

THE LORD MAYOR PUTS OUT A CHALLENGE

THIS TRADITIONAL Guildhall Banquet sounds, as it were, the first ceremonial crack of the starter's gun to speed a new Lord Mayor down the civic track.

"Let us, Mr. Prime Minister, think actively—and my activities lie within the City but for 12 months. For me the Golden Coach today, a No. 11 bus tomorrow; for you, Sir, no sixpenny parking meter; you carry on your energetic statesmanship.

"Let me then, briefly report to you that the City grows—financially, intellectually and in stature.

"A better City comes into being; a place where citizens may work and eventually live in agreeable surroundings.

"The new City University is on the doorstep to teach us to use a computer for calculating our assets—and our overdrafts.

"In the '70's you will find a new Arts Centre with a new Concert Hall and a theatre; new tall buildings arise everywhere—some constructed from the top downwards, some built from the bottom upwards.

"The City Gates, in fact, begin to open, to beckon you inside; and Mr. Prime Minister, I would like tonight to invite you to our City Festival in 1968—in July—to see for yourself, what the Living City really means.

A living city

"A Living City, Sir,—in a world where untimely Death still stalks abroad. What do I mean? Listen!

"Tonight, Sir, we in Guildhall,

Sir Gilbert Inglefield's Guildhall Speech

the millions in the front parlours of Britain and Europe are a fragment of that lucky third of mankind who have no fears for tomorrow.

"The rest, the other two-thirds, the other thousand million husbands and wives, the other six hundred million children live below the poverty line which, very simply, means that they starve.

"The dictionary tells us that starvation is 'a state of extreme malnutrition caused by long continued deprivation of essential nutrients, usually resulting from insufficient food intake.

"If this is etymology, Sir, then I wish to God that there were no more dictionaries for, to be personal for a moment, I have seen, I have KNOWN what 'insufficient food intake' means.

"During three and a half years in Japanese labour camps in Malaya and Thailand, I was a friend of starvation and I can tell you, Mr. Prime Minister, that it is much more than 'a state of extreme malnutrition caused by long continued deprivation of essential nutrients.'

The challenge

"It is a mean, an ugly, a degrading thing. It is, Sir, the essence of anti-life.

"But why should it trouble us? Surely, surely, this is a problem of 'the others,' always 'the others,' the 'other' two-thirds.

"We in Guildhall, in Britain, in Europe, are remote from the fears of tomorrow and while, occasionally, we may dip into our consciences and find charity, we probably have more important, more pressing things to do and we pass by on the other side whilst 'other men,' always 'other men,' die.

"And that is why, Mr. Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, I make this challenge to Britain—a straightforward and simple challenge to our consciences to remember the other two-thirds.

"In front of me, Sir, you see an empty plate with the label: 'War on Want,' for tonight, the Sheriffs and I, your hosts, are entertaining an Absent Guest.

"You can't see him, and neither can I, but he is here whosoever he may be—an African child or an Indian mother or a peasant from Pakistan, who plays on the hopelessness of life like a fruit machine.

"These, 'the others,' the faceless two-thirds, the absent guests who have shared our meal tonight—perhaps not the actual fare but the cost of entertaining our Absent Guest is being sent, direct, to fight the war on poverty and starvation wherever it may be needed.

"Which, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the nub of my challenge—that each of you here, tonight, that anyone who may hear of this project, should entertain an Absent Guest when you hold your own annual luncheon, or dinner, your own banquet or reunion.

It has been calculated that, in Britain today approximately 870,000 lunches or dinners are held each year by firms and companies, societies, groups, clubs and social organisations, and if each were able to send, say, only 10s in a year, and the cost of a



THE LORD MAYOR, SIR GILBERT INGLEFIELD

guest is usually more, it would help to raise well over £400,000 to fight this secret enemy, starvation.

The promise

"I promise you I will entertain an Absent Guest at every banquet or dinner that I hold during my year at the Mansion House, and I would hope to encounter many other 'Absent Guests' when I, too, am being entertained.

"If you are interested in this challenge, and I challenge you to be interested, then you can find out about it at strategic spots around Guildhall, or by writing to me at the Mansion House.

"As I have already said, and I make no apologies for the repetition: this is not the business of

'others,' it is all of our concern and, as you once said, Mr. Prime Minister:

"The problem of any one nation in the wealthy west, however great, must not cause them to avoid responsibility towards the other half of the world, which lives in despair and destitution."

Rugged island

"It is 15 years since you said that, Sir, but I am sure, despite the nation's grave problems of today, your answer to that same question would still be a challenge to us all.

"And this gives me even added pleasure in proposing your health and that of Her Majesty's Minister of State.

"Your name, Mr. Prime Minister, has always been closely associated with our rugged Island's history; indeed, it is woven into the threads of the Bayeux tapestry—and did you know that Tennyson wrote a poetic drama of your name? In a moment of truth—surely a moment of acute prophetic insight—the Earl of Northumbria, at the time woefully lamenting over crises that were then vexing the state, claims with justifiable pride:

"To have conjured the Mightier Harold from his North to do battle here—in England."

"In England? In Whitehall, of course. But I think it is not the first time that the North has provided a Downing Street champion. The North also has many a noble City, and a noble castle.

"But may I bashfully claim a tiny glint of reflected glory? For I was brought up in the Constituency which the Foreign Secretary still represents—the Midlands, too, have their pride.

"And not far off, in Cannock, are Miss Jennie Lee's supporters, and I would like to thank her for encouragement she has given me in many ventures.

"Indeed, some aspects of last Saturday's Lord Mayor's Show have been described as 'Art attack on the City' or, if you prefer it, 'Art attack in the late sixties.'

A fine team

"Sir, you have a fine team of Ministers; you, Sir, are their captain and sometimes their referee. To them we look for our welfare and our guidance; on these strong male and female shoulders rest many burdens—sustained with equipoise and sagacity.

"We are honoured and delighted that so many of your team are here in Guildhall tonight.

"My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I propose the toast of Her Majesty's Ministers, and with much pleasure, couple it with the name of The Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson."