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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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Decline of Rome: The Fall of the Western Empire

By H. SWABEY

Gibbon has touched on most of the ingredients of How to Create a Dark Age, and relates that "the Roman Government appeared every day less formidable to its enemies, more odious and oppressive to its subjects." People no longer wanted to be Romans. It is easy to recall, from the days before Europe burned the house down to cook the goose, the intense pride of a very foreign looking character when he said, "I am Breetish"; he knew that it was not very easy to become British.

Refugees from the invasion of Attila and the Huns fled to some islands, where they were likened to water-fowl, and eventually founded Venice. ("The marriage, which Venice annually celebrates with the Hadriatic, was contracted in her early infancy.") Bishop Leo headed Attila off from Rome, and when the Hun died his remains "were inclosed within three coffins, of gold, of silver, and of iron." There are similarities with the burial rite of North America, where the body is enclosed in a casket, or first coffin, and later in a vault. The embalming done first takes the place of a third coffin. But Leo was less successful with Genseric, who had been invited into Rome: possibly he mollified him, but the Vandals poured into the city, and dragged many captives away to Carthage. There Deogratias, the bishop, tended the prisoners (455 A.D.).

In a few years, at the eleventh hour, Marjorian passed some reforming laws and it is noticeable that they were entirely fiscal. He relieved the provincials from all arrears of tribute and tax and suppressed the extraordinary commissions. (In one instance, the latter "exactd the whole payment in gold: but they refused the current coin of the empire.") Local responsibility was revived and local exaction obstructed. But civil discord broke out again in Italy, and a bishop, Epiphanius, tried to restore harmony. ("The oration of a bishop in favour of peace may be easily supposed": today a bishop would probably be part of the war machine.) The words of one of the contestants might have been spoken by some former ally of Stalin: "What favours have we refused to this ungrateful man? . . . The liberality which ought to have secured the eternal attachment of Ricimer has exasperated him against his benefactor. What wars has he not excited against the empire? How often has he instigated and assisted the fury of hostile nations? Shall I now accept his perfidious friendship? . . ." The extinction of Rome followed, in 476 or 479, when it became a Gothic kingdom. Gibbon remarks that "since the age of Tiberius, the decay of agriculture had been felt in Italy; and it was a just subject of complaint, that the life of the Roman people depended on the accidents of the

winds and waves." He noted Pliny's phrase, that huge scale farming (*latifundia*) ruined Italy, but does not, like Mommsen, explain that a *latifundium* was the result of debt.

Amid the ruins, the monks preserved something, but "the industry must be faint and languid, which is not excited by the sense of personal interest." Ulphilas, the apostle of the Goths, translated the Scriptures for them, "but he prudently suppressed the four books of Kings, as they might tend to irritate the fierce and sanguinary spirit of the barbarians." Ulphilas twice appeared at the Eastern court, "as the minister of peace." In Spain, after Arianism had been extirpated, persecution was directed against the Jews, and ninety thousand of them were compelled to be baptized. But still they continued there: "A nation, the secret or professed enemies of Christianity, still multiplied in servitude and distress; and the intrigues of the Jews promoted the rapid success of the Arabian conquerors." In spite of their ambitions, the Spanish bishops maintained order, and instituted legislative assemblies. ("The regular discipline of the church introduced peace, order and stability into the government: . . . a legal government was supported by the prevailing influence of the Spanish clergy.") The bishops and palatines could only be degraded by the free and public judgment of their peers.

The prophecy of Tacitus, that all the nations would be at war with each other if the Romans were expelled, was partially fulfilled. But in France, Clovis (481-511) established the French monarchy, and twenty five years later the Franks were minting gold ("a singular privilege, denied even to the Persian monarch": it was a sign of sovereignty, as Del Mar proved.) Charlemagne later directed, in his rustic edict, that larger villas should maintain a hundred hens and thirty geese, and the smaller fifty hens and twelve geese. And the Romans enjoyed what land was left them in Gaul exempt from tribute. But the March assemblies were abolished. ("National assemblies, which are coeval with the French nation, have never been congenial to its temper.") The Britons resisted their invaders, but found that "resistance, if it cannot avert, must increase, the miseries of conquest."

