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★
TWENTY-SIX years ago this month, one of our readers reminds us, David Kirkwood, now M.P. for Dumbarton Burghs but then a Clydeside firebrand, was dismissed from the engineering works in which he earned his living and ordered to leave Glasgow. Kirkwood (left), appealed to the Minister of Munitions (right). Here is his own account of the interview as he gives it in his autobiography "My Life of Revolt."



★
A CLYDESIDER talks to CHURCHILL

I RESOLVED to appeal unto Caesar — Caesar in this case being the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P., Minister of Munitions.

To that end I went to London. The natural thing to do was to get in touch with Ramsay MacDonald. By this time we were on terms of deep friendship. Three times he had come through to Edinburgh to see me. Together we had roamed the Pentland Hills, and in those tramps he had opened his heart to me in a way that few men have ever done.

"By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion."

The war had killed Keir Hardie. It had made Ramsay MacDonald a broken-hearted man. It seemed as if he was doomed to spend his life tending goats in the wilderness while the Tory sheep munched grass in green and pleasant pastures.

But the friendship of Members of Parliament is a wonderful thing. I did not understand it then. I was to learn it later on and to become a sharer of it in full measure.

To my surprise, Ramsay MacDonald, in agreement with the idea that I should see Winston Churchill, promptly went to the telephone and, while I waited, arranged a meeting for that afternoon in the Hotel Metropole, the headquarters of the Ministry.

It has always been a cause of wonder to me how the busiest men manage to squeeze in time for something unexpected—and then appear to have nothing else on hand at the moment.

Over a Cup of Tea

I had formed an opinion of Winston Churchill as a daring, reckless, swash-buckler individual who was afraid of no one. I felt that if I could win him there was nothing he would not do.

But I was very critical of him. I expected arrogance, military precision, abruptness. When he appeared, I knew I was wrong. He came in, his fresh face all smiles, and greeted me simply, without a trace of side or trappings. I felt I had found a friend.

"How do you do, Mr. Kirkwood? I have heard a good deal about you," he said.

"I dare say you have," I replied.

"Yes, and I want you to know that, whatever happens, nothing is to be

allowed to stand in the way of the production of the munitions of war."

"Quite right," I said.

Then he rang a bell, saying: "Let's have a cup of tea and a bit of cake together."

What a difference so small a thing can make! I remembered in that instant the awful hours I had waited for Lloyd George and Lynden Macassey, and my feeling at the time: "If only they would give us a cup of tea!"

Here was the man, supposed never to think of trifles, suggesting tea and cake—a sort of bread and salt of friendship. It was magnificent. We debated over the teacups.

"Well, what about it?" he asked.

"I will tell you," I replied. "The Government deported me without cause. I have had redress for those wrongs. I realise that what was done to me was done because we were at war. I waive the quantum o' the sin"—at which he screwed up his face—"but I am unemployed. I am a highly-skilled engineer, idle since May. I want you to put me back in Beardmore's whether Beardmore wants me or not."

"Treated as a Traitor"

I have seldom seen a man look so astonished. His brows came down. He looked at me and said:

"Look here, Kirkwood, you have a great reputation, but you are not living up to it. I expected you to be a reasonable man. You are the most unreasonable man I ever met in all my life. Here am I, three weeks in my job, and you ask me to put you back in Beardmore's whether he wants you or not, into the works he has built up over a lifetime."

"Yes, that is so," I said. "It may seem a strange request. I've told you I have forgiven all that was done to me, but this is doing it all over again. I am treated as if I was a traitor to my country. There is no worse injury could be done to a Scotsman. You have got to do this thing or I'll go out from here and from the Isle of Wight to John o' Groats I'll advocate a down-tool policy."

He whipped round with flashing eyes. "You must not mention that here, Kirkwood. I will not tolerate it. Remember you are in the Ministry of Munitions."

"I would say it, Mr. Churchill, were it in the Court of Heaven, and not only say it, sir, but I'm going to do it."

He sat back in his chair, looked straight into my eyes and roared with laughter. Then he said:

"By jove, and I believe you would! But there's no good in getting heated about it. You feel wronged, and only one thing can change that feeling. Well, why not? Let us see what we can do in the next two or three days, and it won't be my fault if you are not back in Beardmore's."

I knew something of what that meant. I knew I had talked with a man of great ability, great courage and great power, character written in every wrinkle of his face. I knew that he was a man whose word would not be broken.

I came back to Glasgow to find three offers of employment in Glasgow. I refused them all.

On the third day, I was summoned to Parkhead, where Mr. Charles Pelmier, general manager of Beardmore's shell factories, offered me a job in the Mile-end Shell Factory. I accepted.

"Is it workman or manager?" I asked.

"Manager," he said.

We shook hands.

"I'll keep my word," I said, "but I should like to engage some of my friends, fine engineers, who are not working."

"Whatever you do, you do on your own responsibility."

Thus it came that in Mile-end Shell Factory, with David Kirkwood as foreman, worked David Hanton, William Gallacher, and wee MacManus as shop stewards.

Woman Stage Manager

THE first woman stage manager in Australia, according to the *Listener In* is Georgie Sterling, a former Wellington girl, who has done well for herself on the stage and in radio in Melbourne. She played leading parts in Australia in *You Can't Take It With You* and *See Naples and Die*, and then when the company decided to produce *Arsenic And Old Lace* (recently staged in Christchurch), there was no part for her, so she became acting stage manager during the Sydney run, and was given charge of the show when it went to Melbourne. She is in the cast of the new ZB feature *For Ever Young*.