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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM.

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RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS

A speech by LORD ELTON in the debate on Reconstruction Problems in the House of Lords on December 9, 1943.

Lord Elton: My Lords, may I also begin by adding my humble felicitations to those which have already been offered to the new Minister of Reconstruction who, I suppose, with Generals Montgomery and Alexander, is one of the three great discoveries of the war. Our felicitations are necessarily tempered with a certain regret at seeing the intimate good genius of the breakfast table transferred to the doubtless more sublime but nevertheless remote and mist-girt mountain top, from which he is to survey a still somewhat nebulous futurity. I feel sure that if in their journey through the wilderness the children of Israel had possessed such an efficient quartermaster as Lord Woolton they would have felt a certain resentment on seeing him transferred to a permanent seat on Mount Pisgah, for ever straining his eyes towards the Promised Land. May I also say how much I welcome the new title (if I am not mistaken in so thinking it) of the Minister's post. The word "reconstruction" is a word which we have not heard very much lately, and it is a word which, it seems to me, is very greatly preferable to the word "planning," for I am convinced that we shall never plan the future rightly unless we recognise that the first stages of our planning have necessarily to be a process of reconstruction.

Perhaps I can illustrate what I am trying to say most effectively by what may at first sight appear a paradox. The day before yesterday a pamphlet was placed in my hands. It is the work of a young officer recently promoted from the ranks in the Middle East. I have seen a good deal before this of this young man's work, and I think that perhaps more than any other living writer he possesses the faculty of presenting in lucid and moving form the sentiments and opinions, and even the endearing characteristics of the ordinary man—his simplicity, his shrewdness, his obstinacy, the deep vein of sentiment in his make-up, and his impatience with any sort of hypocrisy or affectation. This pamphlet is called *The Good Years to Come* and is, in fact, a seven-thousand-word treatise on the New World as seen from Libya. In his pamphlet, which is the outcome of countless discussions between the author and his fellow-soldiers, both there and at home, he remarks that it appears to him and his friends to be a mere piece of journalistic hypocrisy to speak, as our Press so often does, as if we had gone to war "for a new world." We went to war in September, 1939, he says, because we had a treaty-obligation to Poland. In 1940 we virtually went to war again because something infinitely precious to us was in deadly peril.

"We went soberly and grimly to war," he says, "to fight for our

hearthstones, the only things that really matter much in the lives of men. . . . Not for a dreamy mirage of future good did we fight, but for the good we knew . . . for our own armchair by our own fireside on a winter's evening, and our son doing his homework at the dining-room table. For brisk cold Saturday afternoons at football matches and then the cinema in the evening with the wife."

Of course that is a paradox, and one to which the noble Lord, Lord Latham, would justly object. God forbid we should be fighting primarily for football matches, or even for homework.

Nevertheless, those words, my Lord, are based, as everyone of your Lordships is aware, in his heart, upon a profound truth. We are fighting first and foremost for certain ancient and priceless and largely indefinable qualities in the life of these islands, and unless and until those qualities are preserved or, as in some cases is necessary, restored, then there can be no true reconstruction, still less any effective planning of a remoter future. That is the first and fundamental truth, I think, of which that young man and his friends were conscious, and which finds its way too seldom into much that is said and written about the future in the Press.

The second great lacuna of which I think many of us are uneasily conscious—occasionally in listening to debates in your Lordships' House, and much more often in hearing or reading what is said outside it—is perhaps an even more fundamental omission. Towards what are we planning? For to say we are planning for a better Britain may mean everything or nothing. What is the compass-bearing of our journey? We know that in the great totalitarian examples, in Russia, Germany and Japan, they have a simple system of reference. Planning for them has long meant to put the Army first. Well, we trust that after the war we shall not be having to plan for another war. But for what *are* we planning? Too often it seems that the planner is content to leave the city towards which he is moving—like the city which Mr. J. B. Priestley lately so prudently left off stage—veiled in a decent obscurity.

Even more frequently, and even more unfortunately, it becomes apparent that the goal of the planner is a higher degree of material comfort, a higher standard of living, but he will be content provided that he can increase our average income, swell the total of imports and exports, or in one way or another increase our material comfort. Yet is it not abundantly plain that it was precisely the pursuit first and foremost of material comfort, precisely the illusion that the main end of politics is a higher standard of living, which brought us to catastrophe in the past? And does not all history, and the teaching of wise men from that first and greatest of planners, Plato, onwards go to prove that in the final analysis the true object of planning is not material comfort, not economic security, not a higher standard of

living, but Welfare—in which all those material advantages are an indispensable element, but nevertheless only an element? That is the second great blindness to which I have referred.