In his general remarks on the Fall of the Western Empire, Gibbon adds little to what he has said here and there. The struggles of patricians and plebians had "established the firm and equal balance of the constitution; which united the freedom of popular assemblies with the authority and wisdom of a senate, and the executive powers of a regal magistrate." The serenity of the 18th century was founded on the view that, "The balance of power will continue to fluctuate . . . but these partial events cannot injure our general state of happiness, the system of arts, and laws, and manners, which . . . distinguish above the

rest of mankind, the Europeans and their colonies." Europe was then divided into twelve kingdoms, three commonwealths, and several independent states: "the chances of royal and ministerial talents are multiplied . . . The abuses of tyranny are restrained by the mutual influence of fear and shame . . . in war, the European forces are exercised by temperate and indecisive contests." He recognised that "ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall": but his conclusion, to the first half of his work, may still be accepted, that "every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth . . . of the human race."

Rome enjoyed a "last ray of declining glory" under Theodoric (493-526), a Goth who conquered Italy with the connivance of the Eastern Emperor, and who approximated to the eighteenth century canon of politics: "His domestic alliances . . . contributed to maintain the harmony, or at least the balance, of the great republic of the West." The canon of balance is detested by all roosevelto communists, and was expressly condemned at, I believe, San Francisco. But a persecution of the Jews ("rich and defenceless") at Rome and Ravenna exasperated the civil authorities, counter-persecution followed against the Catholics, and the philosopher Boethius ("the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman," (470-524) was executed despite his services to his country. Politicians do not usually welcome the intrusion of philosophy. "Peace, honourable peace," had been Theodoric's aim before these disturbances.

Fluorine and Dental Caries

Writing to *The Scotsman* of May 19, the chief dental officer for Dundee rebuts the sole argument which has been publicly advanced for fluoridation of drinking water. His letter follows:—

"62, Castle Street, Forfar.

"May 17, 1952.

"Sir,—In Dundee an investigation was carried out to test the value of the topical application of sodium fluoride in arresting the development of dental caries in newly erupted permanent teeth.

"Results show that the topical application (like the ingestion of fluorine in drinking water, as in South Shields and other places) only produced a postponement of caries. The greatest contribution to a better dental condition of the people of this country would be the introducing of some means of making dental hygiene a more important factor in our daily lives. The causes of dental caries may be too much carbohydrate and too much sugar, but the use of a tooth brush, night and morning, especially last thing at night, would make a great contribution towards better dental health.

"I am convinced that even if fluorine, in either ingested or applied form, could make a permanent improvement (which has yet to be proved) it would be almost nullified by the lack of oral hygiene in removing the carbohydrate and sugar residue.—I am &c.

"David A. Finlayson,

"Chief Dental Officer, Dundee."

PARLIAMENT

House of Lords: April 30, 1952.

Food Production: (*The Debate continued*).

Lord Noel-Buxton: My Lords, we are a House of moderate men, but I suggest that this is the one issue facing us over which we ought to be extremists. There is nothing relative about the need for further food production in this country—it is absolute. I speak as a countryman but not as a farmer, and I have not in any sense a technical contribution to make. I have spent far more time than I should like in big cities, rather than in the wide open places, with the exception of two in New Zealand or Canada for a short time. Therefore, I feel the urgency of this situation in an urban way, and I cannot help being appalled at our numbers. There is no need to go into the history of that—it is all obvious and common ground. But when one considers the roads of this country on any Sunday evening in the summer and the returning people, one cannot be anything but staggered by the situation. Here are all our people. Consider at the same time that the overseas sources of supply are really permanently drying up. That is a very open question—whether permanently or not. In my view, the overseas sources of supply are permanently drying up. I overseas sources of supply, so far as we are concerned are permanently drying up. I should like to ask the noble Lord who is to reply whether he agrees with that, or whether he thinks that in any sense this is a temporary situation, even if by "temporary" one is to mean thirty years. Does he envisage in the future a situation in which food production is not so important to this country as it is at the moment? I think there never will be such a situation, and the temptation to think that there will be is one of our worst disadvantages, because it tempts us to regard it as merely a gap which we have to fill before the overseas countries are again going to do this tremendous job of feeding us.

What an undignified business it all is! We ought forthwith to dedicate ourselves to a new pioneer concept, to a pioneering spirit, on our own land. Why go 13,000 miles to New Zealand or 3,000 or 4,000 miles to some part of Canada, when the thing is crying out to be done within 100 or 200 miles of your Lordships' House? There must be a great need for emigration, but certainly we cannot afford to lose a single farm person. We have it in us, and we have the people to get out on to the sub-standard fields and into the hills. I agree that it is a far-fetched metaphor, but I think we ought to try to view ourselves as if we were newly arrived immigrants in some new fertile country, with the urgent problem immediately of clearing the ground this year for houses and for planting seed. We need to view the situation in that way, and to try to get back something of a spirit essentially worthy of the Mother country of the Empire.

