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## WHY LIBERTY?—Address by Wilfrid Harrison

SPEAKING AT the Public Demonstration in the Livingstone Hall, Westminster, February 28, organised by the Liberal Liberty League, Mr. Wilfrid Harrison said:

"Everywhere we see governments misusing their power. They are acting either in defiance of or in ignorance of the real nature of this Universe, and of the laws which the Universe itself conforms to. Let us make no mistake. When man defiantly or ignorantly flouts Nature then it is man who is smashed and not Nature. That is the grim truth.

"If our statesmen either through ignorance or impudence continue to ignore the fact that this world conforms to law, both moral and material, then we are in for a smashing of the gravest kind. The world to-day is shuddering with the strains and tensions such policies and actions have created. The political structures man has erected regardless of natural law will be tested before long whether they are built upon rock or upon sand.

"Everywhere men are looking for sincerity and intelligence in politics, for some political body which places first importance upon truth and principles. For ourselves, we have published a Declaration of Principle in which we have endeavoured to state the great basic truths of life and upon them we formulate a political 'Programme for Free Men' to be advanced with such measure of loyalty and intelligence as we can command.

"If we are loyal to truth, if we have clear vision how to apply it to our politics, then we have on our side the omnipotent forces of justice, of righteousness, of life itself—on one condition, namely, that we individually do our part faithfully and persistently. Each man has freedom of choice, inherently. Only when he chooses to act in line with the forces of Life are these omnipotent forces released through his living acts.

"We are not fighting for power or for party, but for the recognition of great principles of the nature of life and the way to live. The Spirit of Love is the ultimate *living* spirit of this universe. In our Declaration we affirm that unselfish conduct is the only sure way of Life both for individual and social life; that the Golden Rule is our motto and is the rock upon which the Political Economy of our society must be erected. We believe that any slightest deviation from that leads to distress and disease in our social affairs.

"Having learnt and accepted this truth about living it is essential to learn how to apply it. All down history man has been trying to learn how most wisely to feed and clothe and house himself. Lately he has had the aid of science to tell him how many calories he needs, and what vitamins

to gorge himself with. So with his individual behaviour. He has had to learn how to treat his neighbour and who is his neighbour. This is the function of Religion or Ethics, call it what you will. Man must learn or perish. This is equally true of life in society.

"It is not enough for us to see and acknowledge a great central truth, a great guiding principle, a GOLDEN RULE. Sentiment is not enough. We must bring our full understanding and intelligence to bear upon its application to human affairs, with utter loyalty.

"Starting then from our Golden Rule of doing to others what we would that they should do to us, that is, true brotherhood, we perceive that it is contrary to this brotherhood for any individual, majority or sovereign power to use force to coerce another except to prevent such misuse of liberty as will restrict that of others. That is the charter of Liberty of the Individual. It is a fundamental of our Political Economy. It is our problem.

"The *Manchester Guardian* of February 26, in its leading article remarked: 'The future of Western Europe depends upon our power to educate opinion, and to show that we can remove injustice, and create a more equal and equitable society, while preserving human freedom.' We would add that the future of the world depends upon it.

"To the *Manchester Guardian*, and to other high-minded Press, we say, that in our Declaration of Principle we do show the way to remove major injustices and to create a more equitable society while preserving human individual freedom.

"Mr. Chairman, maybe you are wondering what all this has to do with good housing, plenty of goods and food, freedom from unemployment, want and fear. In our opinion, Sir, it is still righteousness that exalteth a nation. The command is still valid: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.' Therefore we place, first and last, our emphasis upon these great truths upon which any lasting civilisation must be built. We are convinced that only in this way can all these other things be obtained.

"Again I refer to the *Manchester Guardian*. In its brilliant leading article of February 25, discussing Salvador de Madariaga's new book, *Victors Beware*, it asks: 'If we should be faced with a decision to deny certain men bread so that most may keep liberty, to leave some men without work so that all may not have to be directed to work at the State's choice, on what should we base our yielding all to liberty?'

"That is not a new question. How often have good men said to us: 'Yes, I agree perhaps with your policies, but meantime we must do something about the unemployed and the poor.' These seem to be very sound questions and statements with a true sentiment and desire to succour the needy and distressed. If we examine them carefully, however, we find that each has a basic error.

"Take the *Manchester Guardian* error. This assumes that Liberty and Plenty cannot exist together; that Liberty and Full Employment are contradictory; that State management and bureaucracy can provide bread and full employment.

"Each of these suppositions is false. Unemployment and poverty are not due to too much Liberty but to too little Liberty.

