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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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From Week to Week

It is quite possible that, when viewed over a sufficient period, the most important intellectual achievement of the twentieth century will be seen to be the emergence of the principle of indeterminacy. It is certain that the mechanical universe of the nineteenth century, the inevitability of effects from causes and the consequent inadmissibility of miracle, while it provided a groundwork for the technological advance of which we were (are we now?) so proud, also suggested a philosophy, of which Darwin was a semi-conscious exponent, and Marx the political economist, and from that philosophy we now see that we must escape or perish.

Sir Arthur Eddington, in *The Nature of the Physical World* writes: "Strict causality is abandoned in the material world. Our ideas of the controlling laws are in process of reconstruction, and it is not possible to predict what kind of form they will ultimately take; but all the indications are that strict causality has dropped out permanently. . . ."

" . . . Our present conception of the physical world is hollow enough to contain almost anything. I think the reader will agree. There may indeed be a hint of ribaldry in his hearty assent. . . ."

And Sir James Jeans: "To-day there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. . . ."

We make this digression into contemporary mysticism because it appears fairly obvious that there is a direct connection between the present appalling situation, dialectical materialism, the inevitability of cause and effect, and a three-dimensional universe. Under the framework of that conception, there is no real politics except tool-power politics, and no escape from tool-power politics except through a Fourth Dimension, something extending at a right angle to either length, breadth or thickness. Determinacy may be a purely three-dimensional attribute.

For the moment, we leave the subject there.

. . .

There are three economic systems. The first is genuine Capitalism; the second genuine Socialism; the third Monopoly.

In the first, the producer meets the wishes of the consumer or goes out of business; in the second, the producer takes his orders from an omnipotent bureaucracy, and the consumer takes what is allowed to him; in the third, the producer serves the policy of a small omnipotent clique.

All three are still in operation; but the third is for the moment eliminating the other two.

In our opinion, the daunting feature of Lord Vansittart's exposure of the Fifth Column in key positions is not so much the facts in themselves, although they are serious enough, but the complete indifference of the general public, and, no doubt related, the careful evasion of the subject by the Press. Anyone who remembers, for instance, the public attitude to pro-Boer opinion fifty years ago, will appreciate the revolution in temperament which has replaced the (possibly) exaggerated nationalism of the late nineteenth century. Merely remarking on this phenomenon we pause to contemplate certain factors which connect the prominent clergy of the Church of England pilloried by Lord Vansittart. First we have the Bishop of Bradford. Bradford is a diocese in which Jews exercise quite a disproportionate influence in patronage of every description. The Bishop of Bradford played a "leading" part in forcing the abdication of King Edward VIII. Then we come to the Dean of Canterbury, formerly the Dean of Manchester, the home of the Laskis, Behrens, Schusters *et al.*; once if not still a world-wide focus of Jewish political and economic (or shall we say business) activity. And finally, in this galaxy of stars, we have the Rev. Gilbert Cope of Birmingham, where Dr. Barnes is the Bishop. Birmingham has tended to replace Manchester in the last twenty years in its Jewish activities. But of course all this may be coincidence.

. . .

We draw a sharp distinction between the population, or a considerable minority of it, and the United States as an effective world force. We like the former, but we consider the latter one of the worst afflictions of these tragic days. No international event of importance has been free in this century from their irresponsible interference. We need a Lord Vansittart to expose the history of the Irish question, India, and two Great Wars.

Dimensions

"Plato . . . speaks of some men living in such a condition that they were practically reduced to be denizens of a shadow world. They were chained, and perceived but the shadows of themselves and all real objects projected on a wall, towards which their faces were turned. All movements to them were but movements on the surface, all shapes but the shapes of outlines with no substantiality . . . He says that just as a man liberated from his chains could learn and discover that the world was solid and real . . . so the philosopher who has been liberated . . . can come and tell his fellow men of that which is more true than the visible sun—more noble than Athens, the visible state."—C. Howard Hinton, *The Fourth Dimension*.

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PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: March 28, 1950.

Foreign Affairs

(The Debate Continued)

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Ernest Bevin): . . . What we have done—and it is one of the six points which the right hon. Gentleman mentioned, so I do not know why we have been asked to do it—is to attempt not only the unity of Western Europe but the unity of the Western world. I think I might have had a little tribute for the work I have done in this matter. I am sure that, while there is talk of integration in Western Europe, Western Europe will not be strong enough in itself: it is the integration of the Western world that will give the strength and power necessary to defend ourselves. Europe has so torn itself to pieces with the catastrophic wars in which it has indulged in the last 30-odd years that it is going to take a long time to arm it again and pull it together, and to develop it economically. While His Majesty's Government promoted the unity of Western Europe which, as I said at the time, was the hard core which could be brought together to enable us to do something to create character, we had, at the same time, to try to develop this wider unity. . . . There may be resolutions carried in an Assembly without any details worked out, or without assessment of the responsibilities involved, which cannot be applied without very grave consideration.

For instance, I go to Strasbourg tomorrow. One of the proposals to be discussed is something which I am quite certain that this Parliament and this country could not accept—and indeed, the right hon. Gentleman himself discarded it—but which has been put forward by other countries. It is that we virtually create an executive body in Europe which, though not elected by the people, not even elected by Parliament, can by a majority in a very small group arrive at decisions which, by means of a simple majority, can be imposed upon a State. Supposing I agreed to a thing like that on behalf of the Government; this Parliament would not stand for it for one moment, but because I go there and say, "Really, gentlemen, this is not the way to do it," I am accused of dragging my feet.

What there has been in this European movement is a little bit too much of the oppositional complex, trying to translate into Europe the oppositional complex which we get in our own Parliaments. . . . People are going to that Assembly as individuals. Let us have an understanding. They are there to express their views, but they are not committing their Governments. That is the answer, and I cannot accept, whoever goes and expresses a unanimous opinion, that that, of itself, commits the Government. We have the responsibility of looking after the affairs of our country, and I was speaking in that sense. I am not criticising this decision at all. What I am pointing out, when the Ministers approach the problem, is that the Committee on General Affairs might approach the problem in a spirit of enthusiasm, but the Committee of Ministers must approach it in the spirit of the constitution, responsibility to Parliaments and of all other considerations. What we try to do is to bring a balanced judgment to bear on all these problems.

. . . It has been suggested that we have been slow. Well, I am told that I must not say anything about the Foreign Office; but I must take the credit that the bulk of the constructive work was actually done in the Foreign Office here. We did work jolly hard to put forward the scheme, and,

what is more important, we got the European countries to agree. That, at least, ought to be said to our credit. I get a good deal of talk from the United States, but, then, we are not integrating the United States with Europe. I wonder what sort of arguments I should get if the United States were in the Council of Europe and I was trying to put something over on their constitution. I am afraid there would be some very strong arguments that would develop.

The most important thing that has been raised is the accession to the Council of Europe of Germany. It is very difficult in a few moments to deal with a problem of this magnitude. I have no prejudice against Germany. I do not like what they have done in two wars, but does anyone? It is a little difficult sometimes to put this feeling on one side. On the other hand, we must not allow ourselves to forget the character of the people we are dealing with. That is vital. There has been trouble arising recently about the accession of Germany to the Council of Europe, and so far as we are concerned we take this line. We are going to try and avoid what happened at the League of Nations, in which there was a lot of courting of Germany to get them in. I am not complaining of that. People thought that it was a great thing to get Germany. Then afterwards there were the various attitudes adopted by Germany, which amounted to treatment of the League which, to put it at its best, was not courteous or decent to the rest of the people who were trying to work with them.

Mr. Churchill: The Hitler revolution had taken place.

Mr. Bevin: The Hitler revolution did not change the German character very much. It expressed it.

Mr. Churchill: No.

Mr. Bevin: That is what it did. It was latent there right from Bismarkian days. . . .

. . . If we want to bring France and Germany together, talking about arming Germany in any form is, I am satisfied, going to set the clock back for a considerable time. I talk with my French colleagues about the great problems with which we have to deal. . . .

. . . The other point which the right hon. Gentleman raised was with regard to Haifa. This matter was not quite so simple as the right hon. Gentleman suggested. This place was allocated to the Arabs under the United Nations resolution. Israel did not accept that point. She proceeded to take it, and Iraq then cut off the oil. Since that time, we have used all the diplomatic pressure that we could to get Iraq to open this pipe-line and to allow the oil to flow. But Iraq is a sovereign and independent State. I suppose she has a right to come to her own conclusions on this matter as an independent State, and she absolutely declines to allow, in the face of her public opinion, this oil to flow.

That raises the question whether oil should come through the Suez Canal. While I was in Egypt, I was instructed to raise this question with Nahas Pasha. He argued cogently and legally, as did the right hon. Gentleman the other way today, in view of the state of war still existing between the Arabs and the Israelites, and he absolutely declined to yield on that point. The matter is still being pursued and will be pursued until we get a solution. But one handicap in dealing with the Israeli business is that practically none of the United Nations resolutions have been accepted by Israel.

The difficulty that other countries find, not only us but the United States as well, is that when the problem of Israel has to be dealt with in relation to other States, then there

is no basis upon which we can work. We have had a very striking illustration of that in connection with Jerusalem, where the decisions have created enormous prejudice and difficulty in the Middle East. The other thing associated with it is that, like the rest of us, I suppose, Iraq has her comrades in the Arab world and one of the difficulties is that none of them will be accused of letting down the other. That is not a bad trait. . . .

House of Commons: March 30, 1950.

British Transport Commission Bill

(By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Bill be now read a Second time."—[*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter (Kingston-upon-Thames): . . . It is a little surprising in present circumstances that the British Transport Commission should at this moment be bringing forward this Bill. I think all hon. Members fully appreciate the gravity of the financial position, at least of the railway side of the Transport Commission, and it is with the railway side that this Bill mainly, though not exclusively, deals. Hon. Members in most quarters of the House are concerned not only at the grave and increasingly difficult financial position of our railways, but even more perhaps by the inevitable repercussions of that situation upon all our national economy. It is against that background, with the grave issues concerned still unsettled, with one of the gravest of them still awaiting a decision on the desk of the Minister, that the Transport Commission come forward with a Bill which, if this House passes it, will give them authority among other things for the expenditure of money upon works and for the carrying on of many activities, most of which, however admirable, cost money.

This House would be failing in its duty to the people it represents outside if it gave a Second Reading to this Bill without enquiring further as to the position and intentions of the Commission. If we in this House give a Second Reading to this Bill, and in due course pass it into law, we place upon our own shoulders responsibility for the continuance of the Commission along these lines and for the consequences of its so continuing. Therefore, it is right for hon. Members before passing this Bill, to inquire pretty drastically into the proposals of the Commission for rectifying the serious position in which they now find themselves, whosoever may be at fault for that.

Perhaps I should sum it up in this way, that we start our discussion on the basis that the body promoting this Bill is on a non-stop run to bankruptcy and that we must insist—as we would in the case of any body, state owned or privately owned, which came before Parliament with a Bill of this character—on discovering how that Commission hope to be able to find themselves in the financial position to carry out the proposals contained in this Bill as well as to carry out their other duties. It is particularly important that this should be done in the case of the Transport Commission because I am certain that the Minister will agree with me that it has been his consistent policy to shelter the Commission as far as possible from inquiries in this House.

It is, therefore, particularly right that, when the Commission comes to this House for Parliamentary powers, hon.

Members should take advantage of the opportunity so given to investigate further than the policy of the right hon. Gentleman always permits. We are, as it were, the shareholders at a meeting of this concern; at any rate, we are the representatives of the shareholders—I very nearly said, the trustee in bankruptcy—and it is important that we should take this opportunity of examining the situation.

Now, what are—I hope that the Minister will take an early opportunity to intervene and help us on this matter—the proposals by which the Transport Commission hope to raise sufficient financial resources to enable them to carry out even the proposals set out in this Bill? As I understand it, almost their only major proposal, almost their only proposal consonant in scale with the size of the problem, is to raise charges of one sort or another; to raise charges both for those people who pay their fares upon the railways and also, if one looks at Clause 28 of the Bill, of those philosophers who seek to evade that obligation.

It is our first duty to analyse whether that is the right way to achieve what it is sought to do. Of course, it is a great temptation to a great monopoly, when it gets into financial difficulty, to put up charges. Indeed, it is one of the most serious disadvantages of monopoly that that is so. The questions we must ask ourselves before giving authority for this Bill are, whether those proposals work, whether they will, in fact, get the Commission out of their financial difficulties and, equally, the question of whether those proposals will not, even though they get the Commission out of their difficulties, inflict serious harm on the nation, which in another capacity all of us here represent. . . . In referring to the transport situation last summer, Sir Eustace [Missenden] said this:

"During the Summer months just past, we have provided a fine train service, all things considered, and it is somewhat disappointing to all of us that for one reason or another we have not conveyed as many passengers as we had hoped."

The reason, I submit, is the reason which I warned the Minister across the Floor of the House a few years ago would be the reason: that if passenger fares were raised, as was done despite the warning of my hon. Friends, traffics would be diminished. I think the right hon. Gentleman can now see the result of that policy in those words I have quoted of Sir Eustace Missenden. It is against that proved experience—it is not a matter now of logical argument, but of proved fact; it is against that background that the right hon. Gentleman is now dealing with this question of the proposed rise in railway freight charges, which is, as I mentioned a moment ago, still before the right hon. Gentleman. . .

Is it not the fact that, without doubt, what happened with passenger fares will happen with freight; that we will discourage inevitably that margin of traffic which so often makes the difference between profit and loss? I ask the right hon. Gentleman, because practical examples are sometimes of very great use, to pay a little attention to a particular case, which by happy chance came to me today, the case of a constituent of mine, particulars of whom I should be happy to forward to the right hon. Gentleman, who wrote to me this morning in these terms:

"I had occasion to send approximately 3 tons 10 cwt. of machinery from High Wycombe to"—

it is a place in the Northern kingdom and I apologise for my pronunciation of it—

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Higher and Lower

During the years of the currency of Social Credit ideas, progressively, there has been suspicion, amounting to the certainty of intuition in some cases, that the 'territory' covered by them was wider, or deeper, or longer (whatever comparative is appropriate) than appeared on first inspection. At the same time, this "expanding universe" of application has been matched by an "expanding proposition" of statement.

Neither physics nor metaphysics is everybody's "cup of tea," and we seem to have had little comfort to offer to those who believe themselves to be, whether they are or not, restricted to a more elementary beverage. It would, of course, have been much better for everybody if (say) New Zealand, the Royal Navy cruising round to keep the ring or to succour a stricken population in case of necessity, had initiated a genuine trial of Major Douglas's proposals, and, then, assuming, as we do, that the Navy would have got bored, while the life of New Zealanders became progressively more satisfying and complete, to have allowed the philosophical implications of Social Credit to have sunk gently into the world's consciousness. Since no such thing was permitted, the difficulty is the greater in consequence all round. We don't know what we can do about it; but, for the provision of such comfort as it may bring to some wayfarers, we suggest that it is a useful reflection that, while everything is being reduced from five dimensions to four, from four to three, from three to two (known as planners' paradise), actually, all things that live do so in a number of dimensions far exceeding the ability of all the backroom boys in the world to describe, let alone handle conveniently except by living in them, which is a thing we are all as good at as they are—or better.

According to G. K. Chesterton, "The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason." Something very important must underly paradox. Perhaps paradox is really the appearance which things on a higher plane possess when viewed from a lower plane. We do not forget that Major Douglas's assertion that the cost of production is consumption appeared paradoxical to economists—who inhabit a flat earth.

Communism and the "Bodies"

Argument continues concerning Lord Vansittart's recent speech in the House of Lords.

On April 10, the Duchess of Atholl wrote to *The Times* "... In your issue of July 8, 1947, I criticised several of the Bureau's publications for their pro-Soviet bias. The extract quoted by Lord Vansittart from a more recent publication by the Bureau [of Current Affairs] looks as if the

bias were still, there." She mentions the grant of £15,000 by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust to the Bureau in 1946 to be spread over the following five years.

On April 12, the Director invited the Duchess to "come and inspect the Bureau's publications." to satisfy herself how innocent they were. He mentioned a "coloured map of Communism showing, with a cautionary purpose, which parts of the world have gone red."

Concerning this map, the Acting Director of the department of Information of the Greek Government, wrote (*The Times*, April 15):—

"This map, which was published in November, 1947, showed all Northern Greece—Macedonia, Thrace, and Epirus—shaded to correspond with the following definition given at the foot of the map: 'Countries, and areas as in China and Greece, in which the Communist Party is participating in the government, in varying degrees and kinds of coalition with other parties.'

"As soon as our attention was drawn to this map we wrote to the bureau, pointing out that, far from participating in the government, the Greek Communist Party was actually in armed rebellion against the State, and certainly did not control any part of the country at all. I will not weary you with details of the long correspondence which ensued between this department and the editor-in-chief of the bureau, Mr. Boris Ford; sufficient to say that Mr. Ford not only was not prepared to accept our assurance that cities like Salonika and areas which the King of the Hellenes and the Greek Premier had just toured—all of which were marked in the map as above—were not controlled by the Greek Communist Party, but tried to argue it out in a manner which, as we were finally obliged to tell him in no uncertain terms, amounted to a blind acceptance of all the extravagant claims which Communist propaganda was at that time putting out regarding the situation in Greece. In spite of our vigorous protests, the map was not withdrawn, nor was a correction issued with regard to its references to Greece.

"I may add, on a point of detail, that another statement made on the map which we also challenged was the bald assertion that the Greek Communist Party had 400,000 members. Replying to our inquiry how this figure was computed Mr. Ford said that this was the figure published by the party itself, adding rather helpfully: 'How the Communist Party arrives at its figures we would not be in a position to say, but no doubt they will be pleased to give you any further information on this matter'."

Well, *The Times* has usually seventy columns, sometimes eighty-four.

"Probably . . ."

The Lancet for April 15, 1950, (p. 722), in an "Annotation" says of Lord Moran:—" . . . In the preliminaries to the National Health Service, the attitude of the Royal College of Physicians, expressed and to some extent formed by Lord Moran, was that the creation of a service was inevitable, and that their duty was to help in fashioning it, so that avoidable mistakes might be avoided. Probably it would be correct to say that if the senior college had taken a different line, the profession would have refused to work the service, unless or until compelled to do so . . ."

We believe that Lord Moran received all the Bulletins of the Medical Policy Association published in 1943 and

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The Case Against Hydro-Electricity

By ROY BRIDGER.

Since spokesmen of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board take pains to emphasise their anxiety for the preservation of amenities, it could be quite easily inferred that no issues more vital than this were at stake. Mr. Thomas Johnston for instance, speaking recently at the significantly named 'Britain in Transition' course at St. Andrews, produced a conventional platform-type red herring when he balanced a 'largely illusory' loss of amenities against the great benefits that hydro-electricity would bring to the homes of humble folk.

