



Mac and Cheese Day

here are few things in life that bring us back to childhood like the taste of macaroni and cheese, its rich flavourful combination of pasta and rich cheeses never fails to satisfy our palette. National Mac and Cheese Day celebrates this dish and everything it means to us. Celebrating National Mac and Cheese Day is best done by buying one of those beautiful blue boxes and indulging in its flavour. But don't stop there, mac and cheese is an incredibly versatile dish, and you can make an entirely new one by adding a container of tuna fish to the mix.

#REPARATIONS

Suella Braverman Defends Britain's Colonial Legacy!

Posting on X, Braverman wrote that "The British Empire did so much good for the world," while dismissing demands for reparations as having "no basis in law."



he debate over reparations for Britain's former colonies has once again come into focus after former UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman argued that Britain's former colonies should not receive reparations and instead suggested that the British Empire should be viewed as an investment that brought significant benefits to many parts of the world.

Posting on X, Braverman wrote that "The British Empire did so much good for the world," while dismissing demands for reparations as having "no basis in law." Her comments came amid renewed calls from several Caribbean nations, including Jamaica, which has intensified its campaign for reparative justice for slavery and colonialism.

Responding to Braverman's remarks, Jamaican officials and advocates argued that it is becoming increasingly difficult for British institutions to continue relying on what they describe as a long-standing tactic of ignoring demands for historical repair. They maintain that reparations are about acknowledging centuries of exploitation and addressing their lasting economic and social consequences.

Braverman, known for her headline positions on immigration and national identity, has frequently generated controversy with provocative statements. She previously described homelessness as a "lifestyle choice" in certain circumstances and has argued that Indian nationals represent the largest group of visa overstayers in the UK. After leaving the Conservative Party, she joined Reform UK, further reinforcing her political identity as a strong critic of immigration and multiculturalism.

One phrase often used in discussions of Britain's colonial past is, "Of course, slavery was abhorrent, but..." History also complicates claims that Britain simply ended slavery out of moral conviction. When Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act, the British government

compensated slave owners, not the enslaved people who had suffered generations of forced labour. Around £20 million was paid to slave owners in the 1830s, a sum equal to roughly 40 percent of the government's annual budget at the time. To finance these payments, Britain borrowed heavily, and the associated government debt was not fully repaid until 2015, meaning British taxpayers contributed to servicing that debt for generations.

Slavery was not a footnote to colonialism; it was one of its central economic engines. For more than 300 years, millions of Africans were trafficked across the Atlantic in one of history's largest forced migrations. Their labour generated enormous wealth that fuelled Britain's industrial and commercial expansion.

The debate extends beyond slavery to colonial rule in places such as India. Before British dominance, India was among the world's largest economies, accounting for a significant share of global output. During colonial rule, that share declined dramatically. Economist Utsa Patnaik has estimated that Britain extracted wealth worth approximately \$45 trillion (in today's values) from India between 1765 and 1938.

The British Empire at its height ruled nearly a quarter of the world's landmass and population. Colonies supplied land, labour, raw materials and captive markets that helped power Britain's economic growth. Many historians argue that this represented one of the largest transfers of wealth in history.

The effects of colonialism did not disappear when former colonies gained independence. Across Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, colonial rule left behind economic inequalities, social divisions and institutions that continue to shape development today. Supporters of reparations argue that the issue is not simply about financial compensation. Rather, they see reparations as encompassing formal apologies, educational reforms, debt relief, investment in affected communities and recognition of historical injustices.



Fair-poster.

● Bulbul Joshi

century ago, the first visitors to Philadelphia's Sesqui-centennial International Exposition, held to mark the 150th anniversary of the United States' founding, waded through mud and wandered along unpaved sidewalks to reach the heart of the fairgrounds, only to find carpenters still at work on half-finished exhibition halls and gaping holes marking the spots where attractions had yet to be built.

Dining and shopping options were limited, and some of the few exhibits on view stretched the very definition of "entertainment." One was a model Post Office where "you could go send yourself a letter and watch it get canceled," says historian Thomas H. Keels, author of *Sesqui! Greed, Graft and the Forgotten World's Fair of 1926*. "That was it."

