

LET'S FACE THE FACTS

No. 17

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Address to the Men and Women
of Canada

BY

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Minister of National War Services

over a national network of
the Canadian Broadcasting
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Text of the address of the Hon. James G. Gardiner over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation national network Sunday night follows:

I have just returned from Britain. I went there with a strong conviction that British institutions of government as developed through two thousand years of written history are the most Democratic in the world. They offer opportunities for freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of action and freedom to arrange one's own plan of life to a degree that is not provided by the institutions offered under any other system. I came back with that conviction strengthened, and what is more important, with the further conviction that no one either inside Britain or from outside is going to be permitted to change the system or prevent British people going on with Tennyson's pyramid, where, "Freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent."

FREEDOM GROWS BEHIND NAVY

I went to Britain with a strong conviction that the British Navy has been the fortress behind which freedom has been permitted to grow. Four times in as many centuries European tyrants have attempted to blot out the power of the many and bring them into subjection to the will of one. Philip of Spain, Louis of France, Napoleon, William II of Prussia, each had his turn. Each was turned back at the Channel by the fleet of Britain. The forces of Freedom organized for the final battle and victory came with certainty. On each of those epoch-making occasions the forces of Freedom lost many battles but always won the last or most important battle.

HITLER AND NAPOLEON

The rise of Hitler is similar in many respects to that of Napoleon. France under Louis had been nurtured in an atmosphere of power based upon military strength. A generation taught to rely upon force found itself crushed beneath unbearable taxes, and like all individuals and nations relying upon force, threw off all restraint and obligation and sought to gain its place in the world through following one who came from the people but who himself capitalized the will of the people to rely upon force.

Bismarck and William II taught Germany to rely upon force. When the power of the throne was crushed the reliance upon

force in Germany did not disappear with the throne. Hitler, like Napoleon, capitalized that which was inherited from the previous period and is leading his people from the burdens of defeat in the last war toward a fifth effort to cause all mankind to yield to the will of one man and one nation.

This effort must be defeated just as that of Napoleon was defeated before the world can advance to new and greater freedom.

THE BRITISH NAVY HOLDS

I came back from Britain with a stronger conviction that the British Navy is again proving equal to the task of holding the Channel until the forces of Freedom are organized and ready to go forward to victory.

TWO CONVICTIONS STRENGTHENED

I would like to tell you why I came back from Britain with the two convictions strengthened: First: that Democracy is still a living reality in Britain, and Second: that Britain is building behind an unbeatable Navy a power which will defeat Hitler and leave men and women free to live their own lives.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy is something very difficult to define but not so difficult to recognize when you see it in operation. When the last war ended Britain put away all warlike things excepting her Navy, which is the floating rampart of her protective fortress. Behind it the caterpillar traction of the tank was put to work to assist rather than destroy mankind. The aeroplane was made the means by which space was obliterated and social beings brought closer together. People turned, with the assistance of these two powerful weapons of the first great war, to making life more complete and enjoyable.

Factories which had been making munitions, arms, tanks and war planes were converted into workshops where tools, tractors, automobiles and civilian planes were constructed for the use of mankind.

Children played in security. Boys and girls had access through school books, teachers and professors to the knowledge of the ages. They were free to take for themselves professional, trade, business, farming, fishing, sailing, lumbering or any other calling. Only necessity compelled one to do anything and when it did one had the right to choose his course. He did not always have the power

to attain. But he at least had the right to try. That individual right is the essence of Freedom.

Freedom to live, freedom to think, freedom to learn, freedom to agree or disagree, freedom to choose one's calling, freedom to change one's mind leavened by a healthy community spirit which permits us to bear one another's burdens is, I think, the essence of Democracy.

