

Annual Meeting British Tariff Reform League



THE annual meeting of the Tariff Reform League was held at the Royal Horticultural Hall, Westminster. In the absence abroad of the Duke of Sutherland, the president, the chair was taken by Lord Ridley. Among those on the platform were the Duke of Somerset, Lord Barrington, Lord Bateman, Lord Belhaven, Lord Eustace Cecil, Lord Chylesmore, Lord Dartmouth, Lord Desborough, Lord Dormer, Lord Drogheda, Lord Dunraven, Lord Essex, Lord Henry Fitzgibbon, Lord Galway, Lord Claud Hamilton, Lord Headfort, Lord Hill, Lord Hood, Lord Hyde, Lord Kinnoull, Lord Keith of Fyvie, Lord Northesk, Lord Poltimore, Lord Salford, Lord Seaton, Lord Teynham, Lord Wharfedale, Mr. Bridgeman, M. P., Mr. Austen Chamberlain, M. P.; Mr. Chaplin, M. P.; Mr. Jesse Collings, M. P.; Mr. Court-hope, M. P.; Mr. C. C. Craig, M. P.; Sir T. G. Fardell, M. P.; Mr. Fell, M. P.; Mr. Fletcher, M. P.; Mr. L. Hardy, M. P.; Mr. Calude Hay, M. P.; Mr. Hills, M. P.; Mr. Hunt, M. P.; Colonel Kenyon-Slaney, M. P.; Sir Henry Kimber, M. P.; Mr. Bonar Law, M. P.; Colonel Lockwood, M. P.; Colonel McCalmont, M. P.; Mr. J. F. Mason, M. P.; Captain Morrison-Bell, M. P.; Sir P. A. Muntz, M. P.; Mr. S. Roberts, M. P.; Colonel Sandys, M. P.; Sir A. Sassoon, M. P.; Sir Howard Vincent, M. P.; Colonel Warde, M. P.; Captain Clive, M. P., and numerous other prominent supporters of the movement, with Mr. T. W. A. Bagley, secretary. Mr. Austen Chamberlain was accorded an enthusiastic reception upon taking his seat on the platform, says the London Times.

At the instance of the chairman, it was decided to send a telegram to Mr. Edward Goulding, the chairman of the organization committee, expressing the confident hope that Worcester would "go one better than Mid Devon and Hereford."

Mr. Chamberlain

Mr. Chamberlain sent the following letter, the reading of which created loud applause:—
Dear Mr. Bagley,—I thank you for your letter and the copy of the report enclosed. I congratulate you heartily upon the progress that you are making, which I have followed with very great interest during my illness. I regret that I cannot at present take my share in the work, but I am encouraged to see that my enforced absence from your active proceedings has not told against you in any way, but that your committee work and active propaganda in the country have been equally successful during the last year or two. I rejoice especially at the evidence of your work that is given by the late elections of Mid Devon and South Hereford. I do not doubt that a general election at which tariff reform would be the chief issue would show a very different result to that of the last contest.

I remain, yours truly,

J. CHAMBERLAIN.

Mr. Chaplin, M. P., moved the following resolution:—"That this meeting rejoices to hear of the improvement in Mr. Chamberlain's health. It looks forward to the time when he will resume the active leadership of the movement, and it congratulates him on the great results which he can see now of his advocacy of tariff reform and Imperial preference, especially as shown in the course of the by-elections." He said he knew of nothing that would bring more joy to millions of his fellow-countrymen than to know that Mr. Chamberlain had been restored to his full health and vigor again, and nothing would give more profound rejoicing to tariff reformers in all parts of the country than to know that he was able once more to resume the active leadership of the movement, which owed its initiation and its present prominent position to him. They hoped that, at no distant time, he would be restored to the position which he had occupied with such enormous advantage both to his party and his country. (Cheers.)

Sir Thomas Birkin seconded the motion, which was agreed to amid cheers.

