

The London Spiritual Assembly for
1945 - 1946.

At the election held on April 21st, the following were
elected to serve for the coming year:-

- Chairman: Mr. H.M.Balyuzi.
- Vice-Chairman: Miss S.M.Wellby
- Secretary: Mr. J.G.Ferraby
- Treasurer: Mrs.K.V.Brown
- Mrs. D.Ferraby
- Miss V.C.Isenthal
- Miss U.A.Newman
- Mrs. I.Slade
- Mr.W.Wilkins.

Calendar of Baha'i events for May.

- 2nd, Wednesday, 7.0 p.m. Twelfth Day of Ridvan. Public feast. Food contributions to caterer, Mrs. Hyett, please.
- 17th, Thursday 7.0 p.m. Feast of Azamat - Grandeur. Hostess: Zara Warman
Chairman: Ursula Newman.
- 22nd, Tuesday, midnight. Declaration of the Bab. Devotional meeting at 2 hrs. 11 mins. after sunset.
- 23rd, Wednesday 7.0 p.m. Public celebration of Declaration of the Bab. Food contributions to caterer: Mrs. Brown.
- 29th, Tuesday 5.0 a.m. Commemoration of the Ascension of Baha'u'llah.

"Know thou, that upon whatever hearts the bountiful showers of mercy, raining from the "heaven" of divine Revelation, have fallen, the earth of those hearts hath verily been changed into the earth of divine knowledge and wisdom. What myrtles of unity hath the soil of their hearts produced! What blossoms of true knowledge and wisdom hath their illumined bosoms yielded!".....from the Ighan.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE LONDON BAHAI
COMMUNITY, YEAR 101

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This is the **close** of the first year in the second century of the Baha'i Dispensation, and today we look back and review the record of our actions in that year, since its colourful inauguration with the celebration of Nawruz 101, and the Centenary, that brought us before a large section of the public. From then onwards, we have managed to maintain a measure of public interest, by our own exertions.

The actual size, in numbers, of our community, has remained almost constant. We have again been spared loss of life due to flying bombs and rockets, in this sixth year of war, even though Miss Baxter had a narrow escape. Although some members left London temporarily, we have been able to maintain all the usual activities without interruption, and we may well thank Baha'u'llah that He has watched over us, in order to preserve us for that work of rehabilitation of the peoples of the world, that surpasses all other rehabilitation schemes devised by the mind of men. It is therefore all the more tragic to record that we have lost one of the believers who was still in the best years of enthusiasm - Brian Stevenson who suffered a long illness.

During the year we have had one enrolment, - Mrs. Florence Saunders, and have joyfully welcomed the return of Betty Warden, Donald Millar, and Mary Basil Hall, all of whom were serving in other parts of the country until recently. Philip Hainsworth has also been stationed near London, and was able to visit us frequently. Other visitors to the Centre during the year, were Tom Dowson, (Australia), Mrs. Toye, (just outside the London radius), Clarence Steigall and Miss Magruder, both from the States; and others who contacted us were Lieut. Marengella, and Mr. Kinney from New York. The fortunes of war have also added to our community Norman Smith, a member of the American Community, who has endeared himself to us, by his helpfulness, good humour, and generosity.

This year we have reverted to the practice of holding 19-Day Feasts on the correct date, even during the winter evenings, and the attendance has been quite good. In addition we have had two Unity Feasts, one in July, and the other in January, on Saturday afternoons.

Study classes have not been held this year, for lack of students. It was decided to run them as more informal discussion evenings, but these failed to attract people. Nevertheless, evenings have brought a number of individual enquirers to the Centre, and John Ferraby has always been prepared to answer their questions and in this way made the Cause known.

What other practical steps have we taken to respond to the exhortations we received from the Guardian and from the N.S.A. apart from praying for the success of the SIX-YEAR PLAN?

We changed the form of our Sunday meetings, in order to appeal to a wider variety of tastes, and kept on with our advertisements. By interspersing devotional meetings with the usual introductory talks and some more advanced ones, we were also able to space our rota of speakers over a wider period, and probably we benefited from the change ourselves, - it is certainly a good exercise having to give spontaneous answers to questions put in searching form by our own members, for the benefit of visitors.

Again, in order to give a chance to those who cannot come on a Sunday afternoon, we have tried out two evening public meetings, and advertised them in the usual way. These were held in January and March, and were addressed by Hasan Balyuzi and Marguerite Wellby. The attendance was not greater than at the Sunday meetings.

It is, perhaps, quite a good augury, that we have had more than one request for the use of our premises for meetings held by other bodies. In one instance, we have agreed that we would do so occasionally, but not as a regular weekly function, because it would be necessary for a believer to be on the premises till the end of the meeting, and then to be responsible for locking up, and no doubt, it would be difficult to find the personnel required, regularly.

Nawruz 192 again filled the Centre with friends, and this year it was so crowded, that some people were unable to stay, and many were unable to see the dramatic presentation of "The Eternal Covenant", (written and produced by Hasan Balyuzi), but had to listen as best they could from the corridor. We feel that we shall probably have to hire a hall for next year's celebrations.

When discussing teaching plans last summer, we resolved to hold meetings similar to the Race Amity Meeting, from time to time, in order to keep the Faith in view of the public. In practice we have achieved only one such meeting, but it was a very good one. It was, too, at this time of planning, that we received a request from Mr. Cofman of the Ethical section of the Engineer's Study Group, to collaborate with that body.

The result of the two impulses was the Victory House Meeting, entitled "First Steps towards World Unity". It was not actually advertised as a Baha'i meeting, and the chairman and speakers were prominent people whose names would

be likely to draw the public, and who did not mention the Baha'i Faith. Not even the Baha'i speaker, Marguerite Mellby, who gave the summing up in clear terms, and with a simplicity and charm that impressed the audience most favourably, made any mention of the Faith. Nevertheless, sufficient publicity was given through the invitations sent out, with leaflets explaining the principles of those societies participating in the organizing of the meeting, and each society had a display of pamphlets and books. It was suggested that these societies, namely: The Research Coordination Committee, Service Nation Movement, and World Unity Group, should keep in contact for the purpose of running further meetings along similar lines, and taking concerted action. One such meeting was under consideration, but on this occasion we were not in agreement with the ideas expressed, and eventually nothing came of the proposed meeting.

At the present moment, we are preparing for a similar joint meeting, although the invitation came in this instance from a different source, and our two collaborators are not so politically minded. Mr. Davies of the International Friendship League London Federation made the offer, and the Service Nation Movement will work with us, too. It is certainly a hopeful sign if other societies approach us, either because they admire our principles themselves and realise our common approach to current problems, or because they feel that we can command sufficient support and respect from the public.

Apart from these combined meetings, we have outlined a framework for a Baha'i meeting to be held soon after the cessation of hostilities, and we shall be able to go straight ahead with our plans for "New Horizons".

We have had opportunities of sending our own speakers to some other societies. John Ferraby gave an introductory talk to the Ethical Church, Bayswater, in July last, and, as a result, was enabled to give a second talk in October, and a copy of Esslemont's book was presented to them for their library.

Ursula Newman presented the Baha'i Teachings to the South Kensington branch of the International Friendship League, and Hasan Balyuzi addressed the Ealing branch, and Vivian Isenthal gave a talk at the Richmond branch, and is also listed on the current month's programme at the Wembley branch. Youth House, Camden Town, asked for a speaker, and Vivian Isenthal was sent there, and met with a barrage of searching questions, not all of which were constructive.

So much for concerted activities; but as for individual efforts at teaching and making the Faith known to a wider public, we are not able to assess the full value of the work of each Baha'i. We can see the results of some

individual efforts, such as the extension teaching in Ealing, which is the direct outcome of Vivian Isenthal's fireside meetings. The most successful public meeting held at the Oak room of the Palladium Cinema, at Ealing, in November, entitled "World Citizenship - On What Foundation?" brought the teachings to about forty new people, and was followed up (as it was preceded), by sympathetic notices in the local press, where monthly advertising is maintained, and an article on the firesides was accepted. A copy of Esslement was also accepted by the Southall public library, and New World Order is taken by the Ealing Central Library. A display of Baha'i books has been taken by Burnside's bookshop, (Ealing), where enquiries were made about the Faith, and our diaries had been sold. The believers in Hampstead, where advertising is also kept up in the local paper, hope to follow suit and hold a public meeting before long.

At South Kensington, Marguerite Wellby has held regular fireside meetings for nearly a year, and they are not only attended by a nucleus of friends, but are frequently visited by new people. Norman Smith is a regular visitor to both firesides, and brings lively friends in uniform. Other believers who have given their help at the Ealing firesides during the year, were Hasan Balyuzi, Marguerite Wellby, Ursula Newman, Walter Wilkins, and Mrs. Toye and Mr. Cole. Dorothy Ferraby visited Mrs. Saunders and spoke to a small gathering of her friends at Purley about the Baha'i Faith, and Mrs. Saunders hopes to develop regular fireside meetings, which, in turn, will form the basis for extension teaching.

So ends the plain statement of the events of the last 19 months, but we shall all draw different conclusions as to those things that we might still have done, or left undone, the ways in which they could have been done, or the ways in which we mean to do more next year. Each believer will know in his or her own heart how much he or she has helped in the community effort by direct or indirect service in a humble way.

This first year of the SIX-YEAR PLAN may be regarded as one of preparation. We can look forward to the five years ahead as possibly the most exciting in the history of the Faith in this country, for the Guardian has told us that the future of the Cause in Great Britain depends upon the success of the SIX YEAR PLAN, and he has also promised us a glorious future if we rise to the occasion.

Ahead of us lies a period of history vibrant with terrific possibilities for Mankind, and full of pit-calls for humanity.

Let us go forward under Baha'u'llah's banner, with these words to inspire us:

"Gird up the loins of thine endeavour, that haply thou mayest guide thy neighbor to the law of God, the Most Merciful. Such an act, verily, excelleth all other acts in the sight of God, the All-possessing, the Most High."

London, April 1945.

Vivian Isenthal }
Ursula Newman } Joint
Secretaries.