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From Week to Week

Quite a good instance of the way in which opinion is diverted from the obvious to the ingenious in matters of political economy is provided by Walter Bagehot's theory that the Tory dislike (or as he puts it, distrust) of trade, was due to their belief that, involving as it did acquaintance with the customs of alien peoples it raised the danger that this familiarity would threaten the stability of our native political structure.

Whether this far fetched explanation may have had a small basis in fact, we do not know, but it certainly was not the main ground for the attitude. English mediæval legislation is full of attempts to suppress "regrating, forestalling" and other trade tricks, not to mention coin-clipping, oppressive and usurious money rates, infringement of customary prices, and other irregularities which impeded the free flow of production to consumers. In those simpler days, it was easier to see that "trade" (while indispensable) was at once less arduous, less risky, and more liable to abuse than production (as, in the main, is the case today) and the Tory was temperamentally a producer. Bagehot, being a banker was temperamentally a Whig, and it is quite possible that he was not conscious that there could be any other point of view.

The writer of these notes spent many happy days in his early youth with the Lidderdale family, perhaps best known for the part played by William Lidderdale, when Governor of the Bank of England, in averting the worst consequences of the Baring crash by crossing to France during the fateful week-end and borrowing twenty million pounds in gold from the Bank of France on his personal reputation and responsibility. For his part in the crisis, Mr. Lidderdale was offered a peerage, but being a poor man (he died after a period of almost supreme influence on City policy leaving a little over two thousand pounds of personal estate) he refused it, receiving a Privy Councillorship instead.

His brother, although by no means rich even by the more modest standards of Victorian days, was Governor of the Peruvian Corporation, and it is an open secret that the famous Bank Governor's family would have been in real poverty without his help.

It is difficult for those whose memory does not carry back to the nineties to realise the contrast of atmosphere, dignity and culture offered to the world by the best elements of London business circles (mainly the "Merchant Bankers") as compared with the tattered remnants of the present time. It is certain that there were many doubtful components of the "City" even then; but they escaped general notice behind the high rectitude of the class they were working to replace by our present exhibits.

We refer to the Victorians, not so much in any spirit of

laudator temporis acti, although it is becoming increasingly clear that time is bringing its revenge on those who could not see their greatness, but because the element in them which ensured their fall can now be seen in retrospect. Even where rectitude existed, it was not enough. Knowledge and wisdom were necessary. And curiously enough, just as worm is said to choose the best wood, so an element arising out of lack of these attacked some of the characters we should like to consider most admirable. We refer to that curious snobbery which pretended to see some peculiar excellence resident in ignorance of trade principles, and particularly those of the Master-Trade, Finance. It will be remembered that D'Israeli, when asked why a certain politician had been appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in view of the fact that he knew nothing of business and less of Finance, remarked "That is the reason."

This curious perversion of distrust of commerce into prideful ignorance of its working so obviously promised disaster that it is difficult to believe that it was wholly natural. However that may be, it provided the perfect ground for the unhindered propagation of the theories, gold-standard and other, for which Sir Ernest Cassel bequeathed nearly half a million pounds to the London School of Economics and of which we are now experiencing the fine flower. At the root of the evil is that "the City" of Victorian days (ignoring the sprinkling of crooks who were probably of little importance to the main issue) consisted of two main classes—the honourable and ignorant on the one hand, whose rectitude provided the psychological climate of trust essential to financial credit; and, on the other hand, an immensely clever and well organised alien element operating behind this facade, contemptuous of it and determined to dispense with it at the most convenient moment.

"We know the paths wherein our feet should press,
Across our hearts are written Thy decrees;
Yet now, O Lord, be merciful to bless
With more than these.

"Grant us *the will* to fashion as we feel
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribb'd and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.

"Knowledge we ask not—*knowledge Thou hast lent*,
But, Lord, *the will*—there lies our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed,"—Drinkwater—"A Prayer."
(Reprinted from *The New Zealand Social Crediter*.)

If it were not a fact, the existence of a well-organised effort to make "anti-semitism" a ground for certification in lunacy would sound funny. But it is not funny. It is one more instance of the appalling lengths to which the Chosen People myth has run, and the price humanity will have to pay to procure its dissipation.

OPERATION ZION

By NORMAN F. WEBB

Some one has said that "Art is emphasis", referring to creative expression. But there is an art, or artifice, of anything you like to name from bee-keeping to high-pressure selling, and the principle applies in general both positively and negatively; for you inevitably suppress one thing by stressing another, as surely as you can prove anything by a judicious selection of facts, according to Cardinal Newman. And nowhere is the art of emphasis more persistently or effectively practised than in propaganda, or syndicated information—effective for the very reason that propaganda is occult or negative. It is certain that a predominating part of the significance of your daily ration of information consists in its omissions.

Unquestionably it is in the Middle East that the main significance of contemporary world events is to be found, and yet, in confirmation of what has been said above, you would never guess that from the Press, Berlin, China, France, even Church House, all rank far above Palestine, and when at least we do come to Palestine we find the most significant omission of all, that of any reference of any kind whatsoever to the Dead Sea, the ill-omened importance of which is masked by a hitherto unheard-of territorial name, the Negev. The picture the public is asked to accept is one purely of military strategy in a semi-gorilla struggle between the forces of the patriot Arabs and those homing-pigeons, the Israelites, and on that basis the United Nations Security Council and the public at large are asked to compose these fratricidal differences that have arisen, it is assumed, solely from the animosity and acquisitiveness inseparable from nationality.

The facts, of course, are very different. Not all of them, by any means are known; much has to be inferred, and in some directions the secrecy is still impenetrable. But there is not the least doubt that in these present skirmishes in the Negev we are witnesses—and to a shocking degree, unconscious witnesses—of the last and decisive moves in a long drawn-out strategy, stretching back into at least the nineties of last century, which itself is manifestly only part of a much larger plan of human control. It is more useful, however, to concentrate on the isolated strategic movement now known to all the world as Zionism, and presented purely for purposes of propaganda, as a spontaneous up-surge of religious nationalism on the part of a dispossessed and persecuted race.

Readers of this journal cherish no illusion regarding Zionism, or of its religious character; and it is an interesting fact that in Tel Aviv, with a Jewish population of close on a quarter of a million in 1939, there was only one Synagogue, and that the co-operative farming settlements that contain so many of the immigrants from North Eastern Europe, are entirely atheistical. Yet even the better-informed find it difficult enough to penetrate the atmosphere of confusion with which everything of Jewish authorship seems to surround itself or to achieve any clear-cut mental picture of what is going on. We knew that the Jewish Home was a political camouflage, and that the stream of Jewish immigration into Palestine in the inter-war years was an artificial transference of population with a political object; but what was not so clear was its economic implications, and the back-stage manoeuvring of the biggest of Big Business; though it was suspected.

It is not possible in an article of this kind to do more than touch on the essential points of this tremendous affair. The information given here, as far as it goes, is taken from a most valuable little book, mentioned some months ago in these pages, called "The Palestine Mystery"* in which the author gives in convincing and sober form all that is ascertainable to date regarding the history of the economic concessions in Palestine which are centered exclusively on the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley. The main points are summed up here, possibly in an over-simplified form, but it is valuable to get a comprehensible view through the confusing mists; and the immediate urgency of the subject—its extreme topicality—is obvious. Amplification can be got in Captain Rogers's well-documented pages.

As a preliminary to this history, it is presumably known that the waters of the Dead Sea are, financially speaking, anything but dead. However, the extent of their vitality in terms of mineral wealth, is perhaps not widely appreciated. In 1925 the Crown Agents for the Colonies issued on behalf of the Government of Palestine a survey entitled "Production of Minerals from the Waters of the Dead Sea", giving the approximate qualities of valuable mineral substances—potash, sodium, chloride, gold, etc., in thousands of millions of tons. As an instance, the magnesium chloride alone, at the then price of six pounds a ton, was computed to be worth one hundred and thirty-two thousand million pounds sterling. These huge figures tend to get into the realm of the fantastic, where it is hard to keep ones feet; but it can be accepted that control of the resources of this bit of territory called the Negev, means virtual control, through price, high or low, as suits the political situation, of the manurial and high explosive supplies of the world—a tempting prospect for any interest with global aspirations.

The Concession to exploit this vast wealth was first granted by the Sultan of Turkey to three of his own subjects on September 9, 1913, and acquired from them by the present owner (of the legal right, not the physical possession), a British subject, on April 23, 1923. Also prior to the outbreak of World War One, the Ottoman government had granted a concession for the hydro-electric development of the Jordan valley, to a Greek subject, M. Mavromatis, on September 21, 1921. After the Palestine nest had been taken from the Turks and returned to the Arabs with a cuckoo's egg in it, in the guise of Arthur Balfour's letter to Lord Rothschild promising a national home to the Jews, the British Colonial Office, of which Winston Churchill was then head, without consulting Parliament re-granted the hydro-electric concession to Pinhas Rutenberg, a Zionist. This concession was contested before the International Court at the Hague in 1925, Lord Finlay, a former Lord Chancellor, being a member, and the original Turkish undertaking was upheld. Subsequently, Mr. Mavromatis came to an agreement with the Rutenberg interests. The first stage had been reached.

The next episode is not so simple; but in the period between the unauthorised grant of the hydro-electric Concession to Rutenberg in 1921 and the Hague Court decision against it in 1925, the Colonial Office was approached separately in 1923 by Major Tulloch, a British subject, and Mr. Moise Novomeysky, also a Zionist, regarding the Dead Sea Concession. These two were advised by Sir John Shuck-

**The Palestine Mystery*, by Arthur Rogers. 2/-. The Sterling Press, 50, Old Brompton Road, S.W.7.

burgh of the Colonial Office, to combine their applications, and following some rather devious correspondence, in which Mr. Novomeysky would seem to have put "a quick one" over the Colonial Office and perhaps Sir Herbert Samuel, the Governor of Palestine, as well, the Palestine Mining Syndicate Ltd., was incorporated, and on the well-tryed principle, at the present moment being put into operation in the Negev, not to mention Berlin, that possession is nine points of the Law, started operations on the spot.

Following this, the Crown Agents for Palestine, apparently too fearful to turn out a bunch of squatters with no legal rights of any kind whatsoever, advertised for tenders for the concession of the Dead Sea on 6th May, 1925, just a week or two after the findings of the Hague Tribunal upholding the original hydro-electric Concession, under precisely similar circumstances; a judgment amounting to a grave reflection on the action of the Colonial Office, as one "that affected the public interest and national repute, and was not in conformity with the international obligations accepted by the Mandatory of Palestine." It appears that negotiation of a somewhat equivocal character dragged on over this tender until May 22nd, 1929, when it was promised to the Novomeysky group which, in unusual circumstances for a tendering party, had been in more or less constant touch with the Colonial Office during the whole period. The British owner of the original Turkish Concession in the meantime, had not only come to an agreement with Novomeysky at the request of the Colonial Office, but following on the rupture of this agreement, had tried to bring his case before the English High Courts. The matter, however, was adjudged one for the International Court and outside British jurisdiction. Whereupon he entered into a provisional agreement with a French group so that they might bring the case up at the Hague. Here apparently, the British government countered him by a claim on France arising out of the shelling of Damascus, which effectively closed that road.

That, in the baldest outline is Captain Rogers's history, or should it be called attempted elucidation of the situation, as it was and is. On January 1st, 1930, the rights of the Concession granted to the Palestine Mining Syndicate Ltd., were vested in a company incorporated in England called Palestine Potash Ltd. The solicitors of the Company are Herbert Oppenheimer, Nathan & Vandyke, and Lord Nathan, who describes himself as a "member of the Jewish Agency under the Mandate for Palestine," appears to have been the advisory solicitor all through the negotiations over the Concession. It was on the premises of Palestine Potash Limited, in June 1946, that large quantities of arms and ammunition were found concealed in a concrete pit. The first chairman of the Company was the late Earl of Lytton, and among present directors are two directors of Charles Tennant, the great chemical firm of Glasgow, Lord Glenconner and E. W. D. Tennant; the former of whom is also a director of Imperial Chemicals (I.C.I.). Mr. Moise Novomeysky is managing director. It would seem that whoever, or whatever else is involved, British responsibility is set firmly astride this thorny problem, and that British Cabinet ministers, past and present, must be fully aware of the above, and a lot more besides. Apparently it makes no difference to the camouflage with which this vital issue is still draped.

It would be an act of pure mischief to seek to unearth all these past negotiations and intrigues, and to give gratuitous publicity to Captain Rogers's treatise, unless one believed that it might help to clarify this tragic and world-wide issue

that is being so falsely presented. As appears from Captain Rogers's investigation, the representation of the whole matter as a clash of nationalities, and a case for international justice, puts Great Britain in the invidious role of an arbiter, for which she has neither the strength nor the authority left. What is being so cleverly hidden from the British public is the fact that it is Britain's national survival that is to a very large extent at stake. This was clearly demonstrated at the trials held in Germany in 1947 of the directors of I.G. Farben-Industrie, which showed that the Battle of Britain was nearly lost through lack of magnesium, due to the international cartel agreements inside the Chemical Ring, which operated even during the war. To a question put to the Minister of Supply in the House of Commons on June 17, 1947, as to "what quantities of magnesium from Dead Sea sources have been made available annually to the United Kingdom since 1937?" the answer was, "None." And on July 16 following, the Colonial Secretary confirmed the astronomical estimate of Magnesium Chloride in the Dead Sea already given. There is much talk of a neutral trusteeship of the Holy Places in Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine, but who, one may ask, is to control the unholy places!

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: November 30, 1948.

Factory Extension (Development Charges)

Mr. Hurd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now state the arrangements for offsetting development charges under the Town and Country Planning Act in cases where a factory extension is to be built on land already held for the purpose.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir Stafford Cripps): This matter has been carefully considered, but I have reached the conclusion that it is not possible to extend to land developed for additional factories the special arrangements made for land developed for a house for the owner's occupation. The treatment to be given to claimants of this kind will be a matter for consideration in framing the Treasury scheme under Section 58 of this Act.

Mr. Hurd: In the meantime, are the Central Land Board to continue to make wild guesses at the amount that may be charged?

Sir S. Cripps: In the meantime they will continue to carry out their job under the Act.

Mr. Janner: Is the Chancellor aware that this is holding up some very important extensions connected with the export drive, and could he possibly take into consideration special cases to enable people to proceed with their work?

Sir S. Cripps: It is quite impossible to make any regulations of this kind for special cases.

Petitions (Mr. Speaker's Ruling)

Mr. Speaker: There is another matter which I would mention to the House. I promised to give a Ruling about Petitions. The House will remember that a Petition was presented by the junior Burgess for Oxford University (Sir A. Herbert), and that he caused it to be read. I said that I would look into this matter, and I indicated on a recent

(Continued on page 5.)

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Saturday, December 18, 1948.

"SOVIET JUSTICE"

Moves Towards the Subordination of Law

FROM HIS GRACIOUS MAJESTY'S SPEECH (October 26, 1948):—

"You will be asked to consider proposals for making legal aid and advice more readily available to persons of small or moderate means.

"Legislation will be introduced to improve the organisation of Magistrates' Courts in England and Wales and to amend the Law relating to Justices of the Peace.

"A Bill will be laid before you to provide for the payment of jurors and for the abolition, with limited exceptions, of special jurors."

Following the above, we have seen no reference in *The Times* to the Government's intentions concerning the administration of the Law until December 10, when Mr. Morrison was reported as saying that Wednesday and Thursday of this week would be devoted to the Second Reading of the Legal Aid and Advice Bill and the Legal Aid and Solicitors (Scotland) Bill respectively.

Copies of the following letter, which seems to have been the means of awakening attention to such matters as were dealt with under the heading of *Procedure* in our issue of November 27, have been sent to newspapers. We are glad to give the letter publicity. We understand that two bodies of the Legal Profession in Scotland have rejected the principle of a Panel System for Solicitors:—

"26b, Renfield Street,

"Glasgow, C.2.

"December 2, 1948.

"W. F. Dickson, Esq., LL.B., S.S.C.,

"Acting Secretary,

"Scottish Law Agents' Society,

"32, Moray Place,

"Edinburgh.

"Dear Mr. Dickson,

LEGAL AID & SOLICITORS (SCOTLAND) BILL, 1948.

"In connection with the Legal Aid provisions of the Bill, I had an interview with the Dean of the Faculty of Procurators before the half-yearly meeting of the Faculty to-day. I suggested, in view of certain obnoxious aspects of the Bill, that a Special General Meeting of the Faculty should be held without delay. In suggesting an early meeting I was advised by a prominent member of the Faculty

that this Bill might be rushed through Parliament before its terms could be digested. This would not surprise me as the legal profession in Scotland has had little or no opportunity of considering the provisions of the Legal Aid side.

"The Bill was not on the Agenda to-day but the Dean of Faculty (who was not present at the meeting) asked the Clerk to give a brief report. After this had been done I drew attention to the fact that it was quite incorrect to give the impression that this Bill was to assist the poor as I am quite certain that 85 per cent. at least of the average legal firms, clients in Scotland are affected. I drew attention to the fact that it would not now be possible for any Solicitor to give his client the benefit of the scheme and to act for him unless he joined the Panel of Solicitors. In other words, the scheme is not voluntary, it is compulsory if one proposes to retain one's clients.

"There has been a complete lack of information on this proposed Legislation, due, of course, to the fact that the Bill has only been printed and little or no notice has been received that the Government intended to press the matter immediately. I understand that the Lord Advocate suggested at a meeting with certain legal bodies that no publicity should be given to these Consultations on this side of the Bill. This does not surprise me as I feel quite sure the present Government would like to rush through the Legal Aid clauses without anyone having the slightest conception of what the logical outcome will be.

"I looked round to ascertain what was in the minds of those who framed the provisions. I made enquiries in various directions but received no light. Then I remembered that I had bought, some time ago, a pamphlet issued by the Haldane Society (which, as you know, is the organisation of Socialist Barristers, Solicitors, Managing Clerks and Law Students who are members of or are sympathetic to the Labour Party). The pamphlet is entitled 'Soviet Justice,' written by Ralph Millner, Barrister-at-law, with a glowing introduction by Mr. D. N. Pritt, K.C., M.P. I endeavoured to obtain 50 copies of the Booklet in Glasgow but, despite an exhaustive search, there was not one copy available in any of the Bookstalls or Communist Bookshops. I telephoned my Legal Correspondents in London and asked them if they would be good enough to get me 50 copies. They too made a most exhaustive search round all the principal Bookstalls and Booksellers but without success. They even approached the Publishers and could not get one copy. Apparently the Booklet is not now available for the public and there will be no re-print. This again does not surprise me.

