

July 27th 1945

Dear Ones,

"The old order changeth..." Last night the late news reported that Bracken had been defeated and that of the first 30 parliamentary seats reported in, Labor had won 19 new seats. And then this morning the 7 o'clock newscast had a fairly complete recap: the popular vote to Labor at a ratio of 3-2, and the strength in parliament at 2-1, with Labor capturing almost 400 seats. We know that Churchill has resigned and I assume that Attlee will be named Prime Minister shortly; apparently Eden and Churchill were the only Tory leaders to retain their personal seats. (I'll have to check - one "t" or two in the Labor Party chief's name.)

The victory is clear cut; the British people have voiced a decision that is indisputable. There need be no coalitions and compromise governments. The Tory Party and the leadership of Winston Churchill were not defeated because of their war record; the defeat was not ingratitude for a job that was well done - rather it is indication that the people of Britain do not want their government in peacetime, in time of social and economic progress and change, in the formative post war years, to be dominated by the Conservative party and its philosophy. They have thrown their lot with the Labor party and with its openly explained policy and they did so with an overwhelming vote.

From everything which I read, the American political leaders, especially the members of the Senate who have recently been in England, were more or less counting on Churchill's ability to eke through with a narrow majority or to evolve a new coalition under his leadership. Certainly the adherents of Hayek and those who hoped to post a detour sign on what they interpret as the Road to Serfdom must have severe qualms about the results of the election. The conservatives of the United States (of both parties) not to mention their counterparts in England must be no little concerned over this trend of events. The English Channel may have stopped the Nazi horde in its sweep to conquest, but it proved ineffective against the world-wide swing to the left. Within the British Empire, Canada alone is a major political entity which does not sport a Labor government.

There is little point in prejudging the Labor Party program before it becomes effective; certainly the emphasis on nationalization and socialization will take realistic form within the framework of some overall scheme that will take time to work out. It is British tradition and sensible politics that this change will be gradual and that there will be a definite transition period; but there can be no doubt that the results of the election have committed England to a program of planning and social-economic reform which will rank with the other milestones of British Parliamentary progress.

Although the emphasis of the British election was on the home front, it is obvious that its results will have far reaching affects in every phase and element of British foreign policy as well; clearly foreign trade and the competition for world markets will be markedly influenced by the regulation placed on home economy. Trade, cartels, what have you, will become closely linked with the government political and economic policy. The inconsistency of supporting one faction of a struggle, say in Argentina, while trading vigorously and profitably with the other is less likely to occur. Similarly we may see subtle changes in the Empire-Commonwealth economic policies. Certainly we can look for a break in the current attitudes toward India and the Levant. All in all I feel that the new British Government holds the promise of giving proper consideration to international considerations when they are in apparent conflict with limited British or Empire goals. (This of course does not mean that Britain is retiring; there is no reason to go to the extreme conclusion.)

BEFORE COMMENTING FURTHER

I will wait until the letters which you are writing now arrive and I read your comments and the clip-ins in comment on the election results. I do feel that the results were the wisest for England and for the world, that they are a reflection of the maturity and effectiveness of the British democratic system, and they that will prove the incorrectness of the fears of the people who deny that democratic governments can effect wide social-economic programs for the common welfare without resorting to totalitarianism or authoritarianism.

This seems to be British Empire day for my letter writing; last night the weather did clear and I left work at 330 and went back to the company area. Major McGhee, Art, Don and Milt (Milt Fishman is an AG officer but now attached to the PX as an accountant; I came overseas with him - a Brooklyn Boy; a nice chap.) met me and we got our togs and drove out to the New Zealand area. There we were met by a flight lieutenant named Smith and we were taken to the quarters where we were to change. (The New Zealanders have a basic prefabricated structure about 16'x 16' (the same size as our pyramidal tents) and these structures are used individually for quarters and attached together in strings for office buildings, hospital wards, and everything else.) We played two games and won them both; the first was easy and we relaxed only to have to fight to win the second. As always, there were differences in rules; their court was smaller and the ball was rubber rather than the leather we are used to - but we ironed everything out and it was a lot of fun. The game was quieter than our usual sport; the New Zealanders seem to be a little more taciturn than our enthusiastic group. After we showered we went to their club - we had to hurry a little because they wanted to get in before the bar closed so that they would not miss their ever-loving beer. When I learned that their beer is rationed to them, I told them that I had no special liking for it; when I told them that they expressed their regrets and told me that their whiskey was unrationed; would I like some? "Whiskey" turned out to be Johnny Walker Red Label - my first Scotch since my birthday and very fine too! I'll have to visit the NZ camp more often! We enjoyed a good meal; they have a fine mess. Among the officers who played with us and with whom we spent the evening were Smith, who apparently is the equivalent of our finance officer, Townsend, the education officer, and some others whose names, for the sake of the record, were O'Connell and Freyberg, whose jobs I do not know; we also met the dentist but I can't recall his name. New Zealanders' rank runs like ours; and everybody in the airforce who is the equivalent of a major is called a squadron leader whether he flies or not; thus the finance officer is called a flight lieutenant even though he is strictly land-borne. The Air Force does not have attached medics so the Dentist comes from the army which means that he wears a different insignia of rank - "pips" on his shoulder strap rather than the airforce bars. There were also British naval officers at the club last night so we got an informal lesson in distinguishing insignia of rank in the British services. (I should say New Zealand - that distinction is very important.) We went to the movie and afterward returned to the club for "supper" which is their mid-evening snack of bread, butter, jam, tea, and, last night, oysters - a delightful custom and I told Art that that is what we should have to satisfy my evening hunger pangs! It was 10 when we left and we all agreed that it was a swell evening. Were it not for the slight English touch in their speech, the NZ'ers would pass as Americans in any group. They are personable and easy to get along with; my impression of them was very fine. We plan to reciprocate by having them over next Thursday.

The movie we saw was "Murder, He Says" and it is a scream - so even the movie was good. I'm off to Hal Stein's for lunch.

Love,

Summer