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The Wit of Man An Economic Dialogue

by

NORMAN WEBB.

Scene Three:

(Again the Rector's study, half an hour later. The student is on his feet, taking the empty cups from the others.)

THE STUDENT: Any more tea?

THE ENGINEER: No thanks. Two is my limit. (Turning back to the Rector). Talking of ideologies and 'isms. You know I think they're just vehicles of self-deception.

THE RECTOR: That may be. In fact, I think it's true. But I'm to take Social Credit as the exception to the rule; is that it?

THE ENGINEER: It depends on how you regard the matter. The rule doesn't really apply. Socialism and the rest of them are Plans—human preconceptions of a political state of society. But there's nothing of that about Social Credit.

THE RECTOR (rising to get a spill from the mantel-piece and remaining standing): And you, with your freedom-from-want and State Welfare proposals sit there and tell me you're not just another bird of the same feather?

THE ENGINEER (smiling up at him): I do.

THE RECTOR: You've been warning me against accepting the Socialist claim without practical proof; what proof do you offer that your brand of Welfare is likely to have any better results?

THE ENGINEER: In the sense you mean, none. But then I'm not trying to sell you a Plan, or to force one on you, in the manner of ideologists. I told you the other night Social Credit was in the nature of a Minority Report, a Finding. All I'm trying to do is to put before you a finding of the facts—or some of them—that is essentially different to what is dished up to us as factual—pre-eminently this "friend-of-the-people" picture of the impulse behind the Socialist Movement.

THE RECTOR: Why be so insistent on that? It can't be more than secondary, incidental.

THE ENGINEER: So one might think. But whenever I try to cast a little light, it stands in the way; and as far as I know, I have no more aggressive design than to do that.

THE RECTOR: And yet all the time I have a feeling you're trying somehow to corner me. I've talked with professed Communists and got just the same impression of an

unanswerable answer to every conceivable question. That's for your information.

No, reverting to what we were saying before tea, if I sound cynical to you, you must remember I've had a lot more experience of the essential tragedy of this world than either of you are likely to have had. A large part of my professional career has been spent here, in a parish containing some of the toughest and most resistant elements in this city. I wouldn't like to talk of some of the things I've bumped into. It's wrung from me by bitter experience, what I've admitted to you this evening; this loss of confidence, I don't think I've ever admitted it positively before, even to myself.

(Earnestly facing his guests) If I've been so frank with you, I can ask you to be equally so with me. Do you really claim—is it your aim to convince me—that in spite of all the evidence of declining standards we can see everywhere about us, the policy of Trusting the Workers as we call them, at the present level of education and spiritual development hasn't been proved a complete failure?

THE STUDENT (in vehement protest): It hasn't been tried out; that's where you all allow yourselves to be gulled. The whole Socialist philosophy is one of dis-trust. Social Credit is the exact opposite to that.

THE RECTOR: There you go! You're as bad as all the other reformers. You're all exceptions to your own rules. You're all blind as to the actual, or probable results of your own pet theories. All you want is leave to put them into practice on poor, long-suffering society.

THE ENGINEER: Nevertheless, he's answered your question.

THE RECTOR: Possibly he has. But you're all the same in imagining that man, of himself and entirely without God's grace and assistance, can lift himself up by his own boot-laces. You can take my word for it, he can't. What's going on about us today proves it a hundred times over. Why, he can't even be trusted to give an honest day's work for fair pay, apparently, without the threat of unemployment behind him!

THE ENGINEER: Look! May I ask what you mean by "trusting the Workers"? Is it just removing the alternative of semi-starvation to taking a job, any job that offers; just taking that whip out of the bosses' hands?

THE RECTOR: Yes, I suppose so. Isn't that what Socialism is? A logical sequence in Nineteenth Century Humanitarianism, and as I said with all the most humane elements in the nation behind it.

THE ENGINEER: Yes, behind it, with about as much heart as a Tommy attending Church Parade!

(Eyeing the Rector very closely) So the results of practical Socialism on the standards of public behaviour generally,

appear to you as the natural reaction of contemporary human nature to Trust?

THE RECTOR (*visibly moved*): You don't argue fairly!

THE ENGINEER: I'm not arguing. I'm just probing to see if I can't find the obstruction in you to the flow of the ideas I hold; to discover why others should find what has always appeared to me so sound and persuasive, so difficult to accept. Don't forget, you offered yourself as a representative anatomy.

THE RECTOR (*smiling not altogether comfortably*): I could almost wish I hadn't.

THE STUDENT: What makes you want to sit down under this pessimistic verdict on all of us? Why not accept it?

THE RECTOR (*involuntarily covering his eyes with his hand*): God help me, what else can I do?