At a later stage in the proceedings, the chairman announced that the following telegram had been received from Mr. Chamberlain in answer to the resolution:—"Thanks for kind telegram. I feel greatly encouraged by sympathetic message and appreciate results of by-elections.—J. Chamberlain."

Presidential Address

The chairman, in his presidential address, said the progress of the league had been since its inauguration sure and steady, but in the past year it had increased to an extent that might now be described as phenomenal. The executive, while they had endeavored to do their duty, did not shrink from, but rather invited criticism, being conscious that in the management of so large an organization as the league there were numerous points of view to be considered, countless interests to be reconciled, and many steps to be taken which could not commend themselves to every single member of the league. The solid progress of the movement, as shown in the report and in recent by-elections, was such as to win a reluctant admission of advance from their bitterest opponents. (Cheers.) In the long list of names at the head of the report were gentlemen of rank and position, representative of every district and of every interest in the United Kingdom, who had been good enough to give their names as vice-presidents of the council. They amounted to a total number of 2,156, including 65 members of the Commons, 170 members of the House of Lords, and 204 candidates and ex-members, and they formed a genuine and real evidence of the wide support which the movement received from the educated classes

of the community. Many of them had supported the league by active work and by subscriptions. He took that opportunity of observing that in view of the enormous demands being made upon the staff of the league, both in its organization and on its literary side, it would be absolutely essential to have an increase in the staff, and especially in view of the appeal for £50,000 which the Free Trade League were making in their alarm at their progress, it would be necessary to appeal for subscriptions to those who had not hitherto aided them. The increase of work and responsibility was heavy, but it was materially lightened by the support which the list of vice-presidents proved, and also by the loyal and unselfish help given to the league by all sorts and conditions of men who had never spared themselves when asked to help. After acknowledging the unselfish devotion to work shown by the staff, he said that in its inception the league as an organization, independent of party, had to contend, not only with the animosity of its opponents, but also with the apathy of its friends, and sometimes with scarcely veiled opposition from those who should have been its friends. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the league had steadily pursued its policy of educating the country in its principles, and day by day that apathy and that hostility had lessened until now, although the league had remained and must remain a non-party organization, it could claim that its main principles had not only been accepted by the leader and the organization of one of the main parties in the state, but also that those principles were, with very few exceptions, advocated by responsible people in that party with a zeal and wholeheartedness which left nothing to be desired. The league had in many quarters been credited with a power, a power of the purse, a power of political influence, which it did not possess, and to which it laid no claim, but it did lay claim to the right of educating the country in its principles on every possible opportunity; it could lay claim to a considerable success in that propaganda, and he ventured on behalf of the executive to say that they had no hesitation in regarding the report as a record of substantial advance and that at the proper time they would appeal with confidence to that section of the public who had not hitherto given financial aid, to help them in that extension of the work which increased demands had made absolutely imperative. (Cheers.)

A Good Record

Mr. Austen Chamberlain, M. P., moved the adoption of the report, a summary of which has previously appeared in the Times. He congratulated all interested in the movement on the record of good work done and progress made. He said that on the previous day he was speaking about the meeting to his father, and he asked him whether he might tell them that he (Mr. Joseph Chamberlain) was pleased with the work which had been done in his absence. His father answered, "Yes, say more than that; say that the progress which we have made has surpassed my most sanguine expectations." (Cheers.) A member of the Government said the other day that he would not speak of the subject, because he did not think that any of its members had an open mind on the subject. So much the worse for the Government. (Hear, hear.) There was plenty of open-mindedness in the country, and the report bore witness to it. If they were influenced by their opponents they ought, he supposed, to meet there in deep mourning and in sackcloth and ashes. They were told that they were the followers of a dead cause, that they were the advocates of a cause which was that of selfish interest, that those who took an active part in the movement or who aided them, were moved by a desire for personal advantage, and that they who spoke on public platforms were accustomed to appeal to the lowest and most selfish motives of their fellow-men; all that by gentlemen who never ceased at the last election to din into the ears of electors that their food would cost them more, that every vote given to a Unionist was a vote in favor of raising the price of bread, who appealed, if ever party did, to the most selfish interests of the individual, and who supported their appeal by an unscrupulous and reckless use of what, in the language of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he might call "mendacious falsehoods." (Cheers.) Such action might triumph for a moment, but it would not long prevail with men who had open minds and were prepared to judge the subject for themselves. They had passed through the times of difficulty; they were now moving on the crest of an advancing wave. Let them press home their arguments—carry them into every house and every cottage in the country. Above all, now that they had victory within their grasp, let them not alter their plan of campaign, not abate one jot of their hope, yield nothing, but stand where they were on the programme they enunciated, and before long they would carry that programme to a triumphant conclusion. It would be a good day for the trade and industry of this country when their programme was embodied in a statute. (Cheers.) But he was free to admit that a year more or less was not, perhaps, of great consequence to their purely domestic situation. Every year which passed, however, made the difficulty of combining the whole Empire in a satisfactory scheme greater, every year which passed without anything being done to unite them gave rise to new forces that created separate interests and that dragged separate ways. Who could say how much had already been lost by the failure of the Ministers to respond to the invitation of the Colonial Premiers at the last conference? Who could say how much more

would be lost if they delayed it much longer? Heartened by the work they had already done, let them press on with renewed energy and increased hope to the victory that surely awaited those who with courage, confidence, and endurance persisted in preaching the good cause. (Cheers.)

Sir Joseph Lawrence, M. P., seconding the motion in the absence of Sir Alexander Henderson, said that he spent two hours with Mr. Chamberlain on the previous day, and found that he retained still a living and absorbing interest in every detail of their work.

The motion was adopted. The Duke of Sutherland was re-elected president, on the motion of Captain Clive, M. P., seconded by Mr. R. E. Dickinson; and on the motion of Mr. Page Croft, seconded by Mr. Alfred Moseley, the vice-presidents—namely, Mr. Chamberlain, M. P.; Mr. Austen Chamberlain, M. P.; Mr. C. Arthur Pearson, and Mr. A. Bonar Law, M. P.—were also re-elected. Lord Ridley was re-elected chairman, on the motion of Lord Leith of Fyvie, seconded by Mr. J. Welsford, and Mr. Everard Hambro and Sir Alexander Henderson were re-appointed treasurers. The executive committee were also elected.

Certain alterations in the rules were also agreed to.

At the afternoon session there were present a number of ladies representing the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association. They included the Duchess of Somerset, Lady Ebury, the Hon. Mrs. Burns, Mrs. Kinloch, Mrs. Cole, the Hon. Mrs. Maxse, and Miss Violet Brooke Hunt.

Tariff Reform and the Union Party

Mr. Bonar Law moved: "That this meeting of the Tariff Reform League welcomes the unanimous adoption by the Unionist party at the Birmingham and Edinburgh conferences, and the endorsement by Mr. Balfour of the resolution affirming that the first constructive policy of the Conservative and Unionist party should be the reform of our present fiscal system with the view—(1) of broadening the basis of taxation; (2) of safeguarding our great productive industries from unfair competition; (3) of strengthening our position for the purpose of negotiation in foreign markets; and (4) of establishing preferential commercial arrangements with the colonies, and securing for British producers and workers a further advantage over foreign competitors in the colonial markets." He said that no one could be so blind as not to realize the immense stride forward which their movement had made since they last met together at that conference. So recently as before the Birmingham conference there were members of the Unionist party who urged that they should not definitely tie their fortunes to that movement, and they urged it on the grounds, not that they were wrong, but that the country would not have it. No one would say that now. (Cheers.) He believed that a landslide on that question had begun, a landslide which would not only carry their cause to victory but would enable them even at the next election to sweep the country. (Cheers.) Mr. Bonar Law proceeded to speak of the question of unemployment. He showed that emigration from this country had been increasing for the last ten years, and contrasted this state of things with that in Germany, from which country up till the time when they altered their fiscal system, emigration was practically as great as it was from ours. Now, with a population 50 per cent greater than that of the United Kingdom, the emigration was only a fraction of that which was leaving our shores. The figures of the trade unions showed that for the last few years, the years of booming trade, the average of unemployment had been over 5 per cent; in Germany it had been only between 1 and 2 per cent. It had been said in the House of Commons that there were 60,000 unemployed in Berlin. The number 60,000 was given by the Socialist leader in Germany. The official figures were 30,000, and that figure included both skilled and unskilled labor. Nearly 30 years ago, when Prince Bismarck was altering the fiscal system in Germany, one of the ablest of the theoretic free-traders of the day, Lord Farrer, was writing a series of articles, and in one of them he said: "It will be interesting to watch the effect of this change of policy in Germany in diminishing their exports." It was interesting, for the exports only began after the change had been made. (Laughter and cheers.) But that was not all. Only a few years ago another great theoretic free-trader, Lord Avebury, wrote a letter to The Times, in which he repeated, almost word for word, the same thing that had been said by Lord Farrer. He said: "It will be interesting to watch the effects of the increase of the German tariff in diminishing their exports." Again, it was interesting. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Lord Avebury, too, had his lesson, but it took a great many lessons to teach those gentlemen. (Hear, hear.) As against the views of these theoretic gentlemen he would give them the opinion of a gentleman who was not a theorist, who had no claim to distinction except his practical success. He meant Mr. Carnegie, who was really in a very fortunate position in regard to the fiscal question. Mr. Carnegie was one of the very few men who had a really ideal system; he was a protectionist in America, where he made his money, and a free-trader here, where he spent it. (Laughter.) A few years ago that gentleman delivered an address as lord rector of St. Andrew's university. His subject was trade, and he said that the position of Great Britain as the great industrial country of the world

was gone, and gone for ever. But he turned to the students and said: "Do let that distress you. There is still a good deal left. The United Kingdom will be to America what Greece was to Rome. (Laughter.) You will still have your Shakespeares and Miltons, and we will look back to them as the authors of all our greatness." (Laughter.) That was all right for an American. His idea perhaps was that, in course of time, these poor little islands of ours would be purchased by the great Republic in order that they might have a coaling station in Europe. (Laughter.) That was not their idea. (Cheers.) Why did he say that our industrial position was gone? Free-traders told us that Germany's exports had increased in spite of her tariff. He said, and Mr. Carnegie said, that they had increased because of their tariffs. (Cheers.) This was Mr. Carnegie's dictum: "The one method to secure foreign trade was to make your home trade safe, and from the security of your home trade you can stretch out and conquer the markets of the world." He said also that what made our modern manufacturers successful was to manufacture on a large scale, and, further, he asked, "Why cannot you manufacture on a large scale?" The answer, as he observed, was obvious—namely, "You have not a large market; you have a small market, and even that small market is open to your foreign competitors." Mr. Carnegie then went on to say—and this was also true: "It is not the amount of these foreign goods which come in that makes all the difference, but the fact that the manufacturers know they are liable to an invasion at any moment, the extent of which they cannot foresee. (Cheers.) It is that which makes them afraid to spend the money necessary to keep their machinery up to date, and without which success is impossible." That was precisely their creed (cheers), and it was a creed which the man in the street was at last beginning to understand. Under modern conditions what told most on the cost of production was not the price of the raw material nor even wages, but the scale on which they produced; and they could not produce on a large scale unless they had a large market. As Mr. Carnegie said, we had not a large market. Let them adopt the changes which were part of the creed of his resolution, and they did two things—they increased the scale on which our own manufacturers could produce, and by so doing they lowered the cost of manufacture. In addition they diminished the scale on which our competitors could produce, thereby raising their costs. By doing that they would lessen the intensity of foreign competition both in the home market and in the neutral markets of the world. (Cheers.)

