

debated, would be passed that was uppermost in the Executive's mind? We may never know. The upshot however is clear: *the Liberal Party is no longer even PRETENDING to be a Free Trade Party.* In every aspect of its policy it has become just another protectionist party producing vote-catching policies related to no recognisable fundamental principle whatsoever.* Without such a principle to defend it will find itself hard put indeed to stand up to the attacks which its enemies will most certainly direct towards it now that it is showing signs of revival.

Fortunately, at the eleventh hour, the free traders within the Liberal Party saw clearly the true situation. After many years of bewilderment and denigration, they realised that if free trade were to be preserved it had to be clearly extracted from the semi-protectionist, semi-socialist and altogether muddle-headed Liberal Party who were totally ignoring it while being nominally in support.

The first step was to rescue the Free Trade Union. Under the control of prominent Liberal Party officers it had been allowed to wither away almost to the point of total extinction. It was just snatched up in time, with no money left and very few members. As we all know, under the control of men who do not have to look over their shoulders to find out what any political

* Fortunately this is a little too sweeping — the Liberal Party remains committed in support of the taxation and rating of land values. But there are enemies within — some influential, whom we could name — who would like to sink that principle too without a trace.—ED. L&L.

party is saying, and with a most efficient, energetic organising secretary, the Free Trade Union has already made great progress in the task of forging an effective instrument for free trade propaganda and instruction. Members of all political parties and of none can support it and are doing so in the certain knowledge that its views will not be influenced by the necessity for political compromise.

The second step was to bring to the notice of the Liberal Party itself the fact that under its present leadership it was no longer a free trade party. The cavalier way in which Mr. Mark Bonham Carter dealt with the opposition to his Common Market resolution, removes any possible doubt on that score. He sought and appeared to relish a "show-down" with those whom he described, in a Gladstone quotation, as the "unmanageable" free traders.

So the *decree nisi* has been issued. The Free Trade Union is no longer Liberal, the Liberal Party is no longer Free Trade. It will be interesting to see, before the decree becomes absolute, whether the Liberal Party may not have more need of Free Trade than the Free Trade campaign has of the Liberal Party. At least we can be thankful that they now know where they stand. And in the meantime there would appear to be no good reason why the large number of free trade Liberal candidates should not remain with their party and be as loyal to the recent Assembly resolutions as the protectionists in the party have been to others in the past. There is no "better hole" for them. Besides, with a bit of organisation within the party, they may yet pull it back to free trade principles within a very few years.

BRITAIN IN EUROPE

Reprinted from *The Liberal News*, October 6

THE Common Market debate was widely regarded by delegates as one of the most important of the Conference. As *The Guardian* commented: "The Liberal Assembly performed an important service to the cause of closer co-operation with Europe; and in doing so took what may prove to be an equally important step towards a Liberal revival."

Moving the executive resolution in an immensely competent speech, Mr. Mark Bonham Carter said that the Common Market was "the most important development in the history of Europe for decades — probably for centuries". The European movement was in its origin and purpose political — with, of course, a strong economic foundation. Mr. Bonham Carter urged that Britain should open negotiations to become part of that movement as soon as possible — and for both political and economic reasons.

Wittily and concisely he dismissed the two main objections to our going in. Of course, our relations with the

Commonwealth would be altered by such a move. "But only the Tories believe that to alter is to upset. Oddly enough," he went on, "the Commonwealth was not created at Ottawa." Nor was it created by the tariffs that followed Ottawa. In any case, within the next six or seven years Imperial Preference would become negligible.

The real objections of both the Conservative and Labour Parties, said Mr. Bonham Carter, was that union with Europe meant a sacrifice of sovereignty. Even in the Liberal Party there were a few who objected on these grounds — and his remark that in 1960 "that is a most old fashioned view for a Liberal to adopt" brought roars of applause from the hall.

The past few decades had shown that a national state was hopelessly inadequate as an instrument for any constructive programme — whether in the field of disarmament, economic depression or investment in underdeveloped countries. For all these things only inter-

national bodies could hope to make any headway. "If we follow those who prefer independence to interdependence, this country will become 'Little England' — and with every year a littler England, as others, enjoying the advantages of size, forge ahead. The tools of tomorrow — supersonic airliners, knowledge of space, hydrogen power — will be beyond our independent reach, and the new Elizabethan age will become one of cautious and deliberate decline."