The truth is that there are many grave objections not merely to the day to day activities of the Board but to its fundamental policy. Mr. Johnston was much nearer the point when he disclosed that one of the scheme's objectives was to save coal. When the 102 separate schemes of Scotland's £100 million hydro-electricity programme are completed they will contribute one-seventh of Britain's total power production, so there is every possibility, it is true, of large quantities of coal being saved [*]. On the other hand there has never been any official public announcement that as far as coal output was concerned a quiet decrease and a general folding-up of tents like the Arabs had been made the target. On the contrary, big developments are spoken of; in fact in East Lothian co-ordinated planning is to site an entirely new coalmining area. What then is to happen to the coal thus released?

Artificial Manure Manufacture

A useful clue was provided at the 1949 British Association meeting in Newcastle. After a presidential address by Sir John Russell, former Director of the Rothamsted Experimental Station, stressing many benefits to agriculture of scientific research, particularly as regards artificial fertilisers, Mr. G. I. Higson introduced a discussion on chemistry and food production by urging the diversion of 50 million tons of coal annually to increase world production of nitrogenous fertilisers.

Britain hopes to capture as much of this market as possible. A productivity team has left for the United States to study fertiliser production there. This is expected to play an important part in the efforts to save dollars. This much prized section of Britain's export trade has also received a powerful impetus of late from that other creation of a large-scale minded government, the Overseas Food Corporation. It appears too that scientific research has now discovered a fact which makes it possible to apply nitrogen successfully to rice crops. Japanese experts have expressed their belief that a scientific basis has thus been established for the manuring of the world's most crucial crop. In this case the demand for nitrogenous fertilisers would be enormous.

Now it has been found from long experience that a rice plant—or indeed any plant, animal or human being—gives of its best when the fullest care and the richest nourishment have been lavished upon it in the infant stage. In the

*Except with drastic qualifications, this is a large over-estimate. It is doubtful whether Scottish watersheds could be practically developed to produce one per cent. of the power used by the Scottish-English-Welsh Grid.—Editor T.S.C.

case of the rice crop F. H. King in his *Farmers of Forty Centuries* (Cape, 1926) has given a detailed account of the nursery beds, heavily dressed with compost and other organic matter, in which the young rice plants are raised and from which they are eventually transplanted. Is the ballast of quality now to be jettisoned by a mechanised industrialised Eastern agriculture out to cut labour costs?

The exponents of artificial fertilisers, conditioned as they are to factory production, whether stimulants for the land, processed food and drugs, pre-fabs or atomic weapons to clean the slate, are impervious to proof of the superiority of organic manuring. But if the large-scale release of coal for the production of nitrogenous fertilisers is to be the objective of hydro-electricity, careful consideration should be given to an informed statement on the subject made by Professor Hugh Nicol, West of Scotland Agricultural College. In an arresting article *Was William Crookes Right?* in *The Scotsman*, 2nd December, 1949, Professor Nicol declares emphatically that he was not. Crookes's belief that the imminent shortage of wheat could be overcome by the fixation of artificial nitrogen from the air appealed greatly to a 'wheat-conscious industrial nation living near the end of a civilisation conditioned by engineering and inorganic chemicals. His public was (and is) receptively attuned. . . . Nevertheless the idea was unsound. The expansion of food production since 1900, says Professor Nicol, has owed relatively little to artificial nitrogen fixation. Increased production of wheat, in particular, owes almost nothing to fertiliser nitrogen. Also where nitrogenous fertilisers are applied acidification is brought about, requiring a dressing of lime as a neutralising agent, so that for every pound of nitrogen applied three pounds of limestone or its equivalent are required as well as phosphates and probably other materials. As far as grassland is concerned the bacterial fixation of nitrogen by wild white clover has given the biggest boost to food production. The process costs nothing and wild white clover seed can be obtained universally.

If this analysis is correct the need to release coal for nitrogenous fertiliser production can be faded out.

With fertiliser manufacture can be linked an old friend—the explosive—and an extra large-scale newcomer from the same stable, the mass-production of drugs and synthetic vitamins under the so-called 'Health' Scheme. Altogether it is a questionable objective for the tremendous upheaval of hydro-electric development.

Industrial Crescendo

In the face of a universal industrial crescendo, with last remaining resources scheduled to be 'tapped' and every big river 'harnessed' it is a reckless gamble to plunge Britain into further industrialism. The shipping company reports, which reflect world trading conditions, are continually emphasising the problems of foreign competition, increasing costs and labour unrest.

Every creature that draws breath, every plant that grows, requires for its full development certain elements and conditions which under industrialism are either reduced or eliminated. Industrialism and the full realisation of health have proved incompatible. Just as the wellbeing of the soil population (vastly important to plant growth) cannot be secured by the use of artificial fertilisers, so the vigour and health which is man's birth-right cannot be attained on the

refined and processed food favoured by industrialism.

It is difficult to see how a crippled people, restricted by the many difficulties of world trade, is going to enjoy the 'economic prosperity' promised by Mr. Thomas Johnston at St. Andrews.

Again, in this country it has been a national characteristic to encourage individual possession, enterprise and responsibility. The present 'transition' seems to be towards a universal proletariat directed by an unassailable dynasty of technical aces.

The encroachment on vital food-producing areas has met with strong criticism, notably from Lord Lovat, who is pioneering schemes to increase the numbers of hill cattle in the Highlands. Lord Lovat brackets the Forestry Commission with the Hydro-Electric Board, and certainly their activities dovetail quite effectively, in fact Mr. Johnston referred gratefully to the work of the Forestry Commission in healing the scars left by hydro-electric development.

Major C. H. Douglas, an authority on hydro-electricity, has contended that conditions in Scotland are not suitable for the recovery of the high capital costs, and that smaller power stations, each serving a local area and not involving flooding or elaborate civil engineering, would have been more appropriate.

Rural Economy Overloaded

The needs of the 'humble folk' are of course incidental to the immeasurably greater needs of the fertiliser-drug-explosive industry, nevertheless the benefits to rural areas such as the Highlands have been so emphasised that the claims should be examined. Thus entrancing visions of prosperity for the North of Scotland are seen in the introduction of electric hedge-cutters where there are no hedges, and hay-driers where hay-stacks have to be tied down to prevent them being blown away. It is an old saying in the crofting areas that 'it's no use building a castle on a croft,' in other words it may not be possible to recoup the difference in cost between a utility house and a luxury one, at the valuation. Similarly it is highly dangerous to overload a small agricultural unit with expensive gadgets (they are likely to be even more expensive as the effect of devaluation is felt on the price of basic components such as copper, lead and jute.) They are already so expensive that as an incentive to the crofting community to make the maximum use of electricity it has been decided to introduce hire-purchase terms for cookers and the dearer articles of equipment. Repayment is to be made over a period of seven years, which means that soil productivity, which is the only reserve upon which the hitherto independent cultivator can draw, is to be strained to the utmost in order to produce cash crops instead of the former home consumption foodstuffs. The crofter is quickly drawn into the toils of the industrial network, and seven years is long enough to ease him into the ranks of the proletariat. He has been told through every organ of policy reaching him that the old way of life doesn't pay. However, the less desirable accompaniments of the new way of life have become so very repellent that financial considerations are pointless. What is likely to be a deciding factor is the unparalleled growth in world populations and the consequent pressure upon shrinking available acreage. The need for small-scale intensive husbandry in the Highland area is as evident as the case

for hydro-electricity's part in it is unconvincing.

Misuse of Water

Finally it must be realised that water is one of the fundamental elements of creation. The processes and movements of water in the natural order are by no means thoroughly understood. Research work still in progress, for instance, suggests that the almost universally adopted agriculture drainage technique, by the removal of water which can be of advantage when causes of stagnation are eliminated, has done more harm than good. Largely due to our own mismanagement—in the catchment area, on agricultural land and in the consumption area—we are approaching the rationing of yet another basic necessary, and from this aspect alone we need to be very sure what we are doing before embarking on such colossal removals of water from the natural cycle of rainfall, soil, sap and green leaf as occur in hydro-electric developments.

The pivot of hydro-electric power is the maintenance of a sufficient head of water to ensure a steady pressure. The full reservoir which is essential for such steady pressure is unsuitable for taking up flood waters, thus the ostensible flood control benefits often claimed are not present. In the big Columbia River floods early in 1948 the banks of the Grand Coulee Dam held. If they had not, the city of Portland and the surrounding district would have been inundated by flood waters which a dam designed primarily for power development could not absorb. That development involves *additional* flooding is of course well known.

The volume of objection to large-scale hydro-electric development is thus very considerable. But Mr. Thomas Johnston has little patience with criticism expressed at the present stage. Let us finish the job, he says, then we can see how things look. As for the scenery, where the Board has disfigured, the pit-props of the Forestry Commission will heal.

There is a case (though not an overwhelming case) for small local electric schemes. In the face of the trail of destruction left by the industrial age and the huge expanding populations outgrowing their means of support there is no justification for plunging this already unbalanced country into further industrialism with mammoth hydro-electricity projects.

Industrialism reserves its biggest effects for the finale. By the time the various stock-piles are completed we shall be due to have the slate cleaned again and there will not be much time to see how things look.

PARLIAMENT

(continued from page 3).

"Monifieth, near Dundee"—

. . . my constituent continued . . .

"and went to the expense of having it cased for rail transport. An identical consignment was ready the following week but I had no means of casing it and therefore sent it by Road Transport, door to door. The cost by Rail was £30 0s. 4d. and the cost by Road Transport under £19. Can the Railway Authorities wonder why they cannot attract custom on such conditions?"

That is the type of thing of which most hon. Members will have had experience in their own constituencies, that this very high level of freight charges inevitably drives traffic away. What is so very alarming about this is that it happens that this policy of raising freight charges is not to

be confined to the railways; that it is, indeed, the intention of the body promoting this Bill not to seek to check the drop in traffic on the railways by reducing railway rates, but by the infinitely more pernicious method of raising road haulage charges to something like a comparable level. The House will no doubt recall— . . . As I was saying when the hon. Member intervened, it appears that the policy—in my view, the policy which will not prove to be a policy able to finance these proposals—is to raise road haulage charges in order, it is hoped, to offset the disparity between road and rail. I rely for that upon the words spoken by learned counsel, who, on the instructions of the British Transport Commission, appeared before the tribunal early in January of this year in connection with the proceedings the result of which is now on the desk of the right hon. Gentleman. The learned counsel said, no doubt on the instructions of the Commission:

"I am told that we are putting up road charges where we can, and that we will continue to do so."

That was plain enough, and if learned counsel spoke without the instructions of the Commission on that decisive point of policy, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will take the earliest possible opportunity to repudiate those words, because until they are repudiated they throw a discouraging light upon the financial measures behind the Bill.

I ask the House to look at this question a little from the point of view of public policy. One thing is inevitable if this process continues, and that is that the cost of production, particularly of our heavy industries, will be raised—transport as hon. Members know, plays a very large part in the costs of steel; coal—itself an item in the costs of production of other industries; agricultural produce and so on; and at a time when, as all hon. Members agree, the stimulation of our competitive power on the world market is not merely desirable, but an essential of national survival, it seems a terrible thing that this great transport monopoly should be using the vast powers vested in it by this House to inflate the cost of production of every industrial process in this country. . . .

. . . In connection with the proposals for, as the right hon. Gentleman so nicely puts it, integration of road and rail, I wish to raise a point in the hope that he will be able to deny it. In a newspaper closely associated with His Majesty's Government, "The Daily Mirror," on 27th March, an article was published which purports to give the intentions of His Majesty's Government and indicates that the difficulties of the Transport Commission are to be met by a short-term loan.

"The short-term loan would be to enable the railways to carry on over say, the next three years . . . The plan, it is believed, would be for the loan to be repaid out of a special charge or tax levied on road passenger transport."

I hope the right hon. Gentleman will not fall back on the pretext that statements as to taxes must await the Chancellor's Budget statement. I hope he will be in a position to deny the suggestion outright. It is a very dangerous proposal and if it is untrue it would be in the interests of our transport system to deny it at once. . . .

Sir Austin Hudson (Lewisham, North): . . . There are two other points on which I should like to say a few words. So far as I can make out, Clause 28 deals with fines of different kinds. In subsection (2), page 18, the Transport Commission seek to take powers to increase certain fines. I have looked at the Act of 1936, and I find that the fine that is being increased from 40s. to £5 applies to people

who do not show their tickets. Further on there is another fine of 40s. which is being increased to £5, and that applies to people who try to leave the train without showing their tickets. I should like to know why, further on, there is this terrific increase from £5 to £20 which appears to be for a second offence of trying to leave a tram, train or bus without showing one's ticket. Obviously there must be some reason for inserting that provision. I should like to know whether there has been an enormous increase in the number of these offences. An increase from £5 to £20 is pretty steep. I hope that no hon. Member will think that I am trying to encourage anybody who goes in for that undesirable practice of trying to travel free; but the point is one which I think should be explained.

The next point concerns Clause 33, on page 19. Why do the British Transport Commission contract out of the Town and Country Planning Act? We should all like to contract out, and here they calmly insert in the Clause a provision to the effect that the enactment shall be deemed to have been passed before the coming into force of the Town and Country Planning Act. I should like to know if that is to be a precedent for all these public commissions, and I should like to know the reason for this action. Obviously it may be that they are contracting out because they do not like the Act, but they seem to be only people who are allowed to do so.

I hope that the next time we have a British Transport Commission Bill—and I presume this will be a yearly event—they will have a better record of achievement than they have to date. The ground was very ably surveyed in the opening speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames. I think we all recognise that there are many hon. Members who are profoundly disturbed about what is happening on the railways, on the London Passenger Transport network and in other places—not only about the financial happenings but also, as my hon. Friend said, about the vast staffs which live and have their being under the Transport Commission. I hope that later in the Debate the Minister will be able to answer some of the questions I have endeavoured to put to him.

Viscount Hinchinbrooke (Dorset, South): . . . Finally, I will try to express to the House what I conceive to be the real danger of nationalisation in the transport field. What nationalisation does is to refuse to acknowledge and provide against deteriorating user—it refuses to recognise the fact that that loss is there. Nationalisation maintains the *status quo*, freezes the facilities and the trading characteristics of the nation and stops the natural processes of change and development. Just by way of illustration, since coal nationalisation it is extremely doubtful whether enough of the national effort has gone into atomic energy, hydro-electric development and oil refining. In my view, coal has been provided with too much social capital, and since transport was nationalised, we are seeing under the syndicalist attitude of hon. Members opposite, road services sacrificed to the railways, freight vehicle licences reduced, the Ministry of Transport allowing deterioration to take place in the upkeep of our first-class roads, and we are finding that it is increasingly difficult for the ordinary road user either to acquire cars or the petrol to put into them.

There is no doubt whatever that *laissez-faire*—unrestricted competition—is by far the best way to ensure that a nation keeps abreast of the times in comparison with other nations and to ensure that new industries and new services are fostered. I am quite certain that full scale *laissez-faire*

applied to the railways today would make short work of them and probably throw thousands of men on to the labour market. *Laissez-faire* does fearful social damage and it cannot be tolerated in this day and age—we are all agreed about that—but what we are doing today is to fly to the opposite extreme. We are bolstering up the *status quo* in rail transport to the detriment of competing transport industries. The road transport concerns are being bought up and suppressed, no private aeroplane flying is allowed, petrol applications by car users are suppressed, and so on. I wonder what would have happened if nationalisation had been applied to the stage coach and turnpike road system of the 19th century. Does anybody suppose for a moment that there would have been the magnificent rail development which has taken place? Of course not. The Government's power of control would have been associated with the old-fashioned form of industry and the new ones would never have been allowed to come into being.

I am convinced that it is quite wrong to inhibit road and rail competition. I am convinced that it is wrong to prohibit private flying, to restrict the use of petrol for cars and to send so many British-made cars overseas to sterling area countries which do not need them. I wonder who dares to maintain in the House of Commons that the railway system is the right and proper system of transport for the 20th century. . . . On this side of the House we believe that the services provided should follow consumer interest and consumer desire and nothing else, unless it is a strategic question. . . . The proposals in this Bill, which obviously carry forward the general intentions of the Government on rail transport, ought to be looked at with great keenness and circumspection. Unless we do that, we shall not advance the transport interests of this country, and I fear that under nationalisation progress in that industry will inevitably be arrested.

The Minister of Transport (Mr. Barnes): . . . This Debate, again, has ranged over the financial problem of the railways, and as to whether the deficit is to be met by an increase in charges. In reply to a Question the other day, I stated that I was not in a position at the moment to indicate the decision of the Government whether these new charges would be accepted and operated. All the discussions that are taking place, including those in our Debate last week and today, and all the evidence submitted by the representatives of some of the major industries in this country, emphasise the seriousness of any substantial increase in railway charges at the present moment. The Government are giving full consideration to the views that have been expressed both in this House and by the representatives of traders, and are measuring the reactions or repercussions of any increased charges of that character. That does not in any way prevent me from submitting to hon. Members the problem as it is working out in fact.

. . . I want hon. Members to consider some figures. The pre-war cost per ton of building a locomotive was £73. Today the cost is £156 per ton. The cost of constructing carriages has increased by 150 per cent. over pre-war. The cost of constructing wagons is today 110 per cent. more than it was before the war. The railways are among the largest if not the largest consumers of British steel products. The average increase in the price of steel products used by the railways is 101 per cent. The increase in cost of non-ferrous metals needed by the railways is 187 per cent. Timber for sleepers are again a substantial item in railway costs. Something like four million sleepers a year are

needed to maintain the permanent way. The price of these has increased by 343 per cent. In a range of 56 commodities used in large quantities by the railways there is an increase over the pre-war price of 145 per cent.

Whether the railways are privately owned or publicly owned, and certainly while they are publicly owned, hon. Members cannot escape the responsibility of facing a situation of that kind. . . .

Oil Refinery (U.S. Capital)

Sir. W. Smithers asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much United States capital is being invested in the proposed oil refinery on the Thames Estuary.

Mr. Gaitskell: It would not be proper for me to disclose details of individual transactions of this kind, but I would refer the hon. Member to the statement issued on 25th March by the companies concerned.

"PROBABLY . . ." (continued from page 4)

1944, which exposed the error which was basic to the "line" now criticised by *The Lancet*. The following is from Bulletin 12 published in May, 1944:—

"We have warned the profession for many months that its great danger lies in the fact that the Executive of the B.M.A., as well as other 'leaders' of the profession, have, under the influence of P.E.P. and other planning organisations, been 'sold' this idea of a central authority. Consequently they have steadily pressed on the profession, through the *B.M.f.*, *The Lancet*, and the 'machinery' of the B.M.A. and other professional associations, planning propaganda backed up by talk of 'inevitability.' The policy of the Executive of the B.M.A. is for control of the profession by a central authority, and this policy is clearly revealed, when you know what to look for, in the *Report of the Council on the White Paper (B.M.f., May 13, 1944)*.

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