(*Vehemently*) You're sentimentalists, you social reformers. I'm a realist. Or I try to be as realistic as I know how, for I have always regarded it as a Christian obligation—the most important, perhaps,—and in view of all the evidence of moral decline, I can't find it in my heart to see the results of this Welfare State in any rosy light whatsoever.

Look at the facts. The more the State does for the citizen, the less the individual citizen responds; it would appear that except in the event of an actual threat of war, the greater the nation's need for service, the less the socialized citizen is prepared to give.

As Christians we should love our fellows, I know; but doesn't loving imply thinking well of them, and who can "think well" in any realistic sense, of a society palpably slipping down a decline of social integrity and morale!

THE ENGINEER: That may be true. But you do realize what you are saying; or don't you? That human nature—yours, mine, the other fellow's; all quite decent people—is hopelessly untrustworthy. That it's socially discreditable, in fact?

THE RECTOR: You put the matter in its very worst light when you talk like that; but I won't turn my back on it as so many of my fellow-parsons do, as I sometimes fear the Church as a body does. (*Turning away and looking into the heart of the fire*). Oh, yes, I suppose I have faced its implications—solitarily, of course. Until tonight I've never met anyone that could have faced me with them.

THE ENGINEER (*interjecting*): Or them with you. Why not put it that way?

THE RECTOR (*nodding assent without looking up*): Or them with me. D'you know, I think they must be just about the most dreadful that the human intellect can ever have been confronted with: the meaning behind this contemporary social failure. And here, in England of all

places, with our magnificent Christian record stretching back over a thousand years, and our tradition of public spirit that makes even Athens look parochial! I can't understand it. I just can't. (*Turning back to his companions as though he was pleading with them*). And yet, as a Christian I must accept the plain evidence of experience,—you do see that, don't you? I've got to accept it, or perish spiritually, as Isaiah warns.

THE ENGINEER: Perhaps; but the actual word Isaiah used was "vision"—"Without vision the people perish;"—one has to see, and interpret one's experience in the right light.

THE RECTOR (*faintly sarcastic*): In the light of Social Credit, you mean?

THE ENGINEER (*unruffled*): I didn't say so; I was speaking generally. But you can see how it works out in the present case; you give all your belief, your credit, to the social doctrinaires and their theories and plans, and as a psychological consequence, all the dis-credit of the contemporary decline of standards goes to society,—the individual citizen. According to your view of the philosophy behind Socialism, as being a genuinely trustful and humanitarian one, any failure in response on the part of society is a betrayal of that trust. Certainly, in the case of some little University lecturer, or ambitious Union boss, who finds himself almost involuntarily rocketed up to the top of the tree, you can see plenty of excuse, or at least temptation, to accept such an unlikely deduction. But, my dear man, for us, all of us who are being socialized whether we like it or not, and who get no sort of kick at all out of it . . .

THE STUDENT: Except in the pants!

THE ENGINEER: . . . to allow all this to pass almost without a protest—it's sheer lunacy!

THE RECTOR: It looks rather like it, I own. But aren't you rather exaggerating one aspect of the situation, at the expense of all the others?

THE ENGINEER: I don't really think so. (*Leaning forward earnestly*): And you know there's a further, and far more serious implication in all this, if you allow that it is the individual, as distinct from the prevailing philosophy, who is to blame for the results we see about us. If that really is the case, then, I contend, Christianity is proved a practical failure. You'll agree with that, won't you? I think you said yourself earlier in the evening that it was based on individual responsibility.

THE RECTOR: That's true. But don't you carry your argument just a bit too far? I know that the failure of Christianity has been the theme of quite a large number of serious and unbiassed books, since the days of Renan,—I've read the late Harold Laski's "Failure of Christianity" and a lot more—and . . .

THE STUDENT: But you wouldn't have called *him* unbiassed, would you?

THE RECTOR: Well, perhaps not; but we must be on our guard, my boy, against falling a prey to "the association of ideas."

THE ENGINEER: Yes, but that's a principle that cuts both ways you know; we must be just as much on our guard against other people associating our ideas for us. For instance, these two, of failure and the Christian Faith; which is, in fact, the main implication of dialectical materialism—

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that, and the assumption of Marxist benevolence and good faith; which itself, is another arbitrary association of ideas. Once we accept that, the whole Fabian School is justified in their belief, not only in themselves, but their belief that recent experience conclusively proves Christianity to be a fallacy, or at the very best, an over-intelligent anticipation on the part of its Founder, and so far removed in space and time as to be to all intents and purposes, unrealizable. Laski calls Him an impractical idealist in the book you mentioned.

THE RECTOR: Oh, but you're getting just too pat and fluent altogether for me; too slick. Haven't I admitted enough for one evening? I've allowed I've lost a lot of the confidence I had in myself when I was a younger, and less mentally tired man than I am now. But now you're trying to make out that I've lost faith in Christianity, in the teaching of the Gospels. I won't allow that. You're just a bit more logical than its logical to be. I expect that was what poor Laski suffered from.

