

The following pages contain the extended notes, references and quotations in a paper read by Alexander Smith, Barrister, Ottawa, on "Some Political Issues Since 1896."

## PRINCIPLES OF LIBERALISM

Government of the People, by the People, for the People

*THE PRINCIPLE OF LIBERALISM is TRUST in the People  
Qualified by Prudence;*

*THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSERVATISM is MISTRUST of the  
People Qualified by Fear.—W. E. GLADSTONE.*

The Liberalism or the Conservatism that continues to be founded on the accident and the prejudice of birth, that believes in "my party and my father's party right or wrong" is the real cause of the discouraging inertia of public opinion that often allows the self-interested few to practically control elections and governments, that prevents or retards reform and makes of a free democracy a bureaucratic tyranny. Liberalism is a positive reasoned belief and every Liberal should be able, apart from opinions as to the Government or the issues of the day, to justify his faith according to cardinal principles of good government.

What are the fundamental distinctions between Liberalism and Conservatism? The words themselves embody the respective historical attitudes of the two parties toward the main function of government.

Liberalism is in essence the problem of realizing liberty. It seeks the setting free of the mass of the people in regard to self-government, trade, religion, education, industry, in all the manifold ramifications of society. Conservatism, on the other hand, means at bottom restriction. It means the conserving of vested rights, the centralization of government in the "governing classes," setting the brakes on social progress.

### Legislate For Those You Represent.

The function of government is to define the rights of the individual in terms of the common good and to think of the common good in terms of the welfare of the individual. In the case of Liberalism the emphasis has usually been on the "common good." In the case of Conservatism the emphasis is usually on the "individual". Historically the particular "individuals" have belonged to the authoritative or vested interest classes. Their motto has been "what we have we hold." Liberalism has found its main support in the masses. The natural result has been that legislation with each party, has been mainly for the classes their leaders represent.

Liberalism recognises that the teaching of history shows that progress is more continuous and secure when men are content to deal with great reforms piecemeal than when they seek to destroy root and branch in order to erect a complete new system which has captured the idealistic imagination. But its grappling with reforms is continuous. Conservatism, while believing in "the good of things as they are," has usually grappled with reforms under the stimulus of an increasingly feared and potent democracy. Liberalism has had to wrench from Conservatism responsible government by the people, manhood suffrage, equal taxation, the right of like