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Report From Britain, 25 January 1950

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REPORT FROM BRITAIN

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Aberdeen, Scotland
January 25, 1950

For some time I have known that a crusade of mine against an evil which has well nigh corrupted the South and has certainly undermined my own family would finally come into the open. This withering blight against which I have fought so manfully has now reached the status of an international incident and a pawn in the ideological hot and cold warfare which threatens the whole globe. Please have patience while I explain.

Soon after I was married I discovered that my wife had long since acquired the "dope" habit. Being relatively young and full of romance I looked upon it as a pleasant whimsy. As the years passed and she began to develop along broader lines, I even imagined some virtue in the substitution of a package of crackers and a WELL KNOWN SOUTHERN BEVERAGE for a more substantial breakfast. Little did I then dream of the future degrading effect not only on me but on my children. They took to the habit in spite of my feverish efforts to convert them to apple juice. I beat a dogged retreat, though in my heart I knew that I was only biding my time.

That time seemed to have come when we arrived in London. The WKSB was available but the few Englishmen who preferred it to tea had to take it without ice. Which is comparable to the abominable British imitation of pork sausage. But my wife, her niece, and my two kids soon adapted themselves to the lukewarm monstrosity, and, on occasion, even found some ice.

Perhaps you can imagine my secret delight when I found that few bottles of the stuff were available in "tea and Scotch" Aberdeen. I tried hard not to gloat, and my seeming victory was short-lived anyway. University students scoured the remote hamlets for the pre-austerity beverage. The manager of the Northern Hotel put through a call to the president of Scotland's largest beer concern in Edinburgh, which appropriately enough, controlled the franchise of the American brew. The gladsome tidings (to me) were that no more syrup would be available inasmuch as Britain was curtailing her sugar imports from dollar countries. At least I seemed to be getting somewhere.

But we made a trip to Glasgow, and with the help of the American consulate there, rounded up several cases of the WKSB. Our search deprived us of a visit to Loch Lomond but to my wife that

was a small price to pay. Believe it or not we brought back twenty-three bottles in our luggage. For the next month these were as jealously guarded as the crown jewels in the Tower of London. Their rationing excluded our poor kids and this may have been confused with character growth. Every other day my wife and her niece would deposit one of the bottles in the deep freeze for thirty minutes and then consume it jointly -- with reverence, as if they were going through some stone-age tribal ceremony.

In December we left for London and the continent with nine bags and sundry other luggage. One carefully wrapped package, I found out in the nick of time, contained a couple of dozen empties which were to have been exchanged in London on the return trip for full bottles. I did shame the conspirators out of carting these "dead men" some five or six hundred miles. But in the meantime I myself had weakened, influenced no doubt by the spirit of Saint Nicholas, to the point where I had ordered a gallon of the syrup sent in from Mississippi.

In Italy we found the WKSBS everywhere and Rome in particular was flooded with it. Whether due to Jim Farley's influence with the government and the Vatican I don't know. My kids recognized each red and white advertisement with more appreciation than they gave to Michelangelo's paintings. And I was thoroughly embarrassed each time we sat down to one of those sumptuous Italian meals and I had to order one jug of wine and four bottles of that insipid liquid.

Then we reached Paris and I came to the conclusion that the time had come to set up international headquarters to stop this fifth column threat to international sanity. Even if it did throw me, temporarily, into the camp of the Commies. They had already united with the wine growers in an attempt to outlaw the sale of the vicious drink which, coming from the United States, "is menaced with human tyranny." They got such a bill introduced into Parliament which apparently was having smooth sailing.

There was plenty of justice in their cause. Vin rouge ordinaire now costs twenty times its pre-war price, and in the post-war deterioration of morality Frenchmen were turning to the cheap American drink. Belgians had pointed the way by consuming six bottles per head one year, twelve the second, and forty last year.

Then the U. S. Embassy stepped in, saying: "We should not think it a particularly friendly act if you were to permit the banning of a perfectly healthy American product." The French

government, intimidated, crushed the bill.

It remains to be seen what new steps the Commies will take to keep France from being "Coca colonized." One reporter's guess is that they will demonstrate with a public breaking of the green bottles on the streets, perhaps to the singing of the "International." A more insidious weapon is imitation of the WKS. A Zimba Cola is offered to the patriotic on the grounds that it is French, "being made by Americans in Morocco." But my wife contends that even the authentic Paris beverage doesn't have the true American flavor. In the very water, perhaps, lies the hope of an uncorrupted France.

Now we're back in Scotland. I don't know what the future will bring. My wife bought today a seltzer water jug with real fizz in it. We have picked up a few chunks of ice from outside and mixed them with the water and a few precious drops from my gallon container. The syrup, the water, and the ice seem to have blended together. I have just taken a wee sip. By golly, maybe this is more "refreshing" than tea after all.
