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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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From Week to Week

"U.S. Industry Adopts Scotland." Headline in Canadian Newspaper.

We should at once agree that Scotland, together with England and Wales, ought either to be adopted or placed in a mental home where they can be assured of kind treatment and prevented from doing themselves further mischief

When Madame Jennie Marx, the well-born Gentile wife of the Jew Mordecai, better-known as Karl Marx, said to him, "When you say that history is affected by economic factors, what you say is true, but it is not new; but when you say history is the outcome of nothing but economic factors, what you say is new, but it is not true."

Two fearful wars, and the threat of a third, can be crystallised into Madame Marx's profound statement. There is just as much or as little sense in saying that all men are equal, with the implication that all men are similar, as that nations should be eliminated.

The way to a better world is not through mongrelisation but in exactly the opposite direction, cultural individualisation and development. We have more than enough mules, and unfortunately the two-legged variety breeds.

"... But Mr. Attlee did not have to send an emissary to the Mediterranean, where 48-year-old Lord Mountbatten exercises his cruiser squadron.

"For Lord Mountbatten knows all there is to know about what is happening in India.

"Since he left India he has maintained a close and cordial relationship with Mr. Nehru. So close and so cordial that it was he who helped the Indian Prime Minister to formulate his present plans for a republican India.

"Will Lord Mountbatten be discredited because of India's decision to become a republic? Not a bit of it.

"For it will be said that only by his personal efforts was India persuaded into accepting the commercial and strategic advantages of maintaining some sort of aloof relationship with the Empire.

"Not only India brings Lord Mountbatten into the news. There is the Personal Bill shortly coming before Parliament to give Lady Mountbatten greater control over the £1,406,250 she inherited from her grandfather, Sir Ernest Cassel."—*The Evening Standard*, March 15, 1949.

At the Convention of the Social Credit Association of Canada in British Columbia held at Victoria, V. I. on March 19, Mr. L. D. Byrne, who had flown from Edmonton delivered a speech which will do much to recall Canadian Social Crediters from the skilfully injected idea that either Social Credit is a funny-money scheme, or it is the camouflaged socialism which for the moment is deflecting the

Alberta Provincial Administration under Mr. Manning.

The Convention was held under the Chairmanship of Major A. H. Jukes, D.S.O., and was largely attended.

The subversive factors at work in British Columbia were openly discussed and the Convention was unanimously agreed on the necessity of dealing with this aspect of the situation.

So far as can be judged without being in possession of the essential local knowledge, Signor de Gasperi's Land Reform Bill is the most statesmanlike measure of the kind which has so far come into the field of Legislative politics. At bottom, the land question everywhere is an attack by the bankers and big industrialists, which we may call the Freemasonic Group, on what they quite correctly perceive as the only effective threat to their usurped sovereignty (which is the stronghold of Catholicism). It seems to them (we are not wholly sure that it is so) that if they fractionalise land-owning while centralising and monopolising money, credit, and tool-power, their sovereignty is absolute and permanent.

Nevertheless, Signor de Gasperi's proposal to buy large portions of large estates and to establish peasant proprietors upon them may be pragmatically, and therefore temporarily sound and desirable. It appears to avoid the more flagrant injustices of the Fabian-Financier-Socialist treatment of real property in once-Great Britain, as well as recognising the greater productivity of small farms, and it may build up a consciousness of the responsibilities of property which has been largely atrophied by vindictive taxation and the Billingsgate which has been directed at land-ownership.

We are more convinced than ever that the idea of a Parliament and Cabinet whose ability is to interfere with everyone's life and business is only bounded by the extent and rapidity with which it invokes catastrophe, is certain to experience its limitations and to perish by them. It may be that the more people who are interfered with, until eventually everyone is so hampered in his daily life that he does a minimum of useful work (and we are rapidly coming to that) the sooner will the apparently inevitable crash come. And the land question is basic.

We think it was A. R. Orage who said "This country has never been in danger from the idle rich. It is the busy rich who threaten its existence." That was before the days of the Isaacs, Sieffs, and Monds.

Mr. Joseph Smallwood, who is credited with having delivered Newfoundland neatly packaged into the saintly hands of M. St. Laurent, the Canadian Prime Minister, who is almost equally with his predecessor *persona gratissima* at Washington, is a teetotaler.

We always feel that they are guilty until proved innocent. The chief defect of the Newfoundlanders appears to have been that they had an absurd sentiment for their connection with the British Isles.

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: April 5, 1949.

MEAT SUPPLIES

Mr. Eden (Warwick and Leamington): . . . No one will deny that our meat ration is dismally small and pitifully inadequate, lower than it has been at any time either during the war or since.

Accurate comparisons are always difficult but I do not think it will be denied that before the war we were as a nation large consumers of meat and bacon. The average consumption—I use the word “average” deliberately—of meat and bacon per head in the United Kingdom before the war was approximately 110 lb. That figure is from a Command Paper and I think it is all right. Taking the present consumption on the basis of the existing ration—that is to say, half a pound of fresh meat a week, 1½ ounces of canned meat, and 2 ounces of bacon—there is a total of three-quarters of a pound a week, that is to say, if my calculation is right, less than 40 lb. a year compared with an average of 110 lb. a year before the war. I think those figures are approximately correct; if they are not, naturally I shall be glad if they are corrected.

. . . I have been careful to try to take comparable figures. If they are not comparable, I shall be glad if the Minister will say so. Since the hon. Member, for Mile End (*Mr. Piratin*) is interested in this matter, I shall give one further comparison which I had also checked up, but with which I did not want to take up the time of the Committee. There was an inquiry by the Ministry of Labour before the war into working class consumption for 1937-38. I want to be quite fair about this. These figures were for people in employment in 1937-38, and showed an average weekly consumption per head of 1 lb. 4 ozs. of meat plus 6 oz. of bacon. In other words, the average consumption of meat in a working class household in those days was roughly double what it is at present, and the consumption of bacon was roughly treble.

. . . Nor is the comparison much more heartening if it is made with other European countries. So far as I can discover, Holland is the only European country with a ration so low as our own. In Austria it is 10½ ozs.; in Denmark, 23¼ ozs., and in a large number of other countries meat is unrationed. Hon. Members may well say that that is because meat is so expensive in those countries that ordinary people cannot buy it. There is something in that—of course there is—but it is not by any means universally true. . . . If the Minister was correctly reported—he may not have been—I have seen reports from France and elsewhere that in Manchester he referred to the price of meat in France as having dropped to 8s. a pound. I do not know whether he really said that. I do not think he can have meant to have said it. Perhaps he meant 8s. a kilo.

The Minister of Food (*Mr. Strachey*) indicated assent.

Mr. Eden: That is quite different. If I remember aright, there are something like two and one fifth pounds to a kilo, which means that the price of meat in France has dropped, not to 8s. but to more like 4s., which is quite different.

Comparisons apart, I want now to turn to what can be done about what, I suppose, everybody in the House will admit is a deplorable situation. First, about imports. As regards the Argentine, as I have said, I do not want to dis-

cuss the current negotiations, but I would say, at any rate, that it would be unwise to rely on any material increase in supplies from that source in the next few years. That would be a wise way to look at it. What is the position in Eire? I must confess I find it very difficult to follow the course of our negotiations with that country. I have seen it stated, for instance, that there are large quantities of cattle available in Eire but the British will not purchase. Indeed, the Eire Minister of Food had some observations to make in reply to something which the Parliamentary Secretary said last December. . . .

. . . The House may also remember—it is a little over a year ago—that the Ministry of Food were offered 10,000 tons of canned meat from Eire but did not want them and would take only 5,000 tons. The rest went to Czechoslovakia. The Parliamentary Secretary then said:

“ . . . we do not want to increase canned at the expense of fresh meat.”—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 13th December, 1948; Vol. 459, c. 860.]

I can quite understand that, but unfortunately, as I see it, we are not now getting either the canned or the fresh meat. That does not seem to be very satisfactory. I should like the Minister of Food, or whoever replies for the Government, to give the House full information about our relations with Eire on this matter of food supplies, and to say to what extent the trouble is one of price and how much is involved. I do not know whether the question is one of price, but it rather looks like it in view of these exchanges between the Governments.

At present, when the meat ration is so desperately small, I should think that the great majority of people would be prepared to pay at any rate a small amount more for the meat if they could be assured of an increase in the quantity available—I think so; but under the present system of Government purchase the consumer has no say in it either way; he cannot register his opinion at all. At present the housewife has to buy other things to make up for the shortage of meat and almost invariably those other things are pretty expensive in points and money. . . .

I turn from one source of supply to sources of supply within the British Commonwealth. First, I want to speak of New Zealand. That small country is making the most gallant effort to maintain her supplies. Subject to anything the Minister has to say, I do not think we can look for anything more than a modest increase from New Zealand, perhaps something of the order of 50,000 tons a year, but not more. As to Canada, the whole subject is bound up with the question of dollar exchange and no greater quantities can be taken except at the cost of dollar exchange, or if our Canadian friends are ready to buy more from us. I must say I have some sympathy with our Canadian friends because they

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were encouraged a couple of years ago to go ahead and produce more, and then we ran into this dollar difficulty which might have been foreseen. Having produced more, largely in response to our policy, they find that we cannot take the goods.

