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## Report From Britain, 25 September 1949

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REPORT FROM BRITAIN

James W. Silver  
(Chairman, Department of History, University of Mississippi)  
London, September 25, 1949

A week in Britain has convinced me that over here there is as much difference of opinion freely expressed as there has ever been in the United States. Robin Cruikshank, editor of the London News Chronicle, put it nicely in an address to the Fulbright appointees (I'll tell you about them another time) when he said that some people assume that "everybody on one side of the Atlantic is a collectivist while everyone on the other side subscribes to laissez-faire -- that Uncle Sam is really Adam Smith with a goatee, and that John Bull is really Karl Marx in mutton-chop whiskers and a Union Jack waistcoat." Actually Briton as well as American will argue at the drop of a hat as to how far the state should interfere with individual liberty in order to bring security and a better life to the little fellow. To return to Mr. Cruikshank, the one idea pretty well assumed by both Briton and American is "the sacred uniqueness of human personality," which, of course, rules out the notion that man was made for the greater glory of the state.

As we left the S. S. Washington at Southampton, a ship's officer remarked on the listlessness of the men carrying off the hand luggage. They did appear to be sallow faced, lethargic individuals, and I was prepared for a British people about to drop in their tracks from want of meat. In the week gone by, however, I have seen little further indication of low vitality. The thousands of vigorous people I have closely watched might as well, except for their "peculiarities" of speech, have been citizens of New York or Mississippi. But I shall look for more evidence before drawing conclusions.

STRAY ITEMS FROM A BUSY WEEK: A sense of frustration at seeing Ireland and France and not being allowed to go ashore.... Le Havre's port still a mass of ruin.... attendance, along with some 400 newsmen from all over the world, at the press conference where Sir Stafford Cripps answered devaluation questions for an hour and a half. My surprise at Sir Stafford's deft handling of loaded queries and his remarkable sense of humor. --his

prophecy that there would be no drop in the American price of Scotch whiskey has already been fulfilled --- a 600 mile telephone call for 30 cents and a street car ride for a penny (two cents) BUT cigarettes at seventy cents a package and six cents for a box of matches which costs a cent in the U. S. --- the magnificent English countryside --an evening with a middle aged London physician who does not like nationalized medicine --statues of George III and Lincoln.... parade of RAF in commemoration of Battle of Britain -- universal admiration of FDR....delight of Fulbright scholars at being shown by Sharman Douglas the exact spot on American Embassy floor where Princess Margaret Rose did the can-can.... LONDON AS EXPECTED: changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace (Christopher Robin went down with Alice), Big Ben, boating on the Thames, Westminster, doubledecker trams, Piccadilly Circus, Waterloo station, speakers' corner at Hyde Park, etc., etc.... the barber who insisted that the United States has more socialism than Britain, and backed up his statement with a cartoon from the Daily Worker -- the London paper which speaks not of devaluation but of realignment. ... tea bars -- blocks of bombed out buildings in London -- the friendly letter of welcome from a Britisher who saw my name in the paper.... the Irish lad who was dumfounded when Billy (my ten year old son) wouldn't admit that he hated the British -- my introduction to British medicine via taxicab smashup and a night in an infirmary (details to follow).....

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