

## British Budget Starts Furore in London Clubs as Snowden makes Good

by Walter G. Fuller (*Special Correspondent of The Eagle*)

London, May 6 — Budget Day in the House of Commons is the red-letter day in the parliamentary year. For weeks beforehand preparation for the introduction of the nation's balance sheet are in the making. By general consent the Chancellor of the Exchequer is excused from regular attendance in the House. Most of his time he is supposed to be closeted with the financial advisers of the Treasury Department, weighing the case for and against this tax and the other.

As the day draws near, an official report is released showing how the money has come in during the year. Then the inspired whispered begin their congenial task. They hint at having some secret knowledge of the Chancellor's plans. "He is going to take a shilling off the insurance tax." "He is coming down heavy on death duties," and so on and so on. London's clubs are whispering galleries at all times, but just before a budget the whispers become positively deafening.

### Nobody Really Knows

Despite all this gossip, however, nobody really knows what cards the Chancellor has got up his sleeve until he disclosed them in the House in the course of his long budget speech. The House on these occasions is packed with members of visitors, who squeeze themselves into every available space: the newspaper men are on tenterhooks, and throughout the length and breadth of the land people eagerly await the evening editions of the papers to know what the nation's paymaster has had to say.

This year, on April 29, the dramatic quality of the scene in the House was heightened by several new and unprecedented factors.

First, for the first time in British history, the Chancellor was neither a Liberal nor a Conservative, but a Labour man.

Second, that he was one of Ramsay MacDonald's genuine 100% labour-Socialists, and not a recent convert from Liberalism or Toryism.

### Snowden No House "Greenhorn"

Philip Snowden, a former post-office clerk and lifelong Fabian-Socialist, is not a greenhorn in the House. He has been an active labour member for many years, and is well equipped with knowledge and experience to face the maze of unwritten rules and conventions which generally overwhelm the newcomer. As Snowden proudly declared at the outset of the budget speech, he has never held ministerial office before, and is therefore the first Chancellor to step straight from a seat on the back benches into the high office of Chancellor of the Exchequer — one of the highest offices in the gift of the British Crown.

But there was no sign of faltering that I could see about Philip Snowden on Tuesday afternoon. He is evidently a "cool customer". He handled himself, and the House, and the difficult and complicated material of his speech with perfect ease and aplomb.

And the reason for this is that Snowden knows his job. As Chancellor of the Exchequer he fits. If all Ramsay MacDonald's ministerial appointments had been made as well as this one, the present Labour cabinet would be a far happier family than it is.

### A Truly Moving Scene

It was a moving scene that I looked down upon from my seat in the gallery. The frail ascetic figure of the Chancellor was leaning heavily upon the despatch box on the table in front of him (for he is a badly crippled man owing to a serious accident that befell him when riding a bicycle as a small boy). There for an hour and forty minutes he stood, expounding the facts and figures of the nation's income and expenditure, till at last when he reached the end he was as exhausted as an athlete at the end of a race, and had to be assisted to his nearby seat by a friendly neighbor.

And what did it all amount to — that hour and forty minutes' speech? Well, it is impossible to sum up in a word or two the consensus

of labour's first budget. Just at present everybody has something to say, and is saying it vociferously, and no two opinions quite agree

#### How Opinions Differ

The Liberals call it a Liberal budget and promise it to give it their support; the Tories call it a Tory budget except for one item which savors too much of free trade for their liking, and for this, at any rate, they will oppose it vigorously. Everybody agrees, however, that it certainly is not a Socialist budget, for there is nothing in it from beginning to end that even remotely savors the gospel of St Marx.

Some people call it an electioneering budget, because of its obvious attempt to please as many interest as possible. But these people are wrong, for I am sure that Snowden could make a far more attractive budget than this if he really gave his mind to it.

Certainly British housewives are pleased with what Snowden has done by cutting 8 cents off every packet of tea, 3 cents off every pound of sugar, 4 cents off every pound of coffee and halving the import duty on raisins, figs and prunes.

Landlords, too, are pleased because of the abolition of the inhabited house duty, which last year brought the Exchequer nearly \$9,000,000.

Telephone users are pleased because of the reduction in charges of half a cent off every call.

#### Even Big Business is Pleased

Even big business is pleased because Snowden has abolished the corporation profits tax, which last year cost the corporations altogether over \$10,000,000.

But there is one section of the community – a very large and influential, though unorganized section – that is thoroughly disgruntled about this budget. These unhappy people are the income tax payers. Mr Snowden has not granted them a single penny's worth of relief from the heavy tax which now stands at 4 shillings and 6 pence in the pound on all incomes over £250. Thus their burden is indeed a heavy one. But Snowden has turned a deaf ear to their appeals, and so for another year the British income taxpayer has no choice but to "pack up his troubles in old kit bag and smile, smile, smile."

Despite, however, the neglect of the income taxpayer, the net result of Snowden cuts and economies is advantageous for the Labour party. The budget is taken by most people as another proof of Labour's moderation, sanity and general fitness to govern. Undoubtedly Snowden's budget has made the government more popular with all classes than it has been at any time since it took office three months ago.

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