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LEADERSHIP FOR THE NEW ORDER

AT a time like the present, when the war effort is rising steadily towards its maximum and fighting has intensified, there is apt to be impatience when the call for consideration of reconstruction and the future of the world is raised. Thus at the Labour conference held during Whitsuntide, criticism was directed against Labour Ministers for failing to secure more vigorous prosecution of the War, whereas long-range policy was given a subsidiary place. Nevertheless, even in the stress and turmoil of a world struggle, the foundations on which a better world shall be erected must be established; even although it is neither possible, nor perhaps desirable, to particularize, there should be some clearer conception of the future state of society in the minds of leaders of thought than is apparent among the general public. It is the task of those who have thought about what is to follow the end of the War to prepare the minds of others. Two notable recent speeches by Mr. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Great Britain, and Mr. Henry A. Wallace, Vice-President of the United States, respectively, have given valuable leads.

Mr. Eden was speaking at Edinburgh on May 8, and devoted a portion of his address to the post-war world. He emphasized that, speaking as Foreign Secretary, he had in mind particularly the problem of keeping the peace. Without peace there is nothing for the future but ever-increasing social stress; and peace does not mean merely the absence of war. Peace in the true sense means stability in international relationships and active co-operation between all peoples; it is an affair for long years of effort, determination and good will. A peace treaty, however skilfully and thoroughly discussed, is but the skeleton, which can only be clothed with flesh and blood by human will and perseverance. The War has demanded intense effort and sacrifice, and we must not grudge similar sacrifices for peace. Every country has a direct responsibility for maintaining the peace. The increase in speed of communication characteristic of the pre-war period has been intensified by war conditions, so that in effect the world is shrinking, and the good neighbour policy is becoming more and more important for the future of mankind.

But just as social advancement is conditioned by peace, so is peace dependent on improvement in social conditions. Unemployment, malnutrition and low standards of life, in any country whatever, are each capable of endangering world peace. The British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America, the U.S.S.R. and China must therefore assume responsibility for the economic reconstruction of the world. This may mean economic sacrifices on the part of individual nations, but they will be well worth while if they can avert another world catastrophe. On a smaller scale, similar problems in connexion with the Colonial Empire will confront Great Britain; again the answer will be sacrifice, for the greater good of the many.

Mr. Eden's speech followed closely on the heels of addresses by Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, who also stressed the needs of the post-war world. Taken together, they are an encouraging sign that members of the Government in Great Britain not only appreciate some of the difficulties which lie ahead, but also the need for bold leadership in attacking them.

Mr. Henry Wallace was speaking on May 21 to the Free World Association, and, as the 'second man' in the United States, his words obviously were intended to convey the views of the United States Government. His speech emphasized in the first place four duties—again the stress was on giving rather than receiving. Referring back to the now well-known "four freedoms" enunciated by President Roosevelt in January 1941, he said they constituted nothing less than a people's revolution, towards the accomplishment of which the present time demands four duties: to produce to the limit, to transport as rapidly as possible to the field of battle, to fight "with all that is in us", and to build a just, charitable and enduring peace. This last inspires the other three duties. Modern science, he said, is "a by-product and an essential part of the people's revolution", and by its aid it is possible to ensure that everyone has enough food. Sufficiency of food is the first requirement in raising the standard of living, which is itself an essential part of the peace which must follow this War and must embrace not only the United Nations but also the Axis Powers. Scientific developments and their applications are thus, on Mr. Wallace's showing, an integral part in the advancement of society. "Modern science, when devoted wholeheartedly to the general welfare, has in it potentialities of which we do not yet dream."

As regards the part that America will play in the future ordering of world affairs, Mr. Wallace was very emphatic that it will continue the active collaboration of which the War has seen the beginning. It may even have the privilege, he said, of suggesting the freedoms and duties of the "common man". The motive will again be service, the older nations helping to start the younger nations along the path of industrialization. Productivity must be increased, so that the "common man" and his children may repay the world community all they have received.

World peace will have no place for a dominant or master race, based on Nazi or any other ideology, and with that myth must go the old conception of international cartels. Such cartels must be controlled internationally in the interests of the common man, as well as by their home Governments. Invention will thus be made to serve the many instead of the few.

These words of Mr. Wallace will be heartening to those who are striving to look beyond the immediate future. But they also demonstrate the need for fearless leadership in combating the wave of conservatism which is almost certain to come with the release of strain following upon the cessation of hostilities. Leadership, working upon a foundation of education towards the new ideals of world co-operation, can alone avert a dangerous setback.

The necessity of preparation for the changes in the ordering of society which must follow after the War was the basis of the proceedings of the second day of the annual conference of the Labour Party. The Party has a Central Committee on Post-War Reconstruction, on behalf of which a resolution was submitted affirming that "there must be no return after the war to an unplanned competitive society", and setting forth the broad principles of socialization which, in the Committee's opinion, are necessary to avert the danger. Measures of Government control have been found necessary for mobilizing the national resources in war and, it was affirmed, they are no less necessary for securing their best use in peace. While the amount, and method of exerting, such Government control, are highly controversial political questions which cannot appropriately be discussed here, the fact that the Labour Party has set up a committee to study such questions is encouraging, in that it will help to turn the minds of many, who might not otherwise give much consideration to the matter, to the urgent problems of a new world order.

While economic and political aspects of reconstruction plans were naturally prominent topics at the Labour Party Conference, the problem of the best utilization of the land and immediate post-war relief for Europe were also discussed. Sir John Orr has demonstrated the significance for the future of adequate food, proper housing and employment (see NATURE, April 11, p. 401). His own work, and that of other students of nutrition, has shown that a substantial proportion of the population of the world are living below or at the poverty line, and he has outlined a broad scheme for the improvement of conditions. The fundamentals of all such plans are based on scientific progress. Science has provided the knowledge required to improve beyond measure the well-being of humanity; but that is not enough. Scientific workers cannot stand aside when they see the fruits of their studies put to wrong uses. Herein lies a great opportunity for education and leadership. Deference is paid by word of mouth and in writing to the importance of science and scientific method in plans for the future, but there must be deeper appreciation among the rulers of the nations of all that is involved. The word 'reconstruction' must not become a shibboleth; indeed in some ways it is a misnomer, for many of the things which are passing away are outworn or have otherwise served their day. The old world order has failed to provide man with the conditions under which he can live a full life; a new order is imperative to serve the progress of civilization.

It is therefore all to the good that men everywhere should be discussing the framework of world affairs which they will wish to build. The most that can be done—and it is of vital importance that it should be done—is that the opportunities which will be afforded by the fluid state of international affairs should be widely discussed now. Thus the sacrifice inevitable in raising the standard of life throughout the world will be understood and accepted as part of the duty due from every citizen dwelling under the banner of the 'four freedoms'.