

UNIVERSITY DEBATERS.

Praise for Adelaide University.

British Industrial Position Discussed.

The University of Adelaide received high praise from members of the British universities' debating team at the luncheon tendered them by the Commonwealth Club at the Adelaide Town Hall on Wednesday. Mr. S. H. Skipper presided, and seated with him at the head table were the guests—Messrs. A. E. R. Molson (Oxford), R. Nunn May (Birmingham), and Paul Reed (London)—and Dr. A. A. Lendon, Brig.-Gen. S. Price Weir, and Messrs. P. McMahon Glyn, K.C., and J. Hayter Reed.

In welcoming the guests in behalf of the club Mr. Skipper said they appreciated such a visit from representatives of the distinguished universities of the home land. It was the second such visit they had received, and it was a compliment to the city, for the previous debaters must have informed the present team that such a visit was well worth while. Such visits might seem novel, but when they looked into history they found that ever since there were cities of learning the most famous of them drew scholars from distant lands who were eager to exchange their ideas with the students at the universities they were visiting. Adelaide might therefore be proud to say that its university was famous outside their own State.

Adelaide University Eulogized.

Mr. Nunn May, in returning thanks for himself and his colleagues, said it had been mentioned that the Adelaide University was known outside the bounds of the Commonwealth. It was hardly necessary for him to say that was correct. Even in the "wilds" of industrial Birmingham he had heard of the Adelaide University, and he could assure them that in such centres of learning as Cambridge and Oxford, the Adelaide University was thought of very highly indeed, and that was a great compliment. They had a university which might one day be as great as those existing in the old world. (Applause.)

In Adelaide they had an example of University education at its best. It was not so much an institution for the dissemination of knowledge among the masses of the people, which was of a somewhat doubtful value, but was a university which was first and foremost a place of research—a place where some of the greatest minds in their spheres were gathered together, and a place which set a very high intellectual standard, and those things after all were the things which all universities should set themselves to do. (Applause.)

Adelaide a Beautiful City.

Mr. May was free in his praise of Adelaide's beauties. He said that when any one came from a city like Birmingham, which great as it was in many ways, could hardly be described as beautiful, to a city such as Adelaide, he could not but be immensely impressed with the wonderful and beautiful conditions under which the people of Adelaide lived. It was a lovely city, set in the midst of a lovely country, and they should be grateful that those who planned the city did so with a generosity and forethought which would enable it, even if it grew to an immense size, to always contain sufficient fresh air and sunlight, instead of the dismal, dull, and dreary conditions under which the people in the cities of the old world lived. (Applause.)

Sunlight, trees, and winter flowers were even in the heart of the city. Some of the buildings were also very fine. He had been very impressed by the cities of Australia, and also by the country, both that which he had seen and that which he had heard about, not only as regarded the miners' wealth, but also in the permanent wheat and pastoral lands, and when he and his colleagues went back to England they would be able to tell the people there that in Australia, men of British stock had a country in which there was an almost incredible wealth of opportunity. (Applause.)

English Conditions.

In Australia, said Mr. May, he had found that there were many people who had surprisingly strange ideas of the true condition of affairs in England at present. So far as the industrial situation was concerned, there was no doubt but that at present it was causing a great deal of anxiety, and had been doing so for many years past. However, those conditions were not so bad as they were often made out to be. So far as the unemployment dole was concerned, he had heard many times from many people who had a terrible thing the dole was, and how demoralizing it was to the working people. (Applause.)

After some years of working, the opinion, on the whole, among employers of labour in England, was that the dole had not been so demoralizing as they had been led to believe. There had been many cases of abuse, but it was only natural to expect that would be so. His own experience in factories in Sheffield and Birmingham, together with opinions gathered from employers of labour in those, and other large manufacturing centres, was that the dole had not led to the complete demoralization of the working man. It had been abused by the women workers far more than by the men. The men, in general, would far rather work than secure the dole. He knew that from his own personal observations while working alongside of many of them. Another thing which had to be remembered regarding the industrial condition in England was that when they left on their tour, there were more people employed than ever before in the history of the country. That was a rather remarkable statement to make at a time when there were so many unemployed. In explanation, however, it might be said that during the war a great number of women went into industry, and when the war ended they remained in the industry. That had largely contributed toward the present unemployed position. Since he had been in Australia, he had heard many people say that the British manufactures, which used to be so good before the war, were now being ousted by the American goods, owing to the fact that the British goods had lost much of their quality. It was true that at the present time, in many branches of industry, America had a great advantage over the British manufacturer. There was an explanation of that, however. During the war American industries kept on turning out the goods they were intended to manufacture. In England, on the other hand, practically every factory was hard at work making munitions and arms. The result was that when the war came to an end the Americans had their factories ready to go on with the turning out of the same products that had been made all through the war, while in England they were faced with the problem of turning their factories from producing articles of war to articles of peace. Another thing was that at the close of the war English factories had in many cases quadrupled their capacity for output, and were heavily over-capitalized, which militated against their competing in the markets of the world with other countries. Just how heavily some of them were over-capitalized was shown by the fact that recently Vickers, Limited, had decided to reduce their capital by two-thirds.

