

YORKSHIRE LIBERALS

AT THE Yorkshire Area Liberal Assembly, convened by the Yorkshire Area Federation of the Liberal Party Organization in Leeds on 16th September, the following were among the resolutions carried nem con:—

LAND AND LIBERTY

Submitted by the Huddersfield Borough Liberal Association; moved by Mr. Ashley Mitchell and seconded by Mrs. C. Laycock.

"This meeting endorses the resolution adopted by the London Liberal Party on 16th October, 1943, affirming that:—

"(1) It is not in the public interest, nor is it necessary for the purposes of reconstruction, to purchase with public money Land Values which are created and maintained by the public.

"(2) The value of 'development rights' which the Uthwatt Committee proposes should be purchased is merely a speculative value due to Land Monopoly which should be taxed out of existence.

"(3) The Taxation and Rating of all Land Values, whether urban agricultural or mineral, and the untaxing and unrating of buildings and other improvements on or in the land, are the indispensable pre-requisites for reconstruction and development after the war.

"The Liberal Party reasserts its faith that the development of individual liberty is the true way of raising the standard of the individual. It disclaims the 'economic planning' of a paternal and coercive State. It holds that the way to liberty is to release the individual from controls by privileged classes, monopoly and officialdom, so that with the distribution of wealth assured to those who produce it, the drift to totalitarianism may be arrested and the masses of the people, given economic independence, may follow the Liberal Party in establishing a society free and confident in wider liberty. The Party therefore pledges itself by the policies it advocates to make the rights of the individual to equal opportunity its paramount concern."

FREE TRADE

Submitted by the Dewsbury and the Pudsey and Otley Division Liberal Associations; moved by Mr. Ronald F. Walker and seconded by Mr. Ray Renwick.

"That this assembly holds that a country bound as this country will be after the war, to export largely, whether it be to pay for its food and its raw materials, or to pay its foreign debt of £3,000 millions, cannot afford any other policy than that of Free Trade."

SCOTTISH CO-OPERATORS

Addressing the Co-operative Area Day-School at Belleisle on 30th July, Councillor A. B. Mackay of Glasgow said:—

In their efforts to cope with the demand for houses Local Authorities were forced to pay large prices for agricultural land on the outskirts of the

cities. They had to dodge the question of city land values, but dormitories five or six miles from work involved two or three members of each family paying bus fares, taking lunch in town and spending long periods in travelling.

Meantime other people were fined in high rates for improving land and for occupying decent houses. Lately £6,000 was the price paid for a piece of land of which the rating value was £21 5s., at which rate the price should have been round £425. The city paid

thirteen times too much. He pleaded that, alternatively, rates should have been paid on the basis of the annual value of, say, £300. The holder could not have held it out of use for long if he had to pay rates and taxes on the true value. If we must buy land we should relate the price to the value in the rating book; but a far better way would be to rate and tax on the full value of land and apply the proceeds to reducing burdens on fully used land.

LIBERAL LIBERTY LEAGUE

A London and Home Counties Conference on Freedom was held under the auspices of the League on Saturday, 30th September, in St. Ermin's Restaurant, Westminster. The President of the League, Mr. Ashley Mitchell, was in the chair. The resolutions, as given below, were adopted unanimously, the first on the motion of Mr. W. E. Bland, seconded by Mr. S. Martin, and the second on the motion of Mr. G. H. Winder, seconded by Mr. G. G. Honeyman.

I.

This Conference convened by the Liberal Liberty League and representative of Liberal opinion in London and the Home Counties, being of the opinion that the Government's proposals for the Control of Land Use fail to meet the necessities of the case which are to break down the high prices of land and give free scope to building unburdened by rates and taxes, urges upon Parliament immediate legislation to give effect to the Taxation and Rating of Land Values;

The Conference affirms that the success of Town and Country Planning is wholly dependent on the encouragement this policy will give to all development by preventing the withholding of land at speculative prices and by relieving houses and other buildings from the rates and taxes now levied upon them;

The Conference, recognising the value of land as a rightful source of public revenue, further declares that nothing short of the abolition of the land monopoly can effectually deal with the social, industrial and financial problems with which the country will be faced in the post-war period; and that this policy be recommended also to the Colonial Office.

II.

This Conference convened by the Liberal Liberty League and representative of Liberal opinion in London and the Home Counties, believing that Free Trade is the best policy for Great Britain, even though the world or large parts of it revert to economic nationalism, and that Protection, whether in the form of customs tariffs, quotas, preferences, guaranteed prices or controlled imports, is incompatible with the future welfare of the people, calls for the abolition of all trade barriers and the return of Great Britain to its traditional policy of freedom from exclusive economic commitments; and at home for the removal of all restraints of trade whether in the form of monopolies, cartels or compulsory marketing boards, and opposition to all forms of State economic planning or control that will prevent the functioning of the free market.

A Sub-Committee on Employment Policy appointed by the Liberal Executive has examined and made report on the Government's White Paper. Amazement is a mild word to describe the feelings of Liberals who have read in this document

that the Government was in error in clinging to the old conception of a balanced Budget, since that must have a deflationary effect. "The proposal of temporary unbalance will be ineffective if the rule is enforced that a balance must be restored within a comparatively short period. A truly balanced Budget is one that brings the whole economy of the country into balance. It may frequently, and over long periods, be the duty of the Government to spend more than its income, if by doing so it can assist the maintenance of an adequate flow of purchasing power."

The Committee responsible for these extraordinary opinions consists of Sir John Stewart Wallace, Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, Mr. A. S. Comyns Carr, Sir Percy Harris, Mr. Wilfrid Roberts, Mr. T. L. Horabin, Lady Rhys-Williams, Mr. B. Seebohm Rowntree, Mr. E. H. Gilpin, Mr. Austin Spearing and Mr. Lancelot Spicer. What is meant by the "deflationary effect" which the balancing of the Budget will cause? That prices will fall? If so, how? And if so, will that spell disaster? The opposite of "deflationary" is "inflationary," so perhaps it is the anti-inflationary effect of the balanced Budget which these reporters fear? What is meant by bringing "the whole economy of the country into balance," unless it be that every citizen will be able to meet his engagements, ending every year out of debt, by the facile process of running the paper-money printing machine at the Treasury and the mounting of public debt? The last sentence contains Touchstone's "If," the peace-maker that settles all argument. *IF* the maintenance of purchasing power is secured by the Government spending more than its income! It is lamentable to see the Liberal Party involved by any of its spokesmen in such dangerous economic nonsense. There is no purchasing power save what comes by the production of wealth, and that is menaced and menaced again by just such ideas as that Budget deficits do not matter; that they are indeed salutary; that prices must be artificially increased; that taxation to meet the deficits is neither here nor there; that in the last resort public debts can be repudiated—that, in fact, "after us the deluge" is the chorus in which also the Liberal Party is asked to join.

If what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, may we expect from the same quarter a like recommendation with regard to local government and finance? Why not? There would be logic in the proposition that our local authorities should emulate the Government and compete with one another in this wizard finance of budget deficits and public debts, dutifully and persistently spending more than their income, catching the will o' the wisp of that purchasing power, and speeding the day of the Age of Plenty.

S. MARTIN, Press Secretary.