... I turn to Australia, and it is here that the long-term possibilities are most promising, but in the immediate future it does not seem that we ought to look for any large increase. I see the Australian Minister of Commerce estimated the other day that it will be about 12 months before the production of pig meat shows any marked improvement, 18 months to two years for mutton and lamb production to forge ahead, and beef is not expected to rise appreciably for at least four years. Beef, of course, is dependent on the big scheme of development of new areas which is going through. . . .

... So, except for Australia, that is the somewhat dismal view I have to inflict on the Committee. The Committee will observe that there does not appear to be any overseas market from which we can expect any substantial increase of meat for the home consumer. I must add that it must be remembered that many of these countries, including Australia, will in the meanwhile be increasing their populations and thereby making greater demands on the supply of meat themselves. All the facts in the survey I have given are available to others and have been available to the Government long since.

This brings me to the most important issue of all, production at home. Here I must trouble the House with a few figures. Last year at home our production of meat and bacon totalled only 779,000 tons compared with more than one million tons before the war, yet in that time our population has increased by about two million. This seems a completely fantastic situation at present when we are faced with such grave shortages of foreign exchange and when as a result we ought to be relying to an increasing extent on home production rather than on imported meat to maintain our level of supplies. We must have a full explanation from the Government about this. We have not had one. The plain fact is that no amount of exhortation can enable farmers to produce more unless they are given more feedingstuffs. On the question of feedingstuffs the Government's policy has been one of order, counter order and disorder. Going back to August, 1947, in the famous quotation from the Lord President of the Council—who I am sorry is not present, because I should like to congratulate him on the wisdom and foresight of the observation—when addressing the chairmen of county agricultural committees. He said:

"Large increases of feedingstuffs must come from imports, and even scarce dollars will be spent on all that is obtainable, since this operation must lead to ultimate dollar saving."

That appeared to us to be Government policy and the policy we could endorse and support. In The Economic Survey for that same year we were told that the

"import of £1,000 worth of feedingstuffs"—

I am sure the Minister of Agriculture will agree, whatever the Minister of Food thinks about it—

"will save nearly £2,000 worth of livestock products."

Again we are in full agreement. In the Survey for 1948 it was stated on the increase of feedingstuff prices:

"There is momentarily less saving in foreign exchange than had been expected from the policy of producing more livestock in the United Kingdom. This, however, is expected to be a transient problem."

We all agree on that. He was not wrong. It was a transient problem; it has transited—it has now gone. The price of feedingstuffs reached its peak in January last year. It has since been falling. Yet in July, 1948, the Minister of Food made this astonishing statement:

"For every £ spent on the importation of coarse grains we get only about a third as much meat . . . as for £1 spent on importing meat from the Argentine, Australia or New Zealand."

In reply to an interjection he added:

"I am referring to beef and mutton. I cannot give the figures for pork. . . ."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 12th July, 1948; Vol 453, c. 880.]

I simply cannot understand that statement, and every effort to elicit an explanation has received no response. When my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Richmond (Sir T. Dugdale) made a speech containing a detailed refutation of it, no reply was vouchsafed. We were told that it was not a matter concerning the Ministry of Agriculture but the Ministry of Food. Even more extraordinary, is it not a fact that no imported coarse grains are issued for the production of beef and mutton? If that is so, what in the world was the use of the Minister's statement and what was the value of the calculation? It is quite incomprehensible.

I return to the Lord President's pledge. When, some 18 months afterwards my right hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Captain Crookshank) asked if the pledge still held good the Minister of Food gave the rather equivocal answer:

"Yes Sir, if necessary."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 9th March, 1949; Vol. 462, c. 1190.]

But how could the necessity possibly be greater than it is today? How much lower has the meat ration to fall before the necessity arises? Indeed, was it not great when the Lord President gave his very proper pledge? Last year, in 1947-48, we imported about 1½ million tons of coarse grains. Yet the average before the war, in the years 1934-38, was nearly three times that amount annually. What are the words "if necessary" to be taken to mean in that context? Except for about £250,000 spent on whey powder for calf and chick foods there has been no importation of feedingstuffs from the dollar area. Yet they are obtainable. I do not think that there is any dispute about that, or about the fact that world crops of coarse grains are at a record level—far above ordinary levels. The Food and Agriculture Organisation referred to "an indicated surplus of some 2 million tons of coarse grain."

... I turn to the contribution of the Economic Secretary at Question Time last Thursday. He was asked if he would authorise the spending of dollars in the purchase of feedingstuffs. He said that supplies of animal feedingstuffs from non-dollar sources had so far proved sufficient to meet requirements of the livestock rationing scheme at current rationing levels. Surely everyone is agreed that the current ration level is totally inadequate. That is the whole point; it is what the argument is about. If we are to improve our present miserably low level of meat rationing we must obtain more feeding stuffs for our farmers.