The 200,000-plus Shriners in town for their fraternal organization's national convention realized that their parades and rallies were the main events planned for these early days of the fair. Many went home disappointed, telling family and friends that the exposition wasn't worth visiting.

"The show is still in a state of undress, not ready at all to answer the doorbell," a California newspaper reported. Speaking with Philadelphia's Bulletin, an Iowa man likened the fair to a birthday dinner held by an acquaintance back home. "He got so darned excited about how many he was going to have, invitations, his speech of welcome and the program of entertainment," the tourist recalled, "he

plumb forgot to order any grub. ... But the fellow had a sense of humour. 'Come around next birthday and we'll have something to eat,' said he. Maybe, I will."

The exposition was America's main celebration of the sesqui-centennial. Congress authorized the fair and provided limited funding for it, in addition to issuing commemorative coins and encouraging local celebrations, but the scale of federal participation paled in comparison with that of the 1976 bicentennial and this year's 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Attendance at the Sesqui-centennial Exposition also failed to match the numbers of Philadelphia's 1876 centennial celebration, which attracted roughly 20 percent of the country's population in an era when planes, cars and luxury liners had yet to make distance travel more accessible. Organizers predicted that 30 million people would visit the 1926 fair; ultimately, fewer than five million paid to attend.

What doomed the sesqui-centennial? Poor planning and lukewarm reviews by the fair's early visitors contributed to the disastrous outcome. So, too, did the streak of bad weather that plagued Philadelphia during the exposition's run, with

#AMERICAN CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION



Philadelphia Mayor W. Freeland Kendrick.

rain falling on more than half of the days the fair was open to the public.

Although some observers considered the lackluster public response a sign that the golden age of world's fairs had come to an end, Chicago's 1893-94 Century of Progress Exposition proved this prediction wrong, drawing more visitors than any of its predecessors. Overall, Keels attributes the 1926 fair's failure to its "association with what was being viewed as an increasingly corrupt political machine," headed by Pennsylvania Republican William Scott Vare.

After the fair incurred "nation-wide ridicule," Keels said, Vare and other local politicians were eager to move on from the endeavour, selling off leftover structures piecemeal "for pennies on the hundreds of dollars." This push to forget the sesqui-centennial has reverberated into the present: Just one building constructed for the 1926 fair stands in Philadelphia today.

"When I started to write my book," Keels says, "I was looking for sources, and I would ask people, who were very knowledgeable historians, and the immediate response was, 'Oh yeah, the centennial, Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park.' And it's like, 'No, the other one.' "They'd ask, 'What other one?'

The inspiration behind the sesqui-centennial

In May 1876, John Wanamaker, founder of the Wanamaker's department store chain, welcomed shoppers to his new Grand Depot. Housed in an abandoned railroad depot that had been redesigned in the Moorish Revival style, the store opened just



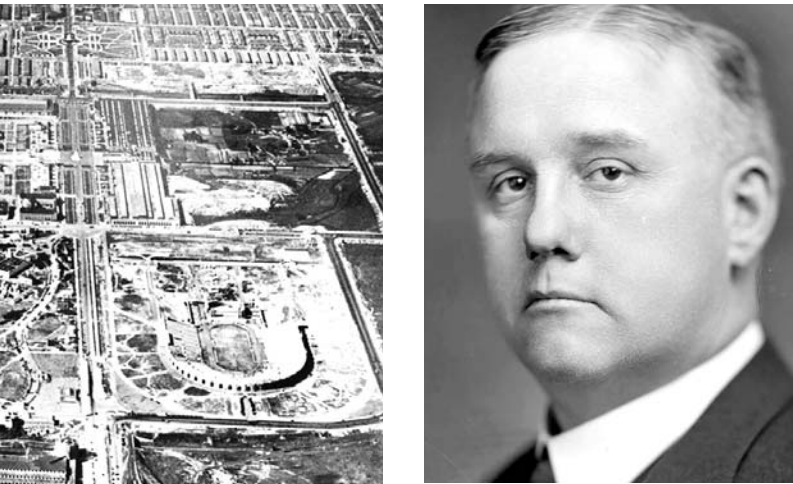
An aerial view of the Sesqui-centennial International Exposition, Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.



