



Mouseland

“It’s the story of a place called Mouseland.” So begins a tale told first by Clarence Gillis, and later by Tommy Douglas, men who were friends and leaders in the Canadian Social Democratic Party in the mid-20th century.

They were instrumental in bringing free, universal health care to Canada as well as legislation that allowed the unionization of Canadian government workers.

Even though it was meant for another country in another era, the story readily translates to the political atmosphere in America today. It demonstrates in a humorous way how working people have failed to recognize that many of our representatives are not like us, and they may not be truly interested in what matters to ordinary working families—yet we continue to vote for them. With apologies to Gillis and Douglas, I’ve changed a few words to “Americanize” it a bit.

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Mouseland was a place where all the little mice lived and played, were born and died. And they lived much the same as you and I do.

They even had a Congress. And every two years they had an election. They used to walk to the polls and cast their ballots. Some of them even got a ride to the polls...and got a ride for the next two years afterwards too. Just like you and me. And every time on Election Day all the little mice used to go to the ballot box and they used to elect a Congress. A Congress made up of big, fat, orange cats. Now if you think it strange that mice should elect a government made up of cats, you just look at the history of the United States for the last 100 years and maybe you’ll see that they weren’t any stupider than we are. Now I’m not saying anything against the cats. They were nice fellows. They conducted their government with dignity. They passed

good laws—that is, laws that were mostly good for cats. But the laws that were good for cats weren’t very good for mice. One of the laws said that mouse holes had to be big enough so a cat could get his paw in. Another law said that mice could only travel at certain speeds—so that a cat could get his breakfast without too much effort. All the laws were good laws, for cats. But, oh, they were hard on the mice. And life was getting harder and harder. And when the mice couldn’t put up with it any more, they decided something had to be done about it. So they went *en masse* to the polls. They voted the orange cats out. They put in the gray cats.

Now the gray cats had put up a terrific campaign. They said: “All that Mouseland needs is more vision.” They said: “The trouble with Mouseland is those round mouse holes we got. If you put us in we’ll establish square mouse holes.” And they did. And the square

mouse holes were twice as big as the round mouse holes, and now the cat could get both his paws in. And life was tougher than ever. And when they couldn’t take that anymore, they voted the gray cats out and put the orange ones in again. Then they went back to the grey cats. Then back to the orange

cats. They even tried half grey cats and half orange cats. And they called that bi-partisanship. They even got one government made up of cats with spots on them: they were cats that tried to make a noise like a mouse but ate like a cat.

You see, my friends, the trouble wasn’t with the color of the cat. The trouble was that they were cats. And because they were cats, they naturally looked after cats instead of mice.

Presently there came along some little mice that had an idea. And they said to the other mice, “Look fellows, why do we keep on electing a Congress made up of cats? Why don’t we elect a Congress made up of mice?” “Oh,” the other mice said, “They’re Socialists! Lock them up!” So they pepper-sprayed them and put them in jail.

You can lock up a person, but you can’t lock up an idea. ☒