

Britain and the Future



Speaker King-Hall, Commander Stephen Member of Parliament of Great Britain

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**BRITAIN AND THE FUTURE
AN ADDRESS BY COMMANDER STEPHEN KING-HALL, R.N.
Chairman: The President, Mr. W. Eason Humphreys
Thursday, October 21, 1943**

MR. HUMPHREYS: Today is the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, which took place October 21, 1905. It is, therefore, fitting that our guest today is an ex-naval officer.

Before introducing our guest, I am going to ask Mr. H. G. J. Rennie, the well-known Canadian actor and artist, to render the prayer which Lord Nelson offered in his cabin prior to going on deck to fight the Battle of Trafalgar: At night, in the North Sea during the Battle of Jutland, Commander Stephen King-Hall's ship, H.M.S. Southampton, fought four German light cruisers at 800 yards range.

Seventy-five per cent of upper deck personnel were casualties. Our guest, "K.-H.", as he is affectionately known to many thousands of people, was the only survivor from a cordite fire in the after part of the ship from which he miraculously escaped.

Commander Stephen King-Hall's service and achievements tempt me to tell you all of them. They would interest you as much as the address we are about to hear, but I must content myself with these

A thesis in 1920 on Submarines in the Future of Naval Warfare won Commander King-Hall the coveted Gold Medal of the Royal Institute. At about the same time, he published a forecast of military developments covering tanks and the importance of land mine fields. That was in 1921. In the light of the African Campaign, those writings might have been made yesterday. After serving in the Far East, travelling extensively through China and Japan, Commander King-Hall was appointed intelligence officer to the Mediterranean Fleet, his duties causing him to travel North Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East.

In 1930, our guest retired from the navy and organized special political and economic research at the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Commander King-Hall is playwright and author, too. Many of you have seen his famous comedy, *The Middle Watch*.

Travelling over Europe and America, Commander King-Hall became convinced of the imminent danger to democracy of Fascism and Naziism, and as part of his campaign to arouse public opinion to this danger, he founded in 1936 what was then known as the K-H Weekly News Letter, nowadays known over the world as the National News Letter. I understand its title is being changed to the London News Letter. By means of cable it is published here simultaneously.

A division of Lancashire sent Commander King-Hall to the British Parliament in 1939, and as honorary director, he has just concluded a very successful national fuel economy campaign in Britain.

Stephen King-Hall's many books have provocative titles-his new book, just being published, is called Britain's Third Chance.

I shall try and make Commander Stephen King-Hall feel really at home here by introducing him to you thus Gentlemen, "K.-H."

COMMANDER STEPHEN KING-HALL: I find myself in a certain difficulty, for I am trying to do something in which perfection is impossible. I see in front of me a large, representative and distinguished gathering. To this gathering I am trying to make a speech. I like to make speeches without notes; I like to sense the atmosphere of the audience and adapt myself to their moods or try to make them share mine. But, attached to my person is a small and sinister-looking object which is nothing more or less than a microphone. Beyond the microphone is an audience of an unknown number of listeners. That these radio listeners will listen to me for a full thirty minutes, I very much doubt, but I would like to keep YOU, and when I say YOU, I now mean the listener, on my wave length as long as possible, and to achieve this purpose I must make a good broadcast. When one does a broadcast, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation not unnaturally wishes to see the script, in order to remove therefrom any particularly clumsy-looking tricks which the speaker may ignorantly or wickedly intend to project into Radioland. So here I am making a speech with a script in my hand. I only hope I shant lose my place in the blessed thing!

As an Englishman and a Member of Parliament, I must be careful what I say,--but not too careful, or else I shant say anything. I remember that in 1934, when I travelled across Canada, the Statute of Westminster was still almost news, and I always got on good terms with my audiences by telling them that I was not a high-hat Englishman with his nose in the air. On the contrary, I had come to Canada to learn,--but there was one plank in my political platform that I was going to stick to, and that was that I was very firm on Dominion Status for Great Britain.

That's just my personal opinion. In fact, everything I'm saying today is my personal opinion. I am an Independent Member of Parliament, supporting the National Government, and I am over here on my own steam, so to speak. I am not under anyone's auspices. When I discussed British-American relations with Congressmen in Washington, I said, "Take a good look at me, you won't see many of my kind about, for I believe I am about the only Englishman on American soil who has paid his own passage to get here. I didn't even get here on reverse lease-lend!"