There will be no let-up, as I have suggested, and it can prove a blessing in disguise, because we shall be able to get back this true Empire spirit into this Island. That is why it is dangerous to emphasise one product or another. This is a convenient method of limiting the endeavour. All lines of production should march forward together, with

no such long-term limit as, say, 60 per cent. above pre-war. Of course, even that may not be achieved without quite a new approach. We have to deal with the psychosis of the past working in the farmer's mind. That will not easily be cured in the older generation. It takes very little to destroy confidence.

I should like to ask the noble Lord who is to reply whether he imagines that at any future point he will be in a position to give a permanent guarantee to agriculture—or rather, a guarantee to agriculture whenever a Conservative Government are in power. We ought to move on the lines of some sort of national pledge by both main Parties. This would have a terrific psychological effect on the farmers. There is one other point. Have the Government a specific new expansion programme in connection with this figure of 60 per cent. above pre-war? If so, what are the details? This is an overseas problem too. The matter is the most urgent at the point where it is also the most difficult. No one doubts that there are full costings available—the facts are known. Our cities simply must accept the fact of the increased cost of producing food. We have to develop new methods of dealing with the matter from the farmer's point of view—as regards, for instance, large variations in efficiency—but we have to accept the situation that food will never be cheap again.

Perhaps I may be allowed to end with a quotation from John Ruskin, which seems very pertinent at the moment—indeed, it would be at any time—with regard to our city communities. He wrote:

“We find the inhabitants of this earth divided into two great masses: the peasant paymasters—spade in hand, original imperial producers of turnips; and, waiting on them all around, a crowd of polite persons modestly expectant of turnips, for some—too often theoretical—service.”

We could bridge this gap, but, in doing so, we must move from the city towards the country, and not the other way.

Lord Brocket: . . . The noble Lord, Lord Luke, yesterday mentioned the question of Ireland and of store cattle coming to this country. I farm in Ireland and I go there frequently. In Ireland there is a strain of nationalism which makes the Irish people wish to kill their own cattle and to use the by-products for themselves, rather than export them to England as stores. In the past, English people have not taken that attitude very seriously, but I can say that a number of factories are either being set up or to be set up in Ireland, which will deal with cattle when they are fat. In due course the numbers will increase, and we shall not be able to depend upon Ireland for store cattle in the same numbers that we have had in the past.

Moreover, in Ireland we have other good customers. Your Lordships may remember that a short time ago some publicity was given to the fact that a number of Irish fat cattle were being flown to Italy. I believe they were sent to Birkenhead; from there to Lympne in Kent; from there to France, and so on to Le Touquet—scarcely an appropriate place for fat cattle—and thence to Italy by rail. In what condition they would be when they got to Italy I do not know; but I do know that when I was in Italy recently I got some good meat which may well have come from Ireland. If the Italians can buy Irish meat it may be that our prices are not attractive enough. We have either got to pay world prices for our meat or not get it. We must

not, at any rate, depend on the Irish store cattle trade continuing in future to the same extent as in the past.

House of Commons: May 1, 1952.

Commonwealth Relations Retired Officers (Indian Tax)

Mr. Anthony Marlowe asked the Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations what representations he has made to the Government of India with a view to restoring the immunity from Indian Income Tax which existed in respect of service retired pay prior to the India Independence Act; and whether he will make a statement.

The Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations (Mr. John Foster): I assume that my hon. and learned Friend is referring to Indian Income Tax on pensions and not on pay. The decision of the Government of India to tax Indian pensions is within their legal competence and I know of no grounds on which my noble Friend can make representations against it. Special measures have, however, been taken by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to relieve from any additional net burden of tax those pensioners who, but for the transfer of power, would have enjoyed exemption from Indian tax under Section 272 of the Government of India Act, 1935.

Mr. Marlowe: Does my hon. and learned Friend mean that, in fact, he is not doing much about this rather difficult problem? Is he aware that many of these retired officers are suffering a financial loss and that they are looking towards Her Majesty's Government to remedy this injustice?

Mr. Foster: I do not think that the position is at all what my hon. and learned Friend says. For instance, pensioners in the United Kingdom have been promised relief out of United Kingdom funds against Indian Income Tax, and they do obtain it. Perhaps the best thing would be for me to send to my hon. and learned Friend the pamphlet which explains all this information. It is not a fact that they suffer any financial loss.