"I have been asked by a number of friends who are very interested in the possibilities of the future to send them photographic copies of the relevant chapters of the Book, and I enclose herewith the last pages which have been photographed this morning, namely pp. 35-81. You will find on Page 59 a very illuminating statement which, in my opinion, accounts for the present scheme of Legal Aid. The Solicitors of Scotland and England must be brought under the heel of a Socialist Government otherwise their system will not work.

"I may say that my views on the Bill come as a surprise to many members of the Faculty but they were, however, shrewd enough to appreciate the possibility of such a manoeuvre being successful by rushed tactics. I was asked specially to send my views to you along with a photographic copy of the last pages of Millner's Book. These I have

pleasure in sending under registered cover.

"I do feel that, after careful study of the Scheme of Soviet Justice you will appreciate that, under the present Legal Aid Section of the Bill, such a scheme could be put in operation in this country. It requires to be done by stealth but under the guise of a generous gesture to the Electorate.

"I have been up and down to London recently about various matters and I met an influential friend who informed me that the intellectual side of the Labour Party was determined to bring the legal profession completely under its power, exactly as it had done with the medical profession.

"There is some defeatist talk that the Bill cannot be resisted and it will be passed in any event. I am not so sure. You may rely on a considerable number of Glasgow Solicitors standing out against any encroachment on the freedom of the profession with its ultimate aim of reducing us to the status of State servants.

"With all good wishes,

"I am,

"Yours very truly,

(Sgd.) JOHN J. CAMPBELL.

"P.S.—I have good reason to fear that, at some future date and at an opportune time, Legal Aid would, by a Government Regulation, be extended to include all other branches of the law such as Conveyancing, Trusts, etc. The panel Solicitors would naturally serve the public and those Solicitors who had not volunteered would be classified as anti-social elements unworthy of consideration and public support."

Mr. Campbell is a member of the firm of Black, Cameron and Campbell, Solicitors and Notaries Public, Glasgow.

Mr. Chifley and Australian Doctors

According to *The Times* (December 10), the National Health Bill has passed both Houses of the Australian Legislature.

"Mr. Chifley, the Prime Minister, in the House of Representatives, said that if the British Medical Association opposed the national health scheme the Commonwealth Government, like Governments elsewhere, would have to consider the training of its own doctors. . . . Proper treatment was now too expensive for the average man and woman, and the Government aimed to reduce this burden."

Truth for December 10 states that, warned by the British example, the American Medical Association is raising a fund from its 140,000 members to oppose any Government-controlled health programme, and may send to England a deputation to see what state controlled medicine means in practice.

PARLIAMENT (continued from page 3.)

occasion that I would refer again to the subject of an hon. Member presenting a public Petition and requiring it to be read by the Clerk.

The precedents show clearly that the concluding words of Standing Order No. 92—"it may be read by the Clerk if required"—mean "if required by the hon. Member presenting the Petition." These words convey an absolute right to have a Petition read, and other hon. Members could not

prevent it by expressing objection.

But to require one or more Petitions to be read must so curtail Question Time as to impose a considerable hardship on hon. Members who desire to obtain oral answers to their Questions. I express the hope, therefore, that hon. Members presenting Petitions will refrain, so far as possible, from requiring them to be read.

Mr. Alpass: May I ask your guidance, Mr. Speaker, in reference to the presenting of Petitions? I am aware that, with regard to a certain Petition, misrepresentations have been made to persons who were asked to sign it. I myself have been approached. The nature of the Petition was misrepresented to me, and I corrected it. What steps are taken to ensure that people who sign Petitions understand what they are doing, and that their signatures are not obtained by misrepresentation?

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid I can give no guidance about that. If any person comes to an hon. Member and says "Please present a Petition for me." I really think that it is up to the hon. Member concerned to see that he is not misled in any way. I cannot help in any way on that matter.

Foreign Organisations (Remittances)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will issue a table showing the number of charities and political or quasi-political organisations in France to which payments in sterling have been authorised since January 1, 1948, and the sums involved.

Sir S. Cripps: It would not be proper to disclose the details of individual applications, except with the consent of the bodies concerned. Since January 1, 1948, 27 charities and political or quasi-political organisations have been authorised to remit £43,931 to France.

Sir J. Mellor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer the principles upon which he permits, or refuses, the transfer of money abroad by individuals or organisations for political purposes.

Sir S. Cripps: All such applications must be considered on their merits. If there is no exchange difficulty then broadly speaking, I would approve contributions made for the purpose of strengthening the democratic forces in any country, and I would disapprove contributions made to organisations whose activities are hostile to that purpose.

House of Commons: December 1, 1948.