THE ENGINEER: I did warn you, though, didn't I, that unless you could come to see the social problem in the same light as I do, you couldn't expect to appreciate the Social Credit Proposals?

THE RECTOR: Granted, or its creed either. (*After a short pause*). The essence, then, of Social Credit is just a disbelief in the good-faith of Socialism, is that it? Rather a negative creed to found a Movement on, don't you think?

THE ENGINEER: I agree; if that was the essence of our belief. But it isn't. The essence of Social Credit would appear—(*Interrupting himself*) You know, I'm getting the picture much clearer in my mind in this talk with you!—would appear to be faith in the fundamental reliability of the human individual and his unhampered reactions. The disbelief in Socialism follows from that, because Socialists are meddlers. It's only incidental, and the proof of its justification and correctness is the bad reaction of the average, decent individual to Socialistic treatment.

THE RECTOR: None the less, it boils down to this, doesn't it, that if one can't see the social problem from the Social Credit angle, one is to be stigmatized as lacking faith, not only in human nature, but in Christianity as well!

THE ENGINEER: Yes, I suppose so, if you like to put it that way.

(*Rising from his chair for a light*). You say you can keep your Christian faith while losing your confidence in the integrity of human nature. Well, speaking in the light of what I understand Christianity to be, that is a mental separation I find quite impossible. That's why I'm a Social Crediter; I just can't believe you can have it both ways; figs and thistles both, on the same branch. And in the same way, you can't believe in the soundness of Fabian theory, and at the same time believe in the sound instincts of a society that reacts so badly to the application of that theory. You, yourself, are a confirmation of that, on your own admission.

(*Facing the other two from the fire-place*). D'you know, Padre, I really think this is the parting of the ways. Shall we give it up here and now.

THE RECTOR: And you haven't even touched on Douglas's proposals! Wouldn't it be a pity? I want to hear them.

THE ENGINEER: Proposals to do what? To give

more economic liberty to a society that appears to you to be already grossly abusing its newly-acquired freedom from the fear of unemployment and semi-starvation? You don't want to hear that, as long as you see the situation in that light!

THE RECTOR (*slightly nettled by the other's stern tones*): I'm not like you; I can't shut my eyes to what is going on about me. I'm not fanatical about anything.

THE ENGINEER: I don't shut my eyes to it either. I attribute it to another cause; that's all.

THE STUDENT: He's spent the evening telling you that. But it's true, what he says, you don't *want* to believe in human nature. Why, I can't think.

THE RECTOR: My boy, nobody in his senses *wants* to lose faith in his fellow-men—especially as it means losing faith in himself. With every bit of me I want to keep that! (*Turning to the Engineer*). No, don't give up. Make what conditions you like. If it's humanly possible I'll comply.

THE ENGINEER: I don't want to make any conditions. Try not to think me rude, but I'm long enough in this world to have lost all *desire* to waste time in satisfying the mere itch of curiosity, either in myself or anybody else.

Well, then, may we leave it like that, and the next move, if there is one, will be yours.

THE RECTOR: Perhaps you're right. Till I've had time to digest this experience. I can assure you it's been a new, not to say gruelling one to me.

THE ENGINEER (*smiling*): Good night, then; and thanks. I really mean that; I'm in your debt.

(*They separate on the commonplace level*).

Mond-Turnerism, A Failure (?) To Be Revived

"Here then is a plan. How can it be launched? Who will take the lead?"

"... This is reminiscent of the Mond-Turner talks of the late 1920's. It is true that in the end those came to naught, but the signs are more propitious today. . . .

"If a better plan can be propounded let us have it. But the sands are running out. Our industrial future—perhaps our survival—depends on improved productivity."—Sir Charles Renold, Chairman, British Institute of Management.

The Red Dean's Sermon

Mr. Beverley Nichols in a Sunday newspaper, after watching a service conducted by the Dean of Canterbury in the Cathedral and listening to his sermon, says it "seemed to me one of the grossest essays in materialism that I have ever heard."

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From Week to Week

To say in the same breath that NATO as the new super-Parliament of the "western" world is a "solid foundation" and that it will, of course, never function as a "solid foundation" or as anything else seems to be the keynote of comment on the newest monstrosity—unless the secrecy attending its deliberations is sinister. To watch the horde of troopers into and out of the Parliament House at Ottawa when Messrs. Morrison and Shinwell were there, one would not imagine them capable of any motive more sinister than to board a tube train at a rush hour.

The "Persian" Government has confiscated, without compensation, the new £500,000,000 Power Station at Abadan.

This ensures further cuts by the British Electricity Authority, while we make plan for another to replace it, and justifies still more fully the claim of the Socialists to be the Party of Full Employment. Ground Nuts, Gambia Chickens, Indian Debts, Persian Oil—there's no end to it, either in Peace or War.

