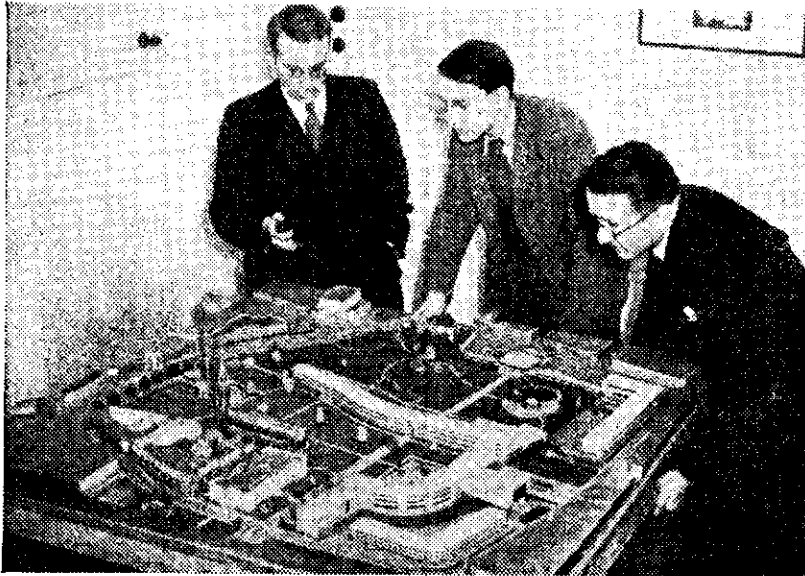


# WILL THE REVOLUTION CONTINUE ?



## A Talk from the BBC in the Series "Calling Australia," by PROFESSOR HAROLD LASKI

cracy depends upon its ability so to apply them that it is possible to discover ways of their solution upon which men are agreed. By which I mean either that we shall go forward to a new level of democratic satisfaction, or fairly rapidly find it impossible to solve our problems within the framework of traditional Britain. To put this in other words: A democracy that has remained narrowly political in its texture must now begin to push forward its frontiers

Britain on the outbreak of the war. The impact it has made has been the equivalent of a revolution in the ways of men's thinking, which must be measured on the scale of the Reformation and the French Revolution. Mr. Churchill and his colleagues have to confront a population which does not merely ask that victory be won in the field; it asks for what end that victory is to be won.

We have been instructed that we are fighting for freedom and democracy.

**T**OTAL war on any showing introduces revolutionary changes into the life of a nation. Whatever be our future this at least is certain that we shall not return to the familiar Britain of September 3, 1939. The degree of change involved in adaptation to the needs of war has made the pre-war epoch almost pre-history.

Let me try and put before you some, but by no means all, of the essential factors of which account will have to be taken. There is the immense change in the level of taxation. This alone establishes new possibilities in the degree to which the State can interfere with the distribution of wealth. There is a new emphasis on production. What counts now is not relevance to the power to earn profit, but relevance to the war needs of the nation. There is the new emphasis on efficiency. The State is driven to interest itself in the individual firm's power to use its capacity to the full. There is the necessity for full employment. The war is an experiment in an enforced egalitarianism. Profits are restricted, investments are controlled, *laissez-faire* habits are subordinated to the general principles of war economics. The status of trade unionism is necessarily enhanced. Without an ever closer collaboration of the union those psychological conditions are not present which can make up a full utilisation of the nation's labour resources.

### New Attitude to Private Property

Alongside these economic implications there are social implications of outstanding importance. The scale of evacuation has meant a complete readjustment of the normal pre-war attitude to the claims of private property. The war has meant a profound change also in the range of established expectation of State action. Morale depends on State intervention in a score of areas—supply of food, housing accommodation, control of employment, the level of wages, to take instances only—which were before largely left to the haggling of the market. Popular demand in a far higher degree determines the ways in

(Above) NOT TOO SOON TO START: Bombed Coventry plans for the future, as the City Architect surveys his model of the reconstructed city centre

(Right): TWO SYSTEMS of Education: "The post-war epoch," says Laski, "will be marked by a limitation upon the rights of privilege"



which these shall be organised. New criteria of the adequacy of State action have been imposed. The power of the State to hold the allegiance of its citizens is set in a new perspective.

### Three Principles

Some of you who have to face the responsibilities of the post-war world will, I think, have to face a body of social problems, the solution of which will be dependent upon three principles which have bitten deeply into the public mind:

*First:* It is a matter of common agreement that no kind of democracy is compatible with the existence of mass unemployment.

*Second:* No areas of this country can be left, like South Wales and Durham after the last war, to be the playthings of unrestricted private enterprise.

*Third:* The re-building of bombed Britain cannot be left to the unrestricted habits of the ground landlord and the speculative builder.

If, as I say, those principles are matters of common agreement, what follows from them? Clearly, I think, that the future of Parliamentary demo-

into the economic and social rounds, or the ability to continue our system upon the basis of reasoned consent will be gravely jeopardised. I am not going to predict the outcome. I will only venture the prophecy that no Government will be able to remain in office on a democratic basis which (a) does not accept the three principles I have mentioned, and (b) is not able to prevent the emergence of that profound sense of disillusion which followed on the victorious close of the last war.

### Democracy in Full

I hope and I think that this will be possible of achievement. The idea that political democracy has social and economic implications has taken firm hold of the popular mind. It is significant, and I do not speak in any Party sense, that the association of the Labour Party with Mr. Churchill was essential to putting behind the British Government that mass confidence which was proportionate to the national need. But mass confidence is the outcome of satisfying mass expectation. It is no use deluding ourselves with the belief that the masses will be satisfied to return to that massively unequal society which existed in

Once those ends are postulated, and with supreme eloquence they have been postulated by the Prime Minister's speeches, the type of our legislation must be related to those ends. We have reached a point in the evolution of our civilisation when the nature of the organisation of the war effort makes it clear that the mere conflict of private interests will never produce a well ordered Commonwealth. Once that is agreed, and there is hardly a dissident from that view, we have either to go forward from the social service stage which has been rapidly developing since 1906, or as in Italy and Germany, back to a type of State which denies the central principles of democratic government and society. It follows from this that the sector in which private interests are allowed free play is limited. If I read aright the signs of the times then, the post-war period is bound to be marked by a great increase in the range and intensity of State power. Granted a democratic victory, the emphasis of that increase will be on greater equality between citizen and citizen. The post-war epoch will, if this is the character of its development, be marked by a

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