Colonial Empire (Geologists)

Mr. Piratin asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether any efforts have been, or are being, made to recruit geologists and geodetic engineers for work in Africa in any other countries besides the U.S.A.

Mr. Creech Jones: Yes. Efforts have been and are being made to recruit geologists and geodetic surveyors in this country and in the Commonwealth.

National Insurance (Applications)

Sir E. Graham-Little asked the Minister of National Insurance whether he is aware that a number of citizens, while being prepared to pay the weekly contribution to National Insurance, have refused to apply for registration

from conscientious convictions; and whether he will supply such persons with cards before subjecting them to the measures required by Regulation 1274 of 1948.

Mr. J. Griffiths: I am not aware of such objections. But if a person prefers to give the Department the particulars necessary to determine whether he is liable or entitled to pay contributions either in a letter or orally at a local office of my Department rather than by filling up the standard form of application, he is at liberty to do so.

Bing Removal, Bellshill

Colonel J. R. H. Hutchison (Glasgow, Central): . . . For the benefit of those hon. Members who do not know what a bing is, and who have the misfortune to have been born south of the Tweed, I would explain that a bing is a collection of refuse products from a mine piled in an unsightly heap, and incorrectly known by residents of England as a slag heap. These bings are situated all over the industrial belt in the centre of Scotland, and unsightly things they are. Furthermore, in case we are told tonight they ought never to have been there, I would say that the National Coal Board are actually creating bings at the present time.

The local authorities in Lanarkshire, anxious to improve amenities at Bellshill, decided they would try to convert some of these bings into different shapes, smoothing them out into terraces and ramps, and I use that word "ramp" in the sense of an incline and not in its colloquial and less pleasant sense, and upon which terraces sport of various kinds and football, might be played. Consequently they called for tenders for the purpose of getting this work done and the tenders were eventually narrowed to two, one submitted by a firm by the name of Mapco, of Glasgow, and another by a firm called Ritchie and Co., of Cambuslang. The first concern quoted some £17,000 for the work, and the second quoted some £53,000, or at any rate these were the figures which the Minister gave to me as the amount of the grant necessary for carrying out this work. One would not have thought that there was a large problem to resolve here—about £36,000 of money to be saved. Apparently, however, it caused doubts in the minds of the Board of Trade, for here the whole story takes a curious turn.

The local authority, backed, I understand by the Scottish Office, recommended that the lower tender should be accepted. Someone became aware that where improvements to amenities were concerned, a grant was possible. The question was put to the Board of Trade, who have promised to pay a grant of £53,000 if the highest tender is in fact accepted. The local authority, of course, jumped at this heaven-sent solution to the problem and accepted the higher tender. . . .

What I want to know is what are the reasons which prompted the Board of Trade to bring pressure on the local authority to carry out such a curious transaction. No doubt we will hear from the hon. Gentleman who is to reply what these reasons were, but in the meantime certain reasons have gained wide credence in Scotland which I think I should tell him and the House. The cheaper contractor was going to use the most modern machinery—scrapers, tractors and bulldozers—and would employ 15 men on this work. Incidentally, they were going to make use for motive power for the tractors of pool gas, the cheapest form of motive

power which exists and which is in plentiful supply.

The two reasons which have received widespread credence are that the action was taken on the grounds that it might save dollars, and that it would give greater employment if the second and more expensive contract was accepted. The amount of pool gas which would be required in carrying out the work by Messrs. Mapco has been computed by technicians as amounting to between £400 and £450. That is the sum in dollars which is at stake. Is it conceivable that the expensive contractor could carry out the work without using any petrol or diesel oil? There is the movement of men, the inspection by his officials, and other matters. The time which this contractor would take will be 18 months, compared with the six months by Mapco, and I understand it is the intention of Messrs. Ritchie to employ in certain circumstances tractors and other vehicles of this kind.

So far, therefore, as saving dollars is concerned, it is possible that we will lose over this, and putting it on the most favourable terms, the estimate is £400 to be saved in dollars at a cost of £36,000 to the taxpayer. I should like to ask the hon. Gentleman who is to reply to answer specifically this point: Is there a ban in the contract of Messrs. Ritchie on him employing vehicles using petrol or diesel oil? Are they precluded from so doing?

The second point is on the number of men to be employed. As I have said, Mapco will employ 15 men, will take one-third of the time and at a cost of one-third of the money. They could remove three bings for the same cost as Messrs. Ritchie are going to charge the country for the removal of one. So it is a question of 45 men of Mapco's against, I am told, some 200 who are likely to be employed in doing this work by means of picks and shovels and hand barrows with Messrs. Ritchie. Here, again, I ask the Minister to tell me categorically whether there is anything in the contract which says that Ritchie's shall employ a specific number of men, because if it is not in the contract it is very much in his interest not to employ 200 men but to employ a lesser number and use more modern implements and thereby save money and increase his own profits.

But even if it is a question of a contrast between 40 and 200 "Bing Boys," this is a most extraordinary economic philosophy. Is there no work in the neighbourhood to which these men can be usefully put? What about road repairing? What about digging ditches for the pipes which will ultimately convey the gas from the local coke ovens, which is at present wasted and is badly needed? Are we to understand that these 170 or so men cannot be persuaded to enter any of the under-manned industries, such as agriculture or mining, about which we hear so much? This is really a most extraordinary new economic policy. How on earth can it square with the exhortations of Ministers, and notably those of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to modernise ourselves, and to carry out our work with the most modern tools and methods? . . . At Bellshill the most modern tools have been set aside. The most modern tools to be used upon this work are hand barrows, buckets and shovels. If the Government were being logical, in wanting to accomplish the thing in this way, why do not they say that the men must do the work with teaspoons and children's buckets?

I cannot altogether blame the local authority in this matter. They have done nothing, but stand to gain. The rates will contribute nothing. The Unemployment Fund,

which incidentally must be standing with a very big sum to its credit, will have nothing to pay. The taxpayer will once again be called upon to finance this task carried out in the craziest way which could be conceived by a Government Department. . . .

Colonel Gomme-Duncan (Perth and Kinross, Perth): I would like briefly to support my hon. and gallant Friend. He has put the case in regard to this most astonishing frolic—I think we can call it that very fairly—and he has asked specific questions to which I hope the Minister will reply. There is a very considerable amount of disturbance in the public mind in Scotland about this particular case, and it is far more widespread, I fancy, than the Minister perhaps realises. I hope his reply may allay the disturbed minds. On the other hand, it may make them worse.

There is one point I have heard mentioned in my part of the country; it is that there is a determined effort by the Government to employ these extra men in this way only to camouflage possible unemployment. I am not for one moment saying that that is the case, but I am claiming that it is widely said in public in many parts of Scotland today, and I hope we shall have a specific assurance that it is not the case. If we get that assurance, we shall get a clear statement of the real reason for this nonsense.

The Secretary for Overseas Trade (*Mr. Bottomley*): . . . In April, 1948, the Lanarkshire County Council said they had this colliery bing which covered an area of roughly 17½ acres which they wanted to clear for the improvement of amenities, and in due course for the development of a housing scheme. We asked them to call for the two tenders, and the figures for these which I have and the ones given by the hon. and gallant Gentleman show no great disparity. The lowest tender for mechanical clearance was £19,319, and the lowest for the manual method £53,000. It was anticipated that by using manual methods 170 men would be employed over a period of nine months, and I think hon. Members must agree that it would be much better to employ these men rather than leave them doing nothing. Also, we were short of mechanical equipment.

The point has been made that we wanted to save dollars. Yes, we do not want to buy machinery from the United States if we can avoid it. We have got some machinery from the United States—for instance, excavators and industrial crawler tractors—but we have now increased home production. Army surplus stores have been released, too, and these machines also help to improve the position. Therefore, we feel that in all the circumstances it is now possible to meet the hon. and gallant Gentleman's requirements by releasing some of that mechanical equipment for employment on this site. In all the circumstances, in that democratic way in which we carry out our proceedings in the House of Commons, I can say that the Government will see to it that assistance will be given to have sites cleared by mechanical means.

Lord John Hope (Midlothian and Peebles, Northern): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us before he sits down whether the Government are always going to decide for the more expensive and non-mechanical means and if that is so, what is the use of asking for two tenders in such cases?

Mr. Bottomley: . . . In regard to the first question about inviting tenders, it is still necessary to invite two tenders

until we are assured that there is sufficient mechanical equipment and that the labour position in the district is such that it does not warrant the work being done by manual labour rather than by mechanical means.

House of Commons: December 2, 1948.

Currency Transfers (France)

Sir W. Smithers asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he took, before authorising the transfer of gifts and loans amounting to about £5,000 sent by the British Labour Party and individual trades unions in Britain to the French Socialist Party, and to the *Confédération Générale du Travail*, *Force Ouvrière* and the newspaper *Le Populaire* to satisfy himself that this money would be used for charitable purposes.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: None, Sir. The applications were not put forward on charitable grounds. . . .

. . . My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor in an answer which he gave to a question put to him a few days ago, made it quite clear upon what grounds these moneys are allowed to be transferred.

Mr. Nicholson: Has not the right hon. Gentleman been guilty of a certain lack of candour? Did not the Chancellor of the Exchequer claim on Tuesday that these payments were authorised where he thinks—by the exercise of his own independent judgment—that the cause of democracy was likely to be furthered? Does not this show that the Chancellor is using his own personal judgment in matters of political opinion in a way which is quite unwarranted and contrary to British political tradition?

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: There is nothing to answer.