It was one of the favourite charges aimed at the villainy of Capitalism (not without some foundation) that the Armament Industry depended on it.

Since the Glorious Socialist Revolution in which we bask, the Armaments Ring has expanded tenfold. Without Socialism, it would be dead. "Russia" claims or claimed, that her particular brand must conquer the Earth, or else.

It would be interesting to know how much Sir Basil Zaharoff, Armaments King, directly and indirectly assisted Sir Ernest Cassel in his contribution to Socialist funds.

It is becoming more obvious with every day which passes that the future of the world depends on the resolution of the problem of the nature of property, and that, as far as can be seen, the individual has no tolerable future unless the sovereignty of the State is so severely curtailed that a statement such as that made by the Persian Government, that the Anglo-Persian Oil plant becomes Persian property by the passing of a unilateral Nationalisation law, even to the extent of a fleet of tugs lying against the wharves of Abadan, would be met by derisive laughter.

We are far from sure that even such a comparatively mild claim as that known to British Law as a Notice to Treat which is the basis of current "Persian" policy is pragmatically admissible. It is the question of sovereignty

which is at stake. Once an infringement on sovereignty is admitted the whole question becomes one simply of sanctions, as we are now seeing in this country. That within so short a time as has elapsed since the open claims of the Totalitarian State have been enforced by the Socialists, and their confrontation with a similar move by the Powers behind their main oil supply, is grimly humorous. It may in addition be evidence of what most people have felt must come—the turn of the tide. Satan has had a good long run for our money.

There is a real and important sense in which natural resources are common property, but it is vital to recognise that this only applies to *undeveloped* natural resources.

If there was oil on Robinson Crusoe's island, it "belonged" to Crusoe and Man Friday because they developed the island, and without their presence it had no value. The core of that development was initiative and know-how, not labour. To say that the position of the Persians *vis a vis* crude indigenous oil is the same before its development and after the British have taken all the risks, provided all the plant and organisation, most of the skilled labour, is the same elemental fallacy as that of the Socialists everywhere. In fact, it is quite arguable that Persian oil would be more valuable if there were no Persians in its vicinity. The globe-alone, Collectivism of Mr. Attlee and his cohorts produces one of two results with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. Either the controllers of initiative (at present, international finance) fight amongst themselves for the power accruing from exploitation initiative ("Point 4. Assistance to undeveloped nations") or, as they prefer, a subordinate nation is allowed to do the work and then expropriated, as the American-German-Jews are expropriating the British everywhere, even in "Britain." "War, or the threat of war" is essential to this policy, and as Bismarck recognised, Socialism is the peace aspect of a War State.

One of His Majesty's Judges, not of course speaking ex-cathedra, stated that the core of the Constitution is the supremacy of Parliament, thus reiterating the heresy of the late unlamented Prof. Laski.

Now we have no doubt that the immediate future of this Nation (not State, please notice) turns on whether this heresy can be made to stick. The position is that either we have no Constitution (which seems to be the case) or it has been so subverted as to have lost all resemblance to its original conception.

A message from Hongkong published last week says that Chinese communists have banned the teaching of classical Chinese and the use of Confucian books for education in Canton, and have ordered private schools there to stop using textbooks written in classical Chinese after September.

The order said the difficult classical style was "beyond the capacity of young minds to master," and directed the schools to choose textbooks from a list published by the Communist New China Book Company.

The order also said the famous "Confucian Four Books and Five Classics" must in no case be used for teaching as they contained "feudal and reactionary" thoughts.

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: July 30, 1951.

Mr. Arthur Horner (Speech)

Mr. Marlowe asked the Attorney-General whether he will give his reasons for forming the opinion that no *prima facie* case exists against Mr. Horner for his recent speech, in view of the fact that it is a criminal offence to threaten force, violence or restraint, or to use any fraudulent device for the purpose of influencing elections.

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend has considered this matter and, as appears from his reply on 23rd July to a question from the hon. and learned Member, he is satisfied that there is no *prima facie* case for prosecution. The reasons for my right hon. and learned Friend's conclusion are entirely matters of law for him to decide.

Mr. Marlowe: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman realise that this speech has caused very considerable apprehension and concern in the country due to the fact that it strikes at our democratic institutions and our constitution, and that greater weight and authority appears to have been given to the speech by reason of the fact that the Secretary of State for the Colonies was on the platform when this was said and did not deny it? Does not the hon. and learned Gentleman think that, in those circumstances, an explanation ought to be given? Otherwise, people will remain extremely concerned as to why no action is taken?

The Solicitor-General: There may be good political reasons for putting the Question. The legal answer is the one I have already given.

Mrs. Jean Mann: Does not my hon. and learned Friend consider that threat and force were used in the Leader of the Opposition's "Gestapo speech" in 1945?