The International Electric Time Systems exhibit at the fair.

days before the start of the Centennial Exposition. Visitors to the fair flocked to it, impressed by the wide array of goods on display. The experience left a strong impression on Wanamaker, who'd also helped raise funds for the exposition.

Forty years later, in 1916, Wanamaker, by then the last surviving member of the 1876 fair's finance committee, urged his fellow Philadelphians to capitalize on the upcoming sesqui-centennial by staging another world-class exposition. Bemoaning political corruption and the city's lack of economic growth, the aging entrepreneur pointed out that preparations for the centennial had started "ten years before the time to get government support and necessary legislation." He asked, "Why not celebrate the century and a half in 1926 and begin to get ready now?" Wanamaker's call to action resonated



Representative William S. Vare.

a fortune as construction contractors, earning the nickname the "Dukes of South Philadelphia." By 1922, Vare, then serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, had emerged as the city's "undisputed boss," Keels writes for the Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia. "During the 1920s, he commanded more political power than any other single Philadelphian before or since."

Vare funneled city contracts to his own company and committed election fraud to keep himself and his cronies in power, reinforcing a Progressive Era journalist's assertion that Philadelphia was "simply the most corrupt and the most contented" municipal government in the country.

In January 1923, the Sesqui-centennial Exhibition Association (SCEA), a governing body tasked with organizing the fair, announced plans for a "world festival of peace and progress" that would commemorate the 150th anniversary while reflecting on the achievements of the past 50 years. The committee claimed that the exposition would transform Philadelphia's Fairmount Parkway into a "triumphal way of the Republic," inspired by the harmonious architecture of ancient Rome, at a cost of roughly \$15 million (nearly \$300 million today).

Political corruption and the sesqui-centennial

At the turn of the 20th century, Vare and his two brothers amassed

early 1924, when the Vare-backed Kendrick took office as Philadelphia's mayor. Kendrick also assumed control of the newly reorganized SCEA, leading the charge to move the fairgrounds from Fairmount Park to a largely undeveloped area in the Vare stronghold of South Philadelphia.

Before construction of the centerpiece Sesqui-centennial Stadium could begin, "some mammoth engineering problems" had to be resolved, and the marshy land on which the exposition buildings would sit drained and filled," historian Arthur P. Dudden writes in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*. This \$10-million project "made the fair insolvent even before it began," Keels says, prompting accusations of political corruption. As the New York Times reported, "Charges have been freely made that the whole enterprise is no more than a gigantic real estate scheme to boost realty values in South Philadelphia."

By January 1926, organizers had made little progress with constructing the fair. The stadium sat unfinished, and none of the exhibition halls had been completed. Appalled by the state of the fairgrounds, federal officials suggested delaying the exposition until 1927, pledging additional government funds if such a plan was implemented. But Kendrick flatly refused, insisting that the exposition take place in the actual year of the sesqui-centennial.

Keels finds this rigidity perplexing. He points out that the 1893-94 Chicago World's Fair was originally scheduled for 1892, the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' departure from Spain in search of the New World, and that the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair was initially slated to open in 1903, the

100th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase. "Both were delayed by a year," Keels says. "Both were huge successes."

The Sesqui author argues that Vare was the driving force behind Kendrick's desire to stick to the original timeline. Vare was running for a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1926, and Keels believes that he wanted the fair ready in time for the election. By creating jobs for his constituents, Vare hoped to gain an upper hand in his campaign. "It was really benighted self-interest at the expense of an entire national celebration," Keels says.

Opening the 1926 Sesqui-centennial International Exposition

The Sesqui-centennial Exposition opened on May 31, 1926, a day earlier than initially planned, to better accommodate Kendrick's fellow Shriners, many of whom had arrived in town early for their national convention.

