

# BAHÁ'Í JOURNAL

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With the issue, we introduce a new feature of the Journal—in future a section of each issue will be used by the National Teaching Committee to report progress, to explain its plans and keep us all *au fait* with the teaching work being done. Now that the Six-Year Plan is at last gaining momentum, more towns are being worked and more still soon will be, this section will be of thrilling and vital interest.

## NATIONAL TEACHING COMMITTEE

### “A SHINING BEACON. . .”

The Teaching Conference in Manchester, February 2nd-3rd, came to the British Bahá'í Community as a providential opportunity for national consultation on the Six Year Plan. A challenging responsibility faced us all, to establish by Convention, 1946, the first nine goal towns to be developed into Spiritual Assemblies. Urging us on was the Guardian's latest call: “I appeal to the entire community to dedicate itself to this sacred and urgent task. . . .” The Plan, he had told us, “must not, . . . cannot fail.” Yet the months were advancing, and already almost a third of the golden time had slipped away. Manchester, all who attended knew, must mark a turning-point and inaugurate the chapter of true collective action.

With these needs in view, a discussion agenda was planned with the following themes:—

- (a) “The State of the Faith in the British Isles.”
- (b) “The Six Year Plan.”
  - (1) The Guardian Calls for Pioneers: How Shall They Be Obtained?
  - (2) The Goal Is Nineteen Assemblies: Which Towns Are They to Be? Which are the nine goal towns for Convention, 1946?
  - (3) The Plan Requires “Utmost Effort, Vigilance, Perseverance, and Self-Sacrifice.”

What regular teaching activity will be carried out by Assemblies, Groups, and isolated believers?

What assistance will the communities and believers need?

After opening statements from the Chairman, Mrs. Slade, and members of the Teaching Committee, the first session of the Conference was devoted to reports from the five Assemblies and two Groups, with wide discussion following each report. The status of the Faith was clearly set forth, and the strength of the existing communities as reservoirs for the prosecution of the Plan was evaluated. Many excellent teaching methods were shared, which are briefly reported elsewhere in the “Journal.” Even at this session the friends were eager to plunge into the main consultation, how to achieve the goals of the Plan; and the requirements for goal towns, with the possible localities, were reviewed in a preliminary way.

The second session on Saturday evening was conducted by the National Assembly. It was opened with prayers and selections from the Words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, chosen and read with profound sensitivity to our responsibility to teach this mighty Cause. Through this devotional period the Conference was lifted to a realm of dedication and spiritual resolution, which was immeasurably reinforced by Hasan Balyuzi's inspired message. Then, for perhaps an hour, the friends consulted together,



sharing their vision of the Plan and their will to carry it to victory. At the close, by common consent, the hour of the Sunday session was advanced, that the Conference might speedily apply its renewed energy to the requirements of the Six Year Plan.

The session on Sunday morning marked, we may well believe, a milestone in the Faith in the British Isles—a transition in the Plan from preliminary consideration and sporadic effort, to true collective action. Working with intense concentration and unity, the Conference gave careful thought to each potential goal town, selected nine localities for focus between now and Convention, and drew up practical plans for regular teaching activity in each. The towns recommended by the Conference are: (1) Northampton; (2) Blackburn; (3) Nottingham; (4) St. Ives; (5) Leeds; (6) Blackpool; (7) Birmingham; (8) Liverpool; and (9) Cardiff.

To qualify as a goal town, the N.S.A. had determined, a community must carry on "active work . . . with sufficient regularity to justify reasonable hopes of an Assembly within the period of the Six Year Plan." Thus, the Conference recommended that outside teachers be sent monthly in March, April, and May to the four Northern towns, and to Nottingham and Birmingham. Ambitious public teaching would be inaugurated in several of the towns, while individual contacts and firesides would be stressed in all. Specialized teaching programmes already being carried out in Northampton and St. Ives would be reinforced.

The need for pioneers was also carefully reviewed. The Conference recommended Cardiff as the most suitable goal town in Wales, and the Joseph Lee family reached a definite decision during the Conference to pioneer in this community. It was unanimously recognized that pioneers for Birmingham and Liverpool are urgently required, to assure their development as goal towns of the Plan, and a call went forth from the Conference for volunteers to arise. The shared experiences of Ursula Newman and Mrs. Brown, who went out as pioneers in 1945, deepened the consciousness of all who heard them, that pioneering is a privilege and bounty lying within the grasp of every believer.