U.K. Designs (Japanese Copying)

Mr. Ellis Smith asked the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken to prevent British designs from being copied, and to prevent the words, “Made in England,” being stamped on manufactured goods made in Japan and Hong Kong.

Mr. P. Thorneycroft: I am not aware that United Kingdom designs are being copied by Hong Kong manufacturers, but if the hon. Member has any information on the subject I shall be pleased to consider it. In fact, under Hong Kong legislation the copyright of every design registered in the United Kingdom extends automatically to Hong Kong. As regards Japan, I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Air Commodore Harvey) on 20th November last.

No cases have been reported to me of goods manu-
(Continued on page 5).

THE SOCIAL CREDITER

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Saturday, May 31, 1952.

From Week to Week

At nine fifteen on the evening of May 23, a party of chosen persons (A. G. Street, Dingle Foot, A. W. Benn, M.P., Irene Ward, M.P., and F. Grisewood) were discussing, among other things, fundamental human rights. They believed in 'them,' and the B.B.C. let them say so. A quarter of an hour earlier, the B.B.C. announced that Mr. Fenner Brockway, M.P., (Eton and Slough, Lab.) had moved the second reading of the Declaration of Human Rights Bill, "to establish throughout the United Kingdom and the non-self-governing colonies and protectorates a standard of human rights and freedoms applicable to all Her Majesty's subjects without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, birth, or other status."

Mr. Doughty (Surrey, East, C.) called attention to the fact that there were fewer than 40 members present. Out of 625, there were 34. Perhaps Mr. Benn and Miss Ward were among them. In any case, its safer on the air.

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Nowadays, of course, banks don't 'fail': this is not in the programme. Only nations 'fail'—anyhow, not banks. In the good old days when banks failed and nations sometimes succeeded, indeed at the time of the failure of the City of Glasgow bank, the legend goes that a wily agent kept a clerk in the back premises busy heating the coin for which the public was clamouring in panic; getting the impression that it was being coined, in unlimited quantities on the spot.

Now what would be the post-moratorium equivalent of that?—the suffused distribution of notes wet with the sweat engendered by the labour of their production?

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The phrase "to command authority," like a tiger's stripes, a leopard's spots, the vine's grapes, the fig-tree's figs, is a makes-to-know phrase. The New Testament covers it by a question: "Do men gather . . .?" The answer does not need proof. We believe there is a comparable case in the law pertaining to negligence. If a passer-by is injured by a brick falling from a building in course of construction, the brick-layer is negligent. The injured man does not have to prove negligence: bricks aren't negligent of their own nature. So anyone who speaks of commanding authority convicts himself of being a tiger, a leopard, striped or spotted, someone bringing forth fruit according to its kind.

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When commanding authority goes with discussion of the Constitution, look out. And so it is with *The Times* which is of the opinion that the powers of the House of Lords cannot be restored "until the composition of the House has been so remodelled as to give it back the moral authority over public opinion which in the modern age a purely hereditary body cannot hope to command." A figure of speech? Ah, yes; like the economists' figures.

• • •

In a presidential lecture to the English Association, Mr. A. L. Rowse has given it as his opinion that "the best contemporary writers" detest the new social order. "Even Mr. Priestley, it seems," said Mr. Rowse, "has turned his back on it." From a newspaper report one cannot tell what comes earlier or later in a public address; but elsewhere the lecturer said that Elizabethan society was alive and bursting with energy; it sparkled and glittered and crackled with it. It was a society that was competitive to the finger tips; everybody scrambled and jostled and climbed and pushed their way to the front. Everybody was, quite rightly, ambitious; and, quite rightly, not afraid to be thought so. Society provided incentive; initiative was encouraged, achievement rewarded.

And there was freedom in that society to move up—or down; careers were open to talents and hard work. The age valued ability. It did not hamper and discourage it at every turn, in the interest of a monotonous sameness not worth having. The Elizabethans appreciated quality, in the objects they made with their hands no less than in things of the mind. They admired nobility and breeding; they set much store by intellectual and artistic gifts, and rewarded them; they appreciated and praised genius—as opposed to the 'democratic' attitude of being awkward and shamefaced about it.

"Bursting," "sparkling," "glittering," "crackling," "scrambling," "jostling," "climbing," "pushing." In other words what the Elizabethans did not do was to "turn their backs" to their pests and their problems. Whether or not Mr. Rowse may suspect us of "too much criticism" in this weighing of his words, we would not have him believe that we dissent from his assertion that "this hearth of the English-speaking world, . . . is small enough to be an integrated society." If it isn't, it could easily be made small enough; but that isn't the Big Idea.

