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THE NATURE OF LIBERTY

he chooses, so as to have jam as well as bread then, or of spending so as to have more jam in youth. Of course, we hope that people will save for themselves, and we make it plain that there will be no means test of any kind to pensions or other benefits provided by the State scheme; what a man gets through the State scheme will not be cut down because of anything that he has saved for himself. The principle of our social security is not forcibly to equalise everybody, but to put a floor below inequalities. We put a floor above physical want below which no one can fall. We do not put for any one a ceiling above which he cannot rise. We aim at security with the maximum of individual responsibility and variety, that is the maximum of liberty. The social security scheme in Britain is typical of the British attitude to the relations between the individual and the State.

There is another respect in which the idea of liberty has developed in Britain. It means the liberties which can be shared by all, not the privileges of the few. In the early part of the 19th Century, the ruling doctrine of *laissez-faire*, combined with the unequal distribution of wealth, gave to a limited economic class liberty without bounds. They could go anywhere and do anything. But society paid a heavy price for this untrammelled freedom of the few.

First, some of the freedoms of action of the dominant economic class produced evils for others. Thus the freedom of each capitalist to put his factory just where he chose, without regard to what others were doing, led in practice to the endless growth of our great cities, with squalor, congestion, smoky skies, and wearisome travel for millions. Today we realise that we must plan our towns and control the local distribution of industry, restricting freedom in one direction, in order to secure good conditions of life for all. This is an up-to-date illustration of John Stuart Mill's remark in his famous *Essay on Liberty*, that nearly everything that makes life worth living for any man depends on imposing restrictions on others.

Second, in some cases the former freedom of the well-to-do became freedom without duties. They could do anything—or nothing if they chose. But the cases in which they did choose to do nothing were relatively few. One of the saving virtues of Britain has been the good aristocratic tradition, that those who had leisure from daily earning should render public service.

To-day in Britain we are far from the inequalities and the *laissez-faire* of the 19th Century. We have narrowed the range between wealth and poverty at both ends. We have social security established by law and coming into practice. And we are beginning to realise that the new situation brings us up against new problems.

There is first the problem of obtaining, in the more equal society of the future, the disinterested public service which was given in the past by the best of the privileged; democracy, in replacing aristocracy, has to learn its virtues.

There is, second, the problem of giving economic security without destroying incentive and effort. In some parts

of the world life has been made almost too easy by nature. In a tropical climate where a man can meet his physical needs without work, sitting in the open under a banana tree waiting for the fruit to fall in his lap, he has a tendency to make sitting his principal occupation. We who have the advantages of more bracing climates must make sure that we do not allow economic security to reproduce the banana mentality. I believe that we can secure this; I believe that the great majority of men can be led by ambition and hope and do not have to be driven by fear. But that cannot be secured merely by wishing for it. It is largely a question of education—of teaching men to be ambitious, for themselves or their children, to wish to be above the minimum at all times to want to do things, not simply to enjoy them.

There is, third, the problem of extending the activities of the State without losing democratic control of its actions. This also is a question of education, and of teaching citizens generally to realise that they have political duties as well as rights, must take the trouble to understand political and economic problems, must make themselves good judges of candidates for Parliament—at least as good judges of that as some of them are of racehorses. We have also at all times to apply the principle that the State may never interfere with the individual liberty in one direction unless this action increases individual liberty in another direction.

Britain and New Zealand have happily many things in common additional to our common language. We both, among these others things, have social security developed by different methods to a point far beyond that reached by any other country in the world. But economic security for the individual, in giving new freedoms, brings new problems for solution. You in New Zealand and we in Britain now find ourselves facing more problems. We shall face them, I believe, in the same spirit. We shall solve them by vigorous debate resting on fundamental agreement as to the nature of liberty.

SHORTWAVE HIGHLIGHTS

AT present reception of Radio Australia at all times of the day is very good, so listeners will have no difficulty in finding these programmes during the times of transmission.

North American and Forces Transmission (9.45 a.m.-11.15 a.m.)—VLG 6, 15.23 mc/s., 19.69 metres; VLC 10, 21.68, 13.84. Forces Afternoon Programme (3.0 p.m.-4.0 p.m.)—VLC 9, 17.84, 16.82; VLB 5, 21.54, 13.93. (Saturday and Sunday transmission opens at 2.0 p.m.). Special Saturday Sports Transmission (3.15-7.30 p.m.)—VLG 6, 15.24, 19.69; VLB 5, 21.54, 13.93. North American and African Transmission (4.30 p.m.-5.45 p.m.)—VLG 6, 15.24, 19.69; VLB 5, 21.54, 13.93. Great Britain and European Transmission (7.0 p.m.-8.15 p.m.)—VLA 6, 15.20, 19.74; VLB 3, 11.76, 25.49. Forces Evening Transmission (8.30 p.m.-12.0 midnight)—VLA 6, 15.20, 19.74. General Pacific Transmission—VLC 4, 15.32, 19.59.

Headlines in the Programmes: Magazine of the Week (7.45 p.m., Sunday, VLA 6), Sporting Round Up (8.30 p.m. daily, VLA 6), Australian Scene (10.45 a.m., Wednesday, VLG 6), Australian Women's Newsletter (10.30 a.m., Friday, VLG 6), Background to Australia (7.15 p.m., Friday, VLA 6), Australia Day by Day (9.40 p.m., Tuesday, VLC 4), Australian Scene (9.40 p.m., Thursday, VLC 4), Australian Radio Reel (7.45 p.m., Saturday, VLA 6), Music Lovers' Hour (9.10 p.m., Saturday, VLC 4), Stand Easy (10.15 p.m., Saturday, VLA 6).

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MAY 7.