While recommending nine towns for immediate concentrated effort, the Conference also opened the door to the development of other goal communities. A highlight of the sessions was the pledge by Miss Una Townshend to pioneer in Dublin this summer, as soon as she is demobilized, and the friends consulted with her on the conditions of teaching work in Eire.

The growth of the Faith in South-West England was also considered, and Exeter and Bristol were recommended as key localities in this area.

On Sunday afternoon the Conference turned to a consideration of the means whereby the Plan might be carried out. The spontaneous and self-sacrificing efforts of pioneers and travelling teachers were recognized as basic needs. Individual effort by all believers, whether in goal towns or other communities, was emphasized as the key to collective action, and a most fruitful discussion of individual teaching followed. The development of teaching circuits in the North, Midlands, and South was recommended, as well as the holding of frequent regional conferences. Publicity, literature, and contributions to the Fund were also discussed, and recommendations for "New World Order" were passed on to the N.S.A.

Attendance at the Conference was a significant confirmation of teaching plans. A total of forty-five attended, including four non-Bahá'is, and of these twenty-seven represented the nine goal towns (or nearby areas) recommended by the Conference! With the exception of Bournemouth, which sent a written report, all Assemblies and Groups were personally represented.

Many practical considerations lie ahead. (1) The need for the successful establishment of pioneers in Cardiff, Birmingham, and Liverpool is crucial. (2) The response of teachers to the needs of the teaching circuits will be a vital factor. (3) The provision of adequate funds to sustain activities in nine goal towns will be a test of devotion and a measuring-rod of success. (4) Above all, the call of the Conference speeds to each individual heart. **All** must arise in service to Bahá'u'lláh at this critical hour. **All** must contribute to the progress of the Six Year Plan. However small or inconspicuous our work may seem, we must find a way to bring our share of life and strength to the common effort. For nothing less than our "utmost" can ensure the victory.

That the British Bahá'is can succeed in their vast collective effort, no one who attended the Teaching Conference will doubt. In the words of Hasan Balyuzi, the Conference stands "as a shining beacon in the progress of the Faith."

It remains for us now to fulfil the hopes of our beloved Guardian, and, through our united dedication to practical efforts, ensure the swift development of the goal communities of the Six Year Plan.

—National Teaching Committee.

On receiving the report on the Teaching Conference, the Guardian sent us the following cable:—

**Overjoyed recent decisions Teaching Conference. Ardently praying speedy realization cherished hopes. Urge supreme united continuous effort. Cabling one thousand pounds furtherance noble aims Six Year Plan.**

**Deepest love Shoghi.**

### WHO CAN PIONEER?

To be a pioneer very few qualifications are required. If this were not true you would not be reading the words of a pioneer! To be a good pioneer, only the highest qualities suffice. If this were not true I am sure many more people would venture forth. But as time is short, the need urgent and our numbers so small, we must not dwell upon our shortcomings but set forth and pray and strive to develop these high qualities while we pioneer.

In all sincerity I believe that there are no difficulties which will not be removed if we desire with all our heart and soul to go out to teach. I learnt this very slowly and reluctantly and spent one unhappy year trying to work things out my own way, believing I had to solve all kinds of difficulties first, before I could be free. The moment I said, "Nothing shall stand in the way; I will go where I can be useful," and did not make any reservations about "if I can find a good job," etc., I found the way clear. For making this slight effort, I have been rewarded beyond measure in happiness.

Not everyone can have the good fortune I have had to work with such a sympathetic and co-operative fellow Bahá'í who has prepared the ground for teaching and has such knowledge and understanding of the Faith. Nor can everyone have the good fortune to live in such a beautiful part of the world, where there are so many interesting people. But I think pioneers who go to Liverpool to help Arthur Cole and to Birmingham to help Miss Eastgate have a wonderful experience awaiting them. In fact, I feel like Bottom and wish I could play those parts too!

If you want to pioneer you can. If we have faith we will succeed. There are few barriers which are not self-imposed and none which God cannot remove.

—Ursula Newman.

### DEVELOPING THE GOAL TOWNS.

In all of the communities recommended by the Teaching Conference a programme of action is being carried out, to qualify them by Convention, 1946, as goal towns of the Six Year Plan.

The following will show the status and progress of the Faith in these key localities:—

#### (1) Northampton.

This is our largest Bahá'í Group, numbering seven adults and one youth. Fortnightly public meetings are held in the Friends' Meeting House, and weekly firesides and a study class for believers are also held. In January the Group invited the Quakers to join them in open forum discussion on the theme: "Contributions to World Unity." With speakers from each community, under a Bahá'í chairman, a spirited meeting of thirty-five resulted. On March 21st a public meeting will be held in Carnegie Hall, seating 200, with Marion Hofman and Peter Wilkinson speaking on: "Can We Hold the Peace?" A local doctor will act as chairman, and wide publicity through invitations, fifty large posters, and advertising, is planned. Northampton sent six representatives to the Teaching Conference, has joined with Nottingham in its International Youth Symposium, and has two members planning to pioneer in the next Bahá'í year.

