

# 'FRIENDLINESS WORKING'

## The Story of the R.I.B.I. Conference at Blackpool

I HAVE seen friendliness working,' said Sir Wilfrid Garrett, speaking at the Monday morning session of R.I.B.I.'s 26th annual Conference, held at Blackpool between April 20th and 24th. Once again the Winter Gardens have received into halls, ballrooms, cafes, and lounges nearly 5,000 Rotarians and their wives, and once again the personality of a great President has brought to a Conference the atmosphere of a family party, turning friendliness to warm affection.

IT might be an instructive exercise in mathematics to assess the chances of a fine and sunny week-end in the middle of April, 1951, bearing in mind the deluge of water which has been blown across our islands since the late summer of 1950.

Shocking as the odds against it must have been, nevertheless the miracle happened—and not only for the period of the Conference, but for the vital days of preparation as well. The delegates arrived in the sun, and they left in the sun; and in the sun, on the Friday evening, they came to their first formal Conference gathering: the Reception given by the Mayor of Blackpool.

By nine o'clock the Empress Ballroom was well filled, to hear a short speech from the Mayor himself; from the President of the Blackpool Club—and (as a happy 'extra') from the Archbishop of York, who shared fully in the Conference activities (and patently enjoyed them) during the two days of his visit.

### The First Session

The next morning, floor and galleries of the hall were full for the first main session. We heard that the registration figure was then 4,852; that 80 per cent. of the Clubs were represented; that the theme of the Conference was to be 'The Struggle for Freedom'; and we rose to receive R.I.B.I. President Tom Cashmore.

The sheer bulk of a Blackpool Conference audience is a challenge to the man who presides over it . . . and President Cashmore was able to accept that challenge without fear. Blackpool has a tradition of a warm-hearted humanity set in a frame that is almost more than life-size. Tom Cashmore is at least as large as life, and that week-end he was the source of a full measure of humanity and fellowship.

His Presidential Address was, as the Archbishop later said, 'statesmanlike and comprehensive'. It was a deliberately serious account of the problems which had faced the Movement during his year of office and of the problems which face its members now—both in their Rotary Clubs and in their obligations as citizens. This speech, by its sincerity, by its avoidance of rhetoric, and its appeal for deep thinking and conscientious action, set the key for the week-end.

The President was followed by John Oscar Barksdale, a Rotary Foundation Fellow from Virginia, now studying in England. In a few minutes he showed himself a thoughtful

man, appreciative of his opportunity, deliberately training himself to fight the war against ignorance and apathy, appreciating that there are 'various aspects of the truth', and claiming that 'if we are going to meet the enemy of misunderstanding, we must not underestimate his power'.

And next an inspiring address by that



The Blackpool Conference at the Saturday morning session. (Photo: B. A. Meadows.)

most venerable of men, the Archbishop of York. In thanking him afterwards R.I.B.I. Past President Almy rightly said that the Archbishop had given the Conference a special dignity. His speech was magnificent to hear, and forceful in its criticism of our modern tendency to accept our rights and deny our responsibilities. He attacked Marxian Communism, he made a memorable joke (duly recorded on page 6), and he called for 'an intelligent and a practical faith' with which to oppose the strength and self-sacrifice which is so typical of the forces which he saw so greatly menacing our free society.

### The First Business Session

In the afternoon, while the ladies were listening to Lady Merthyr 'in another place', the voting delegates attended their first Business Session, which, in the seriousness of

its discussions on the General Council's Annual Report, was a fitting sequel to an impressive morning.

Its outstanding feature, as surely every voting delegate would agree, was the Hon. Treasurer's presentation of his financial statement. In clarity it is hard to believe that it could have been surpassed, and the story that it told was one of reconstruction and of care for the future . . . so much so in fact that a Resolution from District No. 14, calling for 'continuance of financial economy at R.I.B.I., District, and Club levels' was firmly defeated—a defeat which can be counted a vote of confidence in an outstanding (and re-elected) Treasurer and in the good sense of the General Council.

The other more notable features of the meeting were perhaps a few minutes of thunderous denunciation of almost everyone and everything by a Rotarian from North of the Border, and a lively debate on the report of the Magazine Committee.