Mr. W. B. Mattison (South Battersea) then moved an amendment, urging Britain to regain her lead in making a political union of Western Europe. He proposed a democratically-elected assembly for Western Europe, as an obstacle to divisive nationalism. The amendment was opposed by Mrs. J. St. John Thornton (Tunbridge Wells) on the ground that it would divide us even more sharply from the peoples of Western Europe; but the amendment was carried.

Those who have felt there is little emotional appeal in the issue of European integration might well have listened to various passionate speeches from younger delegates in favour of the resolution . . . Mr. Keith Jenkins (Plymouth) argued that the new power bloc that would be created by European union, with its strong vested interest in the preservation of peace, would be a third force to stand up to Russia and America.

Mr. Roy Douglas (Gainsborough) and Mr. Newton Jones (St. Albans) were among those few who opposed the resolution on the grounds that it would surrender Britain's right to reduce tariffs. The Common Market, with its common external tariff, was not an organisation that Free Traders could readily welcome. Mr. Oliver Smedley, leader of the extreme free traders, argued that Britain would, in fact, be forced to accept tariffs on certain raw materials that at present came in free of duty. She would be sacrificing her right to unilaterally lower tariffs.

In his masterly summing up, Mr. Bonham Carter pointed out that the Common Market was founded on the premise that tariffs were essentially a bad thing. By joining it, Britain would have to reduce her tariffs. At present she was the most highly protected country in the world. The Common Market is, in fact, "a step towards the greater liberalisation of trade".

On these grounds the motion, as amended, was carried with an overwhelming majority.

THE COMMON MARKET

From Mr. S. E. Graham, Harrogate, in *The Guardian*

THE Liberal Assembly delegates may come to regret having accepted transcendental arguments in favour of the Common Market, European political unity and our influence in liberalising the E.E.C's external policy.

It appears to have been overlooked that if anyone takes us into the Common Market it will be a Conservative Government — it will not wait for a Liberal one — and that its influence (and that of successive Conservative and Labour Governments) will be in the reverse direction to that so confidently pointed at Eastbourne.

NOTES ON THE MONTH

LIBERALS START A NEW HARE

COMPLIMENTING the Liberals, *The Guardian* commented editorially: "Too often the debate over British membership of the Common Market has been conducted almost wholly in economic terms." The Liberals recognised that British entry was a step towards political integration and this had *The Guardian's* approval.

The free trade *City Press* newspaper, in its "Press Probe" feature riposted: "It is the political implications that are so frightening. It is proposed to enter into a political and economic arrangement with Europe which will antagonise a large part of the rest of the world. The truth is that the Liberal leaders hold on to the idea of European economic and political integration in the name of free trade because they are unwilling to face the issue of protected British agriculture. They are now going out hard to get the Labour vote regardless of any principles. They have started to chase a new hare which will keep them going for another few years and prevent their members from advocating policies which are fundamental to liberalism.

"It is also of interest that while the Liberals are advocating British abdication from responsibility for many countries they are anxious that our own affairs should be subjected to the decisions of a European organisation. They want other peoples to be free and the British to be enchained."

We agree. Britain could exercise a greater influence for peace and sanity — and could better help the "under-developed countries" — if she were strong, free and independent, than she could as a province of the protectionist Rome Treaty empire.

LIBERALS WANT A VALUATION

A COMPREHENSIVE resolution on Local Government was adopted by the Liberal Party Assembly at Eastbourne on September 29. In part this read: "The whole method of rating needs to be reformed in view of the nation-wide dissatisfaction with the present system and public concern over the high cost of building land. The government should immediately arrange for all land to be valued and for the lists to be published and reviewed frequently to ensure that land required for local government purposes shall be paid for at reasonable prices and to make possible the introduction of site value rating. Local authorities should be less dependent on government grants. In particular (a) derating should be ended, and (b) teachers' salaries paid by the Exchequer." Ilford North was responsible for adding the all-important reference to the introduction of site value rating to the original motion which stood in the names of South Hendon, North Hendon and West Waltham-

stow. The present resolution supplements the previous Assembly's reaffirmation (Torquay 1958) that the Liberal Party stands for the taxation and rating of land values.

