexible and capable of evolution, and depending on the wisdom of our people to recognize the difference between evolution and revolution.

So far, the political instinct of our people has enabled us to pass through many troublous times in the last 150 years, times of swift change comprising the opening and the development of what is often called the Industrial Revolution; to pass through them without open violence and with our constitution intact, our social services have broadened out and developed beyond all knowledge in the two decades since the war.

But we have much to do yet in dealing with what is called the hard case of unemployment and the aftermath of that financial and industrial crisis that came

upon us all ten years ago. And the tragedy is that another war would throw back all our efforts and make further progress impossible for a generation. But such experiences are a part of our history. Our little island has been in the danger zone for two thousand years. If war comes, it will find us as a people united as we have never been before; powerful in material resources, and believing in our hearts that on the issue depends ultimately the freedom of mankind. In such a conflict we must play our part and to the end.

You too have your domestic problems, in some ways more difficult than ours. No time could be more opportune for this conference, for the meeting together of men and women in every walk of life, patriotic and of good will, eager to spend themselves in the service of their fellow-men. You have it in your power, by your example, to lead your people, to inspire them to work for the ideals that have animated the greatest Americans through the generations of your history: Courage and Faith, Love and Wisdom, those are what we all need, for in our different ways and with our different responsibilities, we are moving forward into a new age. May God give us a right judgment in all things.