(January 7, 1929)

Does Canada Need England?

By Mr. Beverley Baxter.

President Daly:—It is always a pleasure to welcome to this club Canadians who have distinguished themselves in various parts of the Empire and particularly so when our guest of honor happens to be a native of this city. It was during the war I believe while serving overseas with the Canadian forces that Mr. Baxter had the good fortune to meet not only Lord Beaverbrook but also the Vancouver lady who afterwards became his wife. And I understand that he made a very favorable impression upon both. I should like to take advantage of this opportunity to extend our greetings also to Mrs. Baxter who is accompanying Mr. Boxter. In addition to the distinction which he has won through the excellence of his novels and other writings Mr. Baxter since the year 1920 when he first became associated with the London Daily Express has risen to the high position of managing editor of that great newspaper. This is a truly remarkable and romantic achievement in the journalistic field where gifts of the highest order are essential for recognition. I have great pleasure in asking Mr. Arthur Beverley Baxter to address us.

Mr. Baxter:—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, Mr. Daly and I discussing those subjects which might interest you most hit upon "Does Canada Need England?" He said to me, "Should you not perhaps say Britain?" and I said that for the moment I wanted to use the word England, because the real problem, I sometimes think the real genius, comes from England because of its numbers far more than from either of the other countries which make up the British Isles. So if you will forgive me I will speak of England in what I have to say.

Now, may I touch first the question of National defence? Perhaps the war spirit is over in the world. I wish to God it were so! But when you see France arming again with the enthusiasm and the vigor and the squander of a Napoleon, it is very disturbing and you realize Canada must still, I think, face the problem of national defence. Now it is true that Canada is in a marvellous position inasmuch as she comes under a double guarantee, a guarantee as a member of the British Empire and also— it would be quite unfair not to admit it—under the guarantee of the Monroe doctrine. If Canada says, "We will look after ourselves; we need no defence from Great Britain," then it seems to me for the moment and for some years to come you must consciously or otherwise place yourselves under the direction of Washington. You must assume the status of Cuba. That may be wrong, but that is the way it seems to me. So from that position alone, perhaps it is least important of all, I think Canada needs the British League of Nations, the only League of Nations that really matters, and a League of Nations, gentlemen, if I may speak objectively to you as Canadians for the moment, from which you can walk out in a day or in a month, and not one word will be raised in England against it. There is no freedom more splendid than the membership in the British League of Nations.

Now what about it economically? I admit quite frankly that England is a little tired. England has a human problem which is very great. The dole in its original conception was not unwise. The plan that a workman should contribute to insurance in case of unemployment and that his employer should contribute and the state also, so that in his days of adversity he would have some support, is not a bad one in itself. But like many good ideas it has become a terrible curse and a curse which the best statesmanship cannot see how to remove. Undoubtedly the fibre of many many thousands of British workmen has been terribly lowered by what has now become state charity. But, gentlemen, the English character has not changed yet. It may, but I doubt it. When Pitt came to power in England the fibre of the people had weakened and lessened to an enormous extent, so much so that foreign troops

were in England in case of invasion. Pitt called for the fire of youth again and England answered at once. You have this great human source to draw from, and a little later I want to tell you in my opinion how much Canada can give to England.

But putting aside the human problem, I believe England is an enormous and unequalled partner for Canada in all business affairs. I have said some words to the newspapers and I won't go further on the subject, but I can foresee the day when the barriers will come down between England and this country, between this country and Australia and South Africa and India. I can foresee, if Canadian and English statesmanship can rise to it, a wonderful free trading unit where Canadian genius can find expression in that marvellous public in England where the English fundamental character can find expression. Yesterday I had a talk with Manning Doherty. He said the cattle embargo which was raised by one man alone—make no mistake about that, by Lord Beaverbrook, by his unceasing and tireless efforts—has resulted in a strange situation. No cattle are going to England from this country but the fact that England admits Canadian cattle gives you a weapon in talking to our friends across the line, a weapon for price which every stock breeder knows. What happened with the cattle embargo may happen in a thousand other ways. So I believe that economically Canada does need England and England needs Canada .

