

# LIBERTY IN A CHANGING WORLD

## Full Text of Lord Beveridge's National Broadcast

**N**EARLY 150 years ago, the poet Wordsworth wrote:

We must be free or die who speak the tongue

That Shakespeare spake, the faith and morals hold

Which Milton held.

You who are listening and I who am talking alike use Shakespeare's tongue as our birthright. Let us think to-night of what we mean by the liberty which alone for all of us makes life seem worth living.

There are some things about which there is no room for debate. We should all agree that there are essential citizen liberties, without which we are not free at all. These include the personal liberties—freedom of worship and conscience, freedom of speech, writing, study and teaching, freedom of spending a personal income, or at least as much as the tax-collector leaves to us. They include certain political liberties, in particular freedom to associate with others for

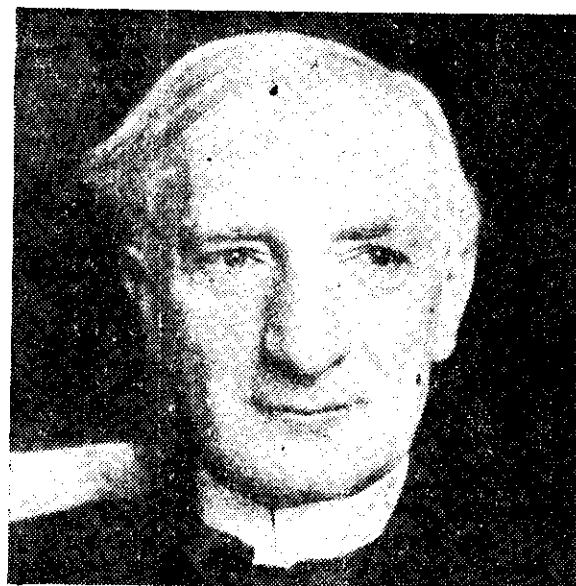
public purposes—to form trade unions, friendly societies, political parties and so on. All this can be accepted without discussion.

There are other points well worth discussion, because in regard to them there have been differences of view and a notable development of thought since 150 years ago.

Like all vital ideas, this idea of liberty changes and develops with changing circumstances. It is dynamic, not static. When Wordsworth wrote, and for one or two generations after, liberty in Britain meant, in the main, freedom from the arbitrary power of autocratic Government. Defence of liberty meant, on the one hand, restricting the sphere of Government, and, on the other hand, replacing autocracy by democracy, so as to prevent arbitrary use of power.

To-day for us in Britain, as I am sure for you in New Zealand, the idea of liberty has grown. It means not simply

freedom from the arbitrary power of governments, it includes two other things as well: freedom from economic servitude, and freedom from arbitrary power in any form. A starving man is not a free man, because, until he is fed, he cannot think about anything except how to feed himself; he is the slave of his physical needs, reduced from a man to an animal. Again, a man who dare not speak his mind, or resent what he feels to be injustice from an employer or a foreman, lest this should condemn him to life-long unemployment is not free. Security against want and security against chronic unemployment are essential elements in British liberty, as we understand it to-day.



LORD BEVERIDGE

"A starving man is not a free man"

Security against want is the aim of the National Insurance legislation which we have put through in Britain in the last three years, giving substantial effect to the *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services* which I made to the British Government in 1942—the so-



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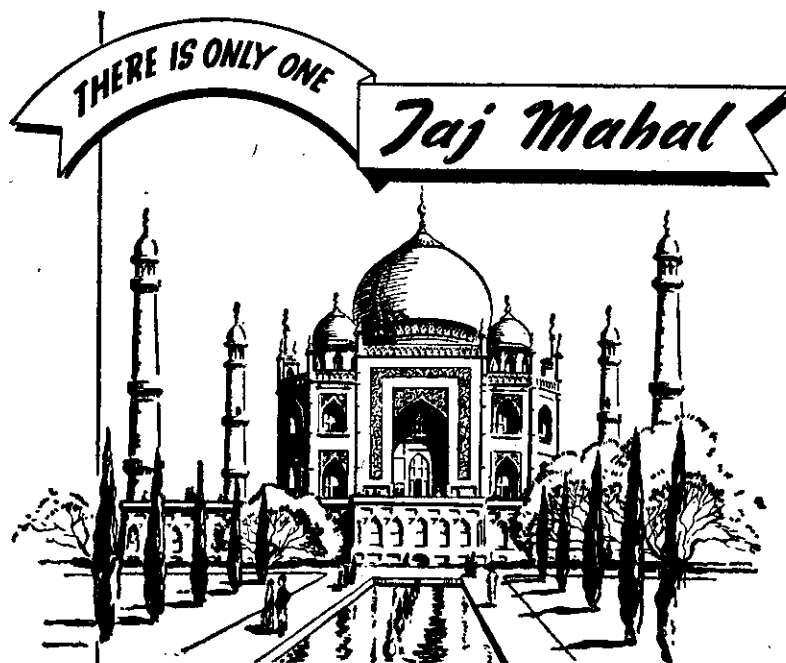
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