"All seemed confusion" during the fair's opening week, an official 1926 account of the exposition admitted. The fairgrounds were still abuzz with construction work. In early April, the Bulletin had recounted the frenzy of activity then unfolding in South Philadelphia: "While overall the men dash about like the characters in a rapid-motion movie film," a reporter wrote, "Hammers beat a tattoo like machine gun fire. Saws buzz. Foremen swear. Men shout. Steam shovels hiss and groan under capacity loads." Nearly two months later, this scene remained largely unchanged.

To be continued...

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



Memorial Hall, the only surviving major building from the 1876 Centennial Exposition.

#LEADERSHIP

Women Are Doing It...

Nita Ambani, Chairperson of Reliance Foundation and this year's No. 1 ranked Most Powerful Woman, called for a broader definition of leadership



Nita Ambani
Chairperson, Reliance Foundation

Impact Leadership

Chairman Ambani has outlined plans to expand the foundation's social impact fund to include medical colleges. In 2026, the foundation will launch a medical college in Mumbai, the first of its kind in India. The foundation will also launch a social impact fund to support women's entrepreneurship and social enterprises. The foundation will also launch a social impact fund to support women's entrepreneurship and social enterprises. The foundation will also launch a social impact fund to support women's entrepreneurship and social enterprises.

Fortune India hosted the its flagship, Most Powerful Women (MPW) 2026 celebration at the Four Seasons Hotel, Mumbai, on Friday, bringing together India's foremost women leaders from business, finance, technology, healthcare, public policy and entrepreneurship.

The event marked the unveiling of the *Fortune India Most Powerful Women 2026* list, recognising 100 women whose leadership is shaping the country's economic and business landscape.

The evening featured a series of high-impact conversations on the future of leadership, artificial intelligence, financial empowerment, entrepreneurship, inclusion and nation-building.

Among the key moments, Nita Ambani, Chairperson of Reliance Foundation and this year's No. 1 ranked Most Powerful Woman, called for a broader definition of leadership rooted in compassion, inclusion and opportunity, emphasising that investing in girls is fundamental to

India's future. Business leaders across sessions highlighted that while AI, geopolitical shifts and rapid technological changes are transforming industries, enduring leadership will continue to depend on curiosity, resilience, customer focus and human judgment.

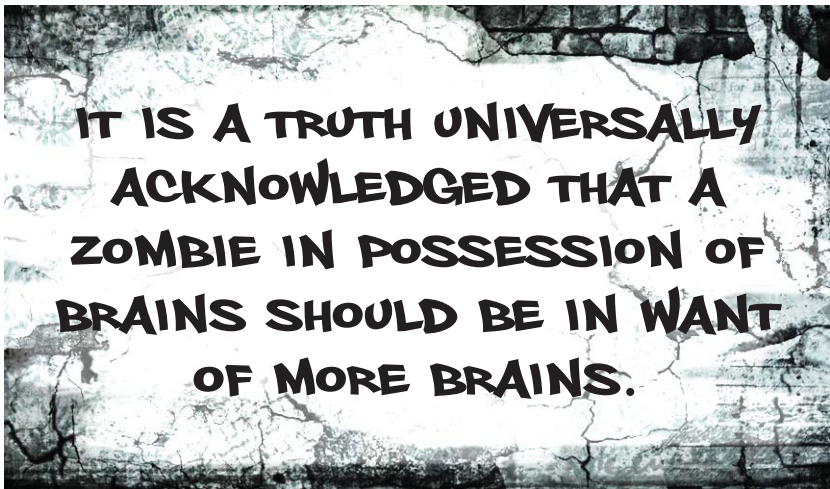
Conversations on financial inclusion underscored that the next phase of women's empowerment lies not just in access to financial services, but in active wealth creation and financial decision-making. The programme also featured insightful discussions on building inclusive workplaces, creating enduring consumer brands, and the role of nutrition and healthcare in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat.

With the Most Powerful Women platform continuing to evolve as one of India's most influential forums for leadership, the 2026 edition reaffirmed Fortune India's commitment to recognising women who are driving meaningful impact across business and society.



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott