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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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From Week to Week

In reviewing M. Bertrand de Jouvenel's *Problems of a Socialist England, The Snooper*, (with which is incorporated *The Dotheboys Daily*), feels that the hardships of the British public are pictured as much worse than they have been in fact.

We can reassure *The Snooper* (with which is incorporated *etc.*) that the general public has a very fair idea as to which section of it has borne the hardships of this enthronement of "the palace guard." When the first act of Mr. Attlee's Administration raised the salaries of Members of Parliament by 40 per cent., doubled the number and increased the pay of Ministers, Cabinet and otherwise, organised the Coal Board on an £8,000 a year per head basis, with Electricity, Gas, Railways *et hoc genus omne* to be salaried with the proceeds of the nationalisation of the Bank of "England" ("banks create the means of payment out of nothing"—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*), no one supposed that the job-for-the-boys department would overlook the necessity for friendly comment, and the surest way to obtain it. We have no contact with Broadcasting House; but if it is feeling the cold blast of Cripps's austerity—well, we should smile. What is the good of a political victory if you don't rob the conquered?

We do not suppose that at any time in the history of these islands more than a tiny minority understood the principles, if any, which controlled their destiny. During the Middle Ages, by reason of education and travel, a considerable portion of this minority consisted of clergy, a word which then carried a different connotation, and, so far as words are concerned, has come down to us as "Clerk in Holy Orders." In consequence, and without minimising the corruption which culminated in the Reformation, a strong necessity existed for the preservation of the national proprieties. If Government in any form has always contained an element of racketeering, until recently it has paid the tribute of hypocrisy which vice pays to virtue with a certain polish on its manners.

But the crudity, as well as the racketeering, has never previously, we think, reached its current level. When Mr. Attlee claims that the Labour Party, which he infers is his party, "believes" in four freedoms of which the fourth is freedom of the individual from the tyranny of economic power wielded by the few, he is either verging on insolence, or he does not understand the meaning of words. There have been tyrants in this country, more particularly since the rise of the industrial-financial capitalists who have brought Mr. Attlee and his Mond-Turner-P.E.P.-Fabians to power; but there has never been since Cromwell, if then, an all pervasive tyranny which would seize a man's property, force him to obtain a license for every activity, say what he shall buy or sell, prevent him from building a barn, refuse to allow him to take his money abroad, conscript him, control his employment, steal his credit, debase his money, and

indulge in many other lawless and tyrannical practices, and then proclaim that it believed in freedom.

"And none might buy or sell, save he had the Mark of the Beast . . ."

"Ye take too much upon yourselves, ye sons of Levi."

If we are to believe a cold-blooded and matter of fact table published in the *Times-Herald*, Washington, D.C. (U.S.A. in case you haven't heard of the place lately) and obtained from official sources, the total distribution to the British *Empire* (note the designation) of U.S.A. funds, including "Marshall Aid," to 1950 is, in round figures, \$44,679,000,000, or say, eleven thousand million pounds. Resisting the temptation to compare this with the distance in miles to the sun, or the compound interest on a penny since the time of Noah, we pause to enquire:

- (1) How much of this was lent to the British *Empire* prior to that liquidation over which Mr. Churchill refused to preside but of which Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Attlee are so proud?
- (2) Did the liquidated portions assume the debt for what they are said to have received, or did "Britain" as usual, "guarantee" it?
- (3) Eleven thousand million pounds is about eleven hundred pounds per family in these islands. Assuming, which is a fairly safe assumption, that you are going to held responsible for your eleven hundred pounds, and in fact Sir Stafford Cripps is collecting it off you as quickly as possible and shipping it abroad, do you feel you have had your money's worth? Because if not, we can assure you that you've only just begun the game.

"We will not necessarily have to send our land army over there. In the next war, as in the last war, let us equip soldiers from other nations, and let them send their boys into the holocausts instead of sending our own boys. We will absolutely demoralise the enemy.

"We will destroy all his lines of communication. We will blast at the centres of operation, and then let our allies send the army in—other boys, not our boys, to hold the ground we win."—Congressman Cannon, Missouri, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

There is no subject, at the present time, to which readers of this review can devote their attention with greater profit than the ostensible basis of our political system—electoral suffrage.

It may be that when they have become conscious (mere understanding is not enough) of its enormities, they can do nothing; it is quite certain that until they have become conscious, they can do nothing.

The whole idea, the devilish idea, of anonymous, ballot-box universalised suffrage, the so-called democracy which is

set over against totalitarianism in the hell we live in, and is of course designed to make totalitarianism a mathematical certainty, is based on the premise of human equality (having no quality) and homogeneity. Please don't take our word for this; consider carefully and critically the effect of an election of a slightly defective farm labourer, a prostitute, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, if they all vote in the same constituency in which a Single Taxer, a Communist, and a Conservative are standing for Parliament. And then ask yourselves—"What basis in the universe has this idea of human equality?"

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: April 27, 1949.

Iron and Steel Bill

As amended (*in the Standing Committee*), considered.

NEW CLAUSE

(APPOINTMENT OF CONSUMERS' COUNCIL & COMMITTEES.)

(1) A Council, to be known as the Iron and Steel Consumers' Council and hereafter in this section referred to as "the Council," shall, not later than six months after the general date of transfer, be established for the purposes mentioned in this section.

(2) The Council shall consist of—

(a) an independent chairman appointed by the Minister;

(b) not less than fifteen nor more than thirty other persons appointed by the Minister, after consultation with such bodies (which may include organisations representing workers) as he thinks fit, to represent the interests of persons (hereafter in this section referred to as "the consumers") who are consumers of the products of any of the principal activities of the Corporation and the publicly-owned companies; and

(c) two members of the Corporation nominated by the Corporation.

(3) A person shall be disqualified for being appointed or being the chairman of the Council so long as he is a member of the Commons House of Parliament, but a member of the Council other than the chairman and a member of any committee appointed by the Council under this section shall not by reason of his appointment as such a member be disqualified for being elected to, or for sitting or voting as a member of, the Commons House of Parliament.

(4) The Council shall be charged with the duties—

(a) of considering any matter affecting the interests of the consumers (including prices), being a matter which is the subject of a representation made to them by any of the consumers or which appears to the Council to be a matter to which consideration ought to be given apart from any such representation, and, where action appears to them to be requisite as to any such matter, of notifying their conclusions to the Corporation;

(b) of considering and reporting to the Minister or the Corporation on any matter referred to the Council by the Minister or the Corporation; and

(c) of making representations to the Minister on such matters affecting the interests of the consumers as the Council think necessary.

(5) The Council shall send to the Minister copies of any conclusion notified or report made to the Corporation, and shall send to the Corporation copies of any report or representation made to the Minister.

(6) The Minister may give directions to the Corporation on any matter arising out of any conclusion, report or representation made to him or to the Corporation by the Council, and shall inform the Council of any directions so given, and the Corporation shall give effect to any such directions.

(7) The chairman of the Council shall, on a request made by not less than six members other than members nominated by the Corporation, call a meeting at which the members nominated by

the Corporation shall not be entitled to be present, but no report or representation in respect of the matters discussed at any such meeting shall be made to the Minister, unless the decision to do so has been approved at a meeting of the Council at which the members nominated by the Corporation were entitled to be present.

(8) The Council may, with the approval of the Minister, appoint committees, consisting wholly or partly of persons who are not members of the Council, to consider and report to the Council upon matters affecting the interests of particular classes of the consumers, whether defined by reference to locality, the products concerned or otherwise, and the Council shall, before appointing the members of any such committee, consult with such organisations representing the consumers concerned and their workers as the Minister may determine.

(9) The Council may appoint committees, consisting wholly of members of the Council, to consider and report to the Council on any matter referred to them by the Council.

(10) The Council shall, with the approval of the Minister, make rules with respect to the quorum, proceedings, meetings and determinations of the Council, and any committee appointed by the Council, and copies of the minutes of the proceedings of the Council, except proceedings at meetings called under subsection (7) of this section, and of the proceedings of every such committee shall be sent to the Corporation.

(11) The Council may, subject to the approval of the Minister as to numbers, appoint such officers as appear to the Council to be requisite for the proper exercise and performance of their functions (including the functions of any committee appointed by the Council).

(12) The Corporation shall pay to the members of the Council or of any such committee such allowances in respect of any loss of remunerative time and such travelling allowances and allowances in respect of their out-of-pocket expenses, and to the officers of the Council such remuneration (whether by way of salary or fees) and such allowances, as the Minister may with the approval of the Treasury determine, and may pay to the chairman of the Council such remuneration (whether by way of salary or fees) as the Minister may with such approval determine, and shall pay such expenses incurred by the Council or any such committee as the Minister may with such approval determine.

(13) Every member of the Council and of every committee appointed by the Council shall hold and vacate his office in accordance with the terms of his appointment.

(14) The Council shall be furnished by the Corporation with such office accommodation as appears to the Corporation to be requisite for the proper exercise and performance of their functions (including the functions of any such committee as aforesaid) or as may be directed by the Minister.

(15) The Council shall, as respects each financial year of the Corporation, make to the Minister a report on the exercise and performance by the Council and the committees appointed by them of their functions during that year, and the Minister shall lay a copy of every such report before each House of Parliament.

(16) The Minister may, after consultation with the Council and the Corporation, by regulations make such modifications of the preceding provisions of this section as may appear to him to be desirable for the purpose of securing more effective machinery for the safeguarding of the interests of the consumers.—[*Mr. G. R. Strauss.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. G. R. Strauss: I beg to move, "That the Clause be read a Second time. . . ."

Mr. Lyttelton: . . . I am only speaking to say that we

SOCIAL CREDIT and CATHOLICISM

by GEORGE-HENRI LEVESQUE, O.P.,
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Universities. (*Published in Australia*)

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shall not divide the House against this Clause, and secondly, to place it on record that we think that this elaborate machinery will, in the circumstances, prove to be entirely ineffective, but it is the best that we can do.

Mr. Birch: . . . I ask hon. Members to reflect about these Consumers' Councils. There is a feeling of absolute unreality about them. I thought that the Minister was extraordinarily complacent as he greased his way through his speech. He used phrases like, "This is exceedingly important to consumers," "This is an essential part of the Bill as far as they are concerned," "They will not complain in the future in vain," and "this provision will be useful and effective," and so on. It put me very much in mind of the right hon. Lady the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food who said that the gestation period of a cow was 11 months and that the Ministry's experts said so. It is that sort of bland and wholly meaningless statement which is made by right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Front Bench opposite, who make them without really thinking what they are saying.

Let us reflect. What happens under nationalisation? I have quoted an instance already this evening. We are pricing ourselves out of the world coal market. Bunker coal in New York is 61s. 3d. a ton and in London it is 98s. a ton. What have the shipowners and other people done about this? I have no doubt what they have done. They have complained to the Consumers' Council set up under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act. What has happened? Was it useful and effective? Did they complain in vain? Did they find it an exceedingly important and essential part of the Bill? Of course not. What happened was precisely and exactly nothing of any sort whatever.

What will happen when prices go up if this Bill unfortunately is ever put into effect? What would happen if we started pricing ourselves out of the international market in steel, as we are now doing in coal? A complaint to the council would be made. But is the right hon. Gentleman really so foolish as to believe that anything whatever would happen about it? I cannot believe that the Minister is as foolish as his words. . . .

Colonel J. R. H. Hutchison: . . . It is one of the vices of nationalisation that when an industry is taken over in this way, some sort of body has to be set up to try to protect consumers. But how effective have they been up to date? A short time ago I asked the Minister of Fuel and Power how often the Consumers' Council of the nationalised coal industry had met since it was set up. In his reply he told me that it had had nine meetings and that representations had been made to it by three groups of consumers. The fact that in nearly two years only three representations should have been made to the Consumers' Council about the types of coal and the shortage of coal just shows how little confidence the public has in such councils. . . .

Mr. W. J. Brown (Rugby): This Clause is ostensibly what I might describe as a mechanical Clause—a Clause which constructs a piece of machinery to do a certain job. But although it is a mechanical Clause, it does in fact raise a very deep issue of principle. That issue of principle is perhaps best illustrated by the exchange which took place between the hon. Members for Colne (Mr. S. Silverman) and Keighley (Mr. Ivor Thomas). It was the submission of the

hon. Member for Keighley that although this Clause was well intentioned it was bound to be ineffective. It was the retort of the hon. Member for Colne— . . . that if this Clause was ineffective in giving the consumer any real voice in the determination of price, quality, and what-not, we were no worse off, because the consumer had no effective measure of control or influence now. If we approach this Clause with that in mind we shall go astray. It is not true that the consumer now has no power of influencing the course of events. It may well be that some people do not like the method that he exercises, but it is no good saying that he has not got any method, for the truth is that if he does not get what he regards as a fair deal from one firm he is free to transfer his custom to another firm.

Mr. Mitchison: Not for tubes.

Mr. Brown: Quite obviously, in a general argument I cannot go into every category of steel production. It may be that there are particular types of steel production in which, in effect, there is only one producer. Even if that be the case, in the industry as a whole there is a right of choice on the part of the consumer. Hon. Members opposite may well argue that that right of choice—or, to put it in another way, that freedom of competition—carries with it social consequences so grievous as to outweigh the advantage of the freedom of choice. Now I am not going into that argument, because that takes us right into the whole issue of whether we should nationalise or not nationalise, which would not be appropriate on this Clause.

Mr. Birch: "Labour believes in Britain" is very much in favour of competition, I understand.

Mr. Brown: Again I do not want to be diverted from my main argument. I only want to say that it seems to me that there is upon those who declare that the disadvantages of the freedom of choice are so great that that freedom of choice must be taken away—a very strong onus to devise some alternative and effective means. If we are to have an artificial substitute for the natural means, we must take steps to see that that artificially constructed alternative can be made effective. With great respect, I say that nobody in his sober senses can pretend that this Clause will give the consumer any effective influence or control whatever.

Let us see what it is to consist of. It is to consist of a consumers' council, which will be presided over by an independent chairman. Now, he will be appointed by the Minister. There will then be not less than 15 or more than 30 other persons, also appointed by the Minister. There will then be two members of the Corporation nominated by the Corporation, which itself will have been appointed by the Minister. So that for all practical purposes all the 32 members—if that is the maximum number; it will be 18 to 33 with the independent chairman—will have been appointed by the very Minister whose activities and directions to the industry they are supposed, if not to control at any rate substantially to influence.

This is, indeed, not even appealing from Philip drunk to Philip sober; it is appealing from plain Philip to plain Philip. This is a problem which has to be considered in the new economy we are building up. Whether we like the economy or not, it presents new problems, and the first problem it presents is how, when we substitute super-monopoly for either competition or partial monopoly, we can keep that super-monopoly in the hands of the public. That is the problem, and we do not find the answer in any

(continued on page 7.)

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Saturday, May 14, 1949.

The Coming General Election

The *Economist* for May 7 contains an article "by a Correspondent" on "Electoral Illusions." Underneath it, in a line "frame" is a quotation from the same paper of May 5, 1949 commenting on the Parliamentary Oaths Bill, admitting the Jews to sit in Parliament. It begins with Lord Ashley's quotation of 'the high authority' of Dr. Arnold" that "there is no plea of justice in the case of the Jews. They are voluntary strangers here, and have no claim to become citizens but by conforming to our moral law, which is the Gospel." Macauley is cited in counter-argument. Both the revival of the topic and the juxtaposition of the "framed" paragraphs excite our interest, and we await developments. The article below which the century-old quotation appears deals exclusively, as might be expected, with such 'illusions' as fall outside radical criticism, of the kind which this review is guiding, and to some extent initiating, of the ascription of any degree of rightness, or suitability, or justice—or even actuality—to the pretended 'rule of the majority' through the technique of the secret or any other ballot. On the contrary, the writer is solely interested in some of the other illusions which attend the popular discussion of 'who's going to get in?' Any interest which might attach itself to this question, is obviously altogether subordinate to the interest which resides in the possibility of a reversal or modification in a political direction of the policy given to the elected Administration to pursue (the electors do choose *who* shall ruin them, although they don't choose the weapons to be used against them). It has already been pointed out in these columns that a very narrow majority for the Conservative Party might have the advantage of releasing any talent for statesmanship at present hidden among the (Conservative) back-benchers, with the effect of introducing a note of realism into whatever battles are still open to parliamentary participation. We note, therefore, the opinion, not quite fully expressed, but quite apparent, that "as the owners of casinos know, there is no gamble about the net result of a large number of gambles. The tables may be loaded in favour of one side or other, but there is a certain logic to the outcome." Also (last sentence of the article) "The only thing liable to alter the national result is an exceptionally well contrived 'stunt' or an outstanding blunder on the national level." Admittedly, the organisation of stunts and blunders of the kind envisaged comes within our range of interest, both in regard to the organisers and to the policies implemented. Put simply (but not we trust over-simply) you can provide a difference of five grains in two heaps of sugar if you use a match-stalk as a spoon and the fragments of sugar average five grains each; but not if you use a coal shovel and the lumps of sugar average a quarter of an ounce. We are in the coal-shovel (or muck-rake?) era of politics, not the match stalk. The newspapers and the "B".B.C. are the shovel, and the lumps are 'the masses.'

So, on a statistical basis, *The Economist's* anonymous correspondent argues as follows:—

"When the 1945 results were tabulated, constituency by constituency, in terms of percentage they presented a surprisingly even distribution curve. Fifteen to eighteen seats were held by a majority of under 1 per cent., fifteen to eighteen by a majority of between 1 per cent. and 2 per cent., and so on. In all, about 320 M.P.'s hold their seats by majorities of under 20 per cent., and could, therefore, lose them as a result of an adverse turnover of 10 per cent. Fifteen to eighteen seats may be expected to change hands for every 1 per cent. swing in the national vote from one of the two major parties to the other—and a loss of 15 seats by one party means a change of 30 in the Parliamentary majority."

He (or she) goes on to attach this to a warning against *prediction* (of a majority which is not clear cut), and drags in Dr. Gallup; but in spite of the disguise the conclusion seems to us to be that the machine which is now being manipulated will not run to narrow majorities.

Science and Power

"The change of spiritual climate from the heady optimism of the Nineteenth Century to the apocalyptic terrors of our own age is well reflected in the popular disillusion with scientific rationalism. All the fashionable philosophies of our generation, such as Bergsonism, Freudianism and Existentialism, are at bottom wholly irrational, even when, as in the case of psycho-analysis, they choose to wear a scientific mask. . . . The rise of professional thinkers to a place of great influence and power in Society has increased the suspicion with which the clever have always, and perhaps justly, been regarded by the simple. It has also invoked all those jealousies and fears that make the exercise of power so hazardous. At the same time the professionalising of science and letters has had the effect of segregating their practitioners from the mass of Society and of infecting them with the sin of *hubris*. It has encouraged them to believe and to persuade others that the scientific principles that have proved so useful in the exploitation of inanimate nature can be applied with equally beneficent results to human nature, especially in the realm of politics. But in politics the scientific intellectual, who is under the same necessity as in the laboratory to confirm his theories by empirical demonstration, finds himself thwarted by the human contumacy which has defeated so many brilliantly conceived plans for universal happiness. Thus to control his experiment he is constrained to demand more and more power and in the end to subordinate his original purpose to the maintenance of his power. Thus in the evolution of the modern State, with its formula of happiness by coercion, we may observe the transformation of the intellectuals from a professional class into a governing *elite*. Science and letters become subservient to politics for the simple reason that the scientist and the writer have become politicians. But the intellectual who has made scientific theory the pretext for an arrogation of power finds himself unable to abandon his theory when further experiment and investigation have discredited it, for the theory has congealed into dogma. Thus we have the paradox of a Society scientifically organised upon postulates that science has abandoned, an ironic example of what the Marxists have called the 'cultural lag.'"—J. M. Lalley, reviewing J. W. N. Sullivan's *Limitations of Science in Not Merely Gossip* (Washington, D.C.)

THE SECRET BALLOT RACKET

**Further references to material about
The Constitutional Issue**

As promised in our brief report last week on the recent London meeting of subscribers, we print below a list, compiled by Mr. W. Wilson, of references in *The Social Crediter* to the Constitutional Issue continuing the list published on March 20, 1948, and slightly overlapping it:—

THE CONSTITUTION

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"	16—P1	From Week to Week ("In these days")	E	"	12—P6	"Church and State"	A F
"	23—P1	From Week to Week ("There are few . . .")	D	"	12—P6	"Juliot-Curie"	N
"	23—P5	"There Should be an Act of P."	D	"	12—P6	"Marxian Justice"	G N
"	23—P4	The Pope and Financial Policies	F	"	12—P1	From Week to Week ("The result of . . .")	E
"	23—P1	From Week to Week ("They have killed the first-born . . .")	M	"	19—P5	The Commons: <i>Brit. N. America Bill</i> (Alan Herbert)	A
"	30—P1	From Week to Week	N	"	19—P4	From Week to Week ("More and more . . .")	M
"	30—P4	Communists in the N.U.T.	N	"	19—	From Week to Week ("The steady . . .")	F
"	30—P2	From Week to Week ("Without entering into . . .")	FG	"	26—P1	From Week to Week (" <i>The Listener</i> . . .")	H
Nov.	13—P1	From Week to Week ("The maximum")	N	"	26—P8	"H. J. Laski"	C
"	13—P3	The Commons: Speech, W. J. Brown	N	"	26—P2	The Commons: <i>Brit. N. America Bill</i>	A
"	13—P4	"Communism" (Qtn. from <i>de Jouvenel</i>)	N	"	26—P4	"Treason is Secret"	E
"	20—P1	From Week to Week	E G H	"	26—P8	"The Haldane Society"	G N
"	27—P1	From Week to Week ("The absolute irrationality . . .")	E	Apl.	2—P4	"Raphael" (Qtn. from Ruskin)	F H
Dec.	4—P1	From Week to Week ("The 'B' — or Commonwealth—B.C. . . .")	G	"	2—P2	The Commons: <i>Brit. N. America Bill</i>	A
"	4—	From Week to Week ("It is symptomatic . . .")	E	"	2—P4	"Spring"	A
"	11—P5	"States, Actual, Real and Potential" by T. J.	A B C D G	"	2—P5	"Church and State"	A F
"	11—P4	From Week to Week ("Much of the")	F	"	2—P2	From Week to Week	F G
"	18—P4	"Soviet Justice"	G	"	9—P4	From Week to Week ("Mr. Churchill has . . ." Also last Note)	N
"	25—P4	"Power and Authority"	G	"	9—P5	The Commons: <i>Consolidated Fund Bill</i> (Strauss's speech)	N
"	25—P5	"Soviet Justice"	G	"	9—P4	From Week to Week ("When P.E.P. . . .")	F
1949				"	16—P1	"Tied Lawyers?"	G N
Jan.	1—P2	The Commons: <i>Legal Aid and Advice Bill</i>	G	"	16—P1	"The Natural History of the Perversion of Ideas"	F H
"	1—P4	"Parliament and the Law"	G	"	23—P1	From Week to Week ("The insanity")	E
"	1—P5	"Power's Subordination of Judiciary"	G	"	23—P4	"The Power of the Majority"	E
"	1—P1	From Week to Week ("In a competent . . .")	N	"	23—P5	"Constitutionalism" by N. F. W.	A
"	8—P2	The Commons: <i>Legal Aid and Solicitors (Scotland) Bill</i>	G	"	30—P4	"The Game Speeds Up"	A
"	8—P1	From Week to Week (King's Broadcast)	B	"	30—P5	"The Constitutional Issue" (Australia)	A
"	8—	From Week to Week (Communism and Catholicism)	F N				
"	15—P1	From Week to Week ("We are not.")	D G				
"	15—	From Week to Week ("This ancient . . .")	F				
"	15—P2	The Commons: <i>Legal Aid and Solicitors (Scotland) Bill</i>	G				
"	15—P4	"Roosevelt's 'War on the Courts'"	G				
"	22—P6	"Communist Police Methods"	G N				
"	29—P4	Cardinal Mindszenty	G N				
Feb.	5—P8	The Haldane Society	G N				
"	12—P1	"The Real Political Significance of the Legal Aid Bill" by John J. Campbell	G				
"	19—P4	From Week to Week (Qtn. from <i>Nineteenth Century</i>)	D				
"	19—P6	The Commons: <i>Juries Bill</i>	G				
"	19—P8	"The Press and Soviet Justice"	G N				
"	26—P1	"The Constitutional Issue"	A				
"	26—P8	"An Irony of History"	F N				

REALISTIC CONSTITUTIONALISM

(Notes for an Address to the Constitutional Research Association at Brown's Hotel, Mayfair, May 8, 1947)

by C. H. DOUGLAS

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PARLIAMENT (continued from page 3.)

consumers' council. We have seen that in the case of coal. The average working woman in my constituency who writes about coal, the quality, the price or the amount of slate in it, writes to me because she regards me, firstly, as her Member of Parliament, secondly, because I am extremely accessible and, thirdly, because I am intensely human. Does anyone believe that the average woman in the back streets of Blackpool, Birmingham, Nelson and Colne, or Rugby, when she is told, as I shall have to tell her, "My dear, you have a consumers' council now. It is no good coming to me, you must go to the consumers' council," that she will go anywhere near the council?

Mr. Attewell: Is it not the case that this Consumers' Council is not so much for the housewife but for the users of the raw material?

Mr. Brown: It is perfectly true that the average housewife does not order tons of steel, but she does go around ordering an occasional 5 cwt. of coal. One would not expect the housewife to go to the consumers' council in the case of the steel industry in the same way as she would go to the consumers' council in the case of the coal industry. The point I am trying to make is that we cannot get her to go to the coal consumers' council, because she regards it as a piece of officialdom that is potentially hostile and certainly alien, between which and her there exists no organic relation. The consumers' council, in the case of the coal industry, has not operated to give us clean coal, and it has certainly not operated to give us cheap coal. I know that the comparison is unfair, and I make it therefore with reservations. I remember coal being delivered to my house at 14s. to 16s. a ton.

Mr. Fernyhough (Jarrow): And the miner receiving 3s. 6d. a day.

Mr. Brown: I agree that there was a monstrous social injustice. The miners and the agricultural workers—the two most socially useful bodies—have always been at the bottom of the wages list except in times of war, and I welcome the change which has taken place. But do not forget that the price of coal is now about £5 5s. per ton instead of 16s.

Mr. S. Silverman: The hon. Member would not argue that because the consumers' council set up under the coal nationalisation legislation is not very effective—conceding that for the sake of the argument—it necessarily follows that this totally different council for a totally different industry and totally different class of consumer will also be ineffective?

Mr. Brown: I would be the last person to allege that there is a meticulous identity between one industry and another—of course, they are all different. What I want to tell the hon. Member, and this will be found in the insurance world, is that the attitude of the individual man or woman in the back streets dealing with an insurance agent is one thing, but when that agent is put behind a desk in a Government office the relationship is immediately altered. I have seen that from both sides of the Civil Service. I say, therefore, that this cannot be an effective way of giving the consumer a voice in the determination of price control, and I urge, not with hostile intent, that now that we have a large parcel of industries under national ownership, with more scheduled to come under national ownership, the Government must apply their mind to the problem of how to ensure that these vast monopolies are kept under a measure of public

control. The present situation is that they are not being kept under public control.

I do not know what Mr. Speaker's Ruling will be about questions on the Corporation or its constituent firms. Suppose that he gives the most liberal Ruling, and that we can interrogate the Minister not merely on the Corporation, but on the 106 firms. How much really effective influence can we bring to bear upon the Minister, even if we had that liberty? All that we should get beyond that would perhaps be a day's Debate once a year. Presumably we should have an annual report from the Minister, with perhaps a day's Debate, in which half a dozen Members on each side of the House may participate, but they will not be able to affect the decision of the House which will be taken by whatever the majority may be at the time. In the case of the Post Office we have considerable freedom to interrogate. We can interrogate in detail on telephones, mail deliveries, wages of postmen and all sorts of other things, and on top of that we have a Debate on the Estimates. Does anyone believe that we exercise any effective control as a Parliament over the Post Office? Bless my soul, if we had, the Post Office would not be making a profit of between £13 million to £20 million, because that is the absolute negation of the principle of "production for use and not for profit."

Suppose that there is a big deficit in the industry. Presumably that will introduce budgetary considerations. Suppose that there is a big profit. Then comes the question whether the profit ought to be devoted to the relief of taxation, the improvement of wages, or reduction in prices, or a combination of all these three things. How can that be regulated—

Mr. Lyttelton: The public interest.

Mr. Brown: That is all very fine, but the trouble about phrases like that is that they have to be stepped down from generalisation to practical decision. The public interest includes wages, prices and the level of taxation. How can a consumers' council, constructed on the model outlined here, deal effectively with that? If they cannot deal with it, and we cannot, what is the logical conclusion? That we shall have created a super-monopoly which is outwith the control of anybody except the Minister. Little as I dislike tyranny when exercised by employers, I like tyranny when exercised by Government Departments very little better, and I therefore hope that the Government will consider the whole problem of the relationship between nationalised industries and the public interest, as it is involved in the Clause now before the House.

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THE BRIEF FOR THE PROSECUTION

by C. H. DOUGLAS

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Branding the 'Cattle'?

A correspondent directs our attention to a campaign which appears to him to have been inaugurated to introduce the practice of tattooing identification marks or numbers on 'citizens' of this country. Apparently the chief media of publicity up to the present have been the *British Medical Journal* and its contemporary the *Sunday Pictorial*, but references elsewhere may have passed un-noticed. So far as observation extends, the campaign began in the *B.M.J.* about a year ago with a short letter by a doctor advocating the placing of an indelible identification number on the buttock of every baby at birth—right buttock for girls, left for boys, so that 'the work of the police . . .', etc., might be reduced when it was desired to identify an unconscious individual. "Then," says our correspondent, "came a paper by Hogben [Lancelot Hogben, F.R.S., Professor of Zoology in the University of Birmingham] published in the *B.M.J.* and elsewhere, elaborating a system of identity marks which could be used for medical records under the new 'Health' service, so that when any patient arrived at a hospital, the institution would merely have to quote his number to a central bureau to obtain full details of his past history, medical or otherwise.

"Now, on Sunday, May 1, the *Sunday Pictorial* comes out with an article signed by a Douglas Warth who writes a regular weekly column headed 'Odd Man Out.' Therein he advocates the perpetuation of Identity Cards and admits that he would go further and have an identity number tattooed on every wrist. He attacks the idea of liberty and throws in as a tail-piece, a condemnation of the popular interest in Royalty. . . A photograph, said to be of Mr. Warth, appears in the same issue of the paper."

Our correspondent, who is a German scholar, adds some details concerning the philology of the surname, 'Warth.' We regret that, for reasons of space, etc., we cannot print these.

"Never Intended"

Councillor Victor D. Warren, leader of the Progressive Party* in the Glasgow town council, has been elected Lord Provost by 57 votes to 56.

The Dean of Guild (Lord Inverclyde) and the Deacon Convenor—*ex-officio* members—both voted for him. Councillor Warren and Councillor T. A. Kerr, the Labour candidate each voted for himself.

Councillor James McInnes, speaking on behalf of the Labour Party, said he did not deny the right of the Dean of Guild and the Deacon Convenor to participate in the normal civic administration of the city, but it was never intended that these two privileged individuals should determine the form of government of the city. The party which should govern the city had been determined democratically by the citizens when they gave the Labour Party a majority of one.

*Since this word to describe a new colour for the string on which the elector may lead home the pup he has been sold is coming into vogue, it may be recalled that the leftist majority in the L.C.C. was called 'Progressive' before it became 'Labour.' It was then opposed by 'Municipal Reformers.'

Certificate of Sensibility

We have seen a drawing explaining the following, which is ascribed to *The Economist*:—"In Aesop's time it was thought a clever trick for a wolf to go about in sheep's clothing. Nowadays the wolf does much better to go about in his own clothing, as all sensible people are then convinced that he is really a sheep."

Fr. Levesque

Fr. G. H. Levesque, O.P., Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Laval University, Quebec, has been appointed a member of a five-man Royal Commission to study matters of Canadian culture.

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