

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

(adopted by the Annual Party Conference by 2,413,000 votes to 30,000.)

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At no time since the War began has the British people been more united in its will to victory or more clear in the recognition of its urgency. The fate of those nations which have fallen under the heel of Hitler has made it plain that no civilised way of life is possible to those whom he conquers.

The British Labour Party, therefore, regards victory as the only basis upon which the achievement of its ideals becomes possible. More: it is convinced that, for the attainment of victory, this purpose has an importance greater than at any previous time. For if all the energies of the nation are to be concentrated on the immediate end of victory, the ideas required for their effective mobilisation are those which this Party has consistently affirmed since its foundation.

The full use of our material resources for victory, whether it be in the organisation of the mines and transport, whether in the development of the land, or in the adequate protection of the civil population, can only be attained by the combination of equity with efficiency. That combination means the instant and thorough-going recognition that the interests of the Commonwealth come before those of any vested interest, however powerful.

Without such recognition the maintenance of national unity in the transition from War to Peace is bound to be incomparably more difficult; and our power to meet the grave problems Peace will bring is certain to be hampered. The Central principle of Socialism is the insistence that the interests of the Commonwealth are the supreme test of policy. It is only by the vigorous application of this principle that we can win both the War and the Peace.

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The record of the Parliamentary Party is before the Conference. Its leading members with the full assent of Conference, entered the National Government formed by Mr. Churchill in May, 1940, on terms of full partnership. Since that time, our Ministers, like our members of Parliament, members of Local Authorities and regional bodies of every kind, with the National Executive, have been concerned to make their maximum contribution to the great task of winning the War as speedily and as decisively as possible. At the same time they have done their utmost to lessen the heavy burden which War inevitably casts upon the workers, and to preserve and even to enlarge, their rights. Not least, they have been deeply concerned to see that the vital civil liberties of the people are amply safeguarded and maintained.

The area of the social services has been increased. Largely through the care and determination of the Trade Unions, the standard of life has been well safeguarded. The health of the workers has been protected by the maintenance of the factory codes, and by the institution of factory doctors, canteens, and nurseries. Labour, national and local, has taken its share in civil defence; and in every sphere its activities have done much to improve the provision for the safety and comfort of citizens. The social protection of our people has been facilitated by the alert and continuous watch which has been kept over financial policy. Interest rates have been kept down. The Treasury has assumed powers over the Banks which assures their full co-operation in the policy upon which Parliament decides. The dangers of inflation, every present in War-time, have been kept to a minimum..

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With undivided will, the nation stands ready for those grim tests of action and endurance that the summer months are likely to bring. The first concern of every citizen is the concentration of the entire common effort and the unhampered use of all national resources to the great end of complete victory. To this end, all the energies of the Labour Movement are primarily and resolutely devoted.

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The organisation of the victory cannot be separated from the post-war tasks of reconstruction. The ideas which inspire the conduct of the war are bound to set the frame within which the change to peace conditions is effected. As we seek to prevent profiteering in war, so we can seek to prevent it in peace. As we prevent exploitation in war, so also can we prevent it in peace. To remove the obstacles to full production in war, whether they be the outcome of privilege or of inefficiency, is to prevent their emergence when peace returns. In May, 1940, the Government took wide powers, over property not less than over persons, to see that these ends are attained. It is our task, as a Movement, to see that nothing hinders their ample realisation.

We note that all classes in our society, as at not time in our history, are united to assure to ordinary men and women the full implications of that victory for freedom and democracy for which we are fighting. Mass unemployment is intolerable in war; we must make it intolerable in peace. Distressed areas are incompatible with a full war-effort; the organisation which removes them for the purpose of war must remove them for the purposes of peace. Finance is the servant, and not the master, of political policy in war-time; it must continue in that relation when peace comes. In war our great material resources are not private empires to be administered ~~for profit~~ for profit, but national assets to be efficiently administered for victory; they must be similarly as we turn from war to peace. The idea and the spirit which underlie the war effort imply the use of our human and material resources in the interest of the whole people and not of a part of the people. That idea and that spirit must animate the process of reconstruction. Our power to make them inspire the nation then will depend upon the limits to which we apply them to the organisation of victory now. That is what the nation expects; that, also, is what the nation must receive. For it is aware that each decision which gives priority to the national interest over private claims in war-time provides the basis of asserting the same principle when we turn from the grim tasks of war to the healing purposes of national restoration.

The central principle underlying the nation's war effort is that of equity. It is the central principle which must underlie the nation's peace effort also. The Labour Movement does not admit that there is one level of claim in the period of external danger, and a different level when that danger has been overcome. Whether it is the health of the people, or its housing; whether it is our educational system or our land-system; whether it is the organisation and use of our coal supplies and our transport; whether it is the treatment of the injured and disabled or the care of old age; there can be no differentiation in response to claims which is not justified by the public welfare. As the war is shoving every day, equity is the primary condition of maximum efficiency; it is, also, as the Labour Party has always affirmed, the primary condition of social justice.

We re-affirm the vital principles of our Socialist faith. We claim that they have been shown to be urgent by the experience of this conflict; we assert that the degree of their application will be the measure in which victory is swift and assured. We are bound to insist that just as they are the bases of triumph in the war, so they are also the condition of unity in peace. Therefore, in the period, however long, which remains before victory, we shall demand their increasing application. The more complete our national planning now over production, consumption, distribution, and finance

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the easier and the more equitable will be the ultimate transition to Peace. We cannot act too swiftly to this end.

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The nation is fighting this War that it may live as a free people. To win it is to defeat the gravest threat the Socialist idea has ever met. For Socialism asserts, as the Nazi faith denies, the intrinsic worth of a man as a man. By our determination to defeat the Nazi effort, we are making the human values for which Socialism stands more clear and more compelling to millions of our fellow-citizens. Those values are increasingly accepted not merely by the free peoples all over the world, but with equal intensity by the victims of Nazi and Fascist oppression. They are the source of that will to victory upon which we can build a Peace of justice leading to that international order of free co-operation which alone can give dignity to the lives of men and women.

War has taught us that without Socialist principles there can be no security; without them, also, there is no prospect of that justice which seeks to realise for every citizen his equal claim upon the common stock of welfare. War has taught us, also, that without Socialist principles, the immense possibilities of science cannot be harnessed to the achievement of the common good not only of our own people, but those of every land. The Labour Movement, therefore, calls for the rapid translation of these principles into the organisation of the War effort that our victory may be the more rapid and certain. It calls for this translation in the conviction that victory and reconstruction are indivisible; that the spirit and idea of the one are the spirit and idea of the other.

Finally, the British Labour Movement is fully aware of the special and proud position of our country has come to occupy in the public opinion of the world. British aims and British conduct will determine, in large measure, the aims and conduct of all nations in the years which follow victory. If that is an achievement, it is also a trust. We in Britain have so to set our course that the chart we follow is at once an example and an inspiration to the rest of mankind. History has given us the opportunity to consecrate the sufferings of the world by fulfilling its hopes. That is the vision to which we must dedicate our lives. It is not only the debt we owe to the men and women who built our Movement; it is also our inescapable obligation to the sons and daughters of men who will follow us and whose lives will be shaped by the principles on which we build our effort. It is in that spirit we must go forward. There is no other high-road to a noble victory and just and enduring Peace.



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