### The Sunday Group Meetings

The serious spirit of the Conference was well exemplified by what happened on the finest Sunday afternoon for very many

months. In spite of the brilliantly blue skies, the call of the sea, and the accessibility of the Lakes, more than 1,400 Rotarians attended the seven Group Discussions, and in the reports on the Tuesday morning it became clear that accommodation had been taxed to bursting point—even though it had been previously assessed by 'planners' who might be excused for having assumed that Sunday would be wet. The meeting for Club Bulletin Editors and ROTARY SERVICE Correspondents was certainly twice as large as in any previous year, and almost twice as lively. (It also produced the admirable suggestion that the 'dead wood' in the Clubs might well be pulped to provide more paper for the magazine.)

Sunday's programme ended with concurrent concerts in the Winter Gardens—one programme in the Opera House, and another

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## Comments of the Month

### The Blackpool Conference

ANOTHER Conference is over—and a Blackpool Conference, too: which means that it was a Conference which gloried in its own size. It gloried, too, in its own friendliness, and, above all, in the personality of its President. Whereas other towns may force us into separatism, at Blackpool the emphasis is on unity.

Huge sessions and huge social occasions mean, of course, that an additional value is placed on the smaller meetings, since it is there alone that the individual Rotarian can re-discover his own individuality.

And perhaps that is why, on an exceptionally fine Sunday afternoon, far more than half of the Rotarians registered at Blackpool refused the call of the open air and attended Aims and Objects and other Group Meetings. At these there was the chance for the intimate interchange of opinion, and it is notable that, more and more, these Sunday Conference discussions are being handed over to 'the floor of the house', with little more than the advisory help of the R.I.B.I. 'experts' on the various platforms. (Is this perhaps why the attendances continue to increase?)

Formally and informally, even the Groups sub-divided: some to go on talking over tea; others, like those interested in the new 'Philip and Elizabeth' Clubs, to meet again for more information and to see which way the road stretches for the future. Whatever may happen in that particular connection, or in others of which we have no notice, it would be nothing new if, in the years to come, informal conversations between a group of men at the R.I.B.I. Conference, meeting quite outside the official programme, should prove to have fanned a flame of service destined to spread nation-wide.

### The Festival of Britain

THE impression that every Delegate will have taken away from the Blackpool Conference is that it has been a 'family affair'—and within a few days of the close of the Conference we had all of us entered into another 'family' celebration: our 1951 Festival.

As President Tom Cashmore suggested in a powerful speech to the *Finsbury Club* (after opening the London District's Festival of Britain Rotary Rendezvous at the Kingsley Hotel), it is our love of liberty which links together our people and the peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and makes this an occasion for family retrospect and for a brave look to the future. Britain can rejoice in her achievements, and can be proud that the rest of the world still looks to her for leadership. In Rotary, too, we can be thankful that this Festival period gives us our chance to spread the family idea still further: for we are linked not only with the peoples of our own blood, but, internationally, through the Movement to which we belong, to a family of more than 80 countries.

On another page in this issue is a list of nearly a score of 'Festival' towns where special arrangements for groups of visiting Rotarians have been made; and individual Rotarians, arriving here from the corners of the earth, are already enjoying fellowship and hospitality in

the homes of our members. Whatever we may think of the outward signs of the Festival of 1951 (and those of us who live and work in London have cause to be proud of the excitements on the South Bank of the Thames) it is in the homes of Rotarians, in the Rotary Rest Rooms and Marquees, in the Rotary Rendezvous, in fellowship and in service, that the Festival will find its most lasting worth.

### Hobbies Exhibitions

ATTENTION is drawn to page 16 of this issue, which—all too briefly—summarizes in pictures and reports a group of more than a dozen Hobbies and Arts and Crafts Exhibitions. Many of them have been linked, in their respective localities, to the Festival of Britain, but they have a most encouraging way of repeating themselves, year by year. These, and the more ambitious Careers Exhibitions, do much to inculcate the sense of community for which President Cashmore appealed in his address to the Blackpool Conference.

### 'Rotary Service'

THIS ISSUE of ROTARY SERVICE is very largely devoted to the reporting of the R.I.B.I. Conference, and in the following pages will be found extracts from all the principal addresses, the results of the elections, and the transactions of the business sessions. When all this, together with a page of Festival news (page 10), has been included, there is, unfortunately, only a very limited amount of space for other matter. Much news from Clubs and Districts, therefore, is unavoidably held over until next month, and we hope that the Correspondents concerned will accept our apologies for the quite unavoidable delay.

#### ON THE COVER

A Blackpool Conference picture. Left to right: R.I.B.I. President Tom Cashmore, Mrs. Stamp Wortley, Mrs. Cashmore, and R.I.B.I. Vice-President (and President-nominee) Stamp W. Wortley.  
(Photo: Blackpool Gazette and Herald.)