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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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The Secret Ballot

A CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF ITS INTRODUCTION

The following extracts are from Sydney Smith's THE BALLOT, contained in SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS; London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1854.

It is possible, and perhaps not very difficult, to invent a machine, by the aid of which electors may vote for a candidate, or for two or three candidates, out of a greater number, without its being discovered for whom they vote. . . . In Mr. Grote's dagger ballot box, which has been carried round the country by eminent patriots, you stab the card of your favourite candidate with a dagger. . . .

Landed proprietors imagine they have the right to the votes of their tenants; and instances, in every election, are numerous, where tenants have been dismissed for voting contrary to the wishes of their landlords. In the same manner strong combinations are made against tradesmen who have chosen to think and act for themselves in political matters, rather than yield their opinions to the solicitations of their customers. There is a great deal of tyranny and injustice in all this. I should no more think of asking what the political opinions of a shopkeeper were, than of asking whether he was tall or short, or large or small: for a difference of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. I would desert the most aristocratic butcher that ever existed, and deal with one who

"Shook the arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece."

On the contrary, I would not adhere to the man who put me in uneasy habiliments, however great his veneration for trial by jury, or however ardent his attachment to the liberty of the subject. A tenant I never had; but I firmly believe that if he had gone through certain pecuniary formalities twice a year, I should have thought it a gross act of tyranny to have interfered either with his political or religious opinions.

I distinctly admit that every man has a right to do what he pleases with his own. I cannot, by law, prevent any one from discharging his tenants and changing his tradesman, for political reasons; but I may judge whether that man exercises his right to the public detriment, or for the public advantage. A man has a right . . . to lay waste his own estate, and to make it utterly barren; but I have also a right to point him out as one who exercises his right in a manner very injurious to society . . . His purse may be full, and his fields may be wide; but the moralist will still hold the rod of public opinion over his head, and tell the money-bloated blockhead that he is shaking those laws of property which it has taken ages to extort from the wretchedness and rapacity of mankind; and that what he calls his own will not long be his own, if he tramples too heavily on human patience.

All these practices are bad; but the facts and the consequences are exaggerated.

. . . As far as the great majority of tenants are concerned, these histories of persecution are mere declamatory nonsense . . .

I detest all inquisition into political opinions, but I have very rarely seen a combination against any tradesman who modestly, quietly, and conscientiously took his own line in politics. But Brutus and buttermilk, cheesemonger and Cato, do not harmonise well together; good taste is offended, the coxcomb loses his friends, and general disgust is mistaken for combined oppression. Shopkeepers, too, are very apt to cry out before they are hurt; a man who sees, after an election, one of his customers buying a pair of gloves on the opposite side of the way roars out that his honesty will make him a bankrupt, and the country papers are filled with letters from Brutus, Publicola, Hampden, and Pym.

This interference with the freedom of voting, bad as it is, produces no political deliberation; it does not make the Tories stronger than the Whigs, nor the Whigs than the Tories, for both are equally guilty of this species of tyranny; and any particular system of measures fails or prevails much as if no such practice existed. The practice had better not be at all, but if a certain quantity of evil does exist, it is better that it should be equally divided among both parties, than it should be exercised by one, for the depression of the other. There are politicians always at white heat, who suppose that there are landed tyrants only on one side of the question; but human life has been distressingly abridged by the flood; there is no time to spare—it is impossible to waste it upon such senseless bigotry.

If a man be sheltered from intimidation, is it at all clear that he would vote from any better motive than intimidation? If you make so tremendous an experiment, are you sure of attaining your object? The landlord has perhaps said a cross word to the tenant; the candidate for whom the tenant votes in opposition to his landlord has taken his second son for a footman, or his father knew the candidate's grandfather; how many thousand votes sheltered (as the ballotists suppose) from intimidation, would be given from such silly motives as these? How many would be given from the mere discontent of inferiority? Or from that strange simious school-boy passion of giving pain to others, even when the author cannot be found out?—motives as pernicious as any which could proceed from intimidation. So that all voters screened by ballot would not be screened for any public good . . .

. . . And then intimidation! Is intimidation confined to the aristocracy? Can anything be more scandalous and atrocious than the intimidation of mobs? Did not the mob of Bristol occasion more ruin, wretchedness, death, and alarm, than all the ejection of tenants, and combinations against shopkeepers, from the beginning of the century? And did not the Scotch philosophers tear off the clothes of the Tories in Mintshire? Or at least such clothes as the customs of the country admit of being worn?—and did not they, without

any reflection at all upon the customs of the country wash the Tory voters in the river? . . .