Specification of Social Credit

By the generosity of a supporter, postcards are available, price 1d. each, with the specification, "What Is Social Credit?" printed on one side, half the other side being available for correspondence. Readers may obtain supplies from K.R.P. Publications, Ltd., 7, Victoria Street, Liverpool, 2.

SOCIAL CREDIT SECRETARIAT

Supporters of the Social Credit Secretariat and regular readers of *The Social Crediter* are invited to apply for tickets of admission, price 2/6 each, to a Meeting to be held in London on July 12 (6-30 p.m.). Dr. Tudor Jones will address the Meeting.

PARLIAMENT—

(continued from page 3.)

factured in Japan or Hong Kong being marked "Made in England." If the hon. Member knows of such cases and of countries into which goods so marked have been imported I will consider taking the matter up with the Governments concerned.

Mr. Smith: Has not the time arrived when the Board of Trade should be more resolute in dealing with matters of this kind? If I can be supplied with evidence direct from Hong Kong, surely the Board of Trade ought to be provided with it. Has not the time arrived when we should be given some concrete results from the assurances we have had?

Mr. Thorneycroft: If the hon. Gentleman has some evidence, I shall be very happy, as I have assured him, to receive it and to give it full consideration.

Air Commodore A. V. Harvey: Does my right hon. Friend recall that, since he gave me a reply last autumn, I have given him fresh evidence of the copying of British designs by the Japanese? Does he not agree that the longer this goes on the worse it will become? Will he take definite action now and show the Japanese that we really mean business and that they are not going to be allowed to get away with it?

Mr. Thorneycroft: I am in complete sympathy with my hon. and gallant Friend's question, but the Question referred specifically to the use of the term, "Made in England," and it was to that that I was directing my reply.

Mr. A. Edward Davies: While the words "Made in England" may not appear on some of the products, is not the Minister aware that, as his hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Air Commodore Harvey) mentioned yesterday, the practice is proceeding and that it has been experienced in the case of textiles in Nigeria? Certainly, in the case of pottery we have had examples at a comparatively recent date. Can he take some action with America and the other countries concerned, and also with Japan itself, to see that the industry is put on a proper basis?

American Import Duties

Mr. Ronald Russell asked the President of the Board of Trade what reply he has received to the memorandum sent by him to the United States Government in regard to possible increases in American import duties on British-manufactured goods; and what action he proposes to take under Article XIX of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Mr. P. Thorneycroft: No reply has yet been received, but my hon. Friend will no doubt have heard of the favourable comments made by Mr. Acheson yesterday. As I explained on 24th April in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Kidderminster (Mr. Nabarro), the applications referred to in the memorandum are still being investigated by the United States Tariff Commission who have not yet made any recommendations on any of them; accordingly, the question of action under Article XIX of the General Agreement does not at present arise.

Mr. Russell: Is it not a fact that whenever American industry finds itself faced with fierce competition it demands protection, and is it not, therefore, unwise to rely on any permanent increase in our exports to the United States?

Mr. Thorneycroft: That raises rather a wider point than the one in the Question.

Mr. Philip Noel-Baker: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the United States Government have imposed quotas against some European imports the quantity of which was increasing and that that largely neutralises their very generous policy of civil aid to Europe? Will the right hon. Gentleman continue to represent to the American representative in London the grave dangers of a return to the Smoot-Hawley policy of pre-war days?

Mr. Thorneycroft: That was, of course, the object of the memorandum which was made available to the United States Government.

Newsagents (Banned Books)

Mr. Crouch asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will supply newsagents with the same list as is issued to the police of banned books.

Sir D. Maxwell Fyfe: The police are not supplied by the Home Office with a list of banned books, but only with a list of books that have been condemned by the courts. If a list of that kind were sent to booksellers it would imply that they were free to deal in any books that did not appear on the list, and would be misleading. There is no censorship of books by the Executive in this country.

House of Commons: May 5, 1952.

Electricity Supplies

Rural Areas (Transmission Lines)

Commander J. F. W. Maitland asked the Minister of Fuel and Power if he will give directions to the British Electricity Authority that they should consider the use of light roadside high tension lines with very small transformers to supply isolated houses and cottages and to employ combined construction where the high tension line passes several premises; and if he is aware that this method is extensively used on the Continent and in the United States of America for dealing with the supply of electricity to sparsely populated areas.

Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd: A light and economical overhead line with small transformers is already widely used in this country. Also combined construction for high and low voltage lines is adopted wherever it is practicable.

Commander Maitland: Will the Minister consider extending that, particularly to the Eastern Counties, where we have very widely scattered districts and we need electricity in the countryside very badly indeed?

Mr. Gerald Nabarro: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the British Electricity Authority could study with profit the Anglo-American Productivity Report on the transmission and generation of electricity, thereby embodying these important American principles which are so sorely lacking in this country?

Mr. E. Shinwell: Is it not true that the British Electricity Authority have already adopted this method in some parts of the country?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, Sir. If my hon. Friend the Member for Kidderminster (Mr. Nabarro) desires further information on this point, I hope that he will put down a Question, but my information is that this is being widely used at present.

Mr. Julian Snow: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the method is not widely used in the particular case to which I drew his attention affecting the hon. Member for Lichfield and Tamworth a little while ago?

Press Advertisements

Mr. Nabarro asked the Minister of Fuel and Power whether he is aware that Press advertisements inserted by the Midlands Electricity Board in urban areas, already electrified, depict a house fully lit by electricity; how far the committee at his Department has succeeded in regulating sales promotional advertising; and if he will make a statement on the new principles which will guide publicity by the gas and electricity undertakings.

Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd: The Committee has proposed new principles for the avoidance of purely promotional advertising. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to these particular advertisements, and I am communicating with the area board.

Mr. Nabarro: While I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, may I ask whether he can tell the House if he has seen this monstrosity, put out in an urban and town area around Birmingham, which is fully electrified, exhorting householders to light their homes by electricity? What does the Midland Electricity Board think householders are going to use—Christmas candles? Why should the electricity tariff be inflated by this kind of unnecessary expenditure?

Pig Keeping

Mr. Law asked the Minister of Agriculture if he will consider suspending the local bye-law regarding the keeping of pigs which was reintroduced on 1st July, 1951, after having been suspended since the war, in order that people in towns who wish to keep pigs may not be prevented from doing so.

Sir T. Dugdale: Defence Regulation 62B, which had the effect of suspending restrictions on the keeping of pigs, was revoked on 1st July, 1951, and I do not think further legislation on this subject would be justified at the present time.

House of Commons: May 6, 1952.

Industrial Noises

Mr. Joseph T. Price asked the Minister of Labour to what extent his factory inspectors have under his regulations advisory powers in connection with the abatement of industrial noise where factory processes are likely to interfere with the sleep of persons compelled to live in the immediate vicinity of factories.

Sir W. Monckton: None at all, Sir. There is no statutory power under the Factories Acts to deal with nuisances affecting residents in the vicinity of a factory.

Mr. Price: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider this matter further and see whether he can give any assistance to a large number of constituents of mine living in Horwich, Lancashire, whose lives are made intolerable by the noise emanating all night long from the plant of the British Transport Commission? Will he consider this matter generally in connection with the development of industry, because in the opinion of many of us it falls within the purview of his Department?

Sir W. Monckton: I can only deal with the situation as it is. It does not fall within the purview of the Factory Inspectorate. It falls within the provisions of the Public Health Acts, which are the concern of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Housing and Local Government.

Mr. Harnar Nicholls: Is the Minister aware that if there were powers the Factory Inspectorate is so much below establishment that it would be doubtful if they could give attention to the matter?

Trade and Commerce

Hire Purchase and Credit Sales

Mr. Hylton-Foster asked the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received with regard to practices adopted to evade the objects of the Hire-Purchase and Credit-Sale Agreements (Control) Order, 1952; and if he will take all requisite steps to put an end to such practices.

Mr. H. Strauss: It has been alleged that some traders are infringing the Order by offering agreements which purport to be agreements for hiring, but which are in fact hire-purchase agreements in which the option to purchase the goods is not in writing. Such cases are being investigated. My right hon. Friend has also received representations to the effect that there has been an increase in credit sale agreements for a period of less than nine months and other methods of giving credit have been brought to our notice. The Order does not apply to some of these agreements, and he is considering whether it is desirable to extend control over credit trading in the goods concerned.

Road Vehicles (Tax Receipts)

Mr. Jamner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will give an estimate of the amount which will be contributed to the Exchequer during the current financial year by road users in respect of the duty on hydrocarbon oils and Purchase Tax and licence duty upon motor vehicles; what he estimates will be the total expenditure on road maintenance and development in Great Britain during the same period; and what proportion thereof will be borne by the Exchequer and by local authorities, respectively.

