

**ESSAYS IN LIBERALISM, BEING  
THE LECTURES AND PAPERS  
WHICH WERE DELIVERED AT THE  
LIBERAL SUMMER SCHOOL AT  
OXFORD, 1922**

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# ESSAYS IN LIBERALISM

*Being the Lectures and Papers which were  
delivered at the Liberal Summer School  
at Oxford, 1922*



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## PREFACE

THE papers contained in this volume are summaries—in some cases, owing to the defectiveness of the reports, very much abridged summaries—of a series of discourses delivered at the Liberal Summer School at Oxford in the first ten days of August, 1922. In two cases ("The State and Industry" and "The Machinery of Government") two lectures have been condensed into a single paper.

The Summer School was not arranged by any of the official organisations of the Liberal party, nor was any part of its expenses paid out of party funds. It was the outcome of a spontaneous movement among a number of men and women who, believing that Liberalism is beyond all other political creeds dependent upon the free discussion of ideas, came to the conclusion that it was desirable to create a platform upon which such discussion could be carried on, in a manner quite different from what is usual, or indeed practicable, at ordinary official party gatherings. From the first the movement received cordial support and encouragement from the leaders of the party, who were more than content that a movement so

essentially Liberal in character should be carried on quite independently of any official control. The meetings were inaugurated by an address by Mr. Asquith, and wound up by a valediction from Lord Grey, while nearly all the recognised leaders of the party presided at one or more of the meetings, or willingly consented to give lectures. In short, while wholly unofficial, the meetings drew together all that is most vital in modern Liberalism.

In some degree the Summer School represented a new departure in political discussion. Most of the lectures were delivered, not by active politicians, but by scholars and experts whose distinction has been won in other fields than practical politics. One or two of the speakers were, indeed, not even professed Liberals. They were invited to speak because it was known that on their subjects they would express the true mind of modern Liberalism. Whatever Lord Robert Cecil, for example, may call himself, Liberals at any rate recognise that on most subjects he expresses their convictions.

As a glance at the list of contents will show, the papers cover almost the whole range of political interest, foreign, domestic, and imperial, but the greatest emphasis is laid upon the problems of economic and industrial organisation. Yet, since it is impossible to survey the universe in ten days, there are large and important themes which remain



unexplored, while many subjects of vital significance are but lightly touched upon. Perhaps the most notable of these omissions is that of any treatment of local government, and of the immensely important subjects—education, public health, housing, and the like—for which local authorities are primarily held responsible. These subjects are held over for fuller treatment in later schools; and for that reason two papers—one on local government and one on education—which were delivered at Oxford have not been included in the present volume.

It must be obvious, from what has been said above, that these papers make no pretence to define what may be called an official programme or policy for the Liberal party. It was with study rather than with programme-making that the School was concerned, and its aim was the stimulation of free inquiry rather than the formulation of dogmas. Every speaker was, and is, responsible for the views expressed in his paper, though not for the form which the abridged report of it has assumed; and there are doubtless passages in this book which would not win the assent of all Liberals, for Liberalism has always encouraged and welcomed varieties of opinion.

Nevertheless, taken as a whole, these papers do fairly represent the outlook and temper of modern

Liberalism. And the candid reader will not fail to recognise in them a certain unity of tone and temper, in spite of the diversity of their authorship and subject-matter. Whether the subject is foreign politics, or imperial problems, or government, or industry, the same temper shows itself—a belief in freedom rather than in regimentation; an earnest desire to substitute law for force; a belief in persuasion rather than in compulsion as the best mode of solving difficult problems; an eagerness to establish organised methods of discussion and co-operation as the best solvent of strife, in international relations and in industrial affairs quite as much as in the realm of national politics, to which these methods have long since been applied.

That is the spirit of modern Liberalism, which gives unity to the diversity of this little volume. As has often been said, Liberalism is an attitude of mind rather than a body of definitely formulated doctrine. It does not claim to know of any formula which will guide us out of all our troubles, or of any panacea that will cure every social ill. It recognises that we are surrounded in every field of social and political life by infinitely difficult problems for which there is no easy solution. It puts its trust in the honest inquiry and thought of free men who take their civic responsibilities seriously.

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