Sir Waldron Smithers: As America and Australia are prosecuting and getting convictions against Communist traitors, why cannot we do the same thing in this country?

Lieut.-Colonel Lipton: Will my hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that he will not, as a result of Parliamentary Questions of this kind, seek to bring political influence to bear upon the Director of Public Prosecutions in the discharge of that official's important duties?

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend comes to his conclusions on legal grounds, and legal grounds alone.

Mr. Manningham-Buller: Will the Solicitor-General do what he can to see that the law is observed?

The Solicitor-General: I do not know whether the hon. and learned Gentleman is taking it upon himself to suggest that there is a *prima facie* case here.

Mr. Manningham-Buller indicated dissent.

The Solicitor-General: I am glad to see that he is not. In that case, I fail to understand the point of the question.

Mr. Manningham-Buller: I put the question in view of the previous supplementary question put to the hon. and learned Gentleman. I take it that he and his right hon. and learned Friend will, naturally, fulfil their duty to see that the law is observed?

The Solicitor-General: I am very glad that, at any rate,

it has elucidated the concurrence of the hon. and learned Gentleman that there is no *prima facie* case.

Mr. Manningham-Buller: No.

Mr. Marlowe: Does the Solicitor-General realise that freedom of speech in this country depends upon the observation of a certain code, of which the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act is part?

The Solicitor-General: Yes, certainly. I should have thought that, for that reason among others, it would be a perfectly good reason for not bringing a prosecution in this case.

House of Commons: July 31, 1951.

Transport

(The debate continued.)

Mr. Boothby (Aberdeenshire, East): . . . I am just a traveller—a fairly extensive traveller—on British Railways and I must honestly say that the deterioration since the war has been terrific.

There is no cause for complacency whatever on either side of the House with the British railway system at present—absolutely none. I should like to give one or two examples. First, there is the question of unpunctuality. Trains in this country are slow-scheduled by comparison, they are slower scheduled than the trains of France. I have made it my business during recent weeks to study the arrival of main line trains both in Scotland and in the main London termini. The record is very bad. The record at Euston during the winter months—and I have looked at the figures—was really disgraceful.

I propose to say something which would upset my hon. Friend the Member for Abingdon (Sir R. Glyn) if he was here. The record of the L.M.S. for punctuality before the war was never good. The record of the L.N.E.R. main line trains—not the Liverpool Street line—was absolutely superb before the war. That has all gone. My last three journeys to Aberdeen have averaged over one and a half hours late, whereas before the war it was unheard of to be five minutes late. I travelled north with one of my hon. Friends last Saturday night to Aberdeen and the train was three and a quarter hours late. When we questioned the sleeping car attendant we were told the same old story.

They call it engine failure. It may be that nobody bothered to clean the engine. It may be that the fireman did not bother to turn out. They say that the coal was bad. But the fact is that engine after engine cannot pull, or will not pull, the train and the engine has to be changed. This happens again and again, sometimes three nights out of six. The punctuality record is getting worse and worse. So much for that.

I turn for a moment to the question of dirt. I assert that the rolling stock of British railways is permanently in a filthy condition, both outside and in. That does not apply only to the rolling stock, but also to the locomotives. That is a bad thing. If one studies the locomotives at any of our great London termini, one finds that the gleaming, splendid creatures that existed before the war—symphonies in blue and green and brass of the Great Western Railway—have disappeared.

Now they are all the same, covered with soot and muck—even the great new ones of the London and North-Eastern like the one we call the "Coronation Express." One cannot see them for dirt. Nobody ever touches them. It is the same as with a motor car. I do not believe that an engineman can take a real pride in his engine or in his work if he has to drive these filthy machines along the lines and nobody can tell one from the other.

That is a condition which hon. Members will find staring them in the face if they go to any one of our London termini. They will not find that a single engine has been cleaned for weeks and weeks. They are never cleaned. What is the cause of it? I should like to know. I pass over hastily the restaurant cars, and I come to the service generally.

I want to echo what was said by the hon. and learned Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hector Hughes) as an example of bad service and what has been happening in recent weeks and months to the fish from Aberdeen. Before the war, fresh fish consigned from Fraserburgh, Peterhead or Aberdeen itself could be put on a train at a certain time and one knew that it would be delivered at Billingsgate in time for the next market. That has not been operating for weeks and months, although we have written to everybody including the Railway Executive and Lord Hurcomb.

They write and say that it is a question of shortage of labour. Then, two or three days later, they say that it is not a shortage of labour, and that it is a shortage of wagons in which to carry the fish.

Mr. David Jones (Hartlepool): The hon. Gentleman will find on page 120 of the Report figures to prove that the degree of punctuality was higher in 1950 than in 1949.

Mr. Boothby: I cannot conceive that I have been as unlucky as all that. If that is the case, I must be the most unlucky man in the country, and my friends must be equally unlucky. However, I will let that pass for the moment.