An abominable tyranny exercised by the ballot is that it compels those persons to conceal their votes who hate all concealment, and who glory in the cause they support. If you are afraid to go in at the front door, and to say in a clear voice what you have to say, go in at the back door, and say it in a whisper—but this is not enough for you; you make me, who am bold and honest sneak in at the back door as well as yourself. . . . It is as if a few cowards, who could only fight behind walls and houses, were to prevent the whole regiment from showing a bold front in the field; what right has the coward to degrade me who am no coward, and put me in the same shameful predicament with himself? . . . It is really a curious condition that all men must imitate the defects of a few, in order that it may not be known who have the natural imperfection, and who put it on from conformity. In this way in former days, to hide the grey hairs of the old, everybody was forced to wear powder and pomatum.

It must not be forgotten that, in the ballot, concealment must be absolutely *compulsory*. It would never do to let one man vote openly, and another secretly. You may go to the edge of the box, and say, "I vote for A", but who knows that your ball is not put in for B? There must be a clear, plain opportunity for telling an undiscoverable lie, or the whole invention is at an end. How beautiful is the progress of man!—printing has abolished ignorance—gas put an end to darkness—steam has conquered time and distance—it remained for Grote and his box to remove the encumbrance of truth from human transactions. May we not look now for more little machines to abolish the other cardinal virtues?

But if all men are suspected; if things are contrived that it is impossible to know what men really think, a serious impediment is created to the formation of good public opinion in the multitude. There is a town . . . in which live two very clever and respectable men, Johnson and Pelham, small tradesmen, men always willing to run some risk for the public good, and to be less rich, and more honest than their neighbours. It is of considerable consequence to the formation of opinion in this town, as an example, to know how Johnson and Pelham vote . . . Now, the tendency of the ballot would be to destroy all the Pelhams, Johnsons . . . to sow a universal mistrust, and to exterminate the natural guides and leaders of the people; political influence, founded upon honour and ancient honesty in politics, could not grow up under such a system. No man's declaration could get believed. It would be easy to whisper away the character of the best men; and to assert that, in spite of all his declarations, which are nothing but a blind, the romantic Rogers has voted on the other side, and is in secret league with our enemies.

"Who brought that mischievous profligate villain into Parliament? Let us see the names of his real supporters. Who stood out against the strong and uplifted arm of power? Who discovered this excellent and hitherto unknown person? Who opposed the man whom we all know to be one of the first men in the country?" Are these fair and useful questions to be veiled hereafter in impenetrable mystery? Is this sort of publicity of no good as a restraint? Is it of no good as an incitement to and a reward for exertions? Is not public opinion formed by such feelings? and is it not a dark and demoralising system to draw this veil over human actions, to

say to the mass, be base, and you will not be despised; be virtuous and you will not be honoured? Is this the way in which Mr. Grote would foster the spirit of a bold and indomitable people? Was the liberty of the people established by fraud? Did America lie herself into independence? Was it treachery which enabled Holland to shake off the yoke of Spain? Is there any instance since the beginning of the world where human liberty has been established by little systems of trumpery and trick? These are the weapons of monarchs against the people, not of the people against monarchs. With their own right hand, and with their mighty arm, have the people gotten themselves the victory, and upon them may they ever depend; and then comes Mr. Grote, a scholar and a gentleman, and knowing all the histories of public courage, preaches cowardice and treachery to England; tells us that the bold cannot be free, and bids us to seek for liberty by clothing ourselves in the mask of falsehood and trampling on the cross of truth. (Footnote, Mr. Grote is a very worthy, honest and able man; and if the world were a chess-board would be an important politician).

If this shrinking from the performance of duties is to be tolerated, voters are not the only persons who would recur to the accommodating convenience of ballot. A member of Parliament who votes against Government can get nothing in the army, navy or church, or at the bar, for his children or himself; they are placed on the north wall, and starved for their honesty. Judges, too, suffer for their unpopularity—Lord Kilwarden was murdered, Lord Mansfield burnt down; but voters, forgetting that they are only trustees for those who have no vote, require that they themselves should be virtuous with impunity, and that all the penalties of austerity and Catonism should fall upon others. I am aware that it is of the greatest consequence to the constituent that he should be made acquainted with the conduct of his representative; but I maintain, that to know, without the fear of mistake, what the conduct of individuals has been in their fulfilment of the great trust of electing members of Parliament, is also of the greatest importance in the formation of public opinion; and that, when men acted in the dark, the power of distinguishing between the bad and good would be at an end.

To institute ballot is to apply a very dangerous innovation to a temporary evil; for it is seldom, but in very excited times, that these acts of power are complained of which the ballot is intended to remedy . . . in the meantime a serious and dangerous political change is resorted to for the cure of a temporary evil, and we may be cursed with ballot, when we do not want it, and cannot get rid of it. . . .

By
C. H. DOUGLAS:
**THE REALISTIC POSITION OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

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The Party System in Politics

The following letter appeared recently in a provincial paper:

Sir,

Bearing in mind that the natural capacity of the earth to produce has in no way diminished and has, in fact, under scientific process, enormously increased—a condition naturally conducive to increasing freedom—it seems obvious that the present state of affairs is due to human interference and mismanagement. If it is conceded that this is due to the evasion of responsibility we are in a position to arrive at a solution by correctly placing it.

While it is customary to blame the inefficiency, corruption or even treachery of politicians, if we stick to the principle, the greater responsibility is on those who elected them. While the secret ballot was claimed to prevent victimisation, it was in fact the most perfect Enabling Act ever invented. It enabled politicians to pass unpopular laws of the flimsiest pretext of the will of the irresponsible mob, who in turn evaded responsibility by hiding behind the secret ballot.

As it appears to be axiomatic that badly working mechanisms eventually break up, the following, in rough outline, has been suggested as a remedy.

The party system to be retained, and the secret ballot replaced by a recorded vote. Each party to put forward its proposals together with their cost to taxpayers, and a designation of interests and individuals affected. The cost of legislation by the successful party, with the proved loss to any individual not having voted for it, to be borne by those who did. Any consequent reduction of taxation to be shared 75 per cent. by the supporters of the legislation and 25 per cent. by the rest.

Under such an arrangement we should cease to give away blank cheques to be drawn on ourselves and other people, and I have no doubt it would brighten the brains both of voters and administrators who, having in mind the realities of the situation mentioned in the first paragraph, would find the means for which they are responsible, of acting in accordance with them.—H. WINCKLES.

Yardley Gobion, Northants.

Six Suits

Dear Sir,

I had need to go shopping with an American who is over on a three months' visit. He is given a book of coupons and each coupon entitles him to seven yards of material, or three and a half double width (a suit length) a suit length or suit and he has six of these.

At the back of each shop he can buy without luxury tax anything there is there for export. How does this increase our foreign trade? He can buy the very best of our English goods. He pays in dollars and it is sent to the boat and he can receive it out of waters zone.

Just to show what is going on under our very noses.

Yours truly,

N. MAYO.

140 Princes Street, Edinburgh.
July 22, 1948.

'The Skim will feed the Pigs'—?

"While the majority of Australia's skim milk products (which dairy farmers generally fed to the pigs) was being sent to the United Kingdom, an analysis of Commonwealth milk product export figures showed that most of the rich full cream foods were going to other countries, the Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Dennett) said today.

"He said he intended to inquire into the position.

"Britain was getting only 3.63 per cent. of our full cream, sweetened, condensed milk. Other countries were getting 96.37 per cent.

"It is an amazing thing that although we have butter rationing and a strict ban on the use of table cream to help Britain, she is not receiving the benefit of our sacrifice," Mr. Dennett said.—*Melbourne Herald*, May 22, 1948.

Food Stocks

The *Daily Telegraph* of July 28, 1948, quotes some figures given by *The Economist* assessing food stocks held in Great Britain:

"Thus we appear to have just over a year's supply of corned canned beef in stock (111,000 tons) and 33½ weeks of dried eggs (17,000 tons). On the other hand, butter is on a slenderer margin. According to *The Economist*, stocks amount to 12,000 tons, or 2½ weeks' supply, compared with 22,000 tons in 1946.

"Wheat is 8½ weeks, flour 4½ weeks, cheese 5½, meat 6½, tea 13½ and sugar 14½. Stocks of sugar, it may be noted, are estimated at 653,000 tons, compared with 311,000 in 1946."

Monkey Nuts

"... We all know how Nigeria had not enough locomotives to convey the groundnut production, and we know that, according to the Report, if there had been more locomotives to carry those groundnuts it would have meant for the people of this country an extra ounce of margarine per week . . .

"... According to a Belgian estimate quoted by Professor Forde and Dr. Scott . . . 6,300 men with modern machinery could produce as much as 50,000 men could by using old native methods, we can surely appreciate that if there could be set up on the spot a larger number of mills to extract oil by modern means that would certainly very materially add to the real wealth of the West African Colonies.

"... In the Dutch East Indies I found that whilst there was no production of palm oil in 1913, by 1936, something like 176,000 tons was being produced because they had modern machinery on the spot . . ."—*Mr. Sorensen, M.P.*

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Saturday, August 7, 1948.

From Week to Week

It may be coincidental that the notorious Regulation 18B, by the authority of which many hundreds of high-minded, patriot Englishmen were arrested and imprisoned without the formulation of a charge, and without hope of trial, is the embodiment of the policy laid down in Number 18 of the Protocols of Zion; but the mathematical odds are heavily against it.

"Probably most out of touch with the facts of modern economic life is the Marxian dogma, as woven into Harold Laski's recent book. It consists essentially of a dialectic dualism, derived probably from Jewish and Protestant concepts, involving an anthropomorphic concept of "government" as essentially benevolent and omnipotent, and an economy planned and directed by civil servants as innately good or heavenly, while in the same dialectic a capitalist economy is made to seem a hell and an imaginary capitalist is introduced who looks like the devil. . . .

"The same criticism applies to the predominant reasoning of the United States Supreme Court, which seems essentially to be very close to Marxian. . . .

"The increasing wordiness of these opinions, like the wordiness of Laski's recent book, may be taken as due to the difficulty of reconciling the facts with the fancies. Perhaps the most brilliant thinker on the High Court bench, Justice William O. Douglas, is, like Laski, also a front man for the cult of business-baiting. These men know the facts. Hence the difficulty of arriving at the conclusions—entailing thousands upon thousands of words."

Christian Science Monitor, June 29, 1948.

If the definition of an educated man as one who can recognise the validity of an argument be accepted, there is small doubt that the educated few are decreasing in number, rather than otherwise.

We suppose that, apart from the wild men, no considerable section of the population would pick Mr. Aneurin Bevan or Mr. Shinwell as exemplars of the New Culture. But it is astonishing how many people will seriously suggest, in the face of the evidence, that such mainly regrettable accidents are instances of the inevitability of "democratic" fallibility, and that their methods will procure automatic elimination.

Now it ought to be obvious to anyone of ordinary intelligence that the least accidental aspect of the present administration is the presence in it of Messrs. Bevan and Shinwell.

Only immensely powerful backing, far from the unstable and ostensibly unpredictable verdict of the ballot box, would have first brought them to power, and then kept them there as a liability to the more sober revolutionaries. Little acquaintance with the gossip of Fleet Street is required to learn of the channels through which the mob is incited to serve the interests of the very rich, but not of those whom the mob, with a little assistance, identifies as the very rich. This real power behind the Squalid Nuisances and the Tinkers' Cusses can procure the reversal of the ballot-box verdict in six months. That Messrs. Shinwell and Bevan are safe in their emoluments is complete proof that they are doing their job.

An equally grave instance of the disorientation of public opinion is the success of the episodic system of thought which is steadily pumped into it by such agencies as the "B".B.C. and certain once-famous newspapers. So far as any one thing is certain, the present situation in Berlin, at once fantastic, grotesque, and potentially catastrophic, is the direct result of the orders given (by whom?) to halt the advancing British and Americans and to allow Russian troops to "take" Berlin. We are not friends of Mr. Churchill, but as we understand it, only his obsession with the Americans induced him to agree to a course of action which his historic sense must have warned him would be disastrous.

But this pivotal fact is hardly noticed in the news and comment on the indignities heaped upon us; it is past, you know, and we must think of the future. It is as much as to say to a navigator, "It is of no consequence from where you started, and of little importance where you are; keep your mind on where you're going." Try it on a map.

"The public safety is the supreme law," is one of those propositions which superficially seem unanswerable and yet are, in fact, so hedged with qualifications as to be both dangerous and confusing. It may be compared with Ayn Rand's equally true and more definite statement, "No tyrant ever rose to power save on the plea of the common good."

Aphorisms of this nature are formulations of what purport to be natural laws, and it is becoming increasingly clear that there is Natural Law, but there are no natural laws. That is to say, the Constitution of the Universe is all of a piece, an immense and almost inconceivable equilibrium and balance, and to over-emphasise one feature of it is to set up a train of "compensations" which are in all probability the root cause of our agonies.

No one who will take the trouble to look into the absurdities of "public" encroachment on private right, *i.e.*, established custom, can fail to observe the working of this compensatory principle. There has been more flagrant and widespread injustice, more misery, pain, and frustration inflicted on *individuals*, more ugliness and bestiality in the wielders of power in the Century of the Common Man, than in the ten which preceded it.

There have been misery, war, and injustice always, God wot; but never before in history have they been acclaimed as a signal demonstration of Progress.

"A delegated authority cannot be re-delegated."—LEGAL AXIOM.

The Quebec Elections

In the Quebec elections of July 28, the Candidates supported by the Union des Electeurs gained nine per cent of the total vote, though none were elected. Candidates were put forward in all constituencies. In the last provincial election, Union des Electeurs candidates polled one half per cent. of the total vote.

The Times of July 30 reported:

"The Quebec provincial elections have resulted in the return to power of Mr. Maurice Duplessis and the Union Nationale Party, with a greatly increased majority. In the new legislature of 92 members, the Government will have 82 seats, the Liberals eight, and the Independents two. In the last legislature the Liberals held 33 seats. The Liberal leader, Mr. Adelard Godbout, was himself defeated in his own riding, though by only a slight margin. The Union des Electeurs (Social Credit) and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (Socialist) candidates all lost their deposits.

"The Premier, Mr. Duplessis, stated after his party's victory that it was certain that the province had pronounced categorically against 'centralisation and the abandonment of its prerogatives.' Provincial 'rights' was the central plank of the Union Nationale platform. Party candidates also laid stress on the Government's record during the past four years in efforts to stamp out Communism in the province.

"Government colonisation and public works plans are considered to have had an effect on the vote."

Two Questions on National Insurance

House of Commons: July 22, 1948.

PRICES NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Major Tufton Beamish asked the Minister of Fuel and Power if he will give an assurance that there will be no increase in the price of coal, electricity or gas to the consumer as a result of the increased contributions paid by employers to the National Insurance Scheme on behalf of their employees.

Mr. Gaitskell: No assurance can be given that this increase in cost, though small in proportion to total cost of production, can be met in every case, either in private or socialised industries, without an increase in price.

Major Beamish: May I ask the Minister whether his reply means that the Government will permit private firms and farmers, who are not subsidised by the taxpayer, to increase control prices?

Mr. Gaitskell: I do not think one can possibly give a general answer to that. Each of these cases is considered on its merits in the light of the general Statement on Personal Incomes, Costs and Prices, issued by the Government.

NATIONAL INSURANCE REGULATIONS (PUBLICATION)

Sir John Mellor asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury why the National Insurance (Transfer of Assets) Regulations, 1948 (S.I., 1948, No. 1408), was not published until after it had come into operation.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: I regret the delay which was due to pressure of work at the printers.

Sir J. Mellor: Is not this matter of late publication becoming much too frequent, . . .

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: July 19, 1948.

BRITISH NATIONALITY BILL

THIRD READING [*]

Viscount Hinchinbrooke (Dorset, Southern) [continuing]: Therefore, I want to know more about this secret council of civil servants. Did the representative from Eire indicate that Eire would co-operate with the United Kingdom more, or less, if this Bill were passed? Did the representatives from India, Pakistan and Ceylon indicate that their countries would remain in the Empire a longer or shorter time if this Bill were passed? What are the practical political purposes behind this Bill? Is it designed to make it more difficult, or easier, for a Dominion to leave the British Empire? What view is taken of Burma in present circumstances? Will this Bill stave off the Communion of Burma or otherwise? Those are the kind of practical problems of which we should be told.

What about Australia? The Home Secretary made great play on the Committee stage with consultation with the Prime Minister of Australia. Poor man! He arrives in this country to discuss trade and emigration, rushes to Berlin and in a speech says he supports the Government's foreign policy, returns and departs again in a matter of hours. In the interim the Home Secretary flings at him this complicated doctrinal issue and comes triumphantly down to the House with the answer he wants. I am not suggesting for a moment that the Prime Minister of Australia gave an ill-considered opinion, but I would much rather be told of evidence of formal resolutions asking for an alteration in status, passed by the Parliaments of the Dominion of Australia and of the several Australian States. We have had no evidence put before us of any such thing. Where is the evidence? Of course it is not there. Who cares about this thing in Australia, except the Prime Minister and an official in the Department of External Affairs, who is one of this group of civil servants—two men in 7,000,000? They care, and of course, such is their power, that the thing will be done.

The Government's sense of timing of this Measure is appalling. Canada is the most tangential of all the Dominions. They pass a Bill in 1945. Then come the official discussions and then, following hard upon the discussions, this Bill,

"O most wicked speed to post with such dexterity . . ."
The Mother of Parliaments ought to be the last of the Parliaments in our Empire to initiate legislation of this kind. When all the Dominions have taken their stand, if they do, then we can follow suit and give formal registration here of what has become an established practice at the confines of the Commonwealth. What is to be thought of a mother who sweeps and cleans her house before the children have gone to school? It is typical of our Civil Service to think only of the 47 million whom they regiment at home. It is typical of this Government to ignore the fact that we here lie at the centre and heart of a great world Empire. For three years this Government have been playing about with vital industries on the home front. That is bad enough— . . . It is far worse to use a Bill of this kind to force great changes in the vital institutions of Empire. Allegiance and nationality,

[*] Extracts from the first part of Viscount Hinchinbrooke's speech appeared in *The Social Crediter* of July 31.

words occurring in this Measure which have been bandied about in speech after speech, are binding links of Empire. If any grafting is to be done on the tree it should be on the branches and not at the roots.

The hon. Member for North-West Hull (Mr. R. Mackay) put up a fantastic argument on Committee stage. I am sorry he is not present now. He said the Dominions were jealous of our status at home and wanted to drag us down, or words to that effect. In my experience that is not true at all. If it were true it would be a most small-minded and dog-in-the-manger attitude, which we should repudiate in this House by refusing to comply with their requests. This House of Commons should be the last, not the second, legislature to turn from subjecthood to citizenship. Citizenship! His Majesty the King resides in London and not in Ottawa or Sydney. Why should we engage in a race with Canada and Australia and fall over ourselves to make His Majesty reign over

"Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies"?

I should not be surprised if shortly even the words "to reign" were impugned.

"Geo. VI, by the Grace of God and of the United Kingdom and Colonies, first citizen!"

That would look splendid, would it not, on the new cupro nickel issue?

This Government touches nothing without demeaning it—the relationship and status of great Imperial countries, the inspiring symbolism of nationality and subjecthood, the very coinage which supports and mounts the King's likeness. We on these benches, unfortunately, have no power to work any good on this Measure. It will be left to another place to do that, and I pray they will exercise that power. This is another issue on which the people of this country will be found to be on the side of the House of Lords and against His Majesty's Government and their bureaucracy.

Pasture Acreage (Restriction)

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Thomas Williams):
I beg to move,

"That the Order, dated 8th July, 1948, entitled the Agriculture (Special Directions) (Maximum Area of Pasture) Order, 1948, a copy of which was presented on 13th July, be approved."

... During the war and for the years immediately following, the nature of our agricultural production was controlled and influenced by both price incentives and the issue of directions requiring farmers to produce specified acreages of wheat, potatoes, sugarbeet, and sometimes flax, and also to maintain a prescribed acreage under tillage. In many cases directions were unnecessary; but where they were served, I think it is fair to say that farmers in general accepted and obeyed them, and steps of enforcement were rarely required.

Under peacetime conditions compulsory orders ceased as a general method. Accordingly, the issue of directions to grow particular crops was discontinued after the 1947 harvest. The targets are, of course, still set, but the agricultural executive committees are asked to secure them not by compulsion, but by persuasion; in fact, by advisory work and the very substantial increase in prices which were introduced in August last year when that expansion programme was set. I believe that this policy has justified itself and that an overwhelming majority of farmers are conforming with Government policy by maintaining the requisite acreage under crops.

I ought to say that the National Farmers' Union have played a not unimportant part in securing the targets without any form of compulsion. It is also fair to say that the leaders of the National Farmers' Union are not very happy about this order I am inviting the House to pass. They feel that perhaps we might continue to appeal to farmers and depend upon their response. I can only say that I have given their arguments very careful consideration and I satisfied myself, after consulting a large number of agricultural executive committees, that this is the only possible way of safeguarding the national position.

I need hardly remind Members how difficult is the world food position at the moment. Because of that position it is fairly obvious that the acreage of wheat and potatoes will have to be much larger than before the war, and I doubt if we dare fail with either wheat or barley. For some years to come it seems to me we shall have to ask farmers, in areas where potatoes were rarely grown before the war and where they are not too popular now, to take their share in that particular programme. I also think it will be necessary to grow increasing quantities of coarse grains and other fodder crops to feed the much larger livestock population we hope to build up during the course of the next few years.

While the great body of farmers are readily persuaded to contribute their quota to the national targets, there is a small minority who have no such scruples. In fairness to the agricultural executive committees, who as my agents have the task of dealing with them, and in fairness to farmers who are playing the game, I am satisfied that the agricultural executive committees should be given powers to compel non-co-operators to keep at least to a minimum acreage of tillage. The form that non-co-operation is likely to take is putting down to grass an unreasonably large acreage of land now being devoted to crops. It is for these reasons, therefore, that this order has been made.

The probable need for this order was foreseen when the Agriculture Act was being discussed in this House in 1947. Section 95 enables me in cases of emergency to take, subject to the approval of Parliament, very wide powers for the control of agricultural production. On the Report stage a provision was inserted—Section 95 (2, d)—permitting the Minister to invoke the full range of powers given by that Section. It gives power to prescribe the maximum area of land which may be maintained by an agricultural unit in peace-time. When we debated this on June 5th, 1947, I indicated that while I hoped it would not be necessary to take the full powers available under this Section, I should probably be asking for much more limited powers under Subsection (2, d), and that is the order now before the House. If the order is approved, I shall forthwith delegate these powers to the agricultural executive committees, and the committees will be instructed—and this is important and I hope hon. Members will take note of it—not to use them widely, but to limit directions to cases where, after all methods of persuasion have been exhausted, the farmer or farmers concerned still refuse to recognise their obligations. Therefore, there is no intention of issuing widespread directions for the preservation of tillage, but only on the unwilling person who is not playing the game by himself, by his neighbour, or even by the nation.

This may be a suitable opportunity for me to elaborate the policy of which this order is to be the instrument. Our war-time effort, which involved the raising of the tillage acreage in England and Wales from something short of 7

million acres in 1939 to 11½ million acres in 1944, was based on what we all thought then was a short term policy. It was hoped that after the war was over there would be a progressive reconversion back to grass. I am afraid that the situation has changed and that that is no longer possible. . . . I have already explained that whatever the tillage acreage may be we now no longer issue cropping directions to any farmer. We expect each farmer to play his part in achieving our national target and, on the whole, we leave the farmer to make the best use of his own land in the light of his own experience.

This is a modest order, designed exclusively to reach about 11½ million acres by 1951, and for which we are paying agricultural prices. I am sure that the vast proportion of willing farmers will appreciate it, and that only a small minority of unwilling, non-co-operative, farmers will be hostile to it. I do not think there is any politics in this; . . .

Captain Crookshank (Gainsborough): In spite of the Minister's hope that this order would commend itself to every Member of the House I must say at once, quite frankly, that it does not commend itself to me. The right hon. Gentleman put forward a great many quite unimpeachable observations, with which I agree, about the need for growing as much as possible in this country. I think he anticipated some of the things we shall be debating tomorrow and, therefore, I will not go into the figures or the arguments he used except to say that we are all agreed, particularly in view of the changed economic situation of the last 18 months, that it is vitally important for us to grow all we can ourselves. That is agreed national policy.

But the question we have to discuss tonight is whether this order is the best method of achieving that purpose? Everybody—no, I will not say "everybody" when I think of some of the expressions used by some of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues; I will say the most sensible people in the country object to being ordered about by directions. When we discussed the Agriculture Bill last year the right hon. Gentleman, in what was then Clause 92, proposed to take powers to give directions, in peacetime, to the farmer. When, at the first stage of our discussions, we took grave objection to that proposal it was said that it would be invoked only in extreme conditions of national danger—in what was called either the 1914 or 1939 position. That was what was envisaged, as can be seen from a perusal of the proceedings in Committee. Afterwards, however, the argument slightly changed. The right hon. Gentleman said that he had powers to do this under existing legislation, under the Supplies and Services Act, as extended, but would prefer to transfer those powers so to speak, from that Act into the Agriculture Bill. He said he was doing that partly for the sake of tidiness, and that if the powers had to be invoked he would invoke them under the procedure we are now adopting, under the affirmative Resolution procedure proposed by the Government, instead of the negative procedure.

Even then, the right hon. Gentleman made it clear that the powers would be used only in times of really serious emergency. That is why when, the right hon. Gentleman spoke tonight, I was straining my ears to catch the grounds on which he is putting this order before the House. Although we are aware that in general the international background and the national economic background are extremely serious today, that is not enough for this argument. The right hon. Gentleman's argument was that something drastic required to be

done. I thought that if the right hon. Gentleman intended to stand on that leg he would emphasise, once again, with all the solemnity which is at his disposal, the words so often repeated in this House by the Chancellor of the Exchequer about our economic situation. He did not. He said, "Yes, the situation is grave, but the real reason for this is not because the great bulk of farmers have not realised the gravity of the situation, and have not been doing their best to meet the difficulties of the day, but because a very small minority do not play the game."

That is the Labour Party and the Labour Government all over again—the big instrument for the little necessity, instead of, as we so often suggest, trusting people to do the job. Incidentally, in these days, as the right hon. Gentleman said, it is not such an unprofitable job. This action of the Government is typical of what happened last week, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hillhead (Mr. J. S. C. Reid) asked the Minister of Food whether the Government would abolish bread rationing. The reply was to the effect that although it was not necessary now the machinery must be kept going in case it was wanted later. What is being done by this order is typical of that mentality. Just because there is only a small minority of people who are not playing the game this machinery must be maintained; the Government are making a terrible psychological blunder from which the whole farming community, who have done everything they can to increase production, as was asked for by the Government last year, will suffer.

I would refer the House to HANSARD of June 21st, when the Minister was asked questions on this matter. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"Pending the results of the 4th June agricultural census, which will not become available until August, I am expecting that the 1948 wheat acreage in the United Kingdom will be roughly 2,300,000 acres compared with 2,163,000 acres last year, and the potato acreage 1,460,000 acres compared with 1,330,000 acres last year."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 21st June, 1948; Vol. 452, c. 957-58.] In the next question he was asked the acreage of crops for 1948 and he said that he expected a total increase over the previous year of at least one-quarter or perhaps half a million acres. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman must admit those to whom he appealed had certainly done their best to carry out the appeal in the national interests. It is an absolutely stupid thing to do, when an immense voluntary effort is needed and is being accorded, to introduce this great hammer of compulsory direction, for thereby the Minister is likely to destroy the whole structure of confidence which has been built up, and undermine the acceptance on the part of the agricultural community of what one might call a moral responsibility to the nation as a whole.

. . . The House must not overlook the full effect of the 1947 Agriculture Act where, if there is any possibility of the likelihood or consideration that the rules of good husbandry are not being carried out, the machinery of supervision can come in.

Mr. Williams: No. Surely the right hon. and gallant Gentleman is not so unaware of the contents of the Act that he does not know that a farmer may put more land under grass than need be, and still he would not necessarily come under the supervision machinery of the Agriculture Act.

Captain Crookshank: That is opening a very big door, which some of my hon. Friends are obviously going to enter if that is going to be the argument of the Minister. Surely we are not in the very parlous condition that we have got to have in peace-time powers of direction which are admittedly

against the rules of good husbandry throughout the country. I had not appreciated that we were in such a parlous condition. That, of course, alters the basis of the argument. I was assuming we were going to try to get maximum production out of our soil consistent with the maintenance of the fertility of the soil, and that we were not going to put all that in danger, as was inevitably done in certain years during the war.

I thought the general ideas of good husbandry were going to be carried forward. But if we are going to do everything without considering that side of the argument, we are in a very dangerous national condition, because the Minister must in the long run agree, that whatever this recalcitrant minority does, generally speaking it is the farmer who knows what is best to do with his own land. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would agree to that proposition, but if he is not going to agree to it I do not know where we shall get in this argument.

It is quite a monstrous thing to bring this great weapon of direction into force for what is admitted to be a comparatively small minority. . . .

[No speaker downrightly repudiated compulsion. Further opposition either disputed the farming technique of the policy to be imposed or sought a less conspicuous method of applying compulsion.]

House of Commons: July 22, 1948.

SPORT ORGANISATION

Mr. Ellis Smith asked the Prime Minister if he will move for a Select Committee or appoint a Royal Commission or Departmental Committee to investigate and report on the organisation and functioning of all kinds of sport; and how it can be further encouraged, financed and harnessed for the benefit of the nation.

The Lord President of the Council (Mr. Herbert Morrison): I have been asked to reply. No, Sir. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister does not consider that the setting up of such a body would be appropriate or would find general support. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Education has wide powers to entertain requests by sports and games organisations for financial assistance.

Major Beamish: Will the Minister bear in mind that Government interference with sport of any kind on the scale suggested is part of the stock in trade of all totalitarian States?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Member ought to know.

Major Beamish: I do. Could I ask the Lord President to elucidate that last remark?

Mr. Morrison: No, Sir. I do not think so.

Colonel Gomme-Duncan: Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that the recommendations of his hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Radcliffe (Mr. Anthony Greenwood) as to organised leisure will no longer be taken into consideration?

Too Many Plums?

Fruit growers estimate that plums valued at more than £350,000 will go to waste this summer. The crop is assessed at 146,000 tons.

The Food Minister said he had made available the small amount of extra sugar needed to ensure maximum canning, but would not de-ration plum jam or raise the minimum fruit content. He also declined to make a bonus issue.

Shortage of dollars to buy extra sugar is among the reasons given.

Because of a shortage of tin-plate, growers do not expect canners to take more than a small part of the 15,000 to 20,000 tons expected surplus. Much of the surplus is suitable only for processing.

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