

^{with}
Sal. Fischer Luncheon

I intend to speak to you today on the essentials of our democratic system. My speech could be called "The Political Duties of the Citizens of a Free Government" - it could be called "The Axioms of Democracy" - it could be called "Our British Way of Life" - it could even be called "Things to Fight For". However entitled it would remain what it is intended to be, a reminder of some of the rights, privileges and duties which pertain to our British and Canadian citizenship in times of peace. At first blush it takes some hardihood to discuss such things in this mad hour of omens and uncertainties. But surely it is precisely at such a time that we should remember the achievements we have won in peace, when we should remind ourselves of our heritage, when we should appreciate those achievements and cherish that heritage. Fleets, armies and aircraft are but means to protect ideals which our race has built up from the ways of life of generations of ancestors. If we do not live up to those ideals of government, if we do not continue to live according to our traditional way of life, then British democracy will fail within its embattled walls, as surely as if those walls should fall before the assault of a conqueror. As Dr. Sandwell has said: "Liberty has made our country. Let us not fail to guard our heritage of liberty in the mistaken belief that we can be permanently better off or safer or hobler without it." Not less than in times of quiet, but more in times of war, must we preserve in domestic practice those fruits of the victories of peace which the poet tells us are more renowned than those of war. Surely it is eternally true, that it is when the human spirit is treading a dark road, that

we must seek, as at no other time, to keep the lamp of reason and the torch of internal liberty, trimmed and burning at their brightest. In that belief at all events I proceed to discuss without reference to war those things which have produced, and which characterize, the democratic way of life with which we have been blessed, which other peoples have been denied, and which will be in deadly peril at home as well as abroad if war does strike.

I take as my immediate text the words of my great predecessor Dr. Richard Chapman Weldon - spoken fifty-six years ago. "In our free government we all have political duties, some higher, some humbler, and these duties will be best performed by those who have given them the most thought."

As Weldon said, we live in a free government, in a Parliamentary democracy, wherein a constitutional monarch reigns, but the people rule themselves, by representatives selected by, and ultimately responsible to them. This Canada of ours is a part of the British Empire, or as we now say, a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Of the evolution of our status within that Empire I need not speak. But I may recall to you the historic spirit of the whole of which we are a part, by quoting to you the tribute of General Smuts, himself a representative of a conquered people, in words spoken to the British Parliament, and applicable to Canada: "All the empires that we have known ... are founded on the idea of assimilation, of trying to force different human material through one mould so as to form one nation. Your whole idea and basis is different These younger communities, the offspring of the Mother Country - or territories like that of my own people, which have been annexed after various vicissitudes of war - all these you

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My remarks today are intended to be a reminder of some of the rights and privileges which pertain to our British and Canadian citizenship in times of peace and the responsibilities which attach to them. At first blush it takes some hardihood to discuss such things in this mad hour of war. But surely it is precisely at such a time that we should remember the achievements we have won in peace, when we should remind ourselves of our heritage, when we should appreciate those achievements and cherish that heritage. Not less than in time of quiet must we preserve in domestic practice those fruits of the victories of peace, which the poet tells us are more renowned than those of war. For even in time of war we must seek to keep the lamp of reason and of internal liberty burning as brightly as external events will allow. In that belief at all events I proceed to discuss, without reference to war, those things which have produced, and which characterize, the democratic way of life with which we have been blessed, which other peoples have been denied, and to which the apathy of the citizen is a constant threat. How far the rights and

responsibilities of citizenship must be modified or increased, in time of war, are matters outside the scope of my talk.

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want to develop according to the principles of self-government and freedom and liberty. This is the fundamental fact, that the British Empire, or this British Commonwealth of Nations stands for a fuller, a richer and a more various life among all the nations that compose it. And even nations that have fought against you, like my own, must feel that they and their interests, their language, their religions, and all their cultural interests are as secure ... as those of the children of your own household and your own blood".