The hon. Gentleman certainly cannot deny what I was saying about the delivery of fish from Aberdeen to Billingsgate. I can tell him, with full authority, that if one wants to have a chance of getting fish delivered in time to Billingsgate one has to take care to put it not on the first train out of Aberdeen but on the second train, which runs out an hour later. One can take it as certain that the second train will arrive ahead of the first. Fish put on the second train has a reasonable chance. If it is put on the first train there is not a hope. I do not call that good service.

The hon. Member for Berwick and East Lothian (Mr. Robertson) referred to the closing of branch lines. It is now proposed to close a branch line in my constituency from Aberdeen to Macduff. My hon. Friend the Member for Banff (Mr. Duthie) is also concerned about that. If they close this line altogether to passenger services, it will put paid to the development of an important part of the north-east coast of Scotland. It might not be so very bad if an alternative method of transporting goods was available, but that is not so. The line is costing £5,000 a year, I grant that.

This is an obvious case for the introduction of the auto-rail car which is in common use on the continent of Europe and also in America. It never seems to have occurred to the Railway Executive to attempt to use such a method. There they have the permanent way, a solid steel road;

but it never occurs to them to run a tram service along that road at comparatively small cost in diesel fuel. Why do they not do that? I do not understand it. One has only to cross the Channel to find these things running all over the north of France and making profits. That is what these branch lines require.

This leads me, in conclusion, to the general question of what we used to call in the Army *esprit de corps*. I think that this is at the root of a great deal of the trouble on the railways. I think that there is a case for increases of wages in the railway service, especially for the more highly skilled men. Whatever the cost may be, and however it may have to be met, I believe that there is a case. It was put by the hon. Member for Birkenhead, and by other hon. Members. But the fact remains that there is very little *esprit de corps* in our railway system at the moment, and not much discipline.

The stationmaster at one of our principal terminus stations said to me recently, "If I want to give an order nowadays, Mr. Boothby, I can take it as fairly certain that the men, whatever their grade may be, are bound to have a meeting to decide whether they should obey it or not. I am bound to say that they nearly always decide to obey it, but it is nearly always too late." That is contrary to my idea of discipline. If hon. Members take the trouble to talk to guards and senior attendants on the railways, they will find the same state of affairs.

I took a note of what a senior attendant of 24 years' service said to me the other day when I was complaining bitterly about the late arrival of a train. He said, "Nobody gives a damn any longer whether trains arrive on time or whether, for that matter, they arrive at all." That is what he said, and I do not call that taking a pride in service. Another one said, "I am thankful I am retiring next year, because the heart has gone out of this show. Nobody minds any more."

Why is it? I think it is the same story, once again, of what has happened in the other nationalised industries. It is that the human touch has been taken out of this industry. The Minister of Transport must try to bring some humanity back into it. Nobody in the industry has ever heard of the Railway Executive, ever sees it or knows of whom it consists or what they do; and nobody cares very much, either.

I remember, long before the war, that if one went to the Waverley Station in Edinburgh or to King's Cross, one would see the tall and distinguished figure of Mr. William Whitelaw, the chairman of the L.N.E.R., on the platform. Every porter on the station knew the chairman of the company, and knew that he could go up to him and talk to him, and they were all put on their mettle. We have nobody like Willie Whitelaw in the railway industry today. He was doing a very good job, and I wish we had him back today, because there is nobody like him.

I asked a stationmaster at another railway terminus when he had last seen the Railway Executive, and he said, "I have not seen any of them for nine months, and I have almost forgotten who they are." That is one of the troubles, and the answer to it, of course, is not to denationalise, but to decentralise. This thing is far too big for these men to control. Even the L.M.S. was too big for a single board of directors to control, and the whole of British Railways is far too big for any one small executive to direct and control efficiently. How can they know what is really going on, and

how can the people whom they are supposed to be directing know much about them?

I am inclined to agree with an hon. Gentleman opposite who said that the railway system should be regarded as a service rather than—as my hon. and gallant Friend behind me described it—as a commercial venture. I do not think it is a commercial venture. I think it is a service, and that the conditions of that service should be good. I for one, and I speak only for myself, do not rule out entirely the necessity, in the end, in the interests of standardised freight charges all over the country, and not merely for fish, of some form of subsidy for our railway system, but only in return for real efficiency—and efficiency is what we have not got today.

Mr. Proctor (Eccles): We have listened to an interesting speech by the hon. Member for Aberdeenshire, East (*Mr. Boothby*), and I would like to say in reply to him that I, too, have had complaints from the staff when I have been travelling on the trains.

