THEY DON'T WANT SWAMPS AND JUNGLES

ERIC KNIGHT
The text of this pamphlet was broadcast by the author, Mr. Eric Knight, over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation network of radio stations on Sunday, March first, 1942. The talk was rebroadcast, in response to public demand, on March fourth and again on March eighth.

Mr. Knight came to Canada upon the invitation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and his address opened a series of weekly wartime talks, sponsored by the C.B.C., under the general title, "Guest of Honour".

Eric Knight is one of Great Britain's most gifted and distinguished writers. His most recent book, "This Above All", was a best-seller throughout the English-speaking world. His earlier "The Flying Yorkshireman" is regarded as a modern classic of humorous writing. In the first World War he fought in the ranks of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

There is only one thing worth speaking over the radio, in any land, at any time . . . and that is truth. But truth is not a positive thing. It is not absolute. Each man brings his own truth, colored by his own life, his own prejudices, his own loves and hates.

Tonight, I try to bring you my truth. That you should like it or not like it is a secondary matter. Only believe it is a truth as I see it.

I speak, of course, about the war. I have just come over from England. I am just freshly peeled off the Atlantic convoy. I suppose, then, I should tell you something about England . . . about the people of London, how they carry on. But I think perhaps you are tired of hearing of the fortitude, the courage, the determination of the men and women and children of Britain who have stood up under the unkind and bloody rain from the Heavens. You have heard it. It is old hat.

Let me tell you, the people of Canada . . . this great,
rich land of Canada itself... looks to us. I am not a Canadian. The only right I have to speak plainly to you is because I once came here and put on your uniform and served beside your own men and saw them die... in another war.

LET'S TALK PLAINLY

And why not let's start talking plainly? One of the troubles of our Democratic front in this war is that we are not one unit. We are several countries—and we have to be "diplomatic." We have to be careful what we say for fear of offending each other. Well; here take offense at what I say, if you will.

But the plain truth about this war is that Democracy has not yet got down to the business of war. We all believe, somehow, miraculously, that the horrors of war, by some special law of Divine Providence, can't touch us. The other fellow, yes... but not us. And each one goes on believing that; until the enemy is ten miles away; his tanks cutting through soldiers armed only with rifles; his planes bombing civilians who have no air-raid shelters. And so went France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Greece, Crete, Hong Kong, Singapore, Pearl Harbor... each one knowing intellectually that war was near; but each one somehow convinced spiritually that the blood and slaughter and screaming steel could happen somewhere else... but not here.

We must learn to understand that if we are a united front, when it happens to one of us, it happens to us all. Remember the line of John Donne, from which Ernest Hemingway took the title of his well-known book:

Do not seek to know for whom the bell tolls —
It tolls for thee.

Remember that when a bomb falls and crushes the life from a British child — that child is your own small son or daughter who may be sleeping upstairs now. When a trapped soldier dies in a Malayan swamp — that is your own grown-up son. When a Polish civilian, treated like a slave, emaciated by hunger, falls finally into a mass grave — that is you — you who listen now in your fine, comfortable house with your good lusty Canadian dinner under your belt.

DO NOT BE DELUDED, CANADA

Do not be confused by this war, Canada. Do not be deluded by goose-headed thinking! When the Nazi chiefs howl of Lebensraum, do you think they are talking of Britain? No. There's no living-room in Britain—that tiny island now overcrowded by its forty-four million people! When the paranoiacs of Berlin scream about colonies, do you think they are talking about some strip of banana land, or some unholy spot in a malaria-ridden jungle?

Let us not be idiotic. When the thief smashes the plate-glass window with a brick, he doesn't take a dollar watch! He grabs the diamond crown in the center.

Germany and Japan don't want swamps and jungles. They want you—great, rich sprawling Canada, rich with her endless wheat-bearing acres where a Herrenvolk could lord it over a slave population; Canada with its great and untold wealth of unexploited raw material. Those are the goals of Nazi war—Canada, Brazil, Russia, the United States—the vast lands that lie amid untold resources, the lands with living-room for the "super-race" that will allow you to become a new sort of white native to carry out their orders.

It is true. Do not delude yourself. When you decide to rob the chicken-roost of a settled order, would you steal sick chickens? Ask yourself that. No; if you're going to run the risk of being a criminal, you might as well steal the plumpest pullets and the fattest geese.

Do not think, because you are used to these things, you are
not rich to the point of luxury here. You are rich with a way of living that is luxury—luxury while the war goes on. How shall I make you understand what your riches are . . . each one of you, sitting at home now.

Perhaps I can do it through small things. Listen to me now.

Go to your window and lift your blind. That is richness; for it is an action that no man in Britain dare perform tonight. Now; look out of your window — and you see lights. You are seeing what the richest Croesus in all Britain could not buy tonight.

Tomorrow morning, at breakfast, squeeze yourself an orange. You are doing what no grownup in Britain will do today—for he has agreed that every orange in the land shall be reserved solely for the green ration books of children only.

For your child, cut a banana into a bowl of cereal. When you do it, say that you are cutting up what no mother in Britain could give to her child. She couldn’t buy that banana, not for a thousand dollars—for there are no bananas. Not one—not if a thousand doctors declared that child’s life would end if it were not fed bananas.

Sit at a table and pour out a pint of milk and drink it. Then say to yourself that you’ve consumed your milk for three days.

Put four pats of butter on your hot cakes. Then say that you can’t have any more butter for seven days—your total week’s ration of butter is finished at one gulp.

You men, as you go to work tomorrow; stop in a store and buy a packet of cigarettes. Know that you might have walked in ten tobacconists in London before you got one. When your packet is empty; throw it in the gutter. Think as you do it that if you were in London you would put it in your pocket, take it back to the shop so that it could be used again to pack ten more cigarettes in.

Walk into a shop. Buy yourself a suit—two suits—three. Buy warm underclothes and woollen sweaters for your children. Understand that in London you could not have bought them without counting your few ration tickets for the year. Think that shoes and clothes, and gloves, and hats, and shirts, and even handkerchiefs are rationed.

**THE HOUSEWIFE IN WARTIME**

You housewives; go shopping in the morning. Walk into any shop you wish. And think that in Britain you could only go into the one where you are registered. Buy a can of salmon. Then say to yourself that you have used up your points coupons on canned goods for the next two weeks. You can’t have any more tomorrow, or tomorrow. Tell the grocery-man to wrap up your bundles! As you do so, think that you are getting what wealth could not buy in England; for to save paper you’d have to carry home every article exactly as it is—unless you took a piece of wrapping paper with you to the store to use again and again.

Tomorrow, when you go to the butcher’s, ask him to show you twenty cents’ worth of meat. No more — no less. Twenty cents exactly. Look at that piece of meat. Now imagine yourself going home to your husband and saying: “This is all you can have.” That’s his complete ration. Not for just one meal. Not for whole day. It is his complete ration for one, entire week . . . and if he eats it all at one meal, he’s eaten his week’s supply at one gulp.

Get into your car, and say you will drive out into the country. Then stop and say: “No. There is no petrol—it is rationed and none goes for pleasure.” Say you are tired and want to go to bed. And then say: “No, I cannot sleep. For tonight is my duty night; when, by law, I must sit on the roof until dawn, doing my turn at fire-watching.”

Do you understand? Do you see what wealth is? Do you not see that wealth is not money . . . but a way of living? Do you not understand that every ordinary, small gesture of life that
you accept here as routine, has died in other parts of the world? That when you say: "Give me two fried eggs . . . or even one fried egg", you are doing something that people in other lands dream about; but can't do.

Why; in Canada, you give away packets of matches. Give them away! Do you know you could walk into twenty shops in Britain today before being able to buy one box. Ah, but you say, you'll be smart. You'll buy a lighter—a cigarette lighter. Yes, you'll walk into one hundred shops and not be able to buy one of those even then—they're gone.

Do you understand war a bit better now? Do you understand what wealth is? Wealth is a way of life! And I tell you these things, not to make you feel sorry for the British . . . we do not want sympathy! We want to win this war! We shall not win it until we are all fighting it.

Not so long ago I stood in a training depot in England, where your Canadian boys are working in three eight-hour shifts a day at certain technical training phases—training like a factory on a clock-around shift. We talked about food. I saw the boys eating. Later, as a guest, I ate at the officers mess. I wish I'd eaten with the men. They all had exactly the same food—but the men's food was better cooked. The officers said: "Yes: the men have to have good cooks. We have to get along with any kind we can."

Later I talked with the General. I said: "I'll be in Canada soon. Do you want me to say anything to the people there?"

He thought a while. Then he said: "Tell 'em Sansom's Rough-Riders want to get in action. Tell 'em our hearts and our spirits are high. Say we are in good heart. Say we want to get out and meet the Hun on equal terms. Tell 'em we've got tanks—but tell 'em we want more Canadian tanks."

I said: "Why Canadian tanks?" He said: "Why, damn it, because we're Canadian soldiers—and we want Canadian things. Yes, tell 'em to send us Canadian tanks. But tell 'em we're all right—and in good heart."

Those are your own boys, people of Canada. They will not get tanks and guns and planes quick enough unless you feel, each one of you, that it is your personal job to see that they get them. You will not feel it is your personal job if you are convinced that the war is something far across a sea that is never coming to your doorstep.

WAR AT CANADA'S DOORSTEP

I tell you it can come to your doorstep! I tell you it is at your doorstep. So many people these days talk of rebuilding our world after we win this war. They seem to take it as a blithe matter of course that we shall win this war. Of course, for the sake of what is called morale, we should all get up and tell you that we are bound to win it. We are not bound to win it! The thing to get in our heads is that we can lose this war! By the Lord Harry, we can lose it—as long as we think it is something that can touch other people—but not us. Many other lands thought that—until the enemy planes were overhead and his tanks ten miles down the road—and then it was too late.

It can be too late for us. We have to stop thinking of what we can do in 1943 or 1944 or some date dreamily far over the horizon of time—and understand that it is what we do this month of March in 1942. It can be too late if we go on supposing that because the common man and woman and children of Britain have stood up to Blitz and fire and bomb—they will go on standing up for a couple more years until we get ready to really fight the war. Is it bad for morale to say that? I think not. Is it bad for morale to say that 60,000 men, women, and babies have died under Hitler's bombs in Britain? I think not. Is it bad for morale to say what any soldier of the last war knows—that for 60,000 killed you always have an even greater number maimed; with arms, with legs, with faces torn away? I think not!

I think it will be good for morale if you know those things
—and know that they can happen here, too, if Britain falls. For then you will understand that this is your war. Yours; just as surely as if Japanese tanks and battalions of slanted-eyed men were ten miles down the road from where you live, and Nazi squadrons of bombers were right overhead now. And that is the only way to think of this war.

I say this, not spurning nor forgetting what Canada has already done. Only one who has seen the splendid and generous work of the Canadian Red Cross in Britain, could say 'thank you' as fervently as I do. Only one who has seen your own men training and working in the armies, could properly recognize the gift of the men you have sent. Surely one who has lived under the protecting wings of planes flown by your own Canadian lads—who go up to face any enemy—could never fail to recognize their courage and their determination.

For all that Canada has given—her wealth, her manhood, her kindness—I say thank you.

If I attack complacency on this continent, I am not forgetting what has been done by your citizens whose eyes will turn to far horizons.

SEE CANADA THROUGH GREEDY EYES

But I am not asking anything more for Britain. I am asking you to do something for yourself.

I am asking you to understand a new and bloody kind of world conquest that threatens the free life of a Canadian and an American just as surely as it does the free life of a Briton.

See this great land of Canada, not through your own eyes. Try to see it as other, and more greedy, eyes see it.

Think of your wealth in Canada. Think of the wealth of your way of living—the only true wealth of this world. If you cannot understand that you live in splendid wealth, try to understand that to other peoples the way you live—the ordinary way of your life—looks like lavish and luxurious splendour.

Understand that when the Nazis talk of Lebensraum—they mean you! Understand that by conquest they do not mean a treaty—but a gigantic, new, savage world policy which sees your splendid land as a place where they, the herronvolk, reap the riches, and you, the free-born Canadians, are a subject, slave race, to work, or to be starved and shot—as the Poles are being starved and shot.

Understand that if we are truly United, a bomb in London is a bomb on every city in Canada.

If the enemy were, at this moment, twenty miles down the road, you would not live blissfully as you do now. The way to fight this war is to fight it, here; as if any moment, the enemy tanks were just ten miles away down your own road.

If you work and toil in this war in that spirit, then, and then only, shall we defeat this enemy. We shall defeat him if everyone in Canada truly believes that this, this land of yours, is the Colonies the Nazi madmen are talking about—not a greasy spot in a jungle.

Only if you understand that Canada, no less than Greece or Norway or Poland or Czecho-Slovakia, can be enslaved; shall we work and fight hard enough in this war to win it, and ensure that she shall be free.

Only if you understand that your way of life here is so rich and full as to excite the envy of the ordinary citizens of Europe, will you fight hard enough to see that this war is won; and Canada can go onward toward an even fuller life, with a continuance of her growing social freedoms, her open spirit of thought, her flowering education, and her even greater economic strength.

I pray with all my heart that these things shall come true. I pray with all my heart that the people of Canada will have the clearness of vision and the firm resolve to make them come true. Only if you act in time can they come true.
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