We are, then, in Canada a free people governing ourselves without external control. We govern ourselves under a Constitution which itself expresses its purpose as directed to the creation of a federal union "under the Crown of Great Britain with a constitution similar in principle to that of the United Kingdom." Our Constitution is underlain by the constitutional usages, political principles and theories and habits of representative and responsible government, whereby the English people have attained to government of the people, by the people and for the people.

A political democracy means a system wherein government is carried on in accordance with the will of the people as to how, and by whom, they shall be governed. Such a system rests on the assumption of the personal worth of every individual citizen, and his right to a voice in the management of the State. It is founded on the belief that such a system is the best method of securing the twin objectives of the highest degree of Personal Freedom and the most adequate kind of Social

Justice. We seek to secure these objectives on the theory that the people will best know how to fashion and administer the laws necessary to give each individual the maximum liberty of expression and action, and the assurance that justice will be meted out to all impartially. This involves the right of all to participate in the work of government - the great principle of equality of citizenship. Obviously not all can engage directly in the management of the country and so has arisen the idea of a representative government. If all are to be governed by a few representatives, then all must be entitled to participate in selecting them, and so has arisen the idea of popular suffrage, gradually extended so as to take in the whole adult population, without regard to race or creed, birth or rank, riches or poverty.

But unless organized and related to concrete matters the voting at public elections may result in the expression of a mere chaos of personal views. Hence in every democracy appears the party system as a vital principle. Together, the political parties focus public opinion upon public issues so that the people in the mass may deliver an intelligible verdict as to the policies by which, and the men by whom, they desire to be governed and represented. The dominant party in the Legislature selects from its members an Executive Committee, or Cabinet, to manage the various departments of government. The Cabinet remains responsible to the elected representatives of the people - including those of opposing Parties - and if it loses their support will be turned out of office.

On the other hand democratic government implies more than the mere right to vote. Elections after all are mere devices for discovering the public will at a given time. If we are to have government

by opinion each citizen must have the right to express his own opinions, to discuss those of others, to organize with others for the propagation of those opinions he believes to be right. He must be able to think freely, speak freely, dissent from majority views freely, associate freely, and be free to seek to convert the majority, Again we come back to Personal Freedom as the very basis of our system, Thus in a recent judgment, the Chief Justice of Canada said, with regard to a statute challenged as curtailing the freedom of the Press: "The B.N.A. Act contemplates a Parliament working under the influence of public opinion and public discussion. There can be no controversy that such institutions derive their efficacy from the free public discussion of affairs, from criticism and answer and counter criticism, from attack upon policy and administration and defence and counter-attack; from the freest and fullest analysis and examination from every point of view of political proposals. This is signally true in respect of the discharge by Ministers of the Crown of their responsibility to Parliament, of members of Parliament of their duty to the electors, and by the electors themselves of their responsibilities in the election of their representatives Freedom of discussion means freedom governed by law. Even within its legal limits it is liable to grave abuse; but it is axiomatic that the practice of this right of free public discussion of public affairs, notwithstanding its incidental mischief, is the breath of life of parliamentary institutions."

In Canada, as in England, all citizens have freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of association in the form of principles of

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the ordinary law of the land which defines the limits of permissible freedom so generously as to impose little restraint on the most eager citizen. In addition we have the machinery to make our views effective in directing and controlling our government. ~~These are mere aspects of the principle of personal liberty which is part of the texture of our system of government, a disciplined liberty, resting ultimately on the supremacy of the ordinary law, and the impartiality of our legal administration.~~

So much I have said by way of emphasizing the very trite fact that our democracy is a system of popular government representative of, and representative to, public opinion. It is a significant tribute to the dynamic force of public opinion, freely formed and freely expressed, that though every dictator has directed himself to the suppression of freedom of opinion, and the ~~elimination~~ ^{infringement} of any real opportunity to express opposing views, he has invariably insisted upon great demonstrations of apparent popular approval. How different in our system which recognized in its legislatures an Opposition Party, fundamentally opposed to the government of the day, and which, so far from being repressed as treasonable, is called His Majesty's Loyal Opposition and the Leader of which in the Dominion Parliament, at least, is paid the salary of a Cabinet Minister, out of public funds.

Now government by opinion, based on freedom of thought and debate and action, requires a unity of belief in the fundamentals of government and a toleration of dissenting opinions. *As/Laski/says/* Lord Balfour has said, "Our whole political machinery presupposes a people so fundamentally at one that they can safely afford to bicker; and so sure of their own moderation that they are not dangerously

disturbed by the never-ending din of political conflict". And as Jennings says, a democratic state is one "where criticism of the government is not only permissible but a positive merit, and where parties based on competing policies and interests are not allowed - but encouraged". And as Wickham Steed has said, "freedom to criticize carries with it as a main attribute - toleration of unpalatable opinions, for intolerance is the one thing we cannot tolerate if we are to remain free".

Our Parliamentary democracy does secure to the citizen the right to vote, the right to criticize, the right to persuade and convert others, and otherwise to mould public opinion. But rights are ineffective if they are not exercised, and of no value if they are not exercised intelligently. Bryce truly says that "among the conditions requisite for the formation of a wise and tolerant public opinion, the intelligence of the people and the amount of interest which the average citizen takes in public affairs, are the most important." For successful democracy does demand that the citizen shall take seriously and intelligently his public duty.

7 The character of the democracy, and its efficiency as a form of government, must vary with the intellectual character of its citizens, and their capacity for sound judgments. To the extent that the electorate of a Democracy possesses that capacity it will be reflected in the government it selects, to the extent that it lacks that capacity it will have to be content with inefficient government. For it must

be admitted, that a people, free to govern itself, gets exactly the kind of government it deserves. Education, then, is of direct and controlling effect upon the public opinion of the democratic ~~citizen~~ nation and, through that opinion, upon the character of the people's government.

Every right I have mentioned involves a correlative duty. The right to vote is a duty to vote, the right to discuss public affairs is a duty to become informed about them, the right to participate in government is a duty to participate in it directly, or, more remotely, in the development of public opinion. The burden of ruling rests no more upon those in office than upon the ~~individual~~////// individual citizen. As the Chief Justice of England has said, "the foundation of democracy is the distribution of responsibility throughout the whole body of citizens". Never has this idea been better expressed than by Earl Baldwin when, speaking out of long experience in the practice of popular government, he said: "Democracy is indeed a difficult form of government, difficult because it requires for its perfect functioning the participation of all the people in the country. It cannot function well, unless everyone, men and women alike, feel their responsibility to their State, do their own duty, and try and choose the men who will do theirs. Freedom can only be maintained by a constant vigilance. A democracy can only be maintained when every man and woman in it, seeks to do everything in their power to make that community better and freer." And, as a great Canadian has remarked, all our hopes for the future preservation of democracy rest on the maintenance of freedom of discussion and of the franchise "so hardly won" and "so precariously held". We must realize, therefore, that though participation in government is a right and privilege of

every citizen it involves a correlative duty and responsibility. It is our duty to take an interest in all matters effecting the common welfare, and to seek to aid in the solution of our country's problems. It is our responsibility to contribute to the intelligent and wise solution of those problems.

This responsibility can only be discharged fittingly, by those who have given their political duties the most thought, as Weldon said. Moreover, since parliamentary government "demands prolonged apprenticeship in the art of self-government", its success depends on citizens who have educated themselves for effective citizenship by doing as well as by thinking, by enagaging, however humbly, in the actual practice of government. If all so discharge their political duties, we will have brought to the discussion of public matters, and to the ballot box, a public opinion truly educated in, and for, Democracy. We may thus be able to say in years to come, what George the Fifth said in a public message to his people some years ago: "The system bequeathed to us by our ancestors, again modified for the needs of a new age, has been found once more, as of old, the best way to secure government by the people, freedom for the individual, the ordered strength of the State, and the rule of law over governors and governed alike."