... I will sum up. Three and a half years after the close of hostilities we have the lowest meat ration ever. In this respect, therefore, the masses of the people are worse off than before the war and worse off than many of their counterparts in other countries of Europe. In this country the restoration of our livestock population has fallen behind

(Continued on page 6.)

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Saturday, April 30, 1949.

The Game Speeds Up

The reasons which impel Members of Parliament so studiously to avoid any course of action which would reassert the principle underlying the very existence of a House of Commons—Supply, *i.e.*, the power to withhold money for policies of which their constituents disapprove—contain an elusive element of something wholly irrational and inexplicable. The usual suggestions which are made when the topic is broached, insufficient when taken one by one, do not 'add up' to a total which seems to us to be sufficient to provide a convincing explanation even when taken all together.—That they see no farther than their noses, *etc.* Some Members of Parliament are very shrewd and farseeing. That the Whips exert an irresistible force to determine their conduct. Over and over again, 'public opinion' exerts (temporarily it is true) a force in comparison with which the whole House of Commons is a gnat's wing against Niagara. H.M.S. Amethyst looks like being an occasion. We might go right up (or down) the scale until we reach the purest theory of Black Magic; but being (presumably) immune ourselves, we cannot understand why a high proportion of our fellows in the community should not be the same. (We hope the admission will be accounted to us for righteousness, and that it be observed how strong an evidence it is of a becoming humility.) There are ways in which a resolute minority of the House of Commons can, if they will, reverse the disastrous tendencies of the present. It is idle to say that their security would not long survive such an exhibition of independence, or that they themselves might not survive it either. They would; and we should all be and feel much more comfortable in consequence. When we are asked to provide a plan of campaign, we shall have pleasure in giving it our serious consideration. We have not been asked, and we do not know anyone who has. It is as bad as that.

And now we hear that many of the older and wiser Members of Parliament are seriously anticipating the early extinction of Parliamentary Government, picturing to themselves some such histrionic gesture as Cromwell's when he dissolved the Rump Parliament, and envisaging an autocracy of a kind well able to dispense with the pretences of election. Yet they know well that it is not the forms of Government but the policies of Governments which matter, and, in regard to their special and very strong dissatisfaction with the present direction which events are taking, there is not the slightest suggestion, nor is there the slightest idea in their minds, of a truly alternative *policy*. So this anticipated end to their troubles is no end at all.

Following the absurd result of the London County

Council Election, great preparations are afoot for a repetition of the farce in the forthcoming municipal elections. And that is explicitly a prelude to another of these 'victories' which seem to bode so little good to anyone: this time, of course, a 'Conservative' 'Victory' at the general election. But the party organisers are playing on a wicket that is much stickier than they say, and they are saying how good it is both to put courage into themselves and into their rather listless supporters. It is fully time that they were shifted to another pitch, and this can be done if adroit use is made of the realistic notions which this journal has spread during the past years.

Literally

While *The Times*, which (literally as well as actually and daily) dispenses a policy indistinguishable from that of *The Daily Worker*, is distracting a not inconsiderable part of the attention of its readers by retailing the large number of instances in which the word *literally* is misused, we wait, patiently rather than hopefully, for the exhibition of due emphasis (literal, we hope) upon the following (the list is not exclusive):—

That bankers (literally) make money while goods are produced by an entirely separate system (a system of energy conversion), and that all that ensues from the operations of the production system is subject to the control of the money system.

That this is (literally) disastrous, *disastrous* being the letters which form, in that order, the right word to describe the (actual) results.

That *Mediterranean* is (literally) the form which correctly describes the place where the nearest aircraft carrier was when it was needed in the vicinity of Shanghai, on the other side of the earth.

That *treason* is (literally as well as legally and consequentially) the word which would have been used at any time before the twentieth century to describe the offences of all those, from Ministers to broadcasters and journalists, who have conspired to bring about the present political and economic situation, and that only some of them might have escaped just punishment by claiming that they acted under duress from Powers who controlled them, body and soul though, strictly speaking, the soul is not, we believe, amenable to such control, and bodies which behave as we postulate have—actually—lost their souls.

That the times through which we are passing are; terribly and progressively as well as literally, times of corruption.

The Master-Spirit

Give me a spirit that on this life's rough sea
 Loves to have his sails fill'd with a lusty wind
 Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,
 And his rapt ship runs on her side so low
 That she drinks water, and her keel ploughs air; . . .

—Chapman (translator of Homer and contemporary of Shakespeare.)

