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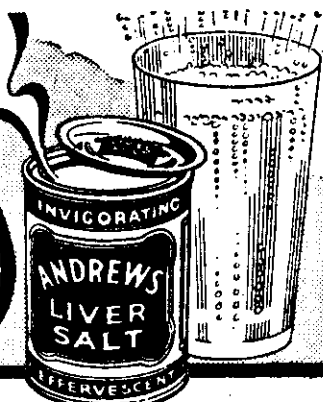
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# MORALLY WRONG IS POLITICALLY WRONG

## Pen Portrait of Sir Richard Acland

**E**IGHTY-EIGHT years ago, the sixth son of Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, tenth baronet, landed in Lyttelton, bought a block of sheep country in South Canterbury, and married the eldest daughter of Bishop Harper. His grandson is now the Nationalist, that is, the Conservative, Member of Parliament for the area in which he and his relatives still run their sheep. Eight years ago, the eldest son of Sir Francis Dyke Acland, fourteenth baronet, entered the House of Commons as Liberal Member for the Barnstaple Diocesan of Devon, but found Liberalism unsatisfying when the war came. To-day, he is the founder and leader of Common Wealth, a new Socialist party in Britain, and has (it has been recently reported), handed over all his personal property to a national trust. Here is a pen picture of him from a recent issue of the London "Observer."

**L**EAN, spectacled and young-looking for his 36 years, with an irresistible suggestion of a sixth-form boy—the kind of prefect who is not very good at games, but makes up for it by force of character—Sir Richard Acland gives above all else an impression of earnestness. Even his enemies do not accuse him of insincerity. But it is not a solemn kind of earnestness either; merely the eager, buttonholing enthusiasm of a man who not only knows that he possesses the truth, but, what is more, knows that the truth is very simple and can be printed on a four-page leaflet.

If you ask Sir Richard Acland what is the central doctrine of Common Wealth, his small but growing political party, he will answer you more or less like this: Capitalism must be scrapped forthwith, but Britain must "go Socialist" under her own steam and in the way that accords with her past traditions. Nationalisation of industry—yes; class warfare—no; patriotism—yes; collaboration with Russia—yes; imitation of Russian methods—no.

Simple, and even obvious, as such a programme may sound, it is original enough to have earned the hostility of the older Left-wing parties. And the by-election figures suggest that they have good reason to fear this youthful rival.



**SIR RICHARD ACLAND:** Drawn by Stanley Parker.

**M**UCH depends on phraseology, as Acland is well aware. Common Wealth dislikes labelling itself "Socialist," avoids the Marxist jargon, and tries, not altogether successfully, to speak the language of the people. Acland himself has the advantage of having reached his collectivist opinions by an unusual route.

His father, Sir Francis Dyke Acland, landowner and fourteenth baronet, was a notable West countryman and Liberal politician—Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1911-15), Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Feb. June, 1915), and Secretary to the Board of Agriculture (1915-16). In 1916, he resigned with Asquith, and did not hold office again. At his death in 1939, he was M.P. for North Cornwall, which he had represented for seven years after a long period out of Parliament. Sir Francis Acland's great subject was agriculture; he had also an expert

knowledge of forestry. His first wife, who died in 1933, was a former President of the Women's National Liberal Federation, and the author of a moving book, *Good-bye for the Present*, which in part, told the story of her ten-year-old daughter, who was killed in an accident.

Richard Acland, holder of a safe seat at Barnstaple, for which he was elected as a Liberal, has never experienced the ordinary discipline of a Left-Wing Party.

He likes to explain—eagerly, and even with a tendency to bang on the table—that the existing left-wing parties have ruined themselves by ignoring three obvious facts. The first is that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is out of date. The proletariat by itself is no longer strong enough to dominate society and can only win with the help of the middle-classes. Secondly, any political party which insults patriotism is doomed, at any rate in England. Thirdly, and

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