

THE SOCIAL CREDITER

FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

Vol. 11. No. 11.

Registered at G.P.O. as a Newspaper
Postage (home and abroad) 1d.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1943.

6d. Weekly.

MODERN SCIENCE (V)

Thorpe* calls physics and chemistry "twin sisters, daughters of Natural Philosophy, like Juno's swans, coupled and inseparable."

The same author has noticed that Lavoisier's views were not accepted immediately in Germany, Sweden and England. "The spirit of revolution, even though it might be an intellectual revolution, had not extended to these countries."** I note Thorpe's description of the provinces of physics and chemistry. "Physics," he says, "is concerned with the forms of energy which affect matter; chemistry with the study of matter so affected. Each, then, is complementary to the other."

In the light of a sentence from a letter by Major Douglas which I have been privileged to see, how is this 'complementary' characteristic regarded by those who wish to extend 'education' in the higher seats of learning to something like three times its present proportions?

Douglas wrote: "What I am trying to do is to synthesise the situation away from the Encyclopaedist heresy, which is simply a Satanic application of the principle of divide and rule."

Forty-three *per cent.* of the total candidates at the School Certificate examination in July, 1929 offered Chemistry to Boards other than Oxford and Cambridge to 27½ *per cent.* offering Physics. The figures for the Oxford and Cambridge Boards were 22 *per cent.*, and 19 *per cent.*, in itself a curious, and, in my opinion, a not unimportant distinction.

Does it indicate the influence of the Board of Education, the preference of urban parents for the study of the material before the study of the immaterial, the inspiration of Widnes odours, or what? Only 4 *per cent.* of school candidates offered Mechanics, and they were all 'Other Board' scholars. Twenty-five Oxford and Cambridge Board scholars offered *both* Physics and Chemistry, "like Juno's swans, coupled and inseparable," to 3 *per cent.* of scholars examined by 'Other Boards.'

*SIR EDWARD THORPE: *History of Chemistry*, 1909.

**Lavoisier, himself a member of the Paris Commune, was executed by the Convention—"La republique n'a pas besoin de savants." In 1768 he had become a member of the *Ferme-generale*, a company of financiers to whom the State conceded, for a fixed annual sum, the right of collecting the indirect taxes of France. He excused the excesses of the Revolution in a letter to Priestley, on the ground that they were "committed for the love of liberty, philosophy, and toleration, and that there was no danger of such things being done in France for an inferior motive." (Acton, p. 91)

Professor Irvine Masson, a chemist himself, has written about this matter: "Let me make no bones about this early juvenile school chemistry; a great deal of it is worth very little indeed. A great deal of it is taught by those unlucky (because misdirected) persons, the Honours graduates in chemistry, who ought to have been given a good broad pass course which would have afforded them a reasonable perspective. It is in no way their fault; if you turn out a specialist to teach youngsters, can he be blamed if he transmits the only thing you have equipped him with? I make no apology for selecting chemistry for special comment, because the universities produce far more Honours graduates in chemistry alone than in any other experimental science, and nearly as many as in all the other experimental sciences put together." And, again: "... as a chemist I deplore the extraordinary number of children well under sixteen who study chemistry . . . for young people under sixteen, to differentiate and to develop the branches of physical science as much as is done strikes me as quite artificial." Now that Professor Masson is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield, I hope he is not too busy measuring the strength of the (chemical) current to effect some reform. The distribution of full-time advanced students (*i.e.*, post-graduate) in England, Scotland and Wales in 1930 was: Mathematics, 7.5; physics, 16.0; Chemistry, 50.3; Botany, 9.9; Zoology, 7.5; Physiology, 4.6; Geology, 4.1. (The figures are *per cent.*)

The late Sir Alexander Pedler was, from 1907 until his death in 1918, Secretary of the British Science Guild, a body which will always be memorable if only on account of its transient attachment to Dr. Sprague, of Bank of England *cum* Harvard *cum* New Deal-Federal Reserve-Board fame. Of Pedler it is recorded that he "was appointed by the Secretary of State for India to a post likely to involve original investigation, because a Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, with ideas in advance of contemporary public opinion," (*i.e.* Bengali public opinion?) "wished to add a competent chemist to the staff of the provincial Agricultural Department. A new Lieutenant Governor, with other ideas, was authorised to suppress the post of Agricultural Chemist and offer Pedler, employment in the Bengal Education Department. . . ." And so the Bengali were taught chemistry, instead of preparing for a House of Lords Debate on manures. Possibly there has been still another Lieutenant Governor of Bengal since then. Evidently the ascendancy of chemistry is a world-wide ascendancy.

