

LIBERAL LIBERTY LEAGUE

The public meeting of the League held in the Kingsway Hall, London, on April 14, spent a useful night upon the object it was called to discuss, namely the Economic Crisis and the Failure of Planned Economy; to take a stand for private enterprise together with freedom of production and trade, individual rights and freedom against State domination of our lives. After the four speeches, which were heard with acceptance, a number of questions were asked and answered. Mr. T. Atholl Robertson dealt with the housing question and the rating of land values. Mr. George Winder spoke of the agricultural controls and the virtual terrorism that was extending under the bureaucratic machine. Mr. S. Martin and Mr. A. W. Madsen dealt respectively with the Transport Bill and the Town and Country Planning Bill.

In the course of his opening address, Mr. Ashley Mitchell, presiding, referred to the observation in the Government's White Paper *Economic Survey for 1947* that 'the task of directing by democratic methods an economic system as large and complex as our own is far beyond the power of any governmental machine working by itself no matter how efficient it may be.' 'That statement,' he said, 'was a belated recognition of the intricate fabric upon which the livelihood of our people was based. In itself it showed that our only hope for survival depended upon the speedy abolition of controls and the liberation of those who had the ability, experience and energy to manage that complex fabric.'

'The major cause of the failure of the present Government, inherent from their doctrine, is that they have intensified the follies of their predecessors. The Tory Government from 1931 whipped us with tariffs and marketing acts—the Socialists are lashing us with the scorpions of controls and licences. The managers of industry are checked and reprimanded like naughty schoolboys. Now it is the turn of the trade unions to be warned that a system of State-controlled wages is a necessary part of a planned economy—thus their own supporters are now to receive an elementary lesson in Socialism . . .

'The wealth of Britain was made by freedom of trade. In keeping open ports, this country not only prospered itself but provided the whole world with a free market-place that created a flow of commerce to the benefit of humanity at large. The World Trade Conference at Geneva should have been hailed by this country as the opportunity to lead the world to sanity, but we see that the President of the Board of Trade told the conference that this country will retain Imperial Preference; in other words, that the British people shall not be allowed to enjoy the profusion of nature, since if other countries persist in that folly, we shall also be similarly deprived. If a real Liberal had gone to Geneva, he would have frankly told the world that whatever other countries might do, we had finished with tariffs and barriers to trade, that we should uphold the Atlantic Charter and so remove burdens from our own people. . . . There is now a glorious opportunity for the proclamation of true, fearless Liberalism. Yet, alas, we see official Liberals favouring universal planning, economic general staffs, support for agricultural protection, endowment for landowners in the iniquitous Town and Country Planning Bill and Statism at every turn. They have spoken for a "wages policy" which is but another term for State-controlled wages.'

'In the present critical conditions, with the Socialist Government obviously floundering, there is a natural urge for a combined front to make sure of a change at the next election, but the effort is vain unless it is based on the opposite of Socialism. How can Tories who only ask for better planning, or Liberals who ask for universal planning, pretend they can offer anything better than the poison we are now enduring? The opposite to Socialism is liberation. We never had full freedom, only partial. What an appeal could be made by a body under any name that offered the abolition of controls, land made free for all to use on payment of the ground rent to the community; a sound currency; tariffs, quotas, import licences and bulk buying swept away; free commodity exchanges re-opened, government expenditure reduced. That is the real anti-Socialist alternative by which to produce the free prosperous community that would need no compulsory military service for its defence.'

'The Liberal Liberty League offers that policy. It is the only body standing for liberty against oppression. If people say we are only a small body, the answer is let them join us and make a real effective force for freedom.'

Mr. Winder brought with him and made available for distribution among the audience, reprints of the *Wiltshire Gazette's* report of the judgement given by Mr. Justice Atkinson in the notorious Odlum Case. In citing this case, Mr. Winder said that it was but one instance of the manner in which the growing power of bureaucracy was crushing the liberties of the people and of the limits to which our legislators will go to defend those powers when challenged.