On one occasion, I asked a member of the staff why he gave us these complaints in this manner, and he said, "It is my job to keep the passengers pleased; and many of them are against nationalisation." I believe that, if the hon. Member for Aberdeenshire, East, would take the place of *Mr. White-law*, to whom he referred, and went on the railways showing his pride in British Railways and encouraging the people who are working them to regard them as a great national asset, and if he also took his proper place as a Member of Parliament and encouraged the people with whom he came in contact to regard this industry as a great national service, he would not hear so many of the tales of woe which he apparently enjoys on his way to Aberdeen.

Mr. Geoffrey Wilson (Truro): Do I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument to be that the railways allow their engines to become dirty to please the passengers?

Mr. Proctor: We have heard a lot about the cost and the amount of money which it would cost to keep the railways efficient. Let the hon. Gentleman opposite consider the immense cost of polishing the railway engines. The hon. Gentleman has wide experience of the railways, and he ought to know better, because he knows how costly that can be. We have to consider brilliance, as against efficiency and economy.

Mr. Boothby: If the French can clean them so can we.

Mr. Proctor: Yes, and, the French have many accidents which we avoid. The hon. Member has compared our railways with those of France, I suggest that we come out of that comparison very well indeed. Let us compare the track of British Railways with the French railway tracks, and, when the hon. Gentleman speaks of speed, let him balance that against the safety of British Railways as against any other railways in the world. Let us consider, when we arrive half an hour late, that it is better to arrive safely than to have an accident. . . .

Oil Development, Alberta (British Investment)

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make dollars available for British capital investment in oil development in Alberta.

Mr. Gaitskell: Yes, if I am satisfied that a sufficiently good case exists.

U.S.A. Penicillin (Royalties)

Dr. King asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what royalties were paid last year to the United States of America on the manufacture of penicillin.

Mr. Gaitskell: This information is not readily available and in any case, since only two firms are concerned, to divulge it would involve disclosing transactions by individual businesses and thus be contrary to Exchange Control practice.

Ministry of Supply, Water Pipes

Mr. Lambert asked the Minister of Supply whether he is aware that there is a delay of up to two years in the delivery of three-inch to six-inch iron water pipes; and, in view of the fact that rural water schemes are being held up and becoming much more costly, what action he proposes to take to make supplies of pipe available.

Mr. M. Stewart: Yes, I am aware that there is between 18 months to 2 years' delay in delivery of these pipes. Increased production depends on additional labour to work extra shifts. Plans are in hand to provide housing accommodation for additional labour for one of the largest producers in the country, but it is not expected that they will be completed before 1952.

TRUTH and "The Alberta Experiment"

Truth for September 28 prints the following letter over the signature, of T. N. Morris:—

Sir,—It is highly probable that William Aberhart will be honoured when his detractors, some of whom do not know enough about him to spell his name correctly, are remembered, if at all, with reproach. It may be true that Aberhart did not, at first, know how to implement Social Credit principles, but he showed himself capable of learning, and of taking advice from those who did, and, immediately it became evident that "the wildest of economic experiments" might succeed, it was vetoed. In these days of wild inflation and general economic madness, it is regrettable to find *Truth* on the side of the Father of Lies in characterising as "wild" the principles of integral accounting and consumer control of production on which Social Credit economics rests.

Truth, a little surprisingly, defends itself in a note to the above letter by saying that it is "not a question of what *Truth* thinks, but of what investors thought at the opening of the Alberta experiment." We shall, of course, always be glad to hear what *Truth* thinks, and await the announcement; but—investors? A whole month after his election, the late *Mr. Aberhart* was able to say he could not buy Alberta 6 per cent. bonds as the prices quoted were merely bids and the holders were not selling. Who were they? 'Investors'?

On Planning The Earth

By GEOFFREY DOBBS.

K.R.P. Publications, Ltd.

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Sugar in Parliament

Omitted from our extract from parliamentary questioning (T.S.C. September 22) was Mr. Turton's question whether the Minister did not "tell us only last week that the amount involved [Exported to Persia] was $1\frac{3}{4}$ million cwt?"

"The Young Elector"

"During the past fortnight I have met and talked, in town and country, with a representative selection of those three million young people between the ages of 21 and 26 who are about to cast their votes for the first or second time. . . .

"Leaving aside the extremists—of whom there were not so many as I had imagined—what struck me most forcibly was an attitude common to all kinds of people, of dissatisfaction with *both* the main political parties. This took varying forms, ranging from apathy and indifference to a passionate, almost bitter distrust. . . .

"... (here, after all I have heard about housing, let me say that unless something drastic is done about this and done soon, it may begin to figure in many people's minds as largely and as bitterly as pre-war unemployment.) . . .

"What is it that young people of today want from politics? They want a Government whose leaders show they recognise the critical times in which we live, a Government which has definite principles, aims and purposes, which proclaims these publicly and implements them by action. They want a Government which shows itself aware of their sense of bewilderment and does something to alleviate it. They want a Government which has wisdom, dignity and tolerance. They want a Government which need not make promises but which, if it does make them, abides by them. Above all, they want a Government which does not indulge in spiteful recrimination, but which by virtue of its integrity and good faith unites people of all classes in this country instead of dividing them."—(Ludovic Kennedy in *The Sunday Times*.)