LONDON, DOVER AND DEMOCRACY

I arrived in London in the midst of the Battle of Britain which to date might be better called the Battle of London and Dover. Up until the day, now just two weeks ago, that I left Britain there was not enough destruction outside those two places to warrant one in saying that there had been an attack upon Britain. I suppose there are a hundred places that you or I would not care to have been just at the time the bomb exploded. But when one travels over Britain as I did from Wales to Dover, and Dover to Glasgow, and Glasgow to Skye, to Inverness and through beautiful Perthshire, one is compelled to conclude that the Battle is in London and Dover. Any other place seems quiet and peacefully uninteresting in comparison. It is therefore to London and Dover that I would ask you to go with me for a four weeks' period to see the people as I saw them and form your own conclusions as to the value they place upon the right to choose the British way of living.

HOW LONDON BEHAVES

Any time during that four weeks you could have arrived in London as we did in the evening just before dusk. You could have settled in your chosen place of abode anywhere within the four corners of a city with more people in it than there are in all Canada, and whatever evening it might have been you would have been called to attention between seven and eight o'clock by the sounding of the siren which warned that the planes were on their way from the coast of Europe to Britain's capital. After a few such experiences you could have guessed exactly the number of minutes which would elapse between the sounding of the siren and the hearing of the droning sound of the Nazi planes. After a few evenings you could with your own ears tell when the planes had approached so close that the guns of the nearest Anti-Aircraft batteries would open up. You could detect the whistle of the bomb amidst the roaring din,

the deadening thud which meant the destruction of another place of business, a home or a church. If for any reason you desired to leave your place of abode while this was on, when you lifted the latch each whistling bomb seemed directed to your door.

Most people stay in while this is on but if you care to go out you are guided by little red, yellow and green crosses in the traffic lights at the street corners.

There will probably be a lull in the noise in an hour's time, only to have it start all over again at eleven, again at one, usually not so intense and again with equal intensity just before dawn. This might have been any night. It had been on for four weeks before we arrived. It continued for the four weeks we were there. Newspaper reports indicate it has continued for the past two weeks. That is ten weeks. Such is the Battle of London at night. I do not think there was a day during the time we were there without its bombing incidents in some part of London.

You ask me. What has been the extent of the destruction?

DAMAGE IN LONDON

My answer is that there was more real damage done to property essential to London's existence, and possibly more loss of life in the first two days of the raids than during all the ten weeks which followed. The planes are kept high and the bombing is therefore indiscriminate, with the result that there is a ten-to-one chance the bomb will light on a park, a street or a backyard rather than on a building.

The destruction during the first two days was confined to East London. East London when I saw it reminded me of places I have seen destroyed by a cyclone. The effect of the bombings combine all the destructive possibilities of the cyclone, the thunderstorm, the earthquake and the flood. The concussion caused by the explosion of a bomb or a land mine has much the same effect as the suction of a cyclone, plus the shaking of the earthquake. Brick walls crumble, windows are shattered, and trees are uprooted. Fires are started from incendiary bombs, the explosion of a bomb or the cutting of a gas pipe, combining all the possibilities of the thunderstorm and the earthquake. The cutting of water mains floods underground shelters and basements where people take refuge.

The numbers killed have not been great. In the police district where the greatest destruction was, there were 1,400 civilians

killed out of a total population of 2,000,000 in the first four weeks. But everyone of the 11,000,000 people in the London area is living in the knowledge that as he was bombed yesterday and last night he will be bombed today and tonight. If you ask them what they think of it they invariably answer, "If the bomb strikes me down I will not know it. If I hear it explode I know I am past danger."

THERE IS GRIEF

Do not misunderstand me. There is grief for loved ones gone. There was the man who lost his father, mother, wife and three children in London who went to Scotland to look for work and try to forget it all. There were the mothers with their families and few belongings huddled in the underground stations sleeping on cement floors until husbands and government co-operating could find better quarters. There were sad-faced people with tears almost showing through reddened eyelids. There were people driving ambulances by night and making ammunition by day. And amidst it all speakers still stood on boxes in Hyde Park on a Sunday afternoon and harangued crowds on every conceivable subject from Hitler to God.