#### (2) Blackburn.

Our second Bahá'í Group includes four adults and one youth. Fortnightly public meetings, with attendance up to thirteen, of whom four or five are deeply interested, are held at the Friends' Meeting House; and fortnightly advertising has resulted in a dozen inquiries this year. Members of a peace movement, the Friendship Society, have been interested in the Faith, and a Bahá'í talk was recently arranged for Mr. Harper. The Group, through Mrs. Cooper, has greatly assisted the work in Blackpool and Accrington. On March 17th David Hofman will speak at a public meeting, to be publicized through advertising and a Bahá'í exhibit. Outside speakers will also be sent in April and May. Blackburn sent three Bahá'ís and two close students of the Faith to the Conference in Manchester, the latter being deeply impressed.

#### (3) Nottingham.

Our pioneer, Mrs. K. V. Brown, assisted by four believers in near-by Ilkeston and Loughborough, are co-operating to develop this goal town. Fortnightly public meetings were opened on February 1st, with a talk by Mrs. Brown. On February 24th International Youth Day was celebrated with Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í speakers, including Shoa Nikampur of Birmingham University, Hassan Sabri of Loughborough College, Bill Matthews of the R.A.F., and Esther Richardson as chairman. Ernest Lacey, Bahá'í youth of Ilkeston, contributed much in planning



this Symposium. On March 17th Marion Hofman will speak, and in April Evelyn Baxter will be scheduled. Nottingham is to have outside teaching help each month. Four from this area attended the Teaching Conference, where Mr. Lacey was confirmed as a believer, to the joy of all.

**(4) St. Ives.**

Ursula Newman and Bernard Leach are introducing the Faith in St. Ives through weekly public meetings, weekly advertising, and devotional meetings for inquirers on Feast days. While contacts have thus far been with an intellectual circle, every effort is being made to reach all classes. The renting of a shop is planned, and as the days grow longer there will be talks for the fishermen at the wharves. In April Mrs. Slade will visit St. Ives. Recently an inquiry on the Faith was published in the newspaper and answered (inaccurately) by a clergyman.

**(5) Leeds.**

The five believers of Leeds, members of the Bradford community, have decided to carry on separate teaching work in Leeds. This step, which is supported by the Bradford Assembly, was made possible by Peter Wilkinson's return after demobilization. Three representatives attended the Teaching Conference and have since inaugurated their meetings with great enthusiasm. A large shop exhibition will be held this spring, and outside teachers have been requested monthly. Marion and David Hofman will visit Leeds in March.

**(6) Blackpool.**

Although Mrs. Curwen is the only believer in Blackpool, she has attracted a wide circle of interested contacts, recently holding a meeting for sixteen. Fortnightly firesides, to confirm these attracted ones, will be held and outside speakers will be sent to assist in March, April, and May. It is planned to send Marion Hofman, Jessica Young, and Mrs. Cooper. Prospects in Blackpool seem bright indeed!

**(7) Birmingham.**

A pioneer is needed in Birmingham, which offers wide opportunities for the Faith, for the three believers in this area are sorely limited in their ability to carry on the teaching work. However, Miss Eastgate has recently resumed firesides and, with faith that a pioneer will respond to this call, the local friends are co-operating with the Teaching Committee to inaugurate public meetings. On March 3rd David and Marion Hofman will speak at the Co-operative Hall in Sutton Coldfield, under Miss Eastgate's chairmanship, and intensive efforts are being made to reach a wide circle of contacts. Details

will be reported later. Mrs. Brown of Nottingham will assist with a fireside after this meeting, and other outside speakers will be sent in April and May.

**(8) Liverpool.**

Liverpool is also a community which requires a pioneer, if active teaching is to be successfully prosecuted. Arthur Cole, who is studying at Liverpool University, and Margaret Shanks, youth believer living in Southport (twenty miles distant), are ready to co-operate as fully as possible. Mr. Cole recently addressed the Unitarian Church, and contacts are being developed with the International Friendship League and the Esperanto Society. Several people are studying the Faith, and with intensive follow-up, progress toward a Spiritual Assembly seems assured. In April David and Marion Hofman will assist, while Jessica Young has been invited for May. To be effective, however, a pioneer is urgently needed in this town, once visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

**(9) Cardiff.**

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lee have arisen to pioneer in this important town in Wales, one of the virgin areas of the Six Year Plan. At present Mr. Lee is in Cardiff, seeking employment and a home for his family. Active co-operation is being extended by Mrs. Rose Jones, local believer. It is felt that the permanent settlement of this Bahá'í family will provide a firm nucleus for the future growth of the Faith in Cardiff, and the prayers of all the friends are sought for the speedy success of these plans.