No, gentlemen, I am just over here for two purposes. To inform myself by first hand enquiry about Canada's war effort, Canadians' views about the future and American views on the same subject. I hold it to be the duty of a Member of Parliament to find out about these things. Secondly, I am over here because I happen to own London News Letter, which has the distinction of being the only English organ of news and opinion which is published simultaneously in London and Toronto. We cable it over word for word each week. I regard London News Letter as a privately operated public utility. We try to use it as an instrument of English-speaking understanding.

I am not one of those who spend much time arguing whether or not there should be some form of British-American co-operation after the war. I believe that events will take care of that. It will be just plainly impossible for any great Power, least of all Great Britain, Canada

and the United States to withdraw from participation in attempts to solve the terribly difficult world problems, political and economic, which will crowd upon us when the last all clear is sounded.

In the last war, I was in a little ship in the Battle of Jutland, and we were pretty badly knocked out. People have sometimes said to me--"It must have needed great courage to go through that". I have always replied: "On the contrary, there was nothing else to do but to stay there. The alternative was to step into the North Sea." So I am not concerned about co-operation in principle. What we have got to work out is how that cooperation is to be translated into practise.

The fact is that whether humanity likes it or not, and a good many people don't like it--the phrase "Am I my brother's keeper?" is not solely a great moral issue. It is an economic and a political fact.

In the days between the wars, eminent persons used to get up and say that it was no concern of nation "A" what sort of government existed in nation "B". I always declared that this was pernicious nonsense. I always said that there was no compromise possible between the democratic conception of life and the Fascist and Nazi conception. I always said that it did not matter to us that there was a Fascist government in Italy, and a Nazi government in Germany, and that I hoped that it would matter like the devil to the Fascists and Nazis what kind of a government we had in Britain.

Unfortunately it didn't matter enough.

Once again I hear the dangerous and syrup-soothing doctrine being preached that every nation has the right to choose its own form of government. If you mean the actual style of government, I will agree. If you mean the principle of government, I dissent.

It may be that in certain cases, we can do nothing much about it, but we can refuse to deceive ourselves. We can have the honesty to admit that until the broad principles of the free way of life the four freedoms are universally accepted, peace is not secure.

We can propagate and advocate the free way of life. We can and we must show the world by example that the free way of life can deliver the goods and tackle the complex technical problems of modern civilization.

When this war is over, we must realize that Peace is not something which falls from Heaven like the rain. Peace is something more than a state of no-war. Peace is, or ought to be, something dynamic and constructive. Why is it that only war and destruction are dramatized? Why are there always Ministries of War and never Ministries of Peace?

Why is it that there is always so much talk about preparing for war and not more talk about making peace secure?

Why do the cartoonists the world over depict peace as a dull-looking lady in a badly cut nightgown with wings sprouting from her shoulders?

Men do not die for such ladies. Not men who matter! No! Peace is supposed to be dull, and war, though terrible, is exciting.

But Peace is not dull. The battles and struggles against disease, against that universal enemy of mankind, poverty, can also be dramatic and exciting and call for sacrifice and high endeavour.

Today the human race is expending on war-like effort an amount of wealth which, measured by the yard-stick of money, approaches four hundred million dollars a day.

That is, at a conservative estimate, twenty million dollars an hour; shall we say, three hundred and thirty thousand dollars a minute, or about fifty thousand dollars a second.

Fifty thousand dollars a second, every minute, every hour, night and day, every week, every month, every year.

I do not say this is too high a price to pay for liberty. No price can be too high, provided when the account is settled we achieve our purpose.

But we shall not achieve our purpose unless when the shooting is over, when military victory is achieved, we are prepared to make a great effort to spend for peace and constructive purposes some fraction of what we spend for war and destructive objects.

I mentioned just now the struggle against poverty. Let me give you some figures to illustrate the absurdly small amount of progress we have made on that battle front.

It has become the fashion recently to talk and write of poverty in the midst of plenty and to assert that the problem of production having been virtually solved, it now only remains to deal with the difficulties of distribution. This is a most misleading line of thought. It can be shown statistically that the world as a whole is still a miserably poor place and that whilst it is true that there is a great mal-distribution of real wealth both as between nations and between classes of persons inside nations, the amount of wealth to be distributed is but a small fraction of what could be produced if the world's economic problem were tackled in a big way.

