

PREFACE

American and British relations are not only the concern of governments, but depend largely on the thinking of the common people of both nations. Anglo-American cooperation in this war has been cemented by the successful working of Lend-Lease. The foresight of the Administration and of Congress, has been amply rewarded by military results, and by the reciprocation, which this practical machinery has stimulated overseas. Unstintingly, America has given her ally weapons; England is now repaying with hospitality and supplies to American troops. Whilst the form of this exchange is new, the process of borrowing ideas from each other has been going on for some time. Examples abound. English authors, have by their writings, imprinted their ideas on us; we, through the medium of the film, have whetted the appetites of London audiences, who aspire to attain our high standard of living. These interchanges are necessary fertilizers in a healthy democratic society. Provided there is a mutual sympathetic appreciation of the values and shortcomings of our respective institutions and customs, future misunderstandings will be avoided, and the English speaking peoples may jointly lead the world, during the reconstruction of the post-war era.

Specifically, just as Britons are eager to learn about our schools, social services, and political inclinations, we, in turn, should be well-informed on the practices and operations of Parliament, the growth of Party control in the British Government, and of the transition from an *Empire* to a *Commonwealth*, etc.

By virtue of thirty-seven years spent in uninterrupted and active parliamentary combat, the author, the late Lord Wedgwood, brings his readers a *Testament* rich with experience, and full of seasoned advice. Though he saw the merits of the British system, he was its most outspoken critic, and some of the strictures of this modest descendent of England's master potter, will amaze his American audience. Like George Bernard Shaw, the author might have said to America:—"We thank you for your old destroyers and much else; in return please accept this *Testament to Democracy*." Colonel the Right Honorable Josiah C. Wedgwood, Distinguished Service Order, as he was known when he sat as Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme, died shortly before publication of this American version, of what was to be his last creative effort. He wrote to Mr. Arthur I. LeVine, president of Ad Press Ltd., whose liberal benevolence has made this publication possible:—"I want no royalties, and contribute mine with pleasure to the upkeep of the many refugees, bombed-out war victims, and allied soldiers in the care of the Emergency Council in London. The cause is certainly good enough, and urgent."

For a generation the voice of Wedgwood was heard in defense of the helpless and the oppressed. At first a Liberal, then a Labor leader and finally an "independent rebel", as he termed himself, his constituents re-elected him time and again as their unopposed representative to the Commons. This unique loyalty, left him perfectly free to speak and act as his conscience dictated. Because he was not subject to political, business, or class pressure, he commanded the respect of his political opponents. His integrity and respect for traditions, love of freedom, hatred of injustice and snobbery won him the admiration of all who espouse decency and morality.

He organized and headed an all-party committee of both Houses of Parliament, which was appointed to prepare and write the History of Parliament. Wedgwood supervised the research, and published several volumes of this monumental record. His experience in this field and his acknowledged independence gives a special interest to this TESTAMENT TO DEMOCRACY. He takes his reader behind the parliamentary scene, and argues the case of Government by reason against Government by force. He compares the English system with the written constitutions in America and elsewhere. He points out their weaknesses, shows whence Fascist attack comes, and offers Federal Union as a means of salvaging the world after the war. Much of his analysis concerning Political Parties, Government Agencies, Corruption, Placemen, the function of education, and the efficiency of the Bureaucracy will prove significant material to students of constitutional government.

When Prime Minister Winston Churchill cites his "galant friend" as a model Member of Parliament, it is because Wedgwood like Churchill, was a bad party man, but a good House of Commons man. A Parliament wholly composed of Wedgwoods, might prove unworkable, but a Parliament without independents, of whom he was the most eminent type, would be a less vital and less stimulating place. Wedgwood had two heroes, one dead, and the other very much alive. He was England's most ardent disciple of America's Henry George. His first love for what he describes as "The Citadel of Democracy", stemmed from his admiration for the great gospler of the single tax. As a soldier and patriot, Wedgwood, the Liberal-Socialist, saluted Churchill the Conservative, with a cheer. Churchill responded by citing Wedgwood "as the best example of democracy."

Wedgwood was in the cabinet of Ramsay Macdonald's first Labor Government; he fought in the Boer War; and

saw action and was wounded during the First World War. In this war, after the British defeat in Norway and the collapse of France, he started the cry of "resign", which brought about the downfall of the Chamberlain regime. Though his fellow Members of Parliament vanished swiftly to the shelters, when an air raid alarm sounded, he refused to leave his seat in the House. "I sat on," said the Colonel, "feeling like the Roman Senators when the Gauls stormed the Capitol. I, at least, would perish at my post!" Such was his courage in word and deed. He encouraged African natives, the Indians and the Jews to emulate his example. Because of his pronounced views, he found out later that leaders, of such minority groups, soon fight shy of old friends upon whom authority frowns.

This missionary, pamphleteer and propagandist, who, in 1920, was selected by an American newspaper as one of the six Englishmen in the intellectual class with the strongest faith and the clearest vision, wanted the educational system so altered that it would produce rebels who think for themselves, not robots who think as others want them to. Uncompromising and fearless, during the Nazi Blitz on London, a fire-watcher asked for an autographed copy of one of his earlier works. Wedgwood added this inscription: "From an incendiary to a fire-extinguisher."

The author has known everybody, traveled all over the world, and done everything, including service in the Home Guard at the age of seventy. This book mirrors many of these experiences and they are applied by the author to illustrate his thesis. A man of outstanding parliamentary skill, and a sincere humanitarian, he was once charged with being intolerant. Wedgwood admitted the fault and added, "I hope I may die still utterly intolerant of cruelty, injustice and error." Such "intolerance" is a worthy epitaph to a

fighting life, and the sentiments he expressed to Dr. Ch. Weitzman in a letter in 1941, apply with double force now:—
“When we go down finally to the House of Kings, we shall both, in our own way, be received with ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Welcome into the House of thy Lord.’”

On behalf of the American Chapter, Religious Emergency Council of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, an agency composed of volunteer workers, thanks are extended to Mr. Walter Hutchinson and Messrs. Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers), Ltd., London, England, producers of the original British edition, for generously waiving their rights. To Mr. Joe Silberman, of Pick-S, we offer our appreciation, for permitting use of his firm’s graphics. We extend our gratitude to Mr. Arthur I. LeVine, and to the author’s widow, Lady Wedgwood, for their cooperation in this project.

The publisher’s entire profits and author’s royalties are being donated to the *Wedgwood Memorial Fund*, to establish a Canteen and Rest Center for Allied troops, stationed in England, and to be endowed with the name of Lord Wedgwood. We hope by these means to bring much-needed rest and comfort to our valiant fighting men.

(At the author’s suggestion, several additional footnotes have been added, and these are designated with the writer’s initials: “M.S.”)

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