One has only to consider the fact, to which Douglas has drawn attention, that the profits arising from the phenomenal growth of chemical techniques have remained largely undistributed to question the theory that the needs of industry, in any form comprehensible to the ordinary man are even a subordinate requirement of those who have engineered it.

What made weighty tomes on chemistry the companions of the Russian Nihilists in their moments of relaxation? Kropotkin's notion that chemistry more disposes to invention than other sciences because it involves the use of the hands is nonsense. The determination of the surface tension of a liquid involves the use of the hands; experimental verification of the laws of friction involves the use of the hands; all establishment of correspondence between established 'Laws' and actual experience involves the use of the hands.

There is something deeper than this.

TUDOR JONES.

To be continued.

Points From Parliament

House of Commons: November 9, 1943.

NATIONAL FINANCE (Lend-Lease)

Mr. Stokes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is now able to give the amount of Lend-Lease reckoned in sterling, rendered by the United States to Great Britain up to June 30, 1943, or other convenient later date?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir John Anderson): No, Sir. As my predecessor has informed the hon. Member, such figures are not available.

Mr. Stokes: Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that the President, in his statement, gave a figure for shipments to Great Britain, and that the right hon. Gentleman himself has since explained that this includes shipments sent on elsewhere? Will he make representations to the United States Government that they should make their statements in such a form as may be readily understandable by all people and will not lead to misconceptions?

Sir J. Anderson: I do not think that that would be at all desirable. I do not want to call attention to the purely financial aspects of this matter.

UNITED NATIONS RECONSTRUCTION BANKS

Mr. Stokes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he now has any statement to make with regard to the United Nations Reconstruction Bank, in view of the fact that the draft proposals have been at the Treasury for some months, and that the final proposal was received by his Department nearly a month ago?

Sir John Anderson: The hon. Member is misinformed. It was only recently that we received anything that could properly be described as a draft proposal, and it was made clear to us that this was not to be regarded as an authoritative proposal from the United States Treasury. The proposal in its present form is under consideration, but I am not in a position to make a statement at present.

Mr. Stokes: Am I wrong in saying that certain papers and overtures were made in the early months of June of this year, and I made a careful check of this?

Sir John Anderson: The hon. Member is quite wrong. Certain material was published, of which in fact my predecessor had no cognisance, which did not represent any authentic contacts, and it is only, as I have said, quite recently that anything in the nature of a draft proposal—that not

binding in any way on the American authorities—was communicated to my Department.

Sir Irving Albery: My right hon. Friend said that it is not binding on the American authorities; can he say also that it is not binding on our own?

Sir J. Anderson: Certainly, Sir.

HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME (FINANCE)

Mr. Sloan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what rate of interest is being charged by the Scottish banks on money lent for financing the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Scheme?

Mr. Johnston: No public issue of stock is contemplated prior to the commencement of capital works. What temporary accommodations are being required are being arranged for collectively by the Scottish banks at a low rate of interest which is regarded by the Board as very satisfactory.

House of Commons: November 10, 1943.

STATE CONTROL OF INDUSTRY (HOME SECRETARY'S SPEECHES)

Major Petherick asked the Prime Minister whether the speech made by the Home Secretary on Government control and economic affairs to the Fabian Society recently represents the policy of His Majesty's Government?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary informs me that he made it clear at the beginning of the speech referred to that he was speaking as a Socialist to his fellow Socialists of the Fabian Society. There was no implication in the speech that he was speaking for the Government.

Earl Winterton: Will the Prime Minister make it clear that members of the Coalition Government have a perfect right in this Government, as in previous Governments, to speak to their own political associations as my right hon. Friend does to the Conservative Association and as Liberals do to the Liberal Association?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that any particular advertisements of these facts are needed from me. In my view the less divergencies are emphasised the better.

House of Commons: November 11, 1943.

NATIONAL WAR EFFORT BUILDING CONTRACTORS

Mr. R. C. Morrison asked the Minister of Labour whether it is proposed to continue the call-up of small building contractors over 40 years of age, fully employed as contractors to local authorities for repair of damaged houses urgently needed in industrial areas?

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Ernest Bevin): Under present arrangements building contractors over 40 years of age are not being called up for the Forces. When it is proposed to transfer such men to other work the value of the work on which they are engaged is taken into

Continued on Page Six.