Another view often advanced is that although the productive capacity exists, it is used so inefficiently that the gap between what mankind does produce with its existing resources of labour, machinery and raw materials and what it could produce is considerable. This is not so. Mr. Colin Clark exposes these fallacies in his book "Conditions of Economic Progress". In order to compare incomes on a world basis, he has invented what he calls an International Unit (the I. U.). This unit is defined as the amount of goods which could be purchased for \$1.00 in the U. S. A. over the average of the decade 1925-34. He then expresses the average real income in each country per head of the working population and concludes "the world is found to be a wretchedly poor place".

An average real income per worker of 500 I. U.'s (approx. £2 or \$10 or less a week per breadwinner) is the fate of 81 per cent of the world's population. A standard of living of 1,000 I. U.'s per worker per year is found only in the U. S. A., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Great Britain and Switzerland, which contain 10 per cent of the world's population.

About 53 per cent of the world's population, including the whole population of India and China, enjoy a real income per head of less than 200 I. U.'s. The average real income per breadwinner in China and India is about 120 and 200 I. U.'s respectively.

During the decade 1925-34 the entire world's production of economic goods and services averaged 254 milliard I. U.'s per year. Of this output 119 milliard were produced in the four large units of the U. S. A., Great Britain, Germany and France, which contained only 13 per cent of the world's population.

One can sum up this position in these words "Two-thirds of the world's whole output of economically valuable goods and services was therefore produced in the so-called industrial countries containing less than one-third of the world's population, and nearly half of the world's whole output in four countries." "Of repeated phrases about poverty in the midst of plenty, and the problems of production having already been solved if only we understood the problems of distribution, turn out to be the most untruthful of all modern cliches. In the U. S. A. the highest level of real income per head of the working population so far attained was in

1929 with 1,582 I. U.'s per head (on the basis of a 48hour week). If all the industries of the U. S. A. had been working at full practical capacity (which would have involved extensive economic re-organization) average income produced per head would have been 1,905 I. U.'s and in 1937 about 2,200 I. U.'s. These figures are very modest compared with the fantastic statements sometimes made about the extent of unused productive capacity. Britain and Germany working at full productive capacity could have produced in 1937 approximately 1,500 I. U.'s and 1,000 I. U.'s per head respectively, while actually they produced 1,275 and 828 I. U.'s per head respectively. . . . The age of plenty will still be a long while in coming."

These facts indicate but one of the great tasks which lie ahead of us in the days of peace, if we are to create a war memorial worthy of the men and women who have died that we might live, in liberty.

And now, Mr. Chairman, having indicated to you and those who are listening to me something of the nature of the problem which lies before us, a problem which can be summarized by saying: "How are we to ensure that we reap the fruits of military victory", I will say a few words about the-part which I hope will be played in this great endeavour by my own country. If you were to ask me what is the greatest need of humanity in the years to come, I would reply with the words "democratic leadership."

We know what we have to do.

We know that though might is not right, yet right must have might behind it. At least, if we don't know that, we have learned nothing.

We also know that we have the technical capacity to make the world a far more prosperous place than it has ever been before. We have seen during the war that the most immense tasks of engineering construction, of technical development, of human organization, can be achieved in an amazingly short time.

What then is needed?

Only the stimulus and inspiration of leadership.

In Britain, the people have passed through the furnace. They have been tempered in the heat of battle -and the dark waters of suffering.

England found her soul again in the ruins of her cities, in the darkness of the blackout, the austerity of the way of life of total war.

It is that same spirit which throughout the centuries has withstood the tyrants.-Phillip of Spain, Louis the Fourteenth, Napoleon, the Kaiser. and Hitler. All those symbols of tyranny have been broken by a resistance in which the British have played a notable part.

But as I have indicated earlier in my remarks, it is not enough to resist and overthrow tyranny. Something must be built in its place. In my country, we have before us the vision of a new Britain.

Men of all classes and of all parties and no parties are declaring "We will not go back to 1939." They believe we need not have mass unemployment.

I believe them to be right. The mood of my nation is strong and determined.

