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## Report From Britain, 4 March 1950

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REPORT FROM BRITAIN  
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Aberdeen, Scotland  
March 4, 1950

For nearly a week an impatient alien has waited in vain for an inquiry from Dr. Gallup regarding the Silver Scientific System of Precise Political Prognostication. It has seemed reasonable, apparently to him alone, that the jealous pollsters would like to know just how the British election results were forecast right on the nose.

After considerable soul-searching, and without the slightest inclination toward sulking, the perfecter of the system has decided 1) to dismantle the master plan, and 2) to let the future take care of itself.

For the benefit of historians yet unborn, however, I shall let fall one slight hint as to how I became a success as a political prediction expert. Some weeks ago an ultra-Conservative friend of mine bet me five bob (70 cents) that Freddie Mills would pulverize Joey Maxim. Frankly, I'd never heard of either boxer but when told that Maxim was an American, I took him over the Britisher solely on the basis of national pride. Later, I found out that the odds were fearfully on the side of Mills, but in some strange fashion Maxim came through with a K. O.

In an unusual fit of generosity I tendered my friend a chance to recoup on the election, and, knowing his political bias, offered to take Labor. The canny Scotsman, who looks upon every wager as an investment, refused. From that I drew the logical conclusion, and beyond this explanation of my intricate system I refuse to go.

Having worried through one of Britain's most momentous campaigns -- including a twenty-four-hour radio vigil to hear the results -- I'll have to report that I feel a bit let down. Why, we stir up more fuss in the South over nomination of a lieutenant-governor than I've seen in all of Britain in an admittedly crisis election. Maybe the old dodge that the Briton stands for office while the American runs is a partial solution of the mystery.

Apparently at no time was the British Constitution in dire peril of extinction. No one has contended that Labor's coffers were filled with Moscow gold. Mongrelization is a word unknown over here and the character of British womanhood remains unsullied, sir. I have yet to see a

hill-billy band on the rostrum or to hear a candidate who croons. The electorate just wasn't interested in the adolescent indiscretions of Candidate "X", nor whether in youth he had been an alcoholic or robbed his stepmother of her life savings. Not a single disappointed office-seeker has cried out in anguish that he was "counted out", or that the voters had sold their political heritage for cash on the barrelhead. No ballot boxes have been seen floating down the Thames or the Clyde. And, oddly enough, even the Tories seem to think that the British way of life will go forward. I keep wondering, though, what these people do for fun and excitement.

The radio political fare served the British was austerity itself, consisting of one evening broadcast with a top quota of thirty minutes. Total time was rationed on an equitable basis; the Communists got ten minutes. Each carefully chosen party leader spoke without benefit of applause or lengthy introduction. Aside from these speeches, nothing came over the radio which would have the slightest influence in determining how people would vote. And for five full days before Polling Day there was no reference on the air to the election except in the news broadcasts.

Almost everyone stopped work to hear the tense results as they came in. Twenty-four hours of reporting the final votes district by district and nothing more. No expert opinions on how things were going, no comparisons with the election of 1892, no conceding or congratulating by candidates, no circus atmosphere of the American football broadcast. The assumption seemed to be that the electorate knew what it was all about.

Don't get the idea that the British took the contest casually. Over 83% of the qualified electors voted. Candidates polling less than one-eighth of the possible votes lost their "deposits" of some four hundred dollars each. By this device the Communists kicked in nearly \$40,000 and the Liberals well over \$100,000 to His Majesty's Royal Treasury. Which should have something of a dampening influence on frivolous candidacies in the future.

The election indicated rather clearly a cleavage between industrial and commercial-residential-agricultural areas. Labor was extremely disappointed in not receiving the equivalent of American Mid-western farm support in spite of unprecedented agricultural prosperity. The new government has gone in with minority support of the nation -- it came through with 46% of the votes while the Conservatives were gathering 43½% and the Liberals 9%. The main satisfaction accruing to the Liberals came from the sharp deal they made with Lloyds which

saved them part of their deposit money.

The whole world is anxious about the stability of the new government. Mr. Attlee can propose further nationalization in the realization that it will bring defeat in Parliament but in the hope that the country would sustain him in another election. The more likely course, however, is for him to tread softly and to offend as few as possible while the government carries on. In any event there is no difference of opinion between the parties on foreign affairs.

For those more standpat Republicans who have been gloating over the Conservative gains in Britain I would recommend the reading of the Conservative manifesto.

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Yesterday there was deposited on our doorstep a little bundle of sunlight - a case, twenty-four full bottles, of that Well Known Southern Beverage. Whence it came we do not know but four-fifths of the family have been given a new lease on life.