Now what is the worst and most difficult feature of this whole situation? To my mind the greatest menace facing the British Empire and I say this with a full sense of responsibility as a British publicist, is Britain's foreign policy, or English foreign policy. We will stick to the same word. I believe Sir Austen Chamberlain's rise to power has been a political tragedy and I say that, conscious of the fact that Austen Chamberlain is one of the finest, most honourable men that British Public life ever produced. Even if he has certain of those qualities of the English which the Irishman described when he said an Englishman has all the attributes of a poker because it has occasional warmth. But even if he does come in that category a little bit, he is a fine man. But think of his

blunders. He is obsessed with Europe. He can see nothing but Europe. His great father, Joe, twenty-five years before his time, said, "Get our of Europe. What nation ever had a heritage like the British Empire?" And then his son, coming through Canada a few weeks ago, says in Ottawa, "We cannot get out of Europe." That is the cry of a weary man unable to size up the changing trend of affairs.

When Mr. Churchill sent that mad wire to Canada one Saturday afternoon, "Will you help us in a war with Turkey?" Churchill should have been drummed out of English public life. I say that, again realizing that Churchill is one of the ablest men of our generation. But when Canada was still suffering from her enormous sacrifices of the war, to receive a telegram about some problem about which you people must have known next to nothing, "Will you fight the Turk?" It has such an undignified misconception of the whole situation that Churchill never should have survived it.

Now what is England doing with America? Ever since the war there has been a definite policy of conciliation to America. I am not prepared to say that is not right. I think probably it is. But what has happened? In the first place England cancelled the Anglo-Japanese agreement. They said there is danger of the Japanese going to war and you must cancel the understanding which now exists in case that war takes place. If you do that all friction between America and England will end, and so that policy was cancelled. Then our friends said, "If you will make peace in Ireland; that is the great trouble between America and England; all trouble will cease." They made peace in Ireland. Then they said, "Now pay the American debt. Don't wait to do the business-like thing of consulting your creditors; pay the American debt on their terms in dollars. It will be a good idea; all trouble between the countries will cease." And Mr. Baldwin, one of the nicest men who ever lived, made that tragic settlement which reduced the standard of living for three or four generations. Then the Americans said, "give up your historic right to the three-mile limit. Make it a twelve-mile limit." And the English said, "Very well, we will do it." Then the adviser said, "Now give America naval parity, equality on the seas, and all trouble will cease." And so England conceded that point.

America still remains suspicious, as perhaps she has a right to be, since her very existence depended on her turning her back on everything European. I hope England will go on with the spirit of conciliation but at the same time I would hope they would say to America, "Anything you ask within reason we will give. You can go on raising your tariffs, you can stop the mails if you choose if a single Cunarder challenges you on your seas, but, gentlemen, we are going to go ahead with a proposition we have had in mind for some time and that is called the British Empire."

But in this matter of foreign policy, and I am absolutely sincere in this, I look forward to the day when Canada's voice will be heard at Westminster. When Chamberlain comes to make one of his periodical mistakes, in spite of the advice of the *Daily Express,* I would like to hear Canada's voice come swift and clear, "Just a minute, Sir Austen, I am speaking for ten million Canadian shareholders in this proposition. And we want to have a voice in this." Again and again when things have gone wrong I have wished the voice of Canada would come, whether through your press or your representatives. I think the time is not far distant when there may be an Upper Chamber in England which may take the form of an Imperial Parliament. The House of Lords is going, gentlemen; I don't know whether that is news or not. There are some very able men in the House of Lords and some very stupid ones just as in the House of Commons, but the House of Lords is tottering. The idea of hereditary legislation, so dear to old England, is passing and it will pass in the next four or five years. It may be that in the reconstruction of a second chamber the voice of Canada may find an authoritative place.

I have spoken about what is wrong and what is the greatest danger in what I think is the foreign policy of Britain, but putting aside the economic, the political side of it, what about the human and spiritual and, if you will, the cultural association of Canada and England? There

are qualities in the English people unknown in any other race; a little behind the times, a little conservative; like the Chinese, a little too fond of ancestor worship; like a Turk, a little too hard on the women sometimes; but there is a kindliness, a humor and a respect for public life, which I think we who are Canadians can draw from greatly. In England the most honored man is still the man who serves the state. Any day you can go to the Savoy or any hotel of that nature in London and you see a tall slightly slouched man of about fifty-five or fifty-eight years, tanned with the sun, which doesn't shine that way in England, and as he looks around with his clear blue eyes a little quizzically, you realize that another Englishman has come home from some obscure place in the east where, only with his prestige and perhaps a platoon of eight or ten men, he has ruled and civilized and helped the progress of the world with 200,000 natives. He has earned little money. He has served his country. He comes back home. He goes to his little cottage by the sea and plays a little golf and lives out his days content and happy and honored. There is still in England in every boy's heart the idea of public service, of public position.