Mr. R. A. Butler: The share of road vehicles in the estimated receipts for 1952-53 from the hydrocarbon oil duties is approximately £228 million. Estimated receipts from Purchase Tax on motor cars, motor cycles and com-

mercial vehicle chassis are about £43 million, and from the vehicle licence duties £64 million. Total expenditure on road maintenance and development in Great Britain should be very approximately £67 million, of which £33 million will be paid by the Road Fund and the balance by local authorities.

Income Tax

Mr. P. Roberts asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Treasury of a reduction in the standard rate of income tax of 6d. in the £ and of 1s. 6d. on earned incomes, respectively.

Mr. R. A. Butler: A reduction of 6d. in the standard rate of Income Tax from 9s. 6d. in the £ to 9s. 0d. in the £ with *pro rata* reductions in the reduced rates would cost £83 million this year and £95 million in a full year. A reduction of 1s. 6d. in the standard rate from 9s. 6d. in the £ to 8. 0d. in the £ in the case of earned income only would cost £96 million this year and £120 million in a full year.

House of Commons: May 7, 1952.

International Economic Conference, Moscow

Mr. Emrys Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what instructions he gave to Her Majesty's Embassy at Moscow to attend and observe the proceedings at the recent International Economic Conference.

Mr. Selwyn Lloyd: This Conference was not organised on a Governmental basis, and Her Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow was, therefore, instructed that it would not be appropriate to accept any invitation to attend the proceedings. No such invitation was in fact received.

Mr. Hughes: Could the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us what was his objection to sending observers to this Conference? [HON. MEMBERS: "There were some."] Well, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us if the Government have received a full report of what happened at the Conference, and, if so, where it was obtained?

Mr. Lloyd: So far as the question of observation is concerned, I understand that no facilities were provided for the diplomatic Missions in Moscow to observe the proceedings, and the Secretary-General of the Preparatory Commission stated in his opening speech at the Conference:

"The aim was and is to convene a conference of private persons, and not of representatives of Governments."

Mr. Logan: Is it not a fact that those persons from this country at the Conference had no authority, and were only observers at that Conference?

Colonel Alan Gomme-Duncan: They were "merchant venturers."

Foot-and-Mouth Disease (Standstill Order)

Mr. Anthony Fell: I wish to raise a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the national standstill order enforced from today on the movement of livestock resulting from foot-and-mouth disease notification, and to move the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House to raise a definite matter of public importance, namely, the national standstill order enforced on the movement of livestock resulting from foot-and-mouth disease notification. I find this matter impossible to bring within the limits of the Standing Order on the grounds of urgency. This policy which is being applied by the standstill order arises out of legislation passed by this House, and has been a policy of a long continuing character for many years. Though it is no doubt urgent from the agricultural point of view, I cannot find it urgent from the point of view of the Standing Order.

Mr. R. T. Paget: I wish to raise a matter for information. Is there not a distinction between the standstill orders which we have been accustomed to and which have been part of the law for four years but which were confined to a radius of 15 miles outward, and this entirely new and quite unprecedented order applying to the whole country? It is a standstill order of all the cattle everywhere in the country? That, in my submission, is something entirely new, and its implications, I think, are a matter of very great urgency. It is one thing to say that this policy is worthwhile when it is confined to a small area; it is another to say that the whole cattle trade of the country has to be brought to a standstill.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened with great care to what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said and I appreciate that a universal standstill order does differ in degree from the normal standstill orders in different parts of the country, but I cannot agree that for the purpose of the Standing Order this action, which is taken in pursuance of legislation passed by this House and is of long standing continuance, falls within the Standing Order.

Agricultural Land (Removal of Surface Soil)

Mr. J. K. Vaughan-Morgan (Reigate): I beg to move, "That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make it an offence to carry out any development consisting of the removal of surface soil from land used for the purposes of agriculture without the grant of planning permission required in that behalf under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947."

In short, the Bill is designed to stop the spoilation of good farming land which is continuing all over the country at the present time, and particularly in the Home Counties. It does not in any way prohibit such accepted trades as sale of turf or, indeed, the sale of top soil when it takes place in reasonable quantities. Soil is now being taken from good farming land in large quantities and is being used to fill the flower-pots and window-boxes and gardens of the cities. I understand that it is also used on greyhound racing tracks. It cannot be right that good farming land should have its soil filched for such purposes.

I can best explain to the House the reason for the urgency of and necessity for this Bill if I recount what has happened recently in my constituency at Bletchingley. A speculator bought in early February some 46 acres. He proceeded to install a mechanical grab and to remove the surface soil to a depth of about 18 inches. Today he has devastated some 15 acres. On February 18, I got into touch with the Ministry of Agriculture, when I learned what was

happening. The Agricultural Executive Committee acted with great promptitude and started proceedings, as far as they could, on 22nd February. However, it was not until the 21st April that it was possible to bring this soil pirate to court. It then happened that Mr. William Henry Stevens, who ironically describes himself as a landscape architect, was fined £50 and £3 costs at Oxted Court for failing to comply with the direction made requiring him to cease removing turf and topsoil on land at Bletchingley.

In view of the fact that the speculator in question is making at a conservative estimate, a profit of £180 per acre on each of the 15-20 acres which he has despoiled, this £50 fine has merely acted as a spur to greater activity. Yesterday I received a telegram from a neighbouring farmer as follows:

"Spoliation of land at Bletchingley continues rapidly. Six lorry loads left in 20 minutes this morning. Lorries still queueing for filling."

The farmer in question continues with a request that action should be taken to end this as speedily as possible. Meanwhile, under the other Act involved, the Town and Country Planning Act, the local council also initiated action, but that has proved even slower and the case will not come into court until 19th May.

I hope I have said enough to explain to the House that the present machinery is undoubtedly too slow and too ineffective to stop this trade, and the Bill which I ask leave to bring forward will therefore make it an offence to remove top soil without planning permission. I should explain that it will be necessary for the penalties to be commensurate with the threat which this trade represents to a basic industry of our country, and on a scale sufficient to take profitability out of continuing to trade after legal action has been taken.

I hope I have proved to the House the urgent need of such a Bill. I have the support of hon. Members of all parties. Let me add that the Bill has a sporting chance of reaching the Statute Book by the end of this Session. I also understand that the intention of this Bill has the approval of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Housing and Local Government. I end by appealing to all in this House who appreciate the need at this moment to see that we use our land effectively, to help to end this squalid traffic.

Mr. R. T. Paget (Northampton): I rise to oppose this Bill. It seems to me to relate to a matter of principle which may well involve legislation, but it should not be ill-considered legislation. There can be no greater mistake than the casual creation of new crimes. To take a certain bad case and to say that we will have a general law about it, without considering all the spreading results that such a law may have, is the wrong way to legislate and the wrong way to create crimes. . . . These things want proper consideration. If new crimes are to be made, it is for the Government of the day, after proper consideration, to say, "This thing shall be a crime." With their organisation and machinery they can look into the matter and see, not if it affects one land pirate, but how it affects every other kind of perfectly legitimate proceeding. This cannot be dealt with in a casual private enterprise way of saying, "Here is a thing to which I object; therefore let us make a general crime which makes not only this man a criminal but perhaps also a series of perfectly law-abiding citizens doing

perfectly reasonable things who have not even been thought of."

Therefore, I object to this Bill upon the general principle. Let the hon. Member take it to the Government, and if they do not regard their criminal machinery as being sufficient, let them, after due consideration, bring in the necessary Measure. The creating of crime should not be a matter of private enterprise by back benchers.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Vaughan-Morgan, Mr. Crouch, Mr. Champion, Colonel Ralph Clarke, Mr. Philips Price, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Grimond, Mr. Baker White, Mr. Peart, Mr. Deedes, and Mr. Gooch.

AGRICULTURAL LAND (REMOVAL OF SURFACE SOIL) BILL
"to make it an offence to carry out any development consisting of the removal of surface soil from land used for the purposes of agriculture without the grant of planning permission required in that behalf under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947," presented accordingly, and read the First time; to be read a Second time upon Friday, 23rd May, and to be printed. [Bill 96.]

Water Supplies (Fluoridation)

Mr. Viant asked the Minister of Housing and Local Government whether, in fluoridation of water supplies, the fluorine is added in the form of salts, or in what other form is it added.

Mr. H. Macmillan: In this country fluoride is not yet added to water supplies. In the United States of America, however, there is a growing practice to make such an addition and the fluoride is usually added as sodium fluoride, sodium silico-fluoride (fluosilicate) or hydrofluosilicic acid. The first two of these compounds are solid salts, but are usually made into an aqueous solution before adding to the water. Hydrofluosilicic acid is purchased as an aqueous solution.

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