**(10) Exeter.**

The work in Exeter, although not advanced sufficiently to qualify it as a goal town, deserves our interest and support. For Exeter is one of the localities of South-west England which is recommended by the Teaching Conference for development. Here for more than a month the Torquay Assembly has carried out weekly public meetings, with invitations and advertising, and Lilian Stevens and Muriel Matthews have regularly attended, despite severe weather and other difficulties. Seven or eight new contacts have been reached and friendly relations established with the press. The meetings are now held in the Lecture Hall of the Unitarian Church. Speakers have included Ursula Newman, Bernard Leach, and Marion Hofman, in addition to the Torquay friends. Faithful to the Guardian's hope, Torquay is striving to extend the light of the Faith in the South-west, and we hope before long that definite progress will be seen and that Exeter may become a goal town of the Plan.



Unfortunately it has later turned out that the Lee family are unable to go to Cardiff, so a pioneer is still needed for this town.

#### HIGHLIGHTS IN THE TEACHING FIELD.

The Bournemouth community has just completed a week's teaching campaign, yielding results unequalled since the days of Dr. Esslemont. On February 17th a public meeting was held at the Theosophical Hall, with Richard St. Barbe Baker and David Hofman as speakers, and Marion Hofman in the chair. The theme was: "World Order Is the Goal." Over sixty-five attended, with standing room only! Two follow-up firesides were held, which attracted eighteen and fourteen persons respectively, with David Hofman leading the discussion. The spirit of these meetings and the interest shown were exceptionally fine, and several hopeful contacts have been made. Much hard work went into the preparation of this campaign. Two hundred invitations were distributed, many clubs and organizations were invited, three posters were placed in population centres of Bournemouth and Southbourne, and display advertisements and news items were carried in the daily and weekly papers. Weekly fireside meetings are being continued at the home of Elsie Cranmer, and outside speakers will be sent as desired by the Assembly.

At the request of the National Spiritual Assembly, Marion Hofman has visited the Bournemouth and Torquay communities for consultation on the Six Year Plan. A week was spent in Bournemouth, aiding with public teaching, and three days in Torquay and Exeter. Through these consultations the friends have discovered new ways in which to assist the Plan. Two Bournemouth believers will be able to assist with shop exhibits in goal towns, and several friends in both Bournemouth and Torquay have contributed valuable contacts in goal communities. Thought has been given, also, to the further development of Torquay's extension work in Exeter.

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#### The Qualifications of a Believer.

At this time, when all of us are, in active support of the Six Year Plan, trying to spread the Faith as widely as we can and to confirm new believers to people our new communities, it is a good thing to have clear in our minds what exactly is required of anyone wishing to declare himself a believer. For a soul which is drawing near to the Lord of the Age needs gentle but sure guidance — neither too little should be asked of it nor too much. A look at our own membership cards will help us, for thereon is quoted a part of our Articles of Association, under which the Faith was incorporated in this

country. If we read this, we find a very clear statement: "That he or she possesses the qualifications of Bahá'í Faith and practice, required under the following standard:—

Full recognition of the station of the Fore-runner (the Báb), the Author (Bahá'u'lláh), and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Faith.

Unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by Their pen. Loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sacred will.

Close association with the spirit as well as the form of present day Bahá'í administration throughout the world."

That is the standard required. Each intending believer must thoroughly understand the stations of the three Principal Figures of the Faith. If he does this, he will automatically comply with the next clause and unreservedly accept and submit to what has been revealed by Their pen. Then he is asked to read, or have read to him, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will, which he must also accept. When he has reached this stage, there follows his declaration. If he is in a town where there is a local spiritual assembly, he writes a letter to that local assembly; if not, he writes to the National Spiritual Assembly. When he has been accepted as a believer and has become a member of the community, he progresses in understanding of the last clause quoted, to closely associate "with the spirit as well as the form of present day Bahá'í administration," which is the very heart of our Bahá'í organisations.

