

Address to the Electors of the University of Wales

Wales
1931



Cataloguing data

Title (English-Original language)

Address to the Electors of the University of Wales

Author(s) (Person(s))

John Saunders Lewis

Date and place

27 October 1931, Cardiff

Region(s)

Wales

Language(s)

English

Type of document

Policy proposal

Reference Code

CY0001

Context

Address of Saunders Lewis to the Electors of the University of Wales. The Welsh University College branches of the Welsh Nationalist Party had invited Saunders Lewis to be a candidate for the parliamentary representation of the University. He accepted the invitation.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The Welsh University College branches of the Welsh Nationalist Party have invited me to be a candidate for the parliamentary representation of the University. I have accepted the invitation and have now to beg the honour of your votes at the coming election.

The City Editor of the "Times" wrote on September 28th: "Great Britain did not depart from the Gold Standard on September 21st as an act of policy; she was driven off it".

This admission is historic. It means that the main line of English political action since 1919 has come to nought. It means that England's attempt to ignore the changed conditions of the post-war world, her blind and valiant effort to re-impose the politico-economic conventions of the 19th century, have ended in defeat. We may perhaps salute the stubborn desperation of the die-hards of the City of London who have fought for their international privileges to the bitter end, and have not yet lost hope of restoration; but for their blindness and cruel obduracy the people of England and Scotland, and especially the people of Wales, have paid and will long continue to pay a grim price. Belatedly, we recognise the close of a period. It is a grave moment in history.

Such a crisis naturally leaves its trail of wreckage. The Labour Party, after two unhappy years of government, is split in two. The Liberal Party is finally disintegrated. The mis-named National Government, called together to present a united front to the threat of the time, has with incomparable speed made itself a spectacle of derision to Europe. The English Tories, learning nothing and incapable of change, bent only on a revival of imperial prestige, are the unconscious allies of Bolshevism and seem destined to bring class war and revolution to their country.

Speaking at Liverpool on September 29th, Mr. Winston Churchill said: "The prosperity and greatness of Britain have depended on three great glories and breadwinners—the Navy and Mercantile Marine, the Empire of India and the East, and the City of London..... What have we done to lose our glories and what can we do to bring them back?"

The answer is that they must not be brought back. It is because these, and not other than these, have been its pillars that our civilisation is to-day tottering. If there is to be any worth and any happiness in these lands again, we must find very different foundations. A new orientation is the immediate need of our politics. More important than any change of fiscal device or machinery is the need for a new spirit, a new psychological approach to political and economic problems.

Such principles of reform I find in the sanities of a balanced nationalism. I undersand sound politics to be the attempt to establish and maintain the social conditions necessary to the Good Life. Such an attempt cannot, in the perverse and harmful manner of imperialism, ignore and dismiss the fundamental facts

of history and of the formation of human character. It must demand that the Welsh collier's cultural background shall be allowed the same dignity as that of the London stockbroker. It means that the social life of Wales in town and village and countryside shall, as far as political action may affect it, be made decent and civilised. It affirms that human beings shall not be degraded and made into mere wage slaves and machines for the hollow glory of "financial prestige" or to satisfy the knavish ambition to be the "world's banker" and the "world's workshop." It asserts, against all tyrannies and sectional interests, the right of every human family to property, to culture, to a fair degree of security and independence and leisure.

These generalisations will indicate the points of view which, if you elect me, I shall try to uphold in Parliament. A Welsh Nationalist group in the House of Commons would:

Proclaim and maintain the right of Wales to be a self-governing Dominion in the British Commonwealth of Nations;

Defend with its utmost force the present national institutions of Wales as well as its cultural, agricultural, industrial and financial interests;

Oppose all measures of excessive centralisation and bureaucracy;

Defend the legitimate rights of other minorities within the British Empire;

Maintain such a standard of information on international affairs and so European—in opposition to Imperialist—a standpoint in matters pertaining to the organisation of peace and the co-operation of peoples, that the entry of the Dominion of Wales into the League of Nations, when the moment for that crowning achievement arrived, would be gladly voted and acclaimed at Geneva;

Finally in domestic affairs, it would work forthwith for the restoration of social order in Wales and would enlist the co-operation of all men of good will in the initiation of local enterprises and the fostering of a spirit of personal and social responsibility in every section of the community.

We believe that only under a Welsh Government responsible to the Welsh people can the Welsh co-operative state be established. We see no other solution for our industrial and agricultural problems. We shall resist strongly the present government's determination to use all its resources, its well-disciplined press, its wireless propagandists, its docile publicists and economists, its Orders in Council, in order to fasten on us permanently the dictatorship of the City of London.

If this dictatorship revolts you, electors of the University of Wales, I suggest that you can have in a Welsh Nationalist Party at Westminster the best immediate protest against it, and you will have in the establishment of the Dominion of Wales the only ultimately secure refuge from its degrading tyranny.

In addressing this electorate I may properly end with a note on education. From a Nationalist point of View the matter has peculiar importance. The whole development of modern Welsh nationalism is linked with the growth in Wales of a demand for an educated democracy. The safeguarding of the dignity of the teaching profession in all its categories. The importance of the search for truth, its value in elevating standards of conduct in public life, these are traditional principles that a Welsh Nationalist must constantly uphold.

I have, Ladies and Gentlemen, the honour to be,
Your obedient servant,

Saunders Lewis.

Diliname is a digital library dedicated to preserving, disseminating, and providing access to historical documents that shaped key moments of the XIX and XX century. It aims to offer historical context for contemporary political and institutional developments.

Discover new docs at www.diliname.eu