

FOR A NEW SOCIETY

Revolutionary Conference Called by Archbishop of York

CHURCH of England liberals moved boldly shortly after New Year to seize for the Church leadership in "ordering the new society" which they found "quite evidently emerging" from the war.

To that end they stole a march on the Government with a programme of post-war aims which, coming from any group, would be startling. Coming from the traditionally complacent and conservative Established Church it was little short of revolutionary. It called for unification of Europe in a co-operative commonwealth, communal ownership of the means of production, more religion and less liturgy. On the negative side it condemned the profit motive and the Church's own financial dependence on ancient perquisites and levies. Our report is from "Time."

VIRTUALLY unanimous sponsors of this programme of post-war aims are the Archbishop of York, 23 of the Church's 98 bishops (including London and Durham), 14 deans and a total of some 200 other churchmen. All of them seemingly remembered that the great ages of Christianity have come when the Church took the lead in historic movements, which were as much economic and social as religious, like the Crusades and the Reformation. All of them were determined that the Church should assume just such a leadership in post-war reconstruction. And all of them were determined that the Church should assume just such a leadership in post-war reconstruction. And all of them were determined that that leadership should come from the Liberal rather than the Conservative wing.

With greatcoats wrapped around them they gathered day after day in the paralysing cold of unheated Malvern College to hear speaker after speaker denounce present-day failure to identify Christianity with any great cause except "nosing out fornication." And then



SIR RICHARD ACLAND

"The whole structure of society is rotten"

without a single dissenting voice they adopted a resolution presented by the Archbishop himself. Chief planks:

Union Then: "After the war our aim must be the unification of Europe as a co-operative commonwealth."

Commerce and Conservation: "In international trade a genuine interchange of materially needed commodities must take the place of a struggle for so-called favourable balance. . . . We must recover reverence for the earth and its resources, treating it no longer as a reservoir of potential wealth to be exploited, but as a storehouse of divine bounty on which we utterly depend."

Profit System Condemned: "Christian doctrine must insist that production exists for consumption. . . . To a large extent production is carried on not to supply the consumer with goods but to bring profits to the producer. . . . This method . . . which tends to treat human work and human satisfaction alike as a means to a false end—namely, monetary gain—becomes the source of unemployment at home and dangerous competition for markets abroad. . . . The monetary system must be so administered that what the community can produce is made available to the members of the community, the satisfaction of human needs being accepted as the only true end of production."

Labour: "The true status of man independent of economic progress must find expression in the managerial framework of industry; the rights of labour must be recognised as in principle equal to those of capital in the control of industry, whatever the means by which this transformation is effected."

Private Ownership Denounced

To this unanimous resolution the conference added "by a very large majority" a still more sweeping amendment proposed by Sir Richard Acland, M.P., which stirred up the only major controversy in the four-day conference. This amendment asserted that "the ownership of the great resources of our community . . . (by) private individuals is a stumbling block. . . . The time has come, therefore, for Christians to proclaim the need for seeking some form of society in which this stumbling block will be removed."

Hardly less revolutionary than the Church's programme for society was its programme for reforming itself;



THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

"... The great ages of Christianity have come when the Church took the lead"

Church's Function: "The Church has the duty and the right to speak, not only to its members but to the world, concerning the true principles of human life. . . . The Church, as we know it, does not. . . . We, therefore, urge that enterprises be initiated whereby that life can be made manifest."

Church Militant: "Christian people should take the fullest possible share in public life, both in Parliament, in municipal councils, in trade unions, and all other bodies affecting the public welfare."

Church Finances: "Christians, clergy and laity alike, cannot take part in this work unless they are prepared to advocate complete reorganisation of the internal financial life of the Church."

Form of Worship: "This must be so directed and conducted that its relevance to life and to men's actual needs is evident. . . . Our traditional forms of matins and evensong, presupposing as they do acceptance of the tradition of the Church and unflinching regularity of use, are largely unsuitable. They must in most places be supplemented by services of another type, whether liturgical or not, designed to bring before uninstructed people the truth concerning God."

Concrete Christian Service: "The whole congregation habitually worshipping together should regularly meet to plan and carry out some common enterprise for the general good; if there are social evils in a locality; such as bad housing or malnutrition, let them consider how evil can be remedied. . . . In other places let 'cells' be formed upon the basis of common prayer, study and service."

Revolutionary Speeches

If the Malvern resolutions were revolutionary, the speeches which spurred

the Conference to their acceptance were no less so. Seldom has the Church called sinners to repentance with such bitter jeremiads as those by which lay speakers called the Church itself to repentance.

Here are some samples: T. S. Eliot, the poet, attacked the Church in wasteland accents for letting Christian principle vanish from education. Sir Richard Acland was fiercer: "For over 150 years you have neglected your duty . . . because of sheer funk. . . . The whole structure of society . . . is, from the Christian point of view, rotten and must permanently frustrate your efforts to create for the individual the possibility of a Christian life. . . . This has given Hitler the opportunity for saying 'To hell with the whole order.' . . . In order to save humanity from the horror of . . . Nazism we must find a way of living superior, not merely to Nazism, but to that which we ourselves knew before. . . . We are unprepared for this. . . . You must be prepared to offend people who are determined to preserve the existing order. . . . I beg of you now to proclaim the new society openly. . . . So only will you save yourselves and us."

Dorothy Sayers Was Vitriolic

The novelist, Dorothy Leigh Sayers ("Lord Peter Wimsey"), was even more vitriolic. "Suppose," she said, "that during the last century the churches had . . . denounced cheating with a quarter of the vehemence with which they denounced legalised adultery (i.e., divorce and remarriage). But one was easy and the other was not . . . To upset legalised cheating, the Church must tackle the Government in its very stronghold, while

(Continued on next page)