The case concerned an action of libel brought by Mr. Odlum against Mr. Stratton, Chairman of the Wiltshire War Agricultural Committee, when, after Mr. Odlum had been forced to sell his valuable herd of cattle owing to the Committee's refusal to allow him to grow feeding stuffs, and was subsequently driven to sell his farm

in desperation at the Committee's arbitrary orders, he was blamed for the poor condition of it while the new owner (Mr. Hudson, then Minister of Agriculture) was praised for the improvements he had made to it with the unstinted help and co-operation of the War Agricultural Committee, who among other things allowed him to grow as much feeding stuffs as he wanted.

An article on this case has been written by Mr. Winder and appears in the March number of *The New English Review* under the title 'Odlum v. The Ministry of Agriculture.' We hope, with the necessary permission, to publish the text of this article in our next issue. Reprints of the *Wiltshire Gazette's* report are available on application.

The public meeting was preceded by the annual business meeting of the League. Reports were received and Officers and Executive were elected for the ensuing year, the Officers being: President, Ashley Mitchell; Vice-President, T. Atholl Robertson; Treasurer, Wilfrid Harrison; Hon. Secretaries, Chas. H. Batty, Frank Dupuis and S. Martin.

The next public meeting of the League is being held on 3rd May (6.30 p.m.) in Onward Buildings, 207 Deansgate, Manchester. Speakers are Ashley Mitchell, Wilfrid Harrison and A. W. Madsen.

RESOLUTIONS

Holding its general meeting on April 14, the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values by unanimous resolution urged the withdrawal of the Town and Country Planning Bill because (a) the proposed charges will obstruct the development of land and penalise building, (b) arbitrary powers would be conferred upon central authority thus further limiting local self-government, (c) serious dangers of corruption would be created by the absence of any understood basis of assessment, (d) private interests would be endowed with millions of public money for values created by the community, (e) the existing unjust rating and taxation system would be perpetuated under the Bill which does nothing towards deriving public revenue from the value of land and removing taxation from buildings and improvements, so as to promote and encourage the best use of land.

The resolution was communicated to the Press and to a large number of Members of both Houses of Parliament belonging to the various Parties.

At a meeting of the Council of the Wood Green and Southgate Liberal Association on March 14, Mr. T. Atholl Robertson presiding, resolution moved by Mr. W. E. Bland was unanimously adopted condemning the Town and Country Planning Bill inasmuch as its proposals (1) vest arbitrary powers in the Central Land Board, undermining the authority of Local Government; (2) grant £300,000,000 of public funds to landowners for land values created by the community; (3) fail to collect for the public either existing or prospective increases in the value of land continuing in their present usage; (4) do nothing to stimulate development, on the contrary will add to the existing obstructions to industrial and social development; (5) are no substitute for the taxation of land values, to which the Liberal and Labour Parties are pledged, and which would secure publicly created values to the public, whilst stimulating natural development in a free society.

The resolution was communicated to the local Press and the headquarters of the London Liberal Party.

The following resolution, moved by Mrs. F. G. Sumner, was adopted by the Clitheroe Branch of the United Nations Association at its meeting on April 10:

'The Clitheroe and District Branch of the U.N.A. believes that tariffs and other barriers to trade between the nations are a fruitful cause of international ill-will and strife; that freedom to exchange goods and services (as outlined in the Atlantic Charter) is an inalienable human right and an indispensable condition of lasting peace; that trade barriers enrich a few people and impoverish the masses in all countries affected by them; that if goods and services are prevented by human laws from crossing frontiers, no power on earth will long prevent the crossing of frontiers by armies and bombs. This Branch therefore urges the General Council of the U.N.A. to place the policy of full and complete Free Trade in the forefront of its programme, and to give this policy prominence in its activities at home and abroad.'

2s. 6d. PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE. The tariff question considered with especial regard to the interests of Labour. Carries the discussion to a point not dealt with in other books on this question. 'The most popular and most scientific exposition of the subject which has ever been written.' Lord Snowden. By Henry George. Abridged. Red cloth 2s. 6d. Paper covers 1s. 6d.

2d. HOW THE ENGLISH PEOPLE BECAME LANDLESS. And how to Regain the Land.