Where there is a will, there is a way, and in Britain today there is a strong will. There is a feeling of determined and quiet optimism for the future. A realization that, great as the difficulties will be, they can not be more formidable than the perils through which we passed in those dark days when save for the Dominions, we stood alone.

This issue goes far beyond academic discussions as to whether we shall be socialistic or capitalistic. On this side of the Ocean, and especially in the United States, I find much debate on that subject. I am asked: "Is it true England is going to be socialistic?" I reply: "Your question means nothing to me. It is an echo from a dead past." You are talking 1900 stuff.

England is going to be practical; England is going to be flexible; England is going to be resourceful," and I add, "I hope England is going to remain united." The need of national unity, now and after the war, is the doctrine I am doing my best to preach.

There will be planning in Britain after the war. It is inevitable and desirable. The State will intervene to a greater extent in economic life than it did in 1939; that is certain.

But the function of the State will be to create a framework in which individual initiative and enterprise shall have ample scope.

In some industries, there will be considerable control; in others, much less.

In the 19th Century, Great Britain led the world in free trade and laissez-faire,-what our American friends called "rugged individualism".

That was all right for the pioneering era of western civilization. The world has moved on, and individualism will have to be a little more polished, a little less selfish, and a good deal less rugged.

In the decades to come, it will, I believe, be the role of the British to show by example how the economic advantages of private enterprise and the political and social requirements of public control can be welded into an harmonious whole.

I should be the first to admit that the Britain of the Future can not be created out of wishful thinking. We must create wealth. We must work hard and intelligently. Much needs to be done in our island. There are 4,000,000 new homes to be built in 10 years. Our road system must be modernized. We intend to build up a great tourist industry. I believe you will be able to come to Britain and stay in an inn under the shadow of a 15th Century cathedral and your meal will not consist of tough meat and badly cooked vegetables. Your bedroom will be centrally heated and there will be an open fireplace as well, and if you want it. a slot in the bathroom down which to drop razor blades. We shall develop our Colonial Empire, which we have greatly neglected in the past. Our export trade must concentrate on quality, especially in the new industries, such as plastics, and the many electrical developments which have come out of this war.

The Beveridge scheme of social security, the Butler educational reforms, and the Scott, Barlow and Utthwatt reports are the symbols of the New Britain which I hope and believe will make my country a pleasant place in which to dwell, and also a nation which will set an example to the world of what a democracy can achieve.

For make no mistake about it, Gentlemen, democracy is on trial. It has proved that it can survive, but that is not enough. It has also got to prove that it can deliver the goods in the shape of a better and a fuller life to the man in the street than he had between the two wars.

And this reflection brings me back to the international situation.

The test which faces the Governments and the peoples of the United Nations is whether in the hour of military victory they can hold together and co-operate together to construct and retain a durable peace.

This can not be an exclusive job.

No peace which is founded solely on military strength will endure for more than a season. Wars are not acts of God; they are acts of men.

War is made in the hearts of men and peace, real peace, can only be made in the same place. Sometime in the future, when we cannot now say, those who are now our enemies will have to earn the right and the privilege to participate in the maintenance of that system of collective security which they destroyed with their evil aggression. For the time being, we have first the task of achieving military victory, and secondly, the task of creating an United Nations structure within whose protection world peace can grow.

When this war is over, there will be three great powers,--the U. S. A., the Commonwealth, and Russia, which will have the strength to keep order, to re-build the world.

I hope that Britain, which is linked through Canada to the U. S. A., and by her twenty years treaty with Russia, will be able to make a contribution to that unity.

And let me say this: one of the impressions I take back with me as a result of my visit this time is the political importance of Canada in the post-war world. And if it is not an impertinence on my part to say so, I think that Canadians must strive ceaselessly to develop and sustain that Canadian personality and particular identity which owes something both to American and British influence. The more truly and concisely Canada is Canadian in her culture, the more effectively will she, in my opinion, play the part of catalyst in British-American relations.

Mr. Chairman, the time is approaching when I must bring this speech-broadcast to an end. Whenever I speak on these world problems as I have done today, I often think to myself, how can I bring these issues down to the individual. After all, we each have our daily job to perform, and there is a tendency when one listens to a speech such as I have delivered, to look at one's watch, so to speak, and say: "Very interesting and no doubt very true, but what can I as an individual do about all this? Anyhow, I've got an appointment at 3 o'clock and I mustn't forget to take that parcel home to my wife."

