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From Week to Week

To a less and less extent as time passes the doings, sayings, comings and goings of political stardom 'make sense.' Sense, however, is a rational thing, and there might be thought to be greater reality, in accordance with the conception that emotion is more real than thought, in the feeling of current politics. Paradoxically, there is less and less feeling. The world is numb.

Two generations ago, before aeroplanes and bombs, much less 'atomics,' were seriously thought of, the representation in *Punch* of a British Prime Minister at a time of high crisis, as the subject of the characteristic delusion of senile dementia, had it been possible, would not have passed without result, and certainly not almost without remark. Nowadays, perhaps a Prime Minister matters no more than *Punch*, and so far as the course of events is concerned the incident is no more than a piece of by-play. Cabinets, parliaments, chancelleries are just side-shows where tumblers mime the true *dramatis personæ*—though this time playing unseen on a hidden stage: 'The Great Winston' as the fat man *outside* the booth. "Look! he's got wings!"—"Wings?"—"Yes, can't you see them? Look, White they are, sticking up over his shoulders."—"What's he going to do?"—"He says he's going to fly."—"Where to? To Heaven?"—"No, to Moscow. Watch what he does."—"What is he doing?"—"Wait!"—"He's rather heavy to fly, isn't he? Will he really fly?"

The paraphernalia of Government are in disrepute: yes, 'the bride's dresses' are soiled and torn. She has her tattered Commons robe, now in pawn, redeemable by elevation of the Commoners' dole to £1,500 a year and pensions, moth-eaten ermine, a Lords-and-Commons two-piece suit hiding the patched unmentionables of the Civil Service, which determine the outward appearance like a crinoline. "For a life-time now, the Civil Service, aided by the complexity of public business, has passed more and more beyond the control of the Commons. The Cabinet is intended to be an Executive Committee of Parliament, mainly of the

Commons; but Ministers find themselves more concerned to represent the views of their Department in the Commons than *vice versa*. The Ministers come and go, and the Department and its policies remain." True in the main, that is open to the qualification that Whitehall is only an accommodation address of the ultimate policy-maker. ("The police suspect accommodation addresses"—but if we have any true political police, they look the wrong way.)

The Tablet thinks "a vast range of little-exposed possibilities" are now to choose from, which might "in a generation" lead back membership of the House of Commons to "what it was in the past, an honourable and much valued part-time activity; and the House an assemblage of