Lord Winterton, in seconding the resolution, said that ninety-nine hundredths of the Unionist party were in favor of tariff reform and were determined to see it carried out. There was still, however, a small section of the Unionist party bitterly hostile to that policy. Many of the misfortunes of the party during the last few years had been due to the attitude of these gentlemen. These gentlemen could not be ignored. If they really believed that the policy of tariff reform was inimical to the interests of the Unionist party, they had a clear and honorable course before them, and that was to find another party which would support them. There were many, like himself, who were determined that a great, united, unanimous party, pledged to follow Mr. Balfour on the policy of tariff reform, should be returned to power at the next election, and they were determined to allow no considerations, no pressure, no influence, from whatever quarter, to prevent them from knowing that that party when it was returned was united. (Cheers.)

Mr. A. W. Clifford thought that if they allowed the noble lord's remarks to go down to the various constituencies entirely unchallenged, the effect would be a great discouragement to those who belonged to the Liberal party and whose names yet appeared on the lists of the executive of the various branches of that league. It was possible to run tariff reform on practically non-party lines. ("No, no.") The chairman said that the words which appeared on page 3 of the annual report, to the effect that "the league, which is independent of political parties, seeks to further the objects mentioned above," etc., correctly described the constitution and objects of the league, and there was no intention on the part of any member, last of all of Lord Winterton himself, to depart from those principles. (Hear, hear.) The resolution was carried unanimously.

Educational Work

Sir Charles Follett proposed: "That in view of the urgent need of carrying out the objects of tariff reform as defined in the Birmingham resolution, and the opportunity now presented of carrying the movement to a successful issue, it is desirable that the league should increase its activity in every department of its educational work." He said that it was not the armchair theorist or the hidebound theorist that they sought to educate. That would be a hopeless task. Their aim was to educate and convert the working men to the advantages of tariff reform. The great outstanding question for the working classes was employment. Dr. Macnamara, in a recent speech in the House of Commons, had no remedy to suggest for unemployment in this country, with the exception of the drinking of less liquor and the giving of more manual training. What more sobriety and more hand skill could do towards finding employment was rather puzzling to the plain man. The only cure for unemployment was a demand for labor, and that was what tariff reform would bring about more successfully than

battalions of sober or hand-skilled workmen waiting all the day long in the labor market. (Cheers.)

Captain Morrison-Bell, M. P., who was loudly cheered, seconded the resolution. He said he felt that the great success which they had in Mid Devon had given a powerful impetus to the educational work of their cause. He was not in the least down-hearted after the result of the last general election, because he believed that all that had to be done to win back the seat was to expose the absurdity of the arguments used by free-traders at that time. Consequently he set to work a month after the general election, and arranged for a continuous flow of speakers and workers in the division in order to explain what tariff reform really meant. In this work the Tariff Reform League had given him the greatest assistance. During the recent election his constituency was visited by crowds of members of parliament speaking on behalf of Mr. Buxton, and the old cries of "The Hungry Forties," "Your Food will Cost You More," and so on, were once again trotted out, but they were quite ineffective in producing any impression on the educated common sense of the working men of the constituency. It was only by education that they could get working men and their wives to understand what tariff reform meant, and he hoped that this most necessary work of education would be continued with the greatest vigor. (Cheers.)

After short speeches by Miss Violet Brooke Hunt (secretary of the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association) and Mr. Welsford (chairman of the Liverpool branch),

The chairman said that, with reference to a resolution standing in the name of Mr. Rosenthal, he hoped, if the mover meant to press it, as many delegates would remain to discuss it as possible. (Cries of "Take it now.") He added that he did not think there was a single member of the executive who would not resign if the delegates passed the resolution. (Cheers.)

A delegate inquired if it was not out of order after the passing of the resolution moved by Mr. Bonar Law. (Hear, hear.)