It would be very nice if I could conclude this speech with a neat little prescription saying exactly what must be done today, tomorrow and thereafter in order that the British should assume this much-needed role of leadership. But the spirit of leadership of a permanent kind cannot be obtained from bottles. The only way in which Britain as a nation can express world leadership is through the existence of a government which will say and do those things which become a leader and do them in the manner of a leader. Such a government will exist in Britain only if the citizens of Britain create and support a leadership government.

Here we come to the Individual and he is the root of the matter, as he should be in a democracy.

If you were to say to me: "Yes, I agree in general with your views and suggestions, but what is the next step, what can I do about it, I who have to go to my work tomorrow morning?", my answer would be as follows: "Examine your own circumstances and ask yourself what contribution you are making to citizenship. Every case is necessarily different from the others, but some of the following questions may in part apply to you.

1. Do you make a conscious effort to spend a certain amount of time every day or every week finding out the facts about current political and economic problems?
2. Do you make a point of discussing these matters either formally in discussion groups or informally with your fellow-citizens?
3. If you have children, do you talk to them about citizenship? Can you answer their questions?

4. Do you take any part in local government either directly or indirectly?
5. Do you belong to any political organization?
6. In your business, do you think solely of making money or do you make a conscious effort to provide the public with a service?
7. If you are in public life do, you strive to tell the people the truth even when it seems they want to hear something else?
8. Are you supporting men and women in public life whom you believe to be persons of integrity and character, or do you support them because you hope to get some personal benefit out of it?
9. If you are in public life have you ever done anything you felt was not right in the hope that by doing this wrong thing you would achieve a personal gain?
10. If you noticed that through an error you had been taxed less than you should have been, would you rectify this mistake?
11. If you are an employee, can you say that you would do your job to the best of your ability without supervision?
12. If you were on your death-bed, could you truthfully say that you had done your utmost during your life to put more into society than you had taken out of it?
13. Do you understand the meaning of the phrase "Rights and privileges arise from duties faithfully performed"?
14. Do you ever neglect to pay your bills because you prefer to spend the money on something else?
15. Have you ever put your name to a statement you knew was not true, such as a certificate of character, an income tax form, a medical health certificate, a letter asking for leave of absence, a company report?
16. If you are an author, Journalist or broadcaster, have you ever written or said anything for money which you did not agree with?
17. If you are a newspaper proprietor, have you ever advocated policies other than those you sincerely believed to be in the national interest?
18. If you are a manufacturer or a retailer, have you ever circulated or sponsored an advertisement which you knew to be untrue?
19. If you are a salesman, have you ever sold anyone something you knew they did not need?
20. If you are a doctor, do you give as much care and thought to your poorest patient as you would to your richest patient?
21. If you are a teacher, do you put the dissemination of truth above everything else?
22. In conclusion and taking your life as a whole, do you think that it would be unreasonable to ask you to make a larger contribution to citizenship than you do at present or that it would be far beyond your power to increase even to a small extent either the quantity or quality of your contribution?

Here, then, are some 22 questions flung at random into the pool of discussion. They are only illustrative and another 20 or 100 of a similar kind could have been drafted to cover more occupations, more examples of the eternal problem, the problem of MAN and MEN, or MAN and HIMSELF, the central problem of life. But twenty-two are enough to illustrate what I mean and to show that the great and complex questions discussed in this speech, questions touching the destinies of millions born and to be born can be reduced to the single issue of the conduct of the individual.

In the Great Teaching of Tseng-Tsan, a disciple of the Chinese sage, Confucius, it is written:

"When we have studied phenomena, we may obtain knowledge; when we have attained knowledge, we may acquire good-will; when we have acquired good-will, the heart is chastened; when the heart is chastened, man is cultured; when man is cultured, order reigns in

his family; when order reigns in his family, it reigns also in his country; and when order reigns in every country peace reigns in the world.

These words written two thousand five hundred years ago show us the way we must go. They also show us that after two thousand five hundred years of trial and error, two and a half millennia during which Man has evaded the issue, we are where we started and where we must end; at the Individual and his behaviour towards his responsibilities in the free way of life.