"Full liberty of the individual fully protected from encroachment has never yet been attained. One of the greatest tragedies in history occurred when this country, which was a great light in the world, at the turn of this century began to lose its faith in Liberty. Our leaders of Liberal thought were blind or false to the truth that one last main obstacle had to be removed from our Society before full liberty could bloom and come to fruition. Full employment, equality of opportunity, abolition of poverty were waiting at the door. Campbell Bannerman—to whom all honour—saw it. He was loyal to his vision. But other leaders gradually turned away either through blindness, or because they had great possessions, or great ambitions, or were opportunists.

"To the *Manchester Guardian* and others we say: If things are wrong in the world, do not compromise on your first principles, do not attempt to limit them. Question whether you have grasped all they involve, all their implications. Do not question their truth and value, and to-day specifically answer the question, can true Liberty exist when some men own the earth and all others must pay them rent to stand on it, to live on it, to work on it?

"When a Society is breaking down because of unwise legislation affecting trade, land, taxation, et cetera, in fact from restriction of Liberty, it is no remedy to curtail liberty further. You do not give a man more poison to cure him when he is dying of poison. That is our answer to those who want to cure our distresses by invoking further State action. *Our policy is to increase Liberty further* by altering our land system.

"We hold that coercion is wrong with one exception, namely, as a preventive measure to ensure that Liberty is not abused. This brings us to our next point. What is the function of the State? How should the State exercise its power?

"Our whole argument about Liberty convinces us that any use of power which restricts true individual liberty is ruled out and is immoral. This only leaves the State the right to exercise its power in a protective sense. Defensive Power we call it. We are barred from resorting to any State action which is coercive and aggressive in its nature. This forbids a vast amount of the State action which is taking place to-day. It also demands another type of State action which is not being used to-day. In only one respect will I very briefly touch upon it, viz., in its effect upon property rights.

"Property Law is a creation of the State by legislation. Property Rights are based upon the Golden Rule.

"It is the duty of the State to see that its laws conform to the Golden Rule, that its laws do not rob a man of his just liberties, that its laws protect a man from robbery by others. In both respects our present property laws fail. In the one case by making Nature (Land) private property. In the other case by empowering the State to tax and take from the individual what morally cannot be taken without that individual's consent.

"I should dearly like to show how this policy of ours for domestic affairs is also equally true for overseas affairs. Almost all the difficulties and distresses overseas, in our Empire and in other parts of the world, arise from too little Liberty, particularly in relation to land and its rent. Superficially the aspects differ, but if we examine deep down into the heart of the problem we can always see the absence of freedom and injustice in the land systems. In China, in Russia, in Africa, India, Jamaica, Australia, everywhere at the bottom of distress is un wisdom in these matters. Unless we follow out our Golden Rule in our policies and remedies then we only, as in all history, exchange one bad system for another.

"Who will help to spread these truths? Who will join this Crusade? There is no room for ambition, no special glory, no place and power, but there is that wonderful joy in the heart that we have done something to help our fellows, something to realise that great vision expressed so beautifully in the words:

He came to break oppression,  
To set the captive free,  
To take away transgression,  
And rule in equity."

### MR. CHURCHILL'S BROADCAST

Mr. Rupert Mason writes from San Francisco: "I have just heard Mr. Churchill's broadcast from Missouri. Had he quoted that famous passage from Henry George's Fourth of July Oration (1877), 'Is it too soon to hope that it may be the mission of this Republic to unite all nations of English speech whether they grow beneath the Northern Star or Southern Cross in a League which by ensuring justice, promoting peace and liberating commerce, will be the forerunner of a world-wide federation that will make war the possibility of a past age and turn to works of usefulness the enormous forces now dedicated to destruction,'—he would really have spoken as a free and independent person which it did not seem to me that he did to-day. Not a whisper about tariffs or the taxes now being unjustly placed on the fruit of man's work, which taxes and tariff barriers are gradually but surely communising private property more than any propaganda or alleged scheming of the U.S.S.R. It is our own short-sighted and stupid unwillingness to distinguish clearly what is private wealth and what is common wealth that brings on, inevitably, the present confusion and bitter misunderstandings."

### WILLIAM RICHARD LESTER

As we go to press we have to report with deep regret the death of Mr. W. R. Lester, which occurred after a six days' illness at his home, Keynes Place, Horsted Keynes, Sussex, on March 18. The British Henry George movement, and the movement throughout the world, loses one of its most outstanding personalities who by voice and pen and generous support has rendered it most devoted service over a long series of years. He was a past President of both the Scottish and the English Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values and was Treasurer of the United Committee since its inception in 1907. Next month we will give an account of his work which achieved so much by way of exposition and example, paying tribute to one whose memory will be enduring among all who speak in the name of Henry George. To Mrs. Lester and her sons and daughters we extend most sincere sympathy in their bereavement. At the funeral at St. Giles', Horsted Keynes, on March 20, Mr. A. W. Madsen was privileged to join the family and to represent Mr. Lester's associates in the cause which he had so much at heart.