The chairman said that he could not declare the resolution out of order, but he thought that it was within the power of the meeting to decide whether it was in order or not.

A show of hands was taken, and the meeting, with two or three dissentients, voted the resolution out of order. The resolution was as follows:—"This conference is of opinion that the immediate interests of the working classes in this country would best be served if the proposed reform in Imperial taxation was limited for the present to a transference of a portion of the existing food taxes to imported manufactured articles."

Mr. A. Rosenthal, who obtained leave to make an explanation, said that there was a misconception with regard to his meaning. He yielded to no one with regard to the necessity for fiscal reform; he disagreed only with the methods which were being taken to carry it out. (Cries of "We don't.") The fiscal question as at present stated had three distinctly important issues: The first was the question of immediate fiscal reform; the second was the food question; and the third was the colonial question. While they as a body believed in attempting to pass these as one policy, he rather advocated that the policy should be taken step by step. ("No, no.")

The discussion on Sir Charles Follett's resolution was then resumed by Lieutenant H. A. B. Shrubbs, R.N. (Hants county branch), who expressed a hope that more enthusiasm would be thrown into the educational work of the league. He added that he would withdraw the resolution standing in his name in these terms: "That in order to further perfect the existing organization it is desirable to secure representation for the league in every polling district throughout Great Britain."

Mr. Jesse Collings, M. P., said the agricultural laborer would never be persuaded to support tariff reform unless it was allied to a question which was its complement—a question in which the villagers had a close interest—that of some prospect of a fair number of them being restored to the land. (Hear, hear.) Tariff reform alone would not commend itself largely to them, but tariff reform, allied to such a measure of land reform as would give them some hope of the fulfillment of their dearest desires of being brought back to the land—these two policies together would sweep the country. (Cheers.)

Mr. Medhurst (chairman of the Trade Union branch) said that they must not run away from a single item of their policy, and he had intended to oppose Mr. Rosenthal's resolution. (Cheers.)

After further discussion, in which Mr. A. Bigland, Mr. L. C. Tipper, and other delegates took part, the resolution was carried unanimously.

Votes of Thanks

Sir Joseph Lawrence, in proposing a vote of thanks to the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association, said that they had among them that day a gentleman (Mr. E. P. Benjamin) who assisted the late President McKinley in the preparation of his tariff. It was announced in the press that the Lambeth guardians had decided to render a disused factory at Vauxhall fit for the accommodation of over 100 paupers, who were crowded out of their workhouse. He hoped the gentleman from New York to whom he had referred would tell their friends in America that this country was going to alter that state of things. (Cheers.)

Mr. Wells was carried. A vote of Ridley for p. In the council gave Austen Chamberlain, M.P. Mr. Bonar Law grand hall was sentative and Lord Ripley with British spicuous being by colonial fl in large letter There were p as attending the day, in supporters of

The chair "Our Guests, of Lord Milne welcomed the abroad prevent ment to be o ion. He tho help the flam to set on fire which it first their best to ignorance ha all the mean beacon was s true message ready than (Cheers.)

Mr. Auste with loud che said that they



were numero professional med tions. As we by a little ma of a medium, could give s cuffs were fr dirty collar a eral appeara out-at-the-elb and who wo

"I will gu he urged, as "Secrecy is friends as the career and tel you in the ne

We manag tering a sma formed us th mediums, ren there.

Mr. and M able couple, s Tompkins sat handed him a but no leaves, a few blank lead pencil and instantly the lead pen notepaper. minutes the n opened. The purporting to of the messag It informed h that she was want him to m children in sp impatiently a messages wer him, but as th cannot be rep

From Elle were shown s ceased person portraits were canvas stretch wall. The m with the perso a light was t red blotch a blotch expand be a dab of p sion as a dis form. In an traits were f chaser who, w himself or her portrait medu we were ther it was told t which, we we hands. They than portraits human hands, that the spiri necromancy.

From the cottage, the s Honorable L world-wide r