

LIBERAL LIBERTY LEAGUE

The League issued an Address to the Special "stock-taking" Conference of the Liberal Party which was held in the Beaver Hall, London, on September 8 and 9, the object of which, as the invitation stated, was "to consider what steps are to be taken both nationally and locally in continuation of the Liberal Crusade." The Conference was composed of candidates who had stood at the General Election and of persons nominated by them from their constituency associations. By the constitution of the conference the League was not able to be directly represented but a number of members attended in their individual capacity. The hall was filled on both days with an audience of some 600. The Press was not represented, the proceedings being declared to be "private," although, abrogating that, the speech of the President, Lady Bonham Carter, was given to the newspapers and appeared extensively in some of them. The platform had the advantage that nothing but its own very one-sided view (heavily criticised as it was) of the electoral debacle its causes and the action to take, was made known, to the public.

Following is the text of the League's statement which had been posted beforehand to all the candidates and to many others known to be interested in the conferences, besides being distributed on the spot and communicated, after the meetings, to the Press. Approximately 1,500 copies were thus circulated.

ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY HELD IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER 8 AND 9, 1945.

"The defeat of the Liberals as a Party at the recent Election is of most concern because it signals the triumph of policies which would arm the State with greater powers to put trade and industry in leading strings and interfere still more in the personal affairs and activities of the citizen striving by his own efforts to gain his livelihood.

"Those of the Liberal way of thinking, seeing how poverty and unemployment could be eliminated and wealth be multiplied for all to enjoy by the simple extension of liberty, regard with serious misgiving the unarrested loss of faith in economic freedom. Many politicians look with disdain upon the rights and liberties of the individual and would for the presumed good of the community place his destinies under the tutelage of the State.

"It has become the fashion to discredit or deride the potency of equal freedom and equal opportunity as solvents of economic ills. Thus we see stifled the once dominant note in British politics that the first essential is the overthrow of monopoly and special privilege.

"Private enterprise is not to be freed from the burdens it has to bear (by which it would give due and ample reward to all who produced) but is treated as a sinister exercise of power to be curbed and disciplined.

"The fate of free competition, the life blood of all social progress, is sealed, and in its place we are offered what is called 'economic planning' in the shape of schemes for guaranteed prices, fixation of wages, direction of labour, endowments for agriculture and industry, increased control over markets, the management of import and export trade by State functionaries and monetary manipulation unconcerned about Budget deficits or the growth of the public debt.

"Freedom of trade internal and external is to be sacrificed and the liberation from monopoly which land value taxation, with the corresponding reduction of taxation on buildings and com-

modities and wages would achieve, has no place here. These 'potent promoters of industry and progress,' as Lord Asquith and Oxford described them, are as such repudiated—by the planners. Worse still, the taxation of land values being rejected, the approach to the land question is by land purchase; and the fateful misuse of public funds such as, in the Uthwatt report, is recommended for buying from the landowners their so-called 'development rights.'

"Those policies and proposals will be familiar to the delegates who meet at the Conference in London on September 8 and 9, since they are inherent in the programme on which the leaders of the Liberal Party chose to fight the Election. They are embodied and sanctioned in the report called 'Full Employment in a Free Society,' as any one may confirm who takes the trouble really to study its pages and who will find that the 'full employment' is nothing but an assertion without any vestige of proof that the expenditure of money is the motive power of industry. The words are alluring, but they contain a fundamental fallacy. That there is a misstatement in the description 'free society' is apparent when the practical proposals in the way of controls and administration are fully appreciated.

"The Election was fought on those lines. Liberal candidates were induced to give their approval to an ideology which is absolutely opposed to the tradition and the spirit of liberty. If it is true that false guidance was given—and scrutiny of the literature emanating from the L.P.O. supports the allegation—the responsibility for the political disaster that has befallen the Party is not far to seek; a disaster, however, which is as nothing compared with the grave fact that Liberty as a social philosophy has lost respect and understanding in the public mind.

"Of paramount importance, looking to the revival of the Party and the re-assertion of its claim to a place in the counsels of the Nation, is a passionate crusade for the freedom of the individual and a new affirmation of principle and policy so inspired. There is no hope for the Liberal Party in further cultivating ground which has been captured and consolidated by those of the Socialist way of thinking.