Industry Picking Up.

However, after seven years of peace, the motor manufacturers of England were now beginning to find markets overseas and compete with the manufacturers of the United States, and that fact might be counted to their credit. In that short time they had turned from wartime conditions to successful peace conditions. He could not allow the opportunity to pass to discuss the great industrial strike which had just taken place. Even before they left England the coal situation was having a bad effect on the trade of the new year, as people were holding off placing their orders before they knew what the outcome of the negotiations was going to be. There had been a lot of right and wrong on both sides. The strike was a legacy from the past, and was due to the conditions under which the miners had had to live for a number of years. It was due to that mad rush which took place in the middle of last century, when so many employers of labour were desperately anxious to accumulate wealth at the greatest possible speed that the mining towns, with their almost unbelievable squalor and horrible conditions, had come into being. That time had left them problems which would have to be faced and overcome, and he hoped that would be accomplished with the minimum amount of distress. At the same time, there was a grave danger from the stoppage of the coal industry at the present time, but he was confident that before the passing of another week some solution would have been found.

Mr. May continued that since he had been in Australia he had been told by most manufacturers and consumers to whom he had spoken, that all other things being equal they always gave preference to English goods. (Applause.) That would greatly comfort English manufacturers when he told them of it on his return. There was a feeling in England that people in Australia were not giving that attention to the purchasing of English goods that had been given in the past. They would be pleased to know that there was a sentimental preference given to their products.

Decentralization of Industry.

Mr. A. E. R. Molson dealing with the trouble in the coal trade said that about 40 or 50 years ago mineral oil and hydro-electric power was unknown, and the whole world was buying English coal. For reasons outside their control a large proportion of those markets had disappeared. During the war European powers had found it necessary to become self-supporting. France was now producing more coal than ever before, and Switzerland and Czecho-Slovakia had their hydro-electric power. Their export trade had vanished to such an extent that they were faced with a crisis in the coal trade at the present time. During the nineteenth century Great Britain was the workshop of the

world, but that was not so at present, and the result could be seen in the present trouble. To-day they were seriously concerned with the relations between Australia and the mother country. He had had a chat a few days before with members of the Tariff Board in Melbourne, and had been informed that the preference given to Great Britain by Australia was of the utmost value to the former country. That was realized in England. That preference however, was going to diminish. That was inevitable because Australia, Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand and all the other dominions were not going to rely for ever on importations from Great Britain, but had to think of their own national safety. That situation had to be faced. What Great Britain had to do was to decentralize her industries, and send capital, workmen, machinery, and all the other necessary adjuncts to the dominions and allow them to prosper there. That was the message he would carry back to Great Britain with him. If that situation was to arise there would also have to be co-operation on the part of the dominions.

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IMPERIAL DEBATERS COMMONWEALTH CLUB LUNCHEON.

The Commonwealth Club gave a luncheon at the Town Hall on Wednesday, in honor of the visiting Imperial debating team, Messrs. R. Nunn May (Birmingham University), A. H. E. Molson (Oxford University), and Paul Reed (London University). Mr. S. H. Skipper presided) occupied the chair, and among others present were Brigadier-General S. Price Weir, Hon. P. M. Glyn, K.C., Dr. A. A. Lendon, Mr. J. Hayter Reed, and Mr. Eric Harvey (secretary).

The chairman said the visit of the debating team was rather a compliment to Adelaide, because the previous team must have reported that their visit was worth while. To some people these visits might seem somewhat novel, but it was natural that men from other seats of learning should be anxious to see other universities and exchange ideas. That was the reason for the present visit, and they might take the flattering unctious to their souls that the University of Adelaide was famous far beyond the State. (Applause.) He extended a very hearty welcome to the visitors.

No Empty Compliment.

Mr. May said, amid laughter and applause, that the University of Adelaide was well-known even in the wilds of industrial Birmingham, and in such centres as Oxford and Cambridge it was very highly valued indeed, and that was no empty compliment. It seemed to him that in the University of Adelaide they had an example of education at its very best, a place for research, and where some of the greatest men in their various subjects were gathered together, setting a very high intellectual standard. So far as Adelaide itself was concerned, he was impressed with the beautiful conditions under which people lived, and particularly its open spaces, all of which contrasted with the dull and dreary lives which people had to live in such old-world places as Birmingham. He could certainly go back to England and tell the people there that in Australia they had an almost incredible wealth of opportunity. (Applause.)

Conditions in England.

Mr. May said that during his sojourn in Australia, he had met people who had some strange views about conditions in England, and particularly regarding the unemployment dole, which was so frequently regarded as a terrible thing, and demoralising to the working classes. He did not entirely agree with that view. It was true that there had been cases of abuse of the dole, but more so by women than men workers. Among the men generally, they found a very keen desire to work if it could be found for them. (Applause.) He had spent some time on the platforms of the steel furnaces in Sheffield, and even men there were disappointed when they were laid off and equally delighted when they were allowed to return to work. Another thing to be remembered was that there were more work people employed in Great Britain than ever before in the history of the country. That so many were not employed was due largely to the fact that large numbers of women went into industrial work to take the places of men during the war. Women usually had the capacity for keeping anything they got hold of, and they remained in their positions after the war was over.

American Advantages.

He had also heard in Australia that British articles were not so good as before the war, and were being ousted by the Americans. One reason for that was that during the first years of the war American manufacturers were making goods for the use of European countries.

On the other hand, in England, during the war, all the factories were busy making munitions. The British manufacturer was, therefore, faced with the difficulty of changing his whole front again to produce the goods required in times of peace. In the Dominions, however, British motor lorries were still predominant. By the end of the war many British manufacturers had quadrupled the size of their works and capacity for production, sinking an enormous amount of capital. One great firm, Vickers, Ltd., had now actually reduced its capital by two-thirds, and many big companies had actually gone into bankruptcy, due to loss of markets and over-capitalization. The fact that, after something like seven years the British motor manufacturers were beginning to find markets overseas, and to compete with the United States, might be accounted to their credit. Thus, considering the difficulties which had to be faced, it could not by any means be said that British industry was on its last legs. (Applause.)

The Coal Miners' Strike.

Alluding to the coal strike, Mr. May said there was a lot of right and wrong on both sides. There was no doubt that the trouble was a legacy from the past, and was largely due to the conditions under which the miners had been compelled to live for a number of years. It was due also to the mad rush in the middle of the last century when the great employers of labor were so desperately anxious to accumulate wealth, while the men lived under almost incredible conditions. The problems had been left to be overcome now, and it was hoped that they would be settled with a minimum amount of distress. He had been pleased to find in Australia that there was such a preference for goods made in England. (Applause.) It would also be pleasing to the people at home when he told them of the fact, as a feeling had sprung up there that people in this part of the world were not giving that attention to English goods which they had accorded in the past. Of course, many of the goods were not procurable during the years of the war, and it would need a great effort to bring them back to the eyes of the public. (Applause.)

Foreign Markets Lost.

Mr. Molson pointed to the fact that the rapid advance in the use of oil and hydro-electric power had seriously affected the demand for coal in England, and a large proportion of the foreign markets had disappeared. The South African liners, which formerly bunkered coal in England, now got their supplies from Natal. Also during the war many of the European countries found it necessary to develop their own resources to the utmost. France was producing more coal than in 1914, and Sweden and Czecho-Slovakia had gone ahead with hydro-electric power, and they were formerly large purchasers of British coal. Thus it was no fault of Britain's that those markets had been lost, but it was one of the reasons for the coal crisis to-day. Then there was the growth of economic nationalism. France, before the war, imported all her manufacturing machinery from England or America. During the war she made her own munitions and other goods, and was now able to furnish her own machinery. He alluded to the overwhelming importance of the preference given by Australia to Great Britain, and said that while in Melbourne he was told that Britain must get her industries behind any barriers set up by the Dominions. The latter wanted capital, and the best-trained men, so that articles could be manufactured by them. He had also been told that migration was disappointing, and that the young men of Great Britain would not come out. That was not entirely true. When Sir Henry Barwell launched his scheme in England and the newspapers gave it publicity there were over 500 people at his hotel in London next day, and he received thousands of letters from boys and their mothers. The people generally had probably not quite realized the possibilities of migration, which was due in some degree to the lack of organization, which it was hoped would be remedied. He concluded by expressing the hope that Australia would take every advantage of the British migration scheme. (Applause.)