Lord Perry Looks at Beveridge

In a letter to *The Times* of November 12, commenting on the Beveridge proposals, Lord Perry wrote:—

“Close examination of the proposals dealing with workmen’s compensation and liability for negligence in accident cases suggests a serious encroachment upon public rights that have long been sanctioned by usage and law; since the report advances *inter alia* the following revolutionary suggestions:—(1) That an injured employee’s right to sue his employer for damages for negligence shall be abolished. (2) That, similarly, the right of a person injured in a road or other accident to sue for damages shall be abolished. (3) That, in view of the free medical treatment available to everyone, nobody shall have the right to recover from any other party as special damages the cost of medical treatment additional to that provided by the State. The basis of these suggestions is, apparently, that it is regarded as more important to secure automatic and standardised payments of benefit in such cases than to preserve the legal right of the individual to recover the full compensation to which he is now entitled.

“The report further proposes, on the grounds of the very questionable economy, to put the fate of the injured person’s case in the hands of administrative officials against whose decision the only appeal is to a non-judicial local tribunal. Recourse to the ordinary Courts of law is to be allowed only in special cases by the Ministry of Social Security. As the law now stands, the luckless individual maimed through the negligence of another may recover such damages as a Court or jury may think commensurate with the pain and suffering involved. This well-recognised right—if Sir William Beveridge’s suggestions are adopted—will go. The crippled victim, his pleasure in life curtailed or destroyed (and who has not personal knowledge of harrowing cases of this kind?) is to rest content with ‘the minimum income needed for his subsistence,’ and nothing more. For, be it clearly understood, the flat rate of benefit for the disabled proposed in the Beveridge report is (paragraph 307) ‘intended in itself to be sufficient without further resources to provide the minimum income needed for subsistence in all normal cases.’

“Does the general public, and in particular do the working classes, realise the enormous sacrifices which they are invited to make in the name of equal compensation for all? It is difficult to see that these sacrifices are in deference to any economic principle; in fact, the proposed abolition of the established right to damages for personal injury has no logical relationship at all to the Beveridge scheme as a whole.”

Who Are the League of Nations?

Major Petherick, in a recent question in Parliament, elicited confirmation from the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that of the 45 States which belong to the League of Nations the six who pay their contributions in full are the United Kingdom, India, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.

He asked whether a permanent Imperial Conference would not be more useful.

“No Disproof has been Forthcoming”

Attention is drawn to the following editorial which appeared in the EDMONTON JOURNAL of September 14, 1943 (the emphasis is ours):—

INVITATION HAS TO BE DECLINED

For several years little has been heard of the activities of Major C. H. Douglas and old country Social Credit bodies. But a letter received by the editor of *The Journal* shows that “The Social Credit Secretariat” is still functioning, with an office in Liverpool, and with the major its “advisory chairman.” The organisation’s secretary writes:

“In view of the recent editorial assertions, for which presumably you have responsibility, of the unsoundness of Social Credit, would you please either disprove the mathematics of *Financing of a Long-Term Production Cycle** (copy attached), which embodies in a convenient form the demonstration alleged to be fallacious, or the premises. If there should be no satisfactory answer to this invitation the Social Credit press will be informed.”

There seems to be nothing to do but inform it that no “disproof” has been forthcoming. This could hardly be undertaken when it has been found quite impossible to follow the “demonstration,” which cannot even be published because no facilities are available for reproducing the mathematical formulæ that are employed.

It is a matter of regret that both our educational and our mechanical equipment are unequal to the task set us by the secretariat. But in any case it is a long while since any attention was paid to the Douglas Social Credit theories in these columns. They have been largely forgotten in Alberta. Virtually no one in the province can now believe that they are applicable here.

They have received only a very small measure of support in the country of their origin, where, as in Alberta, they have bewildered those of all degrees of educational attainment. Until their soundness is accepted on at least a fairly wide scale in Britain, it is hardly worth while for the secretariat to make further efforts to enlighten Albertans. They know how poor were the results of previous attempts to do so and they have many matters of immediate and vital importance to concentrate upon at present.

* See *The Social Crediter*, November 28, 1942.

ABERHART MANNING

The memoir of Mr. Aberhart published in the EDMONTON BULLETIN, and that journal’s report of Mr. Manning’s speech on policy broadcast on his becoming Premier of Alberta.

With portraits of Mr. Aberhart and Mr. Manning.

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From K. R. P. PUBLICATIONS LIMITED,
49 PRINCE ALFRED ROAD, LIVERPOOL 15.

THE SOCIAL CREDITER

This journal expresses and supports the policy of the Social Credit Secretariat, which is a non-party, non-class organisation neither connected with nor supporting any political party, Social Credit or otherwise.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: *Home and abroad, post free:*
One year 30/-; Six months 15/-; Three months 7s. 6d.
 Offices: (Editorial and Business) 49, PRINCE ALFRED ROAD,
 LIVERPOOL, 15, Telephone: Wavertree 435.