These are the qualifications of a believer. It is sometimes said that an intending believer should first read this or that book. Reading about any subject is a great help in learning about it and most people do learn that way. If an intending believer has carefully studied a book such as "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era," we know that he has a good idea in his mind of what the Teachings are. But everyone does not learn through books; some learn far more easily through hearing the spoken word. Moreover, people have been known to read every Bahá'í book in publication without becoming believers, so the reading of books is not the standard by which to judge. The criterion is the free acceptance by the heart of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá—this and everything which follows from it is what Bahá'u'lláh asks of each human heart in this Age.

#### Convention.

To avoid delay, details of Convention arrangements have been sent out by separate circular. A report will appear in the next issue of the "Journal."



## Summer School.

Separate notices should by now have reached everyone announcing the time and place of Summer School this year. May we say once more than we hope that everyone who by any means can, will attend and help to make this first post-war Summer School a great success.

The N.S.A. has appointed a Management Committee to organise the School in advance and to be responsible whilst it is in progress. This consists of Mr. H. M. Balyuzi, Miss D. Dewhirst, Mrs. D. Ferraby, Miss D. Lovell, and Miss V. Rate. In addition a Programme Committee is already at work, consisting of Mr. H. M. Balyuzi, Mrs. G. Cooper, Mrs. M. Hofman, and Mr. W. Wilkins. An Entertainments Committee—Miss N. Cooper, Mr. R. Coulson, Mr. P. Wilkinson, and Miss J. Young—will look after amusements, excursions, etc.

Come and bring all your friends—the school will provide a very pleasant and a most interesting holiday.

## Committees.

The Publicity and the Public Relations Committees have been disbanded, as the members had too much other work and the committees could not function properly. Publicity in connection with teaching campaigns is handled by the National Teaching Committee.

"Verily, I say unto thee, every soul which ariseth today to guide others to the path of safety and infuse in them the Spirit of Life, the Holy Spirit will inspire that soul with evidences, proofs and facts and the lights will shine upon it from the Kingdom of God."

'Abdul-Bahá.

## New Believers.

We welcome with much joy to membership of the Community, Mr. T. B. Hesketh and Mrs. K. Hesketh of Ringwood, Hants, Mr. Clarence Lacey of Ilkeston, Miss Joan Smith of Liverpool, Mrs. J. Tremblay, Miss A. Rosen and Mrs. E. Brown of Manchester.

## News.

A letter of welcome, together with a pamphlet containing extracts from Bahá'í Writings on World Order, was sent to every delegate to the recent meeting of the United Nations General Council in London. Only one replied, namely, one of the Ethiopian delegates, who sent a warm letter of thanks.

On January 9th, just at the commencement of the Council meetings, a public meeting was

held in Caxton Hall, London, with several speakers on the subject of World Order. About 100 people were present and the discussion afterwards was good. A similar meeting is planned for April 17th, also at Caxton Hall.

After both had made speeches in the House of Commons in favour of a world government, letters and some of the Guardian's Writings on the subject were sent to Mr. Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, and to Mr. Anthony Eden. Mr. Bevin, through his private secretary, sent a pleasant letter of thanks.

Nawruz was celebrated by the various British communities. London had a big crowd, though not so many as last year. Northampton held a big public meeting at which discussion was animated.

The two pioneers in St. Ives had a good gathering, at which 25 were present. Reports from others have not been received yet.

Lt. Fred Mortenson of Chicago, who has been in Austria with the U.S. Army, was in London for some weeks on his way back to the States. Mr. R. Mottahedeh of New York, who visited England with Mrs. Mottahedeh last autumn, is here again for a stay of a few weeks.

## The World Community of Bahá'u'lláh.

The following report sent by 'Abdullah Isma'il Anwar from Mecca, Arabia, is quoted in the Haifa Newsletter:—

"In Ridvan last three members were elected for the Bahá'í Centre in Hedjaz (Arabia). It was decided to name the Bahá'í library—Bastami Library—in honour of Mulla 'Ali Bastami, the first Bahá'í martyr in Arabia. There are at present five believers in Mecca. It is hoped to establish a Bahá'í Assembly as soon as possible. Meanwhile Bahá'í meetings are held for the study of the Bahá'í Faith and for discussing Bahá'í subjects.

"Our relations with the local people have been on the best of terms, thanks to Bahá'u'lláh's confirmation and blessings. We have tried to be of service to everyone and have developed many friendships. We have won the respect of the authorities and, so far, we have had no opposition from any source. We are very grateful for the Abhá blessings which have been continually bestowed upon us."

Seventy people attended a Bahá'í Youth meeting at Neckargemünde in Germany on March 10th.