Government and People in Australia

We print the following "urgent and important" notice published by the Federal Council of the B.M.A. in order that it may provide an intelligible standard whereby doctors in this country whom it may reach may test the progress of totalitarian medicine as it develops. Incidentally, the dispute which it touches is an item among the matters dealt with by the Melbourne correspondent of *The Scotsman* in an article from which we quote below:—

"URGENT AND IMPORTANT"

"NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE"

"Fee-for-Service Scheme"

"Members are advised that the policy of the Federal Council in regard to the conditions which should obtain in a fee-for-service scheme of Government Medical Benefits—a policy fully endorsed by the Branch Council—is as follows:

- (i) The right of any member of the public to obtain medical benefits in respect of a medical service received shall not be dependent on the existence of any arrangement, agreement or contract between the doctor providing the service and the Government.
- (ii) The willingness of any doctor to co-operate in the machinery for enabling some of his patients to obtain medical benefits shall not debar him from entering into private arrangements with patients to the exclusion of the Government scheme, provided such arrangements are acceptable to both parties.
- (iii) The medical profession is unwilling to undertake the clerical work and liabilities involved in acting as 'agent for the patient' in obtaining medical benefits, and insists that payment be by the refund system exclusively.
- (iv) The medical profession refuses to make available to any third party, lay or medical, the clinical records of patients, as part of the machinery for enabling patients to obtain medical benefits.
- (v) The medical profession refuses to admit the right of the Government to fix a fee of which it pays only a part, and demands that a scale of benefits and not a scale of fees, be laid down.

"Members are further advised not to co-operate in any fee-for-service scheme which is contrary to the policy of the Federal Council, and to refrain from replying or responding to any approach by the Government to them as individuals without obtaining the consent of the Branch Council."

The Constitutional Issue

An important article from Melbourne appeared in *The Scotsman* of April 4, "by Air Mail." It dealt to the extent of well over a column with the political situation in Australia and indicated the emergence of the constitutional issue in a display headline announcing the possibility that the legality of the "Free Medicine Act" would be contested.

The article, after a short introduction deploring the deterioration of good will on the Australian Continent, which is described as "a seething cauldron of envy, hatred, and malice and all uncharitableness," mentions the possibly superior position of Tasmania, without pointing out that there

there may be more control over their affairs by the people concerned, and the writer proceeds to state that "as the life of the current Parliament shortens, it becomes clear that Mr. Chifley intends to bull-doze through the House the maximum amount of his Socialistic legislation possible. He has dropped any pretence of conciliating the Opposition. The theory he is adopting seems to be that his majority has given him Australia to play with. He appears to believe he has been given a mandate to consider only the section classed as 'workers' and to deny rights of any kind to all others.

"If there be one anxiety greater than another of the many that beset us," the article goes on, "it is that of the validity of the bank nationalisation legislation that is now being decided before the Privy Council. Although long accounts of the proceedings are cabled to Australia every day, they do nothing but bewilder the lay mind.

"All that emerges is that the men who framed the Federal Constitution may have concealed the most subtle ideas under their most simple phrases. What they said they have meant something entirely different from what they thought they said. Apparently in that Golden Age, 50 years ago, none foresaw that a day would come when an Administration would aspire to seize all of the private banks for its own purposes. But, given the opportunity, the phrases they used in their lack of foresight might be construed by a subtle mind into a charter for the purpose.

"Our High Court Judges have ruled that the legislation is *ultra vires*; but if the Act is upheld by the appeal Mr. Chifley may have time before the Election to enforce it so far that even if Labour is defeated a repeal would be impossible. His dictum that a scrambled egg cannot be unscrambled still holds good.

"Should the appeal succeed, the Government makes no secret of its intention that the next step along the road to Socialisation of Australia will be a grab at the many millions invested in insurance in the Commonwealth. With absolute control of banking and insurance, practically the entire financial resources of the Commonwealth will be in Labour hands, to be administered for the benefit of the workers. The representatives of that section have recently announced their aim for £10 a week as the minimum wage for unskilled services.

"There has been a general feeling of satisfaction that the High Court has decided against the Minister for Migration in the O'Keefe case that has been followed by the public with intense interest.

"Mrs. O'Keefe was a Dutch subject who came with her children to Australia as a refugee from the Japanese in 1942. Her Dutch husband was killed in action, and she subsequently married an Australian soldier, John O'Keefe. As Mrs. O'Keefe had landed without a passport and had not otherwise conformed to the migration laws she had to be granted several extensions of liberty to remain here. However, despite her marriage to O'Keefe Mr. Calwell ordered her deportation. When her plight became known the public rallied to her side, mainly from sympathy and from the feeling that her marriage gave her Australian citizenship.

"Mr. Calwell, however, exercising dictatorial rights, refused flatly to listen to argument. A public subscription brought in enough money to secure a stay in proceedings and to make an appeal on her behalf to the High Court. Four of the six judges upheld the appeal. The effect of the judg-

ment is that Mrs. O'Keefe cannot be deported, and that the Migration Department must pay costs of £1,000.

"The Minister has accepted the check to his dictatorship with anything but good grace. He gave notice of his immediate intention to draft an amending Bill to close loopholes in the Act as it stands."

Medicine, air transport and shipbuilding provide other instances of reaction to the aggressive tendencies of the Administration. Mr. Chifley has suddenly altered his mind having last year announced that he would not exert compulsion on some 3,000 Australian doctors who refused to take delivery of "free" prescription forms to enable druggists to collect payment from the Health Department for medicines supplied. A Bill is being rushed through the Federal House which provides for a fine of £50 on any doctor who refuses the co-operation desired by the Administration. It is considered certain that it will go through both Houses on a block Labour vote.

The Australian Medical Association is not accepting the situation placidly. "They assert," says the correspondent, "that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Act is merely the first step in bringing the profession under Government control. They point out that similar experiments in the U.K. and New Zealand have not proved an unmixed blessing. Their spokesmen state further that as the Act stands it breaks the confidence and secrecy that should exist between doctor and patient. One instance of a violation of the secrecy has already been brought to light.

"From the views expressed by leading doctors throughout Australia it is almost certain that the Association will contest the validity of the Act, and especially of its compulsory clauses, before the High Court and, if necessary, will take their case to the Privy Council."

PARLIAMENT (continued from page 3.)

that of continental countries, although many of them were occupied by the Germans.

Mr. Shurmer: Some people are getting less than before the war.

Mr. Eden: The hon. Gentleman says that some people are getting less. If that is his final and conclusive answer to this Debate, I do not think that when he comes to ruminate upon it he will find it altogether satisfactory. We are all agreed that we have a problem. It is no answer to say that some people are getting less meat any more than it is an answer to say that I have been getting a good deal more meat in the last two months in the various Dominions. . . . Whatever the cause, the position is that there is this acute shortage of meat today. For this and for their failure in respect of obtaining supplies of meat for the people, the Government must be called to account.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food (Dr. Edith Summerskill): [Replying to Mr. Eden, came to the same conclusion, except that she held out no hope of a substantial increase in home production for some years. She side-stepped discussion on the import of feedingstuffs on the ground that they were part subject of the negotiations now proceeding with the Argentine.—Editor, T.S.C.]

Mr. Snadden (Perth and Kinross, Western): . . . Whatever this Debate has done so far, it has at any rate brought home to me that the policy pursued by our Government and by the Argentine has at last driven home to the House of

Commons, and I hope to the country, that to allow ourselves to become dependent upon a foreign country for our meat supplies is folly, and that to neglect our own vast home resources is absolutely criminal. . . .

I know of no place in Britain where farmers are not still going over to milk. Away up in the Highlands of Scotland, where at one time milk production was almost unknown, many farmers are going into dairy farming, and vast areas of land simply ideal for the production of beef have now been turned into small dairy farms. Why? In my view there are three reasons. First of all because of the high price per gallon of milk and, secondly, because today there is no surplus. In the old days before the war the price of surplus milk was only 3d. and, therefore, the farmer said, "That is too little, I will rear beef cattle." Today the whole of that milk goes to the Milk Marketing Board. Thirdly, there is the quick cash return which the farmer receives every month from the Milk Marketing Board—very attractive ready money.

Contrast that with the job in front of the beef producer, a job which is a long and slow business. It takes a very long time for him to turn over his money. His capital expenditure is great, he has labour difficulties and he cannot get today the proper finishing materials to allow him to turn out his beef cattle. I am thinking of one particular economic aspect. If a farmer of any standing goes in a big way for the beef market his economic need requires more than one turnover each year. He wants a turnover twice a year, and he can only do that if he is allowed to import into this country not coarse grains—as is so often thought by people—but high protein oil cake in order to give a quick finish and get the cattle turned out quickly twice instead of once a year. Today cattle are being stored in winter time, because there is not enough protein to feed them on for a double turnover. The farmer is drawn towards milk production, which is proving irresistible.

. . . Anybody who has been following the world meat situation as I have for business reasons to do, must have detected long ago that a very curious change was taking place in the economy of the Argentine. The policy of the Peron Government is to carve up the estancias—to do away with the large estates and split the country up into a number of what one might call small, peasant holdings. That may be a very good thing for the Argentine, I do not know, but what we have to realise is that a very different system of farming is evolving in the Argentine, unsuitable to the export of meat on a large scale. For that reason I feel certain that if this policy is carried on there will be less beef reared on the one hand, and less available for the world export trade on the other.

So, apart from prices, many people take the view that Argentine beef production will decline, or if it does not do that it will be tightened up severely because of the enormous increase in consumption in the greatest beef eating country in the world. . . .

. . . The Parliamentary Secretary will agree that we must not overstate this Argentine case. There is a great danger of overstating it, because supplies coming from the Argentine, if my information is correct, are only equal to 2d. worth of our ration. What has happened in the Argentine cannot be allowed to camouflage the bareness of our own larder here at home, and the neglect of home production and of our home natural resources. Today, according to one of the Ministry of Food officials, a man for whom

I have a very great admiration, Sir Henry Turner, Director of Meat Supplies, to whom I have listened on more than one occasion, allowing for our increased population, our annual supply of beef is 800,000 tons short of the pre-war scale and he tells us that home production is 400,000 tons down on pre-war output. Anyone can see that if we can even get back to the pre-war volume of British home produced meat, we have closed half the gap straight away without any increase on pre-war production.

I said a minute ago that this problem was in the main a long-term one. For that reason, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) pointed out, we cannot look either to Australia or to South Africa or, indeed, any other source outside Great Britain for any great quick spurt in our ration. There can be no substantial addition to the British ration unless we get our home policy right within the next 10 years. Clearly the answer is we have got to tackle this thing at home here in our own country, and I am perfectly certain having done the job myself in spite of many handicaps, that given the resources and the incentives, the British farmer can produce a far bigger increase in our meat supplies than any outside source, and he can produce it in a far quicker space of time. . . .

. . . You can correct the balance between beef and milk—the first short-term thing to be done—by doing two things . . . the first thing to do is to tackle the price structure in order to give an incentive to the producer of beef who has left that business and gone into the dairy farming industry. . . .

Having put the price right, we should give him proper feedingstuffs. We must give him the incentive and the tools to do the job; and we must not forget that we have in this country a great reservoir from which we can draw our own raw material. It is not much good contemplating producing more meat for the nation unless we are certain that we have a reservoir to produce the raw materials. That reservoir has existed for years and has been waiting to be exploited as I have exploited it in a fairly big way since 1937. I know that it can be done, and I challenge any hon. Member to say that it cannot be done economically. Away up in the Highlands of Scotland—the same applies in England and Wales—I have found it is possible to double the stock-carrying capacity of hill land over 1,000 feet up in a comparatively short space of time.

Professor Ellison, speaking the other day at an important meeting in London, showed that there were millions of acres in England, Wales and Scotland which, if properly exploited, could raise hundreds of thousands of store cattle of a beef type in very quick time. I am speaking of marginal lands as well as hill lands. Professor Ellison estimated—I believe fairly accurately and perhaps conservatively—that we could turn out 250,000 store cattle per million acres of land improved. That gives some idea of what we can do. We have 16 million acres of such land, 10 million acres in Scotland, five million acres in England and one million acres in Wales. Professor Ellison tells us, and he should know, that in Wales alone 500,000 acres of marginal land could be improved by ploughing alone. . . .

What prevents ordinary farmers tackling this job? I would suggest three things. First, there is the capital outlay involved, which is considerable. Secondly there is the lack of confidence in the future because "milk is the thing." Thirdly, there is no financial inducement on a long-term basis. When speaking about Australia my right hon. Friend the Member

for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) asked specifically about a guarantee being given to Australia. I agree with that, but what about a guarantee to our own people? How can we expect them to launch into an experiment of equivalent size without a long-term guarantee that they will not be let down at some distant date?

All this does not mean that the problem is so big that something cannot be done now. I can suggest four things to be done now. I would first suggest that the Government review the legislation which we already have upon the Statute Book covering all the kinds of lands about which I have been talking, marginal lands and hill lands. In regard to the hill cattle subsidy scheme, in order to increase the reservoir the Government might have to restore the terms which were in operation two years ago. When that change was made two years ago, it might have been quite a good change. All the money was put on the breeding cow. I should not like to see that go down, but I should like to see a restoration of assistance to all farmers in using these altitudes for grazing purposes, knowing that cattle on these altitudes do very much less well than others and therefore these farmers should have assistance. I believe the marginal assistance scheme now in operation has not been extended sufficiently to embrace certain types of land which might be included, and the hill sheep subsidy scheme could also be made much less rigid than it is today. The main aim all the way through must be to build up the largest possible amount of breeding cattle on the lands I have described, but we must also remember that that is only half the problem.

The other thing we have to do when we have the cattle is to make sure that when they go down stairs, as we say in Scotland, to be finished off, that they can be finished. Cattle cannot be finished off in winter with home-grown feedingstuffs on an economic basis at present, and that is why the tap is turned off after the grass season is over. One can feed grass with manure in order to take the place of the cake with which we used to feed in the old days because it improves the grass, puts more content into it, and the cattle can be fattened. But when the grass is over, the tap is turned off, and the yards are only storing the cattle for the next summer. It is an uneconomic proposition because they have not got sufficient high protein, linseed cotton, groundnut cake—whatever you like—to finish these animals quickly enough to make it economic.

So I come to the end of what I have to say. I would summarise it this way. First, the pig; second, get back the big arable farmer into beef production; he is the only farmer who can really turn out cattle in a big enough number to make it an economic proposition. Anyone who wants to lose money quickly should go into that business unless he can turn them out in such quantities as to be able to take a very small profit on his turnover. That is what I found in my own experience. Then we have to see that we get the big arable farmer back into the business. We must give him the finishing material in order to turn them out quickly enough to make it an economic proposition.

Having got that going, tackle this question of the great reservoir of the 16 million acres of grassland in Britain and then we shall have produced the raw material. So we have the reservoir, the raw material, and the factory as well to turn out the stock, and that is a lot more than we have in terms of other commodities about which we talk a good deal. Many times I have asked for it. A definite long-term policy on this big question is needed.

It may be that a Royal Commission is required upon it. I believe that suggestion was made in another place. Let us get on with it. If we dither over it and keep fiddling around with it, as we are doing at the present time, I predict that we shall have to exist for many years on the most miserable pittance of meat that this nation has ever known in the whole of its history.

Lieut.-Colonel Sir Walter Smiles (Down): . . . Another suggestion made to me was that it might be possible for maize, if not for all course grains, to be bought by private enterprise. I believe that at the present moment our grain merchants are buying grain all over the world, but it cannot be imported into these islands. It can be bought and sold between two foreign countries and our grain merchants are securing a substantial invisible income to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. When I pointed out to these farmers our difficulties with regard to exchange rates and dollars, they said, "What are our banks for? For years before the war we used to work hard on an overdraft and made a very good living out of that overdraft, too."

Another suggestion that was made led me to put down a question two weeks ago to the Minister of Food. It was that farmers and agricultural workers might be allowed to keep one single pig without much interference. It is generally supposed that the people who live in the country live better and have better meals than the people who live in the cities and towns. That is an erroneous idea. In the morning many of these farm workers go away from their homes and do not come back until night time and so their wives have to give them what is called "a piece" for their dinner. In the old days before the war this very often consisted of two or three rashers of bacon between the bread, but today it is impossible to get the bacon. . . . In his answer the Minister of Food said that it was not possible to allow farmers or agricultural workers to keep a single pig without the necessary laws in regard to inspection being enforced. The people do not like these inspections. A great many of those people in the country always kept one or two pigs. Indeed, in Ireland the pig was known as "the gentleman who pays the rent," and I believe that if more licences were given to farmers and agricultural workers the pig population would increase. . . .

The Minister of Food (Mr. Strachey): . . . The actual total amount of animal feedingstuffs which will be available this year will be, we reckon, some 6½ million tons, which is well on the way to a restoration of the pre-war position. Therefore, this whole picture of failure to buy animal feedingstuffs, and to provide animal feedingstuffs, which unquestionably is a most important thing to do, has no element of fact in it whatever. . . . Like every other raw material—because animal feedingstuffs is a raw material for the agricultural industry, just as cotton is a raw material for the textile industry—we shall always buy feedingstuffs if we can from sterling sources or other non-dollar sources, but if it is impossible to get it from those sources, then I repeat the statement of the Lord President of the Council that we shall, if necessary, use even scarce dollars to buy animal feedingstuffs. I really cannot see any mystery, or any repudiation whatever of that pledge in the statements which have been made on this subject.

Mr. Frank Byers (Dorset, Northern): Does that mean the right hon. Gentleman is satisfied that he is getting sufficient feedingstuffs from the sterling area, and that he need not therefore enter the dollar area at the moment?

Mr. Strachey: Certainly not from the sterling area; it is from non-dollar sources as a whole. It depends on how much we are able to get from those sources. Last year, for example, we bought over a million tons from the Argentine. Well, we shall see how much we get from that source. Last year we got three-quarters of a million tons from Russia. It depends on what tonnage we get from that source also. We certainly do not rule out buying from dollar sources if the situation requires it, and if prices, which are much more reasonable of course this year than last, make it possible to do so. I cannot go further than that.

Mr. Byers: Then in the right hon. Gentleman's own opinion the present situation does not require that action?

Mr. Strachey: I cannot give an answer to that. It depends entirely on the outcome of the negotiations which are going on in Buenos Aires and elsewhere. . . .

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