

A Lesson?

December, 1962.

Dear Sir:

It is not generally known in Canada that one of the issues which led to the defeat of the British Labour Party in 1951 was its proposal to nationalise the barber industry. An indication of the gravity of the situation may be gauged from the editorial of the *Barber & Dresser* dated April 8th, 1951: "The barber-customer relationship must not be jeopardised by mere political expediency. Mr. Attlee's suggestion is flagrant vote-catching jobbery: he must know perfectly well that the additional expense of a state-run barber scheme can only be paid for out of the taxpayer's pocket. What he probably does not appreciate is that if the state were to take over, and every barber were to become a civil servant, standards would be bound to decline. With incentives being undermined and intellectual longhairs in Whitehall threatening our profession with its long tradition of independence, our first duty is to our customers. And in order to fulfill that duty, we must be prepared to strike against the creeping hand of socialism."

It is a tribute to the dour resolve of British barbers that the danger was averted: Mr. Attlee (as quoted in the *Times* newspaper dated April 15th, 1951) in response to a question asking whether he would consider encouraging the immigration to Britain of barbers from Commonwealth countries said: "No sir".

Those two words marked the victory of a determined group of men willing to fight for principle. Canadian doctors may find a moral in them.

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