THEY CARRY ON

The people of London have been and are living through all this. If the place of business is there when they come down in the morning, they go about their business much as usual: if it is not, they help clear up the debris and prepare to start in again. Most of the labour does not leave the job when the siren goes in the day time, but waits for a second warning specially prepared to indicate when danger is closer. They are the most philosophical and cheerful people one would care to meet.

In London, at present, you can have more real laughs and cries than in any other place I know of—the laughs usually follow the humour of the Cockney commenting upon his own plight.

THE FRONT LINE

Why do they take that attitude?

Because they are convinced that they are the front line in a battle to perpetuate freedom among mankind. Their lives they consider small compared with the benefits which will be saved to future generations if they win.

To live in London for four weeks during the Battle of London is to learn life and mankind

all over again. It will cause you every minute of the time to thank God you are part of an Empire which has such wonderful people living in its capital. It will cause you to be proud of an opportunity to help feed them and provide them with the weapons of defence and finally of offensive warfare. It will cause you to be proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in the last battle of this war for freedom which will be won by Britain.

DOVER THE OUTPOST

If you were not convinced in London come down with me to the outpost at Dover. The old fort was built by the Romans in the time of Caesar. It was last rebuilt to repel possible attacks by Napoleon. It is today equipped with all the essential mechanisms. It has an Artillery Major who once lived in our province of Saskatchewan, and who compares destruction with that of the Regina cyclone. The map of the little old city is literally dotted with shell and bomb craters. Many of its buildings have been hit. It has had 305 air-raid warnings in eight weeks. It has a little old boat which goes out daily to sweep mines from the Channel which at times is lost from view in the splashing of water caused by shells from the opposite shore. It is more like our cities in size because it only had 41,000 people in it when the war started. You will be seeing it in a picture entitled, "The Front Line." When you do you will scarcely believe all that I have said about it. Neither the picture nor the fact that only 43 people had been killed there after weeks of bombing and shelling, tell the whole story. Eight shells came over while I was there and there was a dog-fight on above, but people still carried on in their places of business and boys and girls went about the streets bareheaded.

It is there you find the Army, the Air Force and the Navy guarding the narrowest part of the Channel separating the front line of the forces of Democracy from the front lines of Hitlerism. It is there that you find officers of the Navy operating on land who inspire you with the thought that the confidence of the British people in final victory is well placed when it rests upon the conviction that the Navy will hold the narrow Channel until we are ready to advance.

THE NAVY WILL HOLD LINE

But there is much more in what we saw to inspire confidence that the Navy will hold until we are

ready to advance to the defence of Democracy with a well-trained and equipped army and air force.

When day after day while crossing the ocean we went out on deck and scanned the horizon without seeing a ship until we were nearing the coast of Britain, we were compelled to think this could not be if it were not for the British Navy.

When we reached port and saw the greatest activity with commerce both coming and going we were compelled to conclude this could not be if it were not for the British Navy.

When we travelled inland and saw trains, trucks, buses and planes carrying freight and passengers to and from the ports with little to obstruct we were compelled to believe this could not be if it were not for the British Navy.

When we sat down to our meals and had delivered to us food shipped from the four corners of the earth we were sure this could not be if it were not for the British Navy.

But it required a visit to her shipyards to learn the story of the war first-hand. Ships supposed to have been sunk, according to German stories, were either ready to take to the sea or almost so. Ships not intended for battle that have fought their way back to port for repairs after meeting the fighting ships of the foe, their skippers having exemplified all the courage and ingenuity of the sea captains of Queen Elizabeth were there. Craft of all kinds ready to carry freight, passengers or do battle were built, building and under repair. When you leave Britain the Navy makes it at least a hundred-to-one guess you will get safely through.

The flashes of the guns could be seen from our ship after the Navy had guided us safely by all danger when one of her brave captains went to a sure death to make it possible for 34 other ships to find a safe way to port.