"Let it now be frankly and positively declared that the Liberal Party stands for the redress of grievances, the abolition of injustices, the detestation of whatever infringes the equal rights and liberties of the individual, the destruction of special privilege, and the liberation of useful enterprise from its present burdens and handicaps by policies designed to attain full freedom of production and trade.

"There are many of the Liberal way of thinking who are not of the Party. How to appeal to them? They cannot with their beliefs and sympathies support either Socialists or Conservatives, and they and their valuable influence are meanwhile largely lost to politics. They look for the camp they can recognise as avowing and preaching the Liberalism they understand, and joining it they may well sweep all before them."

The publication of the President's speech notwithstanding, the temptation must be resisted to break confidences by an independent account of what befell, save to say that the League and its standpoint certainly came in for much notice during the course of the proceedings; but its demand, supported by a number of conference members, that policy should have first consideration was ruled by the Chairman as being outside the scope of the agenda despite its obvi-

ous relation to the wording of the invitation.

"It is self-deception to pretend," the Hon. Secretaries wrote in their letter to all members sending them the published statement, "that insufficient or defective organisation, the limited number of candidates and the lack of adequate funds are responsible for the Party's misfortunes. This is to confuse cause and effect. These circumstances are the resultant of anti-Liberal policy pronouncements, dispersing and disbanding the forces which rightly led would furnish all the organisation, all the personnel and all the financial support necessary to ensure victory. The political downfall of the Party has been a progressive decline over the years since it diverted its attention from the true mission of Liberalism—to secure for the individual his enjoyment of equal freedom and equal opportunity. There was a parting of the ways when it ceased to urge the redress of grievances and the abolition of injustices, and began to teach instead that the people should look to State help and State patronage for some amelioration of their lot through measures inevitably involving a restriction of their liberties. The Party cannot recover its strength until it regains its soul.

The Liberal Liberty League in its efforts to that end and its warnings against the corrupting influences that have invaded the Party has been abundantly vindicated. Our duty is clear. There is greater need than ever for the League and its objectives. As custodians of the cause of liberty, and armed with the just and practical policy to ensue it, we must carry on our work with redoubled vigour."

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The League is organising a Public Demonstration which will be held in the Kingsway Hall, London, on Friday evening the 23rd November, and other meetings are under arrangement. A new publication in the form of a manifesto, *Full Opportunity for Employment*, setting forth the League's policy of freedom of production and freedom of trade, is now available. Members are cordially invited to help in giving this terse and convincing statement, gaining new support for the League, the widest possible circulation.

INTERNATIONAL UNION

On behalf of the British members of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, Mr. Austin H. Peake, Chairman of the Executive, and Mr. Ashley Mitchell, Hon. Treasurer and the Secretariat, join with *Land & Liberty* in welcoming with most profound happiness and gratitude the fraternal greetings that have come from many colleagues on the Continent of Europe, these including: Mrs. Signe Björner, Mr. Bue Björner, Mr. F. Folke, Mr. Chr. Gandil, Mr. Svend E. Hansen, Mr. K. J. Kjeldsen, Mr. Povl Skadegaard, Denmark; Mr. Christian Gierloff, Mr. Ferd. Lyng, Mr. Ole Wang, Mrs. S. Wielgolaski, Norway; Mr. Johan Hansson, Sweden; Mr. A. Feberwee, Mr. H. Kolthek, Mr. A. Sevenster, Mr. W. Verwey, Holland; Mr. Marcel Cortvriend, Madame de Wispe-laere, Belgium; Mr. A. Daudé-Bancel, Mr. Pavlos Giannelia, France; Mr. Gustav Büscher, Switzerland; Mr. Baldomero Argente, Spain; Mr. Rudolf Schmidt and Mrs. Arnold Schwartz (née Margaret Calder, of Annan, Dumfriesshire), Germany; Mr. Halfdan Hanfen, Bergen, Norway. Our sincere sympathy goes to Mr. W. Verwey and Mrs. Wielgolaski in their bereavement, he losing his father and she her husband during the war. There have been many anxious enquiries about Mr. Sam Meyer, a leader of the Henry George movement in France, and it is grief to say that he has not been heard of since he was transported in January, 1944, to the dreadful concentration camp in Auschwitz.