

Toast to Sir Winston Churchill, presented by Cliff Goldfarb at the Annual Dinner of the International Churchill Society Canada, held at The Albany Club on Tuesday, May 10, 2022.

How wonderful it is after more than two years of rolling lockdowns and cancelled events to be able to gather again in this traditional room to celebrate the memory of one who inspired so many with his words and leadership. Today is the 82nd anniversary of the Friday in the dire Spring of 1940 on which Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill accepted the invitation of a reluctant King George VI to become Prime Minister of Britain. How many other anniversaries of the accession to leadership of a head of any democratic government are commemorated today?

We live in a time when much of our history has been banned and a great deal of what remains has been rewritten, all in the name of progressiveness and equity.

In proposing a toast to a great man, especially one who has been so written and spoken about, it is almost impossible to find words of appreciation that have not already been used, not once, but many times. Among those who are here to celebrate this occasion, no words of praise are needed – we already know who he was and what he accomplished. So, instead, today I choose to toast Winston the historian.

Churchill was not academically trained as a historian – but at the end of the 19th century, this was not as remarkable as it would be today. His education after leaving Harrow Public School was a military one, at Sandhurst. Yet he was a voracious and retentive reader and no one who has read him can doubt that he had a great knowledge of ancient and modern history.

He was recognized as a great historian when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1953, in the Committee's words, "*for his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values*".

Famously he admonished us to "Study history, study history. In history lie all the secrets of statecraft".

Even if Churchill had never become Prime Minister, and therefore would not be remembered as the leader who saved Britain and Western civilization, he would be remembered as one of the leading historians of the first half of the

20th century. He was praised by many for his historical writing: *Marlborough: His Life and Times*, a biography of his distinguished ancestor, John Churchill; *Lord Randolph Churchill*, the biography of his father, and his multi-volume works, *The World Crisis*, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* and *The Second World War*, as well as for many other books and articles.

He was not always an impartial historian – as he said, in a speech before the House of Commons on January 23, 1948: “For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself.” *The Second World War*, though a history, was not intended to be objective, but rather his own story.

Another writer who knew how to make a strong case with his words, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, summed up Churchill’s powers as a writer in commenting on Churchill’s defence of his actions in the Dardanelles campaign: “Mr. Churchill writes with such power – he is, in my opinion, the greatest living master of English prose – that he may produce a greater effect than the facts warrant.”

Churchill has so far survived, with only minor wounds, the wave of cancel culture that has already eliminated the memory of Egerton Ryerson in our City and is now threatening that of Henry Dundas, both men whose achievements and contributions to our modern society have been shamefully misrepresented. Sir John A. Macdonald is facing similar shameful cancellation. If this continues, we will soon have no history that is not an outpouring of identity-politics and grievances that can only harm and divide our society and our nation. Churchill’s admonition to “Study history, study history” will be forgotten. We must not let that happen to Canada. And we must not allow the memory of the true Churchill and his accomplishments to be obliterated from history.

So, it is with appreciation and respect for his great body of historical work that I ask you to charge your glasses and join me in a toast to Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, historian – Sir Winston.