Jewish Candidates

Headed "General Election: Jews Among Probable Candidates," *The Jewish Chronicle* for September 21 gave the following forty names. (Those who are Members of the present House of Commons are indicated by an asterisk*):—

*ALBU, A. H. (Lab.), Edmonton; BAGNARI, B. A. (Lab.), Tonbridge; CAPLAN, L. (C.), Kensington, N.; DALE, Lt.-Col. L. M. (L.), Greenwich; *DIAMOND J. (Lab.), Manchester, Blackley; DUCHIN, E. (Lab.), Sevenoaks; *EDELMAN, M. (Lab.), Coventry, North; ELLENBOGAN, G. (L.), Southgate; FRANKENBURG, J. (L.), Berwick-on-Tweed; GLUCKSTEIN, Col. L. H., K.C., (C.), Holborn and St. Pancras South; GOLDBLATT, D. (L.), Essex; GOODMAN, L. (C.), Bethnal Green; HOMA, Dr. B. (Lab.), Hendon, South.

*JANNER, B. (Lab.), Leicester, North-West; *JEGER, G. (Lab.), Goole (Yorkshire); *JEGER, Dr. S. W. (Lab.), Holborn and St. Pancras South; *LEVER, L. M. (Lab.), Manchester, Ardwick; *LEVER, N. H. (Lab.), Manchester,

Cheatham; *LEWIS, J. (Lab.), Bolton, West; *LIPTON, Lieut.-Col. M. (Lab.), Lambeth, Brixton; MAGONET, Dr. A. P. (Lab.), Beckenham; MAGNUS, S. W. (L.), Wood Green; *MIKARDO, I. (Lab.), Reading, South; MISHCON, V. (Lab.), Bath; MONTAGU, I. (Comm.), Hammersmith, North; NAPLEY, D. (C.), Rowley Regis and Tipton; *ORBACH, M. (Lab.), Willesden, East; RUSSELL, B. H. (Lab.), Bath.

SANDELSON, N. (Lab.), Ashford (Kent); *SHINWELL, E. (Lab.), Easington (Durham); SILKIN, J. (Lab.), Woolwich, West; *SILVERMAN, J. (Lab.), Birmingham, Erdington; *SILVERMAN, S. S. (Lab.), Nelson and Colne; SOLOMON, Lieut.-Cdr. M. H. B. (C.), Stepney; SOREF, H. (C.), Dudley; *STRAUSS, G. R. (Lab.), Lambeth, Vauxhall; *STROSS, Dr. B. (Lab.), Stoke-on-Trent; *TURNER-SAMUELS, M., K.C., (Lab.), Gloucester; *WEITZMAN, D., K.C., (Lab.), Stoke Newington and Hackney, North; *WILKES, L. (Lab.), Newcastle upon Tyne.

The Men of Yalta

(From an article BACKTRACKING FROM VICTORY. By William Henry Chamberlin in *Human Events*, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., September 12, 1951).

There is a legendary Irishman who, on seeing a mutilated statue supposed to represent Victory, exclaimed: "If that's Victory, show me Defeat." The Irishman might have been commenting on the international position of the U.S. six years after complete victory over the Axis powers.

All the things that crusading interventionists predicted would happen to us if we did not pitch in and "stop Hitler" have happened to us in spite of Hitler's annihilation. . . . Can we escape from victory? That is the most vital question that confronts us in international relations today.

. . . What is profoundly disturbing is that so many of the men who are closely associated with the wrong decisions that turned military victory into tragic political defeat are still in positions of high authority. Secretary Acheson was, to put it mildly, no Paul Revere sounding an alarm against the future designs of the Kremlin during the war years. As late as November, 1945, he shared a platform with the notorious "Red Dean" of Canterbury (whose latest flight of fancy has been to compare Stalin with Jesus Christ) under the auspices of the Council of American-Soviet Friendship, an organization on the Attorney-General's subversive list.

General Marshall's fumbling efforts to square the circle by bringing the Chinese Communists into a coalition government, accompanied by an embargo on arms for the Nationalists, contributed much to the loss of China as a potential friendly ally. And politically Marshall was associated very closely with the fateful decisions of Teheran and Yalta.

Averell Harriman is one of the men of Yalta. Philip Jessup was prominent in the Institute of Pacific Affairs at the time when the Carter-Lattimore-Field triumvirate was riding high in that organization. Many similar examples could be cited.

. . . So long as the men of Yalta, in the actual or figurative sense of that term, are directing our foreign policy, the American people can possess no firm assurance that a new Yalta may not be in the making. . . .