

"Mr. Wood introduced his literature and referred to our pamphlet as a publication distributed by 'the opposition'—'worthy people, followers of Henry George, who wrote a book called *Progress and Poverty*, which was worth reading'." (That was a remarkable and unsolicited publicity for the land values taxers!) He said that he would be glad to meet their objections but that was not the place for it. This was the Act, it was law—and it had to be administered and his lecture was on that. Since the Cardiff meeting we have been greatly encouraged to carry on this work, especially as it has that countenance.

THE LIBERAL ASSEMBLY—A MIXED AFFAIR

In one particular respect this year's Annual Conference of the Liberal Party Organisation, held at Blackpool, April 22nd-24th, was different to those of the past few years; the party leaders had decided that the floor should have its say in the framing of resolutions. Hitherto the Executive have occupied the giant share of the agenda with their resolutions, thereby ensuring a definite ascendancy of opinion on their part over the rank and file of the Party. This year there were only four officially sponsored resolutions, and with the exception of the debate on world affairs, the leaders contributed little to the discussions. Therefore, it was reasonable to assume that the resultant declarations of policy would differ from those of recent years, and possibly be more in line with the fundamental principles of Liberalism. There was a hope that Liberals would cease flirting with the goddess of State paternalism and realise the claims with which she rewards her victims, but those who cherished this hope were doomed to disappointment.

The proceedings opened with a resolution on world affairs, which proposed, as an emergency policy, the creation of a Council of Western Europe, consisting of the 16 countries participating in the European Recovery Plan, and Western Germany, and as a long term policy, a democratic federation of Europe. This federation to have defined powers in regard to defence, currency, Customs and the planning of production, trade, power and transport. Most of the discussion on this resolution centred on the question of Federalism, with the result that the real issue, the setting up of a virtually all-powerful international economic planning authority was left unchallenged, much to the chagrin of the real Free Traders of the Party.

Another resolution, on Food Farming and Agriculture, was adopted, which accepted the continuance of authoritarian domination by County Agriculture Executive Committees, advocated the extension of priorities, asked for the provision of State financial aid "by means of cheap capital and credit," State regulation of wages and the "regulation of food distribution to meet individual needs."

This step towards a State-dominated economy led logically to the defeat by a substantial majority of a resolution on "rationing," which called for "the cessation of central control over the allocation of materials and consumer goods." Mrs. Wharmby, a Paddington housewife, who proposed the resolution, pleaded for the restoration of the free market and the liberty to spend our earnings as we felt fit.

A section of the "Ownership for All" resolution, calling for the extension of subsidy payments to private builders, was carried in spite of the opposition, who appealed for the abolition rather than the augmentation of this gift to the land owners out of the pockets of the taxpayer. Much of the support for these proposals came from the younger element at the Assembly, who, it must be remembered, have grown up in an era of the ascendancy of corporate collectivism and the benevolent State. This was all very distressing, but as evidence that there were those present who realised the folly of all this, an amendment calling for "the enactment of legislation to levy taxes and rates on the annual site value of land, and the progressive reduction of these burdens on buildings, improvements, production and the rewards of labour" was carried with unanimity, only two dissenting.

In proposing this amendment, which was added as a subsection to the officially sponsored resolution on the Economic

The succeeding Conference was held in Sheffield on June 12th, where Mr. Fred Adams saw to the distribution.

Similar Conferences are being held during July in Hull, Dolgelly, Rhyl and Cambridge, and we look to volunteers to make the same publicity there. Such has been the demand for this particular leaflet that further large quantities have had to be ordered from the printers. Moreover, it is being circulated in other ways, namely, direct to the Clerks of town and district councils for them to distribute among their individual Council members.

Crisis, Mr. STEPHEN MARTIN (Hon. Secretary of the Liberal Liberty League and Chairman of the Chislehurst Division of Kent Liberal Association) pointed out that the resolution stressed the need for increased production, but contained no really effective suggestions for dealing with the problem. "What we have got to decide," he said, "is how best and most effectively can we liberate the productive capacity of the people, liberate the potentialities of human effort and endeavour, as they have never been liberated before? There is a way; it has been preached by great Liberals in the past. It is, to free individual initiative, enterprise and industry from the tolls of land monopoly, the genesis of all monopoly. It is, to take taxation off the labour and products of man and to place it on the site value of land. Concluding by giving an example of how the increased cost of land was passed on to the consumer by way of increased prices, the root cause of inflation, Mr. Martin appealed to the assembly to revive the "Land Song" as the battle-cry of Liberalism. Miss ENID LAKEMAN and Mr. PETER H. BILLENESS, B.Sc. (Econ.), also spoke in support. The measure of success in getting this economic principle back on the Party programme can be best gauged by the fact that another amendment to this resolution, calling for the extension of family allowances to include the first child and a flat rate of taxation on incomes under £500, was defeated.

Whether the delegates realised the full implications of the land values amendment is doubtful, and it, therefore, remains for its advocates to bring it home at every Liberal gathering in the future and in letters to the Party journals.

An amendment to refer back the section in the Ownership for All resolution on compulsory co-partnership was defeated primarily on the plea of its supporters, who included the President, Mr. Elliott Dodds, that appeals for the application of this principle on a voluntary basis had failed. The enthusiasm with which this was received; some prophesying that "it would put the Party back on the map," reflects how low they have sunk in the bog of State collectivism, that they are prepared to jettison a fundamental Liberal principle of voluntary co-operation in favour of coercive direction of individual effort.

Finally a resolution on External Relations was carried, which, whilst advocating "the abandonment of export licensing," "the cessation of governmental bulk purchase and the acceptance of the principle of the free movement of persons and goods across national frontiers," failed to recognise that true economic liberty cannot be obtained without the inclusion of a demand for the abolition of all revenue duties. Friendly relations with the other countries of the world can best be maintained by opening our ports to all the goods and food that they can send us. By so doing we can best influence the fiscal policies of these countries.

Altogether the assembly was a very mixed affair and one can only regret the absence of those Liberals who could have done so much from the "floor" to lead the way back to the traditional Liberal principles of the economic and political emancipation of man.

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