When Disraeli, who was really a Socialist at heart, finally achieved office very old in life, he looked at England with the heart of a socialist and the mind of a socialist, although a Conservative leader. But he said, in this country, in the homes of England, hidden behind these hedges, there is a well of genius which I would not draw on if I could. It is particularly because of the traditions of public service that the word graft is still unknown in public life. With all her troubles, with all her weariness, no country can give more yet to the world than England and I look for the close association of this my own and most beloved country with that little island across there.

Sometimes you need most where you can give most. I believe Canada can give so much to England. When Canadian speakers come to London they at once get on the subject of resources. One knows the speech long before it starts. But, gentlemen, you have a resource to my mind more human and valuable than nickel, which appears to have transformed all my old friends into millionaires, and

that is the quality of youth. I don't mean merely few years. I suppose the ground on which this hotel is built is as old as the ground on which the pyramids are. I don't wish to brag, but through my grandfather my family goes directly back to Adam. I realize that there are one or two families which would claim a much longer ancestry but I think that you and I must be content with that. But in spite of our ancient lineage, gentlemen, we have in Canada almost the rarest quality in the world; it is the quality of youth. If there were some power to send some of this pulsating energy which one feels in Toronto, some of this optimism and power into the arteries of wonderful but tired England, what a gift it would be! You have mentioned the *Daily Express* and incidentally while the great overwhelming portion of the credit of the success of the *Daily Express* must be given to the one man, Lord Beaverbrook, the man who comes second without any hesitation is a young Torontonian named Robertson, a graduate of Toronto University and of the trenches, still in his early thirties, and whose father did me the honor to come here today. He and I have been two partners on the editorial and business side but his part has been tremendous. But what has happened with the *Daily Express,* because it has today that spirit of youth? Lord Beaverbrook took over the *Daily Express* with a circulation of 400,000. That seems big, but it was a falling circulation and not big for London. What could be done? We had the guidance as editor-in-chief of Mr. Blumenfelt but something more was necessary. Lord Beaverbrook brought up his batteries of tremendous energy and optimism but still it was a puzzle. Then he did what those of us in Canada are always attempting to do, surrounded himself with two or three Canadians. We talked the same language, had the same jokes, knew what it was to sit in the smoking compartment of a train and listen to stories one did not want to hear. Unconsciously we brought to this paper the spirit of Canada. When some American millionaire bought a great old master from us and every one wept we said, "Rubbish; let the old master go; let us create some new masters." When the press began to jubilate that a wonderful old man one hundred years of age had attended

on his hundredth birthday ten board meetings and they all said, "How marvellous!" we said, "Mr. So and So should retire. If there is a man in England who has earned his retirement it is he." We said, "Your railways are all losing money. You have let this bus competition get the better of you. What about the directors of the Southern Railway? The average age of the directors was seventy-four. We took the L.M.S. It was something around ninety. And we said, "This is magnificent but it isn't war. You must give the young man a chance. It is no use thinking your boy is adolescent until he is fifty. It is no good if you pretend he is a boy after that time." And whenever Chamberlain got up to his bad tricks we said, "Just a minute, there is France and Europe and there is the British Empire." And it was a bull market, gentlemen. The circulation today is a circulation of 1,600,000. We go to press every night in Glasgow, in Manchester and in London. It was unheard of. We knew nothing about newspapers but we had this impossible spirit of Canada which does not recognize difficulties. The *Daily Mail* is still ahead of us but it won't be in a year and a half. If the *Daily Mail* denies that statement I can't help it. But what we did there was not because we were heaven-sent journalistic geniuses but because we grafted on to England and English journalism the spirit so necessary after the war and the public responded to it, as I suppose they never responded to a journalistic enterprise in history.

The subject of England is so exhaustive that perhaps I might have said that somebody said in conversation the other day. I was just preparing to say a lot of extraordinary clever things about England, and he said, "You know anything you say about England is true," so I didn't feel it necessary to go on. I shall just close with this. Most of you will have seen Shaw's play, "The Doctor's Dilemma." The artist is dying. The doctors surrounded him in the manner of doctors, very pleased at his symptoms. Then he looks at his poor wife who doesn't understand his art or his symptoms and he says, "I believe in Michael Angelo, in Velasquez and Rembrandt, the majesty of design and the beauty of color, and the glory of art, which has made these hands sublime. Amen,

Amen." It is one of the most beautiful passages that Shaw ever wrote. Well, gentlemen, I think sometimes we who live with this inheritance of the British Empire on our shoulders, I think sometimes we might recite something almost similar to that and say: "I believe in England, in Canada and the British Empire, in the glory of its past, in the majesty of its future, that will make our race sublime." Thank you.