"NOT OUR PARTY"

THE general secretary of the Rating Reform Campaign sent a letter as follows on 4th October to the editor of the *Liberal News*. It had not appeared when this issue went to press, nor had the local government resolution been reported.

"Sir, — It is both gratifying and embarrassing to find the Rating Reform Campaign listed in *This Is Your Party* under "Liberal Groups and Recognised Units". We are honoured by having Mr. Arthur Holt and Mr. Donald Wade among our sponsors and many of our members as well as some of our sixty local representatives are Liberals. As an organised body, however, we are strictly non-party, membership being open to all who support our objects, viz: to secure legislation so that local rates are taken off all buildings and improvements and levied solely on the site value of the land.

"The Campaign will be pleased to provide literature or to address interested associations and will welcome financial and other support."

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

THE Labour Party conference at Scarborough did not discuss any motions on the land and local government finance. There was schism enough on the issue of defence and nuclear disarmament — *and party unity!* — without delegates dividing three ways into land value taxers, land nationalists and "don't knows." The motions are remitted to the national executive.

The party remains dedicated to its unpopular, irrelevant and mistaken socialist tenets. It wants further nationalisation. This, together with the growing public disquiet about trades unions, the bitter recriminations now being bandied about, and the unbridgeable cleavage between those who wish Britain to abandon the H-bomb unilaterally and the rest practically ensures that Labour will lose the next election.

One resolution is worth noting. Moved by Miss Alice Bacon, M.P. for the national executive, and adopted with noisy unanimity, it condemned the Government's policy of restoring a free market in (some) rented property. It demanded emergency legislation to end all further decontrol and restore security of tenure to tenants of property already decontrolled, and demanded legislation to protect all tenants of decontrolled property from unreasonable rents, by empowering rent tribunals to fix rents whenever the landlord or tenant appealed to them. This is anti-democratic. Competing owners and competing tenants should be free to determine rent levels. Rents fixed by tribunals are necessarily capricious, arbitrary and inequitable. Miss Bacon said that Labour did not regard the provision of a home

as a commercial proposition. It was the basis of happy and contented family life, as important to social well-being as health, pensions and education.

That sounds fine. No doubt it is kindly meant and sincerely held. Yet it is a basic cause of the housing shortage and the intolerable living conditions which hundreds of thousands or more are condemned to endure. Until housing is regarded as a commercial proposition, and becomes one, widespread, needless suffering will continue.

TRADE TEASERS

WHILE sightseers gape at the mounted horseguards across the road, civil servants in the palatial offices of the Board to Restrict Trade (our little joke stands constant reiteration) have been considering some weighty problems.

Should they refund anti-dumping duty charged on polymethylsiloxane fluids (silicone fluids) produced by the Société des Usines Chimiques Rhône-Poulenc when these are re-exported in the same state as they were in at the time of importation? Reader: What do you think?

Should they allow leather scrap not suitable for the manufacture of articles of leather and bones, etc. (not cut to shape) and osseine to come into the U.K. tax free? They have been asked to do so.

Ought they to grant an application for drawback (i.e. refund) of duty on certain photo-copying machines imported for re-export?

With a Royal visit to Denmark in prospect can they yield to the request that an anti-dumping duty be imposed on crushed oyster shell sent here from Denmark?

And what about Vinyl acetate (monomer) imported from Italy and Switzerland? Some British interests have alleged that it is being "dumped" in Britain to their detriment and want an anti-dumping duty imposed. Interested parties have been invited by the Board of Trade to lodge representations.

These are teasers indeed. Another perplexing problem is whether imported goods of the following description should be required to bear an indication of origin at the time of importation and sale and exposure for sale in the U.K.:

Heat insulating bricks, blocks, tiles of infusorial earths, of siliceous fossil meal or of similar siliceous earth.

Of course no one really wants to know where they come from but marking, if required, ought to make them more expensive and that would gladden the hearts of British manufacturers. In all solemnity the Standing Committee appointed by the Board will hold a public enquiry in the Board's offices on Wednesday, November 2 at 10.30 a.m.

Another question has been resolved to the Board's complete satisfaction. Rice, millet and buckwheat starch was indeed being dumped here by the West Germans.