Major Bruce: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the attitude of his right hon. and learned Friend is more honourable and more candid than that of the ex-members of the Anglo-German Friendship League?

Mr. Nicholson: I am sorry that the Financial Secretary has not shown his usual acumen. I asked whether he had not been guilty of lack of candour in ignoring a written reply by the Chancellor in which he said that these payments were authorised, or not, according to his personal judgment, and whether that was not most unwarranted and contrary to British political tradition? I submit that that is a question to be answered.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: As a matter of fact, I drew attention to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend. It was part of his reply that these matters are judged on their merits.

Mr. Drayson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances he has permitted £5,000 to be sent to Socialist organisations in France during the past 12 months.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: Two loans to a total amount of £5,000 by British trade union organisations to the *Force Ouvrière* were authorised in March and April of this year. One gift of £1,000 by the Labour Party to the newspaper "*Le Populaire*" was authorised in October. The purpose of the applications in each case was to strengthen the financial position of the institutions concerned.

Mr. Drayson: Is it not monstrous that this money

should be allowed to go to France to strengthen the finances of a Socialist newspaper rather than that money should be permitted to go there in order to commemorate the fallen of the 49th West Riding Division who did much more to strengthen democratic forces than anything that "Le Populaire" or any other French Socialist party has ever done?

Mr. John Paton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the action of his right hon. and learned Friend in facilitating these proceedings is in accordance with the long standing traditions of the Labour movement in this country in succouring comrades abroad, and their wives and children, and that his action has the hearty approval of the great mass of the working-class population of this country?

Mr. Henry Strauss: In order that it shall be generally known on what terms these funds can be sent abroad, could the right hon. Gentleman say whether the Communist sympathies are required from the donor and the donee, or will one suffice?

Mr. Glenvil Hall: Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman will put down that question.

Mr. Gallacher: Can the Financial Secretary tell us, in view of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition declared last night that he had spent millions to help the Social revolutionaries in Russia, why we are having so much noise over this matter?

Mr. Nicholson: I asked the right hon. Gentleman, with all the seriousness at my command, whether he is laying down the doctrine that the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Great Britain is entitled to encourage subventions to any political party in any country in Europe?

Mr. Gallacher: Ask your own Leader.

Mr. Glenvil Hall: I think the hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension. My right hon. and learned Friend has not encouraged anybody to do anything, as is alleged by the hon. Gentleman. What he has done is to follow the usual practice, and treat these transactions as they come on their merits.

Mr. Nicholson: I think the right hon. Gentleman is unaware that on Tuesday the Chancellor said that he granted or withheld approval according to whether it helped the cause of democracy. I am asking—whatever his motives may be—whether that is not equivalent to encouraging certain political parties in foreign countries at the expense of others, and is unworthy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Colonel Stoddart-Scott: As a former member of the 49th Division, may I beseech the right hon. Gentleman to approach the Chancellor of the Exchequer and ask him to reconsider the application to send £5,000 to France for the 49th Division war memorial?

Mr. Glenvil Hall: I am sure that if the hon. and gallant Gentleman puts down his question my right hon. and learned Friend will be very pleased to answer him. Where the object is a worthy one, my right hon. and learned Friend is always willing, where possible, to accede to requests which are made.

Mr. Drayson: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I have already put that question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and that I asked him to reconsider the application by the 49th Division?

Mr. R. A. Butler: Why was it that only £500 was

allowed to be sent in the case of this war memorial, and £5,000 was allowed to be sent in the case of a political party?

Mr. Glenvil Hall: I think the answer probably is that the application was made for £500. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I stand corrected. If the right hon. Gentleman knows, I do not know why he asks me.

Mr. Butler: I asked the right hon. Gentleman why, in the case of the 49th Division war memorial, for which it was requested that £5,000 should be sent abroad, permission was given by the Treasury—

Mr. Beswick: What earthly connection has this question with the Question on the Order Paper?

Mr. Speaker: The Question on the Order Paper asks why £5,000 was permitted to be sent to Socialist organisations in France.

Mr. Beswick: Yes, but the supplementary question was about a war memorial.

Mr. Eden: Repeated questions have been asked about the £5,000 required for a memorial for the 49th Division. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us why it had to be cut down to 10 per cent., while in the case of the Socialist organisations in France the money was permitted to be sent in full?

Mr. Glenvil Hall: As the House knows, I have been overseas for a number of weeks and, therefore, I am not as familiar with this question as are others. If the right hon. Gentleman will put the Question down again, I have no doubt that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will do his best to answer it once more.

Mr. Butler: The Table will not allow it again.

Major Legge-Bourke: With reference to the last answer which the Financial Secretary gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton (Mr. Drayson), would the right hon. Gentleman please clarify the answer in which he implied that the project of the 49th Division was not a worthy one?

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