The Navy will hold and give Democracy a fifth chance to prepare.

BRITAIN PREPARES

Britain is not only a fortress today. Britain is a throbbing industrial centre. Britain's highways, railways and airlines are operating unhindered. Britain's schools are operating. Britain's Houses of Parliament still meet. Britain's public men have time to make you feel at home with them. Britain's churches are full on Sunday morning. Britain is a beautiful countryside. Britain still stands behind the Navy and prepares.

DEPENDS UPON NORTH AMERICA

Britain is the front line in the defence of Democracy, and Britain is depending upon the North American continent which copied her institutions and ways of living more than any other part of the world to help sustain her effort. The British Navy is holding the line while we who turned our swords into pruning hooks and plowshares at the end of the last war beat our plowshares and pruning hooks into swords again.

The real Battle of Britain is being won or lost in the factories of the Democracies. British factories are working night and day to turn out munitions, arms, tanks, trucks, planes and ships. Hitler, thanks to our Navy supported by a small group of airmen, has not succeeded in slowing down production. The civilians of London by their fortitude and courage are holding the line in the Battle of Nerves. The Battle of Europe will be fought in the field by armies.

THE FACTORY WORKERS

Our factories will do the same as those of Britain. My observations in Britain lead me to conclude that we can put too much emphasis upon the need for skilled labour. I enquired in factories and shipbuilding yards everywhere and was told in every line of industry that not more than 5 per cent. required any skill before coming in to do the job, and in a very short time they could operate the machines and tools in the plant. They told me to go and talk to the workers as we went about. I did.

The first one I talked to told me that a few months ago he was a shoemaker. He entered a small arms factory and is now checking with precision tools close fitting sections of a complicated machine gun.

The next was a policeman in peace-time. He now has charge of a very important section of the staff in the machine section, having first taken on the duties of a watchman.

The next was a girl running a rather important machine. She lived in the country and rode in on a bicycle eight miles every morning and back at night. I have seen similar girls milking cows and I am sure it took much more nerve, ingenuity and skill to sit on a stool and pull teats than it did to operate this inanimate creation known as a complicated machine.

I think it would be wise to stop much of this talk against military training for men who happen to

be making planes, munitions, arms and ships, and remember that in one year from now a man will be needed to use every gun, operate every plane, drive every truck, and help operate every ship in the front line of battle. There is no reason for making these machines unless we provide for their being operated.

INDUSTRY'S RESPONSIBILITY

As Minister of War Services I would say after seeing Britain in action, it will take much longer to train a soldier than it does to train labour for plants. Much of the labour being trained for plants in Britain is from the classes old and young of either sex who cannot serve in the line. I heard a very prominent citizen of Britain tell a factory manager that if he could not get the necessary work out of the labour he had it was he who is to blame and not the government if his production is not up to the minute. Factory managers who contend they cannot produce to capacity without interfering with the training of men may have to be told by someone just as they are being in Britain that they as factory managers are not good enough for war-time.

The greatest asset a soldier has is the will and conviction which induces him to serve a common cause in company with others. The training camps are bringing our Canadians of many origins into close association, allowing them in associated groups to place a value on our institutions. This association is producing that greatest of all assets, a common interest in a common cause. The makers of the arms and munitions are placing in the hands of these men instruments which can be used for good and evil. The camps will insure that they will be used for good. I am certain if our young men are given the opportunity to live together for a few weeks we will have the same co-operation in Canada as in Britain from all in preparing to stand in line with the Mother Country when the order to advance to victory comes.

Everyone who responds to the order will remember the Battle of Britain when 14,000 civilians without arms met death during a period when less than 300 soldiers fell. Every young man in the Democracies of the World will follow the lead in courage and endurance of the aged and the mothers and the children during the Battle of Britain until the victory is won and we are again free to live our lives in our own way.