Vol. 11. No. 11. Saturday, November 20, 1943.

FROM WEEK TO WEEK

Rumour has it that the to-be-newly-created Ministry of Reconstruction is to be adorned by Sir Arthur Salter, who wrote, *inter alia*, a book on the United States of Europe. Perhaps his greatest claim to fame, however, was his widely printed announcement, which appeared twenty-four hours before the disclosure of the gigantic Kreuger swindles, that he considered Kreuger to be the perfect model of the ideal big business man.

The Chairman of the Fuel Efficiency Committee is Dr. E. S. Grumell, who is head of the Coal Research Laboratories of Imperial Chemical Industries.

Unless we are mistaken, the coal situation, in its ramifications of mineral confiscation for derisory compensation, and the general air of stampede with which it is enveloped, contains political dynamite.

"The Capitalist Trade Cycle with its allegedly short-lived booms and obstinate depressions is one of the main points of departure for intellectual flights into the planning fable. More than two decades of Soviet Russia's economic history show a series of crises, involving the physical destruction of a part of the nation and its wealth, and deep inroads into the substance of the political, military, and technical *élite* of a nation desperately in need of just that group. No capitalist country in this same period of international disequilibrium had crises of comparable scope. . . . Already in 1928, workers' housing conditions were described by a Soviet writer as 'more terrible than those described by Engels during the Industrial Revolution in England.'" P.265-6.

—Of Soviet "Planning" by GUSTAV STOLPER.

"WASHINGTON PLANS ITALY'S ECONOMIC FUTURE." — Title of article in *American Mercury*.

Now, Clarence, perhaps you can see why we had to have a war.

According to *The Scotsman*, Mr. Ernest Brown, the new Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, "has recently been meeting difficulties."

We don't remember anything quite like the *Daily Mail's* interview with Mr. Brown:

"Every wise politician knows that one day he will go

out of office," said Mr. Brown thoughtfully.

"If he is wise he always provides for two years ahead. And I've done that, you may be sure.

"Like anybody else I shall have to pay income tax on £5,000 a year although I am now a £2,000-a-year man, and it doesn't worry me at all."

Mr. Brown went on to talk to the reporter about housing, and volunteered the opinion that it was not the Hildenborough cottages which 'cost him his £5,000-a-year job.'

• • •

Mr. Willink seems to be aware of that. He says, "My father in Liverpool, my godfather in Berkshire, and my uncle in Westmorland have all been progressive leaders in local educational and social service schemes. And since I am married to the daughter of Dr. Morley Fletcher. . . I have also taken a keen interest in medical services." The Dr. Morley Fletcher mentioned is not the late Sir Walter Morley Fletcher, first Secretary to the Medical Research Council.

"In My Father's house are many mansions."

• • •

The succession of Dr. Anderson, as Secretary to the British Medical Association, by Dr. Charles Hill, as "Acting Secretary" is, we are informed, due to serious illness. In his recent negotiations on behalf of a "comprehensive" medical service (*i.e.* a servitude—or service—which comprehends much as may be) Dr. Anderson showed himself by no means the naive medical practitioner who is as a babe and a suckling at the mercy of Ministers, but a past master in the game of politics, thoroughly awake, thoroughly instructed, and 'comprehensively' armed. Dr. Charles Hill begins his reign by announcing, in the *Sunday Express* (*i.e.*, the *Evening Standard's* little cousin) that Beveridge did not say or imply that medicine should be regimented. He spells medicine with a small 'm'. The B.M.A. has not been chosen as the spearhead of Beveridge by accident.

• • •

"... he told me the Australians were becoming more pro-British every day owing to the behaviour of the Americans: MacArthur has enclosed himself in a sort of Berchtesgaden, and is surrounded by masses of charming but impenetrable American Brigadiers, who offer you a drink but never allow a soul to see the Big Noise. Even Curtin does and says only what he is instructed."

The correspondent who wrote this must have picked it up some time ago. MacArthur is said to be "on the skids."

Lord Woolton's Opposite Number

Mr. James F. Byrnes, American War Mobilisation Director, announced recently that he has appointed Mr. Bernard M. Baruch as head of the new unit which is being set up within the Office of War Mobilisation to deal with war and post-war adjustment problems, and to develop unified programmes and policies to be pursued by the various agencies of government concerned.

The Farmer in Northern Ireland

An account of an address by J. O. GIBSON, given at an Area Meeting of Social Crediters, in Belfast, on November 6, 1943.

After the experience of the last World War, it is a gratuitous insult to hand the farmer any more bouquets. But there can be no doubt that next to the men actually in the firing line, the farmer, in the present crisis, performs the most real and vital, and the hardest job, and, in a climate like that of Northern Ireland, probably the dirtiest and most discomfortable of all.

No two things could be less "mixable" than heroics and agriculture. To the farmers of Northern Ireland, beyond the conventional "strategic" interest in it, and in the defeat of the Germans, the war means primarily the fact that he is making some profit again, instead of just keeping body and soul together at the cost of capital depreciation and mortgages. He is paying off indebtedness, and in many cases actually has cash to his credit, as the recent Treasury forays under the Wings for Victory banner prove.

Two factors stand out predominant in his mind. First, that the "money" to be made, due to the war situation, is largely being realised at the expense of the capital fertility of the land, and that if there is not a return to some system, profitable to the land as well as to him, of self-supporting (in the natural sense) mixed farming, the land, which constitutes his capital (and the fundamental capital of the entire community), will be rapidly drained away.

The second factor is his entire lack of any belief in the Government's good faith; in the possibility of any reliable or continuous policy on the part of the Ministry of Agriculture where the land is concerned. Circumstances, particularly the deadly experience of the slump after the last war, when every conceivable promise made to the farmers at the crisis of the U-boat menace was broken, and every hope frustrated by "events," have left him quite cynical. The farmer is naturally elemental—slow, but sure. The old wisecracks that still hold true, hold true especially in his case—such sayings, for instance, as "Once bitten, twice shy." And the post-war deflation of the last "peace" made a deep impression that has left him very shy indeed.

There is "war" on again, and some money to be made, and he is prepared to take what he can get, and stifle his "better" feelings where the fertility of the land is concerned. To his way of thinking—and though undoubtedly it is a very slow way, it is quite rational and sound fundamentally—it seems "mad" that a commodity like potatoes for instance for which only a few years ago he could not get two pounds a ton, though they cost him about three to produce, and *was fined if he grew too many*, now bears a subsidy to him of ten pounds for every acre he will put in. If that is the way society is "governed," it's a mad way, and not "natural" as he understands nature. But he wasn't in a position "to quarrel" with the offer of two pounds, and he's not going to quarrel with the present state of affairs. Nevertheless, it leaves him totally without confidence in the future, and in the worst possible sense cynical.

He has no more understanding than the "next man" of the present operations of the "compensated price," but his common sense tells him that a subsidy to the producer is a

cock-eyed and wasteful and unnatural way, of doing something that on the face of it appears to be necessary. His instinct tells him that the method, as applied predominantly and in this form to Agricultural prices tends to give the general public the idea that Agriculture is the favoured and pampered pet of the powers-that-be, a distinction he repudiates. He sees far enough to recognise that the beneficiaries are consumers in general in the retail prices they pay, and that his better profits are no different from those of the industrialist, and arise "mysteriously" out of the state of war.

The worst feature of his cynicism is that it is fundamentally a political cynicism. It is not the understanding cynicism that induces tolerance for human frailty. The farmer tends to be, not even indignant at the lack of policy in government, but disgusted, and therefore indifferent. Like the great majority of individuals in an "artificially" frustrated democracy he has not yet grasped the fact that political apathy and biological suicide are synonymous. He is by nature an individualist, with all the individualist's antipathy to cold-blooded co-operation; though in the case of his neighbour in a crisis he can be first-rate. He does not understand combined action in its positive sense, and his instinct in a crisis of a more general kind is to break up and go off on his own—a follower of what is known by the ugly misnomer of "guerilla-tactics."

This aspect shows the agriculturalist as not politically minded, in the party-politics sense. But if we deplore his positive non-co-operation and see in it the reason for his inability to put his own case clearly and make necessary demands with "one voice," it must nevertheless be recognised that from the opposite, negative angle, he understands perfectly the democratic art of what Douglas calls "contracting out"—the prime offence from the point of view of the centralisers and planners; the "sin" for which four million Russian agriculturalists lost their lives not ten years ago.

The farmer of Northern Ireland is cynically prepared to let the Ministry do what it likes provided it still brings cash into his hand, and he gets at least a twelve months' guarantee of price. And he keeps himself free from petty interference by the simple means of putting 50 per cent. of his Government forms "in the back of the fire" instead of filling them in and, within the war-time framework, by going his own way exactly as he always has done. His real (scientific) experience and his natural phlegm combined can put up a barrage through which the young house-trained Ministry inspector is quite unable to penetrate. And he will continue on those "negative" lines unless and until Bren-guns are brought out against him. Instinctively he realises that the Government is playing with him the same game that he himself is being forced to play with the land, which might be described as fast-and-loose, and the above constitutes his reply—not, perhaps, a very intelligent one, in the circumstances that is not to be expected—but a very realistic and concrete one, as the young Government inspectors must be discovering.

Regarded literally, it will be recognised that the picture is a fairly dark one—not to say sinister, as cynical apathy always tends to be. And its future developments *might* be more so. Let us imagine the war over, and a number, if not all, of the subsidies withdrawn under the pressing "financial necessity" for exports, *i.e.*, imports to pay interest on external

loans. What then? Granted the small farmer has achieved in the war boom a degree of solvency and has not involved himself deeply in machines subject to quick depreciation (a decent horse must have quite five times the "life" of a Fordson, and a plough more like fifty), his impulse will be just to "quit work" that contains none of this "iniquitous" element of profit against which the Archbishop of Canterbury has come out to do battle. He can grow enough feeding stuffs for his stock. Barring wheat flour, control of which is becoming almost concentric with the Cinema Circuit Industry, he can be nearly self-supporting, with a diet, in Northern Irish country districts, based on milk, butter, potatoes and bread.

Doubtless, if the farmer could be induced to formulate his instinctive outlook, the above would approximate to it—the outlook of the absolute individualist, pure and simple—too pure, and too simple, of course, as are all "absolute" outlooks. Because, in the first place it is over-realistic. As an attitude, it postulates nothing but self; just as Socialism postulates nothing but the State. Whereas, the reality of the situation is neither the individual *versus* the State nor the State *versus* the individual, but the individual *and* the State.

It is when two absolutes can only see one another in opposition that Bren-guns come into the picture, and either civil or military defence units are turned into a Gestapo. So that an individualistic "realism" that overlooks the above is in fact failing in realism. And isn't it just that failure that Anglo-Saxon culture has succeeded in avoiding so far?

Granted, however, that the worst came to the worst, and the citizen (the member of the State) was threatened with starvation by a sit-down strike of the real agricultural experts, it can be seen how useful a weapon the Nationalisation of the Land would be in instituting a land serfdom such as Russia had, and still has—serfs being those who work by compulsion instead of impulsion—and the farmer might wake up, too late, to realise the mistake of his political apathy when the going was comparatively good.

That is, more or less, the black side of the picture—the obverse, the "wrong" side. To it belongs by right the threatening, the obvious, the looming, the predominating. On the other side (it is always the same) are a handful of "small mercies," and the Art of Living and of good judgment consists in learning their real worth, and the practical unreality of all the "show" on the other side. Douglas has said, in *The Policy of a Philosophy*, that "Good will always be vanquished by evil, so long as evil understands its tools better than good; but if good can only be taught to use its tools correctly, the good will vanquish evil."

What are the counterbalancing mercies? Small enough. There may be more, but two that come to mind are, first, the growing tendency in the farmer, as in everyone else, to approach his M.P. about it. This is testified to. And the second, in regard to post-war agricultural policy, the fact that Britain has been more or less drained of her overseas credits, and may therefore be forced to "economise" on imports, *i.e.*, cheap food. Little enough, surely! But both tangible and positive. We may look for "good" to get the upper hand of "evil" in proportion as the farmer, and individuals generally, grow to understand better their democratic "tools," that is, their representative in Parliament, and their power through him.

N.F.W.

Parliament

Continued from Page Two.

consideration, and the need to repair damaged houses is not overlooked.

Mr. Morrison: Would my right hon. Friend give his attention to these questions, because quite a number of small building contractors have been urged by other Government Departments to undertake contracts, and also by local authorities, to undertake the repair of damaged houses, and are in a quandary because they do not know whether they can enter into any undertakings from the point of view of whether they will be called away either for the Forces or for other purposes?

Mr. Bevin: The building situation is very difficult, and the first consideration I have to give is to the needs of strategy in view of forthcoming events.

BUILDING OPERATIVES

Mr. Higgs asked the Minister of Labour whether he is aware of the difficulties that landlords are experiencing in getting essential repairs done to roofs, etc., of farm buildings; and will he therefore discontinue the calling up of building operatives in country districts who are engaged on this work?

Mr. Bevin: Under present arrangements building operatives who are not in the lowest age groups are not being called up, but they may be considered for transfer to work of higher priority. The importance of essential repairs to farm buildings is fully recognised and would be taken into account before any man engaged on that work was withdrawn.

Mr. Higgs: Is the Minister aware of the short deferment—three months—that has been given to these men when in business on their own, and does he think it reasonable for them to enter into contracts for repair to buildings with such a short term of deferment?

Mr. Bevin: I am afraid I cannot increase deferments for 1944.

HOUSING -

Mr. Lipson asked the Prime Minister whether he will give time for the consideration of the Motion on Housing, standing in the name of the hon. Member for Cheltenham?

[*That in the opinion of this House the way in which the housing problem in England and Wales during the war has been, and is being, mishandled by the Ministry of Health calls for the transfer of this service to another Ministry to deal with it more effectively.*]

The Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill): No, Sir. No time will be given for a Debate on this Motion. The Ministry of Health does not and cannot in time of full war mobilisation possess the facilities which are necessary for a satisfactory handling of the domestic housing problem. I cannot hold out the slightest hope that peace-time requirements can be met as they should be under present intensifying war conditions.

Mr. Lipson: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the Ministry has made the best possible use of such accommodation as is available?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir, I am.

LEBANON (FRENCH AUTHORITIES' ACTION)

Mr. Astor (Fulham, East): I rise to draw the attention of the House to a completely different subject but one of great gravity and in which I feel that the honour of this country is involved. It is reported that at four o'clock this morning the French authorities in the Lebanon sent in Senegalese troops and arrested the newly elected President of the Lebanon and his Ministers, placed them under arrest and denounced them for a plot. England is a free—

Mr. Kirkwood (Dumbarton Burghs): The hon. Member means "Britain"?

Mr. Astor: I know Scotland is interested in the rights of small nations, and I welcome the hon. Member's support. I wish briefly to recall to the House the events which have preceded this. When the British and Free French troops went into Syria and the Lebanon a proclamation was made that these countries would be independent. This proclamation by the Free French authorities was reinforced by a proclamation of His Majesty's Minister in Cairo; by a proclamation of Sir Maitland Wilson, the General Officer Commanding, and by the solemn declaration made by the Prime Minister in this House.

Mr. A. Bevan (Ebbw Vale): With a qualification.

Mr. Astor: After an interval, when Lebanon has had time to settle down and the danger of war has gone away, the Free French authorities announced the abolition of the Mandate although I think that, technically, it could not be made valid by international law until a treaty has been drawn up. A few weeks ago a general election took place. There were two parties to this election, and it was notorious that one of them was receiving the moral support of the French High Commissioner. That party received a complete and total defeat. The party led by Mr. Khoury won 52 seats out of 54 in both the Moslem and Christian areas of the Lebanon. The newly-elected Chamber elected as President of the Lebanon their leader, M. Khoury, a man of the greatest integrity and universally respected. He formed a strong Government, with Mr. Riad Solh, a Moslem, as Prime Minister, and with one of the most outstanding young Christian personalities, Camille Chamoun, as Minister of the Interior. The Ministry proceeded to get unanimous support for their policy and started to make the necessary changes to give reality to their internal independence. Now this lamentable thing has happened.

I do not expect that the right hon. Gentleman the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs can make any statement whatsoever at the present moment, but I wish it to go forth to the world that the Parliament of Great Britain has been seized of this matter, that we feel our honour is involved as the guarantors of the independence of this small country. Our intentions in many parts of the world will be judged by the attitude we take in this case when a freely-elected Parliament and its Ministers are overthrown by force.

I wish not only to give His Majesty's Government—who are bound to take a serious view of this—the knowledge that there are people in the House who feel deeply about it, but to make an appeal to the French people themselves. The French in Algiers have re-created the nucleus of a French Parliament. The resistance movements, the deputies have got together, and we have seen there a welcome resur-

gence of French democracy. The British Press, public and Parliament have welcomed this and acclaimed it with every form of sympathy we can give. We look forward to France as a democracy and to a Parliamentary institution rising again. Surely in this week, when France has re-established her own consultative, and, we hope, Parliamentary institutions, she is not going wantonly to destroy the Parliamentary institutions of the Lebanon State which, of all the States in the East, has the highest degree of education and civilisation and is impregnated with French culture, which has had largely the ideas of freedom implanted by French teachers and by the example of France in the past. So I would make the sincerest possible appeal to the French Republic that they will realise what a sad effect it would have all over the world if this action were persisted in. We do not want to say a word to aggravate a serious situation. We only hope that this will be cleared up. Perhaps I speak with some heat, but many of us who have served in that country love it, and have the greatest respect for its people, and the news is like a personal blow to us. We hope the French National Committee will rapidly reverse what has taken place and allow other people those freely elected progressive and legislative developments and that freedom which they want themselves.

Mr. Muff (Kingston-upon-Hull, East): I intervene to thank the hon. Member for rendering a public service in raising this very important matter, reference to which some of us have seen in the public Press to-day. I cannot speak with the authority and the knowledge of the country possessed by the hon. Member, but I wish that my voice, as well as his, should reach General de Gaulle now that he has been so recently reinforced in civil power and the power that has been given to him in the recent happening at Algiers. It is only a comparatively short time ago since General Catreaux—*[Interruption]*—I would remind the hon. Member for Maldon (Mr. Driberg) that it is no laughing matter if I cannot pronounce a French name in the same way that he can. There was a proclamation by that General in which he was the guarantor of the freedom of Syria and Lebanon, and we are expecting the responsible leaders of French public opinion to honour the pledges given only a few short months ago. We are cognisant of the fact that, as far as it is possible to get to know public opinion in Syria and Lebanon, these men who are now in prison received a mandate to administer local affairs in a country in which we are also so vitally interested. This country has enough problems which have not been created by ourselves but by other people. It is doing an injustice not simply to this country but an injustice to the fair name of France itself when these men are summarily arrested and placed under restraint and prevented from doing their duty to the people of the Lebanon and the people of Syria who are entitled not simply to justice but to every encouragement that this House can give to people striving for their liberties.

Mr. Quintin Hogg (Oxford): I do not want to do more than reinforce what has been said by my two hon. Friends. To my mind the whole question of the good faith of the Free French National Committee is now in question if these statements are true. We must, of course, suspend judgment until we know the facts at greater length, but there are one or two plain warnings which must be given. The freedom and independence of Syria and Lebanon is a matter to which

French honour is irrevocably committed. Britain has irrevocably pledged her honour in the same direction, and British blood has been spilt to win back the freedom of these two countries—and small help they had from some who reaped the benefit of it.

It is alleged, so we learn, that these Ministers, some of whom are known to me personally, have been guilty of a plot against the United Nations or the effort of the war. It is difficult to see what form of plot against France could be made by the democratically elected representatives of a people who have been declared to be independent of France. Those of us who have studied the problem know that there is widespread anxiety among the inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon that there might be a plot by certain Frenchmen against the independence of these two countries. I should like to make it plain that as far as this House is concerned, I do not believe there would be any serious opinion which would stand behind the Free French National Committee if they were supporting such a plot. I hope and believe that these statements may turn out to be exaggerated, but if they are not the Free French National Committee and General de Gaulle must realise that the whole question of their good faith and belief in the principles to which they are openly and irrevocably committed will be raised in this House.

Mr. A. Bevan (Ebbw Vale): I hope that hon. Members who have intervened in this Debate will keep in mind the fact that the Prime Minister made a statement about the freedom of Syria and Lebanon but also added a very strong qualification and recognised that although we are deeply interested in this matter, the French nation have a special historical and cultural connection with this territory which makes France the peculiar trustee and guarantor of its independence. The Prime Minister has already, to some extent, qualified any statement made to the House of Commons concerning the degree to which we are equal guarantors with France of the independence of Syria and Lebanon. I believe it is very undesirable for hon. Members to import into this matter such heat and give utterance to such innuendoes against the Free French movement until further opportunity has been given for investigating the matter. If there is one thing we do not wish to do it is to raise any feeling against the nucleus of the French Parliament now existing in North Africa. Some of the statements which have fallen from hon. Members should not be regarded at this stage as representative of all Members of the House.

Mr. Stokes (Ipswich): May I add a word of support to what the hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Bevan) has said? I appreciate the services which the hon. Member for East Fulham (Mr. Astor) has done in so promptly bringing this matter before the House, and I do not dispute his correctness in doing so, but I think we ought to proceed with caution. If it is only a newspaper report on which hon. Members are acting, I think they would be well advised to treat the report with great caution until we know the exact position. . . .

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. George Hall): My hon. Friend who raised this matter was good enough to give me notice. It was very short notice, but it enabled me to get into touch with the Foreign Office and ascertain that there has been sufficient information received to show that a situation of great gravity has arisen in Lebanon. In the absence of fuller information, His

Majesty's Government are not in a position to make a statement at present. I would hope that the matter should be left there.

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Published by the proprietors K.R.P. Publications Ltd., 49, Prince Alfred Road, Liverpool, 15. Printed by J. Hayes & Co., Woolton, Liverpool.