Now I come—for these are only abstractions—to one concrete example of the two great lacunae of which I think many of us are conscious in this discussion. By common consent the family is the basis not only of our civilisation but of that of every Christian state. The family, as we know, has been the first and perhaps the most tragic casualty of the war. At the very outset hundreds and thousands of evacuations from the great industrial areas whisked the children away out of all direct contact with, or control by, their parents—and incidentally proved that over a large area family life had already broken down even before the onset of war. Since then father has been called into the Forces, mother has been called into the factory, the children are packed in crèches, boarded out with strangers or are merely running wild in the black-out. Divorce flourishes, bigamy is almost a national industry, and your Lordships will have come across the appalling statistics of the spread of venereal disease among girls of under sixteen. Juvenile delinquency has risen during the war from three or four per thousand to eight or nine per thousand. Is it not mere wishful self-deception to talk about a better Britain on that sort of basis?

Are not facts such as these directly related to any planning of the future? Yet how seldom do you hear them mentioned in the discussions of the brave new world to come. Is it not plain that if we realise that something infinitely precious is passing from us, then the first task we ought to hear constantly insisted on in official or semi-official speeches about the New Age is the rebuilding of the life of the family. Yet what do we find? It is satisfactory to know that the safeguarding of the family is one of the "Ten points of a Christian order"—not perhaps a very prominent one, but still one of the ten points—which are now being advocated up and down the country. But in all the official and semi-official propaganda which is now engrossed in discussing the various material attractions of the post-war age we hear practically nothing of this bedrock of our civilisation.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Derby wrote last October to *The Times*, to draw attention to the fact that in the great Albert Hall meeting summoned by His Majesty's Government for women—for women, my Lords—as far as could be made out (because there was a certain secrecy about the transactions at that meeting) nothing seemed to have been said of the problems of the family, of home life, or of the difficulties of the rising generation. And among the galaxy of Ministers on the platform the Minister of Education was a conspicuous absentee. In the intermittent discharge of White Papers which the Government are contributing to the great argument now in progress, too often we find either apathy, or what one can but regard as direct hostility, to the claims of a restored family life upon the future. You remember Mr. R. A. Butler's in many respects so admirable White Paper on education. What role did that leave for the parent? At best a walking-on part. When one reads the White Paper it is as if, at the age of five (or at the age of two if they are sent to nursery schools) children are placed upon a moving official escalator which henceforth carries them through stage after stage of their education—an escalator which parents certainly did not design and over

which they exercise singularly little control. Yet in the past men and women have usually desired to found families because of the deep satisfaction of feeling that they were themselves the chief influence on their children's careers and the chief source of their early benefits! Beware of the illusion that children are born for the State, or even for the Ministry of Education, for that way lies race suicide. Beware of creating a world of State-controlled security where the citizen is tended and shepherded and watched over—in a Whipsnade world of security. A secure world, if you will, my Lords, but the sort of world in which the inmates do not breed.

Finally, my Lords, for the same two reasons, the two fundamental blindnesses to which I have been trying to refer, the tendency to forget that the ultimate object of planning is the complete welfare of man, and not mere material comfort, and the tendency to forget that there are certain precious qualities in deadly peril from the war which must first be restored before any healthy planning of the future can take place—for these same two reasons I think we are also far too ready to accept with equanimity the prospect of a very extensive degree of compulsion in this post-war world. Of course we all know—it has been often pointed out in your Lordships' House—that all planning must mean a considerable degree of compulsion. Unless the planner knows that we are going to do what he wants us to do he is not planning, but only guessing. In war-time, of course, we cannot afford guesswork, and so, in the current euphemism the State directs the young girl into the factory which she detests, and sends her to prison if she turns up late in the morning. In war-time we do not call that by its true name. But I notice that the other day one of our most distinguished planners, my friend Sir Ronald Davison, remarked, "I picture after the war a continuance of the power of direction to work." I hope that if Sir Ronald Davison means what he says, and gets what he wants, we shall call this policy in peace-time by its true name—which is industrial slavery.

Leadership and responsibility are much harder to achieve and much more worth achieving than compulsion and subversion. When Sir William Beveridge places on the title page of his collected essays, *Pillars of Security*, a quotation from an unpublished Report "the aim of leadership is to make the common man do uncommon things" one cannot help thinking that, for many planners the operative work is "making."

Now I do not think that the new Minister of Reconstruction will fall into that heresy. Indeed, if some planner who sees men and women as the mere bloodless material of graphs and statistics, or some civil servant intoxicated by

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the prospect of saving office-time through compulsion, should attempt to preserve our fetters in the new age, I have no doubt that, virtually as one man, we should rise and sweep these bureaucrats into limbo. For the common man, with whom I began—largely, I think, because he has preserved his sense of humour—is not, in this country, as in so many lands, frightened of Government Departments. He can still laugh at them; he can still remember that a Government Department is only his own friends and relations turned into civil servants. He still remembers that the Government Department is the man who planned coal wrong in 1940, the man who invented the title Local Defence Volunteers for the Home Guard, the man who organised the identity card muddle this summer, and, in the last resort, the pert young lady with scarlet finger nails in the Food Office round the corner.

My Lords, what I have been trying to say is that there are dangers in planning, but that they will mostly fall away if only we remember that the true object of planning is welfare, and not material comfort only, and that before we start planning we have to restore some of the most priceless qualities in our heritage. But to planning as presided over by the new Minister, in his so happily named Ministry, I look forward with every sympathy and confidence.

House of Commons: December 9 1943

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr. Riley asked the Prime Minister whether he will consider the advisability of having a comprehensive statement, issued at an early date, indicating the Government's plans regarding contemplated changes in the scope and functions of the powers and duties of local authorities?

Captain Sir William Brass asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of his recent declaration in connection with the nationalisation of the coal industry, he will give a similar undertaking with regard to the recent proposals for the enlargement and alteration of existing local government areas, bearing in mind the representations which have been made to him by national associations of local authorities and the anxiety with which such proposals are viewed by the members of local administrative boards in close touch with public opinion in their respective localities?

The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Attlee): I would refer my hon. Friends to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 22nd September in reply to questions on this subject. I have at present nothing to add to that statement.

Mr. Riley: Is not my right hon. Friend aware of the concern among local authorities over their uncertainty with regard to many of their present duties and cannot some statement be made which will give them an indication of how to arrange their programmes?

Mr. Attlee: I am sure that if my hon. Friend will look at the reply by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to which I alluded he will see matter completely satisfying any fears of any general overturn of local government.

Sir W. Brass: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there

is great disquietude in various parts of the country because people feel that the administration may be taken away from those in close touch with local affairs and handed to someone who is further off? They are very frightened.

Mr. Attlee: I can assure my hon. Friend that those fears are groundless.

Mr. Holdsworth: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the local authorities are dissatisfied with the Prime Minister's refusal to set up an inquiry before any change was made, and can he give further consideration to that point?

Mr. Messer: Is it not true that a comprehensive health service, and changes in the education service and in other services will necessitate some alteration in local government administration, and can we be told what is in the mind of the Government upon that point?

Mr. Ralph Etherton: Would the Deputy Prime Minister consider giving time to the Motion standing in the name of the hon. Member for Stretford?

[*That this House, whilst recognising that changes will be required in the structure and functions of local authorities in order to meet the requirements of post-war conditions and whilst concerned that the consequent reorganisation of local services shall not be delayed, is determined to maintain the full responsibility of elected local representatives and thus to preserve the vitality and administrative efficiency of our democratic local institutions.*]

REFUGEES (REPATRIATION)

Mr. Butcher asked the Home Secretary whether he is making plans for refugees from Nazi oppression to return to their countries of origin as soon as their native lands are free from Nazi terrorism?

Mr. H. Morrison: It is impossible at this stage to formulate precise plans for the disposal after the war of refugees who have been admitted to this country on a temporary basis. One of the objects for which the United Nations are fighting is the overthrow of Nazi and Fascist tyranny and oppression and the establishment of conditions in Europe which will allow the re-settlement in their own countries of the victims of racial and political hatred who have had to flee from their persecutors. Indeed it may well be the case that a considerable number of the refugees will wish to return to their own countries as soon as conditions have been stabilised. Others may wish to emigrate to other countries which may be prepared to receive them.

Subscribers to Australian Loan

The Hobart (Tasmania) *Mercury* of June 19, 1943, said that Mr. Spender, M.H.R., had stated that fewer than 1,000 subscribers provided nearly three-quarters of the recent £100,000,000 Liberty Loan.

"In contrast, 384,131 subscribers provided only one-tenth of the loan. The figures showed just how much truth there was in the Government's claims that the loan was an outstanding success and that it was a people's loan. The 915 subscribers who provided nearly three-quarters of the total were chiefly insurance companies and financial institutions, which Labour never tired of abusing."

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FROM WEEK TO WEEK

Mr. Emanuel (God-with-us) Celler, Democratic Congressman for N'Yark, has written to Mr. Herbert Pell, American Member of the United Nations Commission on War Crimes demanding "the re-examination of Mosley and his wife for indictment and trial and conviction. . . This is not a local English matter. American interests are involved."

If a few more exhibits such as Emanuel-God-with-us, Commander Locker-Lampson, M.P. and the Rev. Mr. Woods, M.P. (the Christian in Politics) continue to emit odd and unpleasant noises, we shall begin to think that there must be some virtue in Sir Oswald Mosley which has escaped us.

If we are going to indict each other's war criminals (and there's something in the idea), we suggest that each of the United Nations (Quiet, Clarence!) should be allowed one indictment for each one *per cent.* of the population of each nation which has done any real fighting.

With a large block of coupons in hand, we could then wade into an examination of the remarks of prominent leaders of American opinion in 1938 when they were afraid that "Britain" would somehow avoid the war.

A Resolution moved by Mr. D. J. Molteno, Glenlyon, at the meeting of the County Council of Perth and Kinross, on the 13th inst., protesting against "the growing tendency of Government Departments to encroach upon the functions of local authorities" was passed unanimously.

In warmly welcoming the motion, the Earl of Mansfield said that if steps were not taken of this nature by other counties and burghs, as well, they were going to find themselves overcome by the very totalitarianism against which this war was being fought.

Does anyone know where our dear friend and well-wisher, Mr. Benjamin Cohen of the U.S.A., who came over to look at the assets, has got to? We hear as little of him as of the "B".B.C.'s one-time idol, M. Lozhovsky.

The Unknown W.A.A.F.: "Why can't they release me to do something useful? A man could do this job."

"The real ideal of American big business—and what

they call 'private enterprise'—is a closely organised, integrated, controlled and strictly regimented economic system, geared to keep the wheels turning with the least possible friction and risk, with the elimination of the 'inefficient'—meaning those who won't play in, in a humble role. That's the direction we're going in; that's the direction the whole world is going in, and that is the direction towards Socialism."

— *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 25, 1943.

If the result of the Acton bye-election shows nothing else, it demonstrates the immense power of the party machines, and the absurdity of supposing that our modern party-Parliamentary system has anything to do with democracy. As candidates, the two 'outsiders,' Miss Dorothy Crisp and Mr. Godfrey, were at least as good as the elected Conservative, and their programmes were better. Both lost their deposits.

We do not know how long it will take the electorate to realise that their problem resolves itself into devising a method of continuous voting on a free agenda, precisely as in days before the great Socialist-Financier plot, a man with a shilling in his pocket voted to that extent on a free economic agenda whenever he spent a part of it. But until it does, politics to the ordinary man are a sheer waste of time.

Altercation in Quebec

The following is from the *Edmonton Journal* of November 8, 1943:—

"STE. CLAIRE, Quebec.—Opposition Leader Maurice Duplessis, addressing a political rally here denounced what he termed a campaign launched by the International Zionist Brotherhood to establish on Quebec farms 100,000 Jewish refugees from Central Europe.

"Duplessis showed his audience a photographic copy of what he said was a letter from the Zionist organisation to Rabbi J. Schwartz of Montreal. It was signed by H. L. Roscovitz, Quebec local No. 6, Montreal, and dated October 14, 1943.

"The letter quoted by Duplessis, stated that at a special meeting of the general committee at New York, October 12, it was decided that the organisation 'would aid financially all Liberal candidates who would agree openly or secretly to support in the commons a government plan to establish on the farms of the province of Quebec, 100,000 Jewish refugees from Central Europe.'"

The *Edmonton Journal* of November 9 had:—

"MONTREAL.—Rabbi Jesse Schwartz, executive director of the Zionist organisation of Canada, said in a prepared statement on Monday that a photographic copy of a letter quoted by Opposition Leader Duplessis on Sunday is 'a fantastic fabrication palmed off on Mr. Duplessis by some irresponsible charlatan.'

"... 'I received no such letter,' said Rabbi Schwartz. 'There is no Quebec local No. 6, nor does any other local exist. There is no individual by the name of H. L. Roscovitz.' Previously, he had said that 'the whole thing is nothing but a fabrication from beginning to end.'"

CHRISTMAS

The festival of Christmas gets short shift these days. There is an egg for everyone, and the Board of Trade issues an extra .001 of a toy per child, and there is no cessation of the fighting. It is to that that we have reduced the commemoration of Jesus of Nazareth's birthday! The typical products of our Higher Educational system say that Christmas is only the survival of a pagan festival, and somehow imagine that they have advanced the cause of knowledge in doing so.

But since we have made a mess of Christmas on the plane inhabited by Christmas-trees (the German speciality) and holly and plum-pudding, suppose we shift our thoughts regarding it on to another plane. Not necessarily a higher one, for barring a recent tendency to commercial exploitation, Christmas has, I think, always been an entirely "good" affair, and retained its reality in spite of the attacks of Dialectical Materialism, if for no better reason than that the impulse to give presents is a thoroughly decent one.

If Christmas stands for anything, it must be for the birth of the Christian idea. What then is the Christian idea? Definitions of that are as endless as life itself, and perhaps we are not greatly nearer to finality if we say that it is the idea that the truth and all that it implies pays better than a lie. Nevertheless, that really does cover the situation, although such an elementary statement as that can take an infinite number of forms. The form which appears to come closest to the crisis of this Christmas forty-three is the issue it poses between the Pagan idea of "direct action" and its Christian alternative: the old concept of an eye for an eye, and the new one as expressed in the admonition to "turn the other cheek."

It will be generally agreed that the change in outlook which constitutes the Christian idea, if it is what we term an advance, can only be a clearer, more correct view of the conditions governing life—an altered concept of the nature of our problem of decent living. This alternative can be expressed as an assertion of the superiority of what appears to us as indirect action over "direct action." Christianity postulates a change of method because it asserts the Pagan method of physical force is based on a misconception of the nature of the problem. Perhaps the best analogy of this practical problem as it exists to be overcome is to be got from the parallel of darkness and light. A "wrong" as we term it (darkness) is not something to be attacked in any direct and forceful sense. It cannot be directly obliterated or disposed of for the entirely practical reason that it is not something, but nothing—just the absence of light. To say that may appear to some like logic-chopping. But it is not so much that as an attempt to correct our symbolism—the form in which we see our problem—and it is really important, because it is that form (our concept of life) that determines the method of our approach, our "way of life," in fact.

History has been punctuated by periods of what seemed like sudden illumination—Greece experienced it, and Italy, and England, to name only three. In fact the process was gradual and anticipated, even if the harvest came, chronologically speaking, with suddenness—a realisation of a radical change in the symbolical form in which the problem of living presented itself to the human mind, producing a sudden sense of discovery, and the appearance of new vistas and new human

faculties. It is not, perhaps, too wild a flight of imagination to suppose such a crucial change of outlook to have been the cause of raising one species among the animals to an upright position—at it were, a recognition that the problem of life could be elucidated no further on all fours.

Now the present orgy of "direct action," of forceful liquidation, may represent the approach of such another change of attitude on the part of the human species; an alteration of the appearance of the problem of living, and in our method of going about it, quite as radical as that of standing on the hind-legs alone. The suggestion is used here for the purpose of analogy, without which the human brain cannot think. Thought of some kind precedes all action, and thought is a pictorial process and dependent on its mental symbols to just as great a degree as is mathematics on its numerals.

What is termed "direct action" then, arises from a Pagan picture of the problem—the thing to be done, which picture presents a "wrong" as something that can be directly, forcefully attacked. But supposing the "wrongness" were discovered to be in the picture, the symbol—that is, in the appearance and not in the "thing," and that the intractability of the problem arose from our method of tackling it, what then? If man were to discover that for the purpose of achieving the results he wants, direct action—the attempt physically to force an issue—was as inadequate as a four-footed approach to, say handicrafts, which is just what Christianity has been postulating for about two thousand years, would it not have a profound effect?

To return to my original analogy, "direct action" is the Pagan method of applying darkness to darkness; of attempting to dispel obscurity by counter-obscurity, to produce order by means of confusion, on the theory presumably that two blacks make a white. But in the analogy the conditioning fact, as I said, is that darkness is *nothing* in any positive sense. It proceeds from, and disappears to no identifiable source, in short, it has no identity that can be directly acted upon. Simply, it is an absence, and is amenable therefore only to the entirely *indirect* act of striking a light. That truth lies at the core of Christianity. It might be defined as an advance in realism, the recognition of the superiority of impulsion over compulsion—its practical efficiency. It is not unreasonable to suppose that such a thought, at work in human consciousness all these centuries, might produce a change in attitude in its way as radical and profound as that represented by "bipedestrianism."

And in the direct line of this great beam of Christian enlightenment comes the enfranchisement of the individual as demonstrated in Economic Democracy, and precisely round the Money System rages what we must hope to be the last great struggle of Pagan obscurantism (the occult government of people by means of keeping them in the dark as to the facts—even one essential fact) against the Christian faith in enlightenment. The present crisis is a Christian crisis—we need always to remember that.

And just as primitive man assumed with his upright position responsibilities and handicaps much greater than his four-footed brethren, so too does Christian (democratic) man assume greater responsibilities and handicaps. No doubt but the weaker-kneed among our progenitors in their early dealings with their enemies were often tempted to get down on

all fours and either "beat it" or fight it out—just as our own planners would involve us completely in totalitarianism to meet the totalitarian menace. Yet in the aggregate our forefathers remained upright and won out, devising means to combat the threat consistent with their new attitude. And it is entirely reasonable to suppose that we shall do the same.

All this appears sufficiently far away from turkeys and Christmas-trees, yet if there is any substance in the Christian idea, the historical birth of which such jolly things are used to commemorate, what I have written is only another way of saying A Happy Christmas!

N. F. W.

Bursaries and Education

A recent correspondence in the *Scotsman* on the proper place of bursaries in the education system brought the following comment from Mr. W. J. Logie:—

"... Education cannot be bought or stolen. If a man owns wealth of any other kind it can be stolen from him by a thief or by legal or political measures, by the State, but there is no way of stealing his learning or his knowledge (though it may be used with his consent and co-operation.) Germany has financed its war effort partly by confiscating the wealth of its Jews; but it could not rob Einstein of his knowledge of mathematics... There is only one way to acquire knowledge, and that is by study.

"This point cannot be neglected in any discussion of bursaries. The man who wins a bursary or has a rich father must acquire his knowledge just as painfully as the man who has neither... Whether a man seeks to be a great scholar or a great piano-player he must work hard; and so far as the acquisition of learning, skill, or technique is concerned, money makes no difference. In so far as the learning or skill may be of value to the State, it pays the State to ease the strain on any student who needs financial support.

"This is known even to the enemies of learning. When Germany wants to destroy a nation's culture it puts its learned men to death and suppresses the schools and Universities. Those people who are jealous of the education given by certain schools in this country are striving to suppress the schools. In Glasgow the 'High School' has just been reduced to the status of a local 'secondary' school—rather a futile proceeding, since its scholars can still be educated elsewhere..."

The Lord Provost of Edinburgh (Sir William Darling) in his reply said:—

"Education is a matter of supreme and national importance, and one is always sure of a generous hearing if one suggests better and bigger schools, longer and more interesting holidays, higher remuneration for instructors, smaller classes, the extension of unpaid tuition and maintenance—but any observations outside of these spheres are received with marked hostility. I have been aware of this attitude for many years, recognising as I do that education is a vested interest, and although I have no special objection to vested interests—they often have very sound justification—I have never looked upon them as sacred and free from criticism.

"My view, of course, is that education is the most important of all the duties of the individual and the community, and I have always protested against the view that education should come as a mendicant, craving and asking, in place

of asserting itself as one of the supreme needs.

"At the meeting to which reference has been made, in the agenda placed before the governors what seemed to me an astonishing inconsistency was not commented upon until I spoke. One of the proposals submitted was that substantial maintenance grants of £100 a year upwards should, apart from free fees, be offered to persons to extend their education; while later in the agenda the recommendation was unanimously accepted that compulsion should be laid upon other persons to continue their education up to the age of 18. It struck me as being undignified that education, with its obvious merits, should rely upon bribery on the one hand and compulsion on the other. Other goods do not require such compulsions, and I doubt if education really requires them either.

"Education must be free, but it should not necessarily be free in the monetary sense. There must be free education for the mass of the people as a basis of living; but education of all types and qualities beyond that sphere, if supplied by the State, will tend to become a standardised commodity. Edinburgh, notably, has emphasised its desire for an extension of the fee-paying school.

"Having been taught to write and read and the other simple elements of knowledge, with a world in which books are freely obtainable the average child can, even if it leaves school at 14, make for itself, if it desires it, a full education. 'The true University,' said Carlyle many years ago, 'lies in books,' and the attempt to induce the majority of the population who may not be bookishly inclined to become learned clerks is neither sound economics in my view, nor does it make for human happiness.

"Far be it from me to do other than encourage the most searching examination of the basis upon which the whole of our post-war planning should proceed, and in education it seems to me that this is being left too much to the specialists. Ordinary people ought to have views and should express them..."

The Lord Provost's concluding remarks, which subordinate the real problems of education to the illusory problems of orthodox finance, limit the application of his previous arguments so as to cripple their effect in practice.

Where is the Promised Land?

A correspondent in Australia writes:—

"Mr. Steinberg, who was connected with the first Communist Government," has been "more or less insisting that we make the Kimberley district available to his race. Taking all facts into consideration and viewing his much-advertised proposals from every angle, what should we find but a regrouping of the problem again upon our own shores. 'Their laws are not our laws, neither are their ways our ways.'

"... The Kimberley district is part of Australia; no place for any Jew. The Jew must be found a land which he can convert to a nation; from every aspect Madagascar fills the horizon; a land where they will be unfettered by alien laws and customs, a land where they can follow to its logical conclusion their culture and philosophy."

The Madagascan culture, he adds, is based upon the laws and rules of the early Semitic settler, and Semitic influence is still marked.

What is a Petition?

Four million electors, on behalf of the Old Age Pensioners of this country, sent a petition to Parliament. The Petition was presented formally by Mr. Maxton, M.P., was removed for further examination by the appropriate committee and then no more was heard of it. One of the members of the committee before which it should next (such is the parliamentary routine) have appeared enquired for it, and was informed that as it did not comply with the Rules of the House on Petitions it had been thrown out by the Clerk to the committee. Neither the sponsoring M.P. nor the Old Age Pensioners concerned had been informed of its rejection, or of the reasons for it. The Attorney-General himself had little to say for the force of these reasons—but, “Those are the Rules that the House has laid down,” he explained, in the course of disentangling members from the toils of those Rules, with his customary *expertise*. So Mr. Maxton had presented to the House a Petition which according to the Rules was not a petition at all—but what else it was and what factor it stood for in our system of government nobody troubled to explore.

When Mr. Maxton presented it to Parliament he asked that two of the Old Age Pensioners should be allowed to appear at the Bar of the House to plead their case. This request was refused on the ground that the practice had ‘fallen into desuetude’, a refusal that caused Mr. Tinker, who raised the matter for debate in Parliament, to say, “I have always understood that the public outside, if they were concerned deeply enough, and their Petitions were well founded and showed that public opinion was behind them, had some kind of redress on the Floor of this Chamber.” So did the public.

What is shown once more by the Government’s summary dispatch of this Petition—by entirely legal means which would yet have preserved the required obscurity had not one of its sponsors happened to be on the relevant Parliamentary committee—is the fatal weakness of one of the essential processes in a democratic organisation, the liaison between constituent and representative, elector and elected government ‘in Parliament assembled.’

The field of activity is a critical one: if a democracy is to be anything more real than a frantic (and ugly) word

uttered *ad nauseam*—which an experience of the results sometimes leads us to suppose—there must be some mode of transmission of the wishes of the people to the consciousness of the few in council for the purposes of ‘governing’ them. The traditional method, inadequate because a relatively static feature in a dynamic medium (for the policy of any group of people obviously fluctuates with changing conditions), is by the election of the ‘representative,’ and the influence to which he is subjected by existing among those whom he represents. This was invalidated by the introduction of party government, and still further by the conjunction of propaganda with semi-‘education’ in the ordinary man, which allowed the imposition of a control system in lieu of a service system. As the last General Election was eight years ago and the next is confined to a receding point in the future, not much policy is at present being conveyed from elector to elected by this means.

What other organisations cover this field and supply something of the need?

There are the political associations—the local branches of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Associations. These may fill part of the gap, but primarily their purpose is to maintain a theory of government, and naturally they are orientated so that this takes priority over everything. Their whole being is bound up with the justification of the political theory they advocate, and should their M.P. be returned to Parliament they bind him rather to their own interests than to his constituents’, many of whom did not vote for him but whom nevertheless he represents.

The constituency associations of some independents come into the same class. A recent report of the Maldon Constituency Association, run by the supporters of Mr. Tom Driberg, starts off with the promising statement that the founders “believed that the people of the Maldon Division desired the opportunity of returning an M.P. who would act for them in Parliament and who, so long as he was their representative, would do all that he could to make democracy work.” But on turning the page it is clear that membership involves *a priori* the acceptance of a basic programme, which includes the Atlantic Charter and the principle that production should be for use rather than for profit. Evidently there is no intention in the Maldon Division of taking policy from *all* the people.

The next group of agencies comprises the polls organised, by no doubt disinterested institutes, on leading questions (the statistical results to be acclaimed as Public Opinion). Here there are a host of difficult and subtle distinctions all bound up with the question “Do people mean what they say?” And the answer is, “When they give tongue on a whole series of intricate technical political and economic matters of which they know little—No, of course not.” It is even “No, of course not!” with reference to other kinds of questions when those who answer have been subjected previously to propaganda. Do people really want the Beveridge Plan? They say they do; but they won’t like it when they get it and discover the regulation of their most intimate lives which is involved. What they really want is the results which they think, and have been told the Beveridge plan will bring them.

Sometimes the disinterested institutes actually combine the polling with the propaganda, as at the *Daily Express*

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Public Opinion centres held at different places, when speakers first *told* the public and then a vote was taken on the subject!

The easy dismissal of the Old Age Pensioners' Petition, and the refusal to hear the advocates at the Bar of the House, has shown the ridiculous inadequacy of the official machinery. What, then, is to come, for democracy?

The M.P. (no less than the disenfranchised constituent) is in a difficult position—for a democrat,—between two opposite temptations. He may try to impose his own policy, often what he thinks people want, but more often what he thinks they ought to have. Or he may think it his duty automatically to yield to the clamour of the mob, as for instance in the matter of the continued incarceration of Sir Oswald Mosley whose unwelcome political views led people to disregard the system of freedom of which normally we boast so much. No one who has had any experience of a great crowd will believe that its shouts convey what in sober earnest the individuals composing it really mean. Their sense of responsibility has devolved on to a tyrannical abstraction, the Mob. The dictatorship of the Mob is the opposite to true democracy. The protection used by our forefathers against it was to temper the power of the people, manifested in the House of Commons, which is elected, by another power conferred according to qualifications completely different in *kind*—*i.e.*, the power vested in the House of Lords; and *vice versa*. This precautionary mechanism was not perfect, yielding from time to time either to the tyranny of the mob or the overbearing manners of the aristocracy; but even that was discarded when the powers of the House of Lords were curtailed.

But the M.P.'s dilemma (and because the M.P. is the channel of policy for the people themselves, the people's dilemma) is not in fact a real one. The way out is for him to treat objectively the job of representing his constituents: the careful ascertainment of the actual (as opposed to the assumed) results that they want from government, and the direction of his powers objectively to ensuring the employment of the correct means of obtaining those results, regarding the matter as a technical problem for the solution of which it is appropriate to employ technical experts. but most inappropriate to take their opinion on the desirability or morality of the ends desired.

The responsibility is once more with the individual elector; in some places it has already been taken up.

E. S. E.

Mr. W. C. Bullitt

Mr. William C. Bullitt, former American Ambassador to Russia, and his daughter were on one of the luxury expresses which collided in a snowstorm in North Carolina last week. More than 100 people lost their lives, but neither Mr. Bullitt nor his daughter was hurt.

Railway officials believe that a broken rail caused the accident.

Co-operative Farming

The London Co-operative Society, by the acquisition of another farm in Essex, for which £17,000 is said to have been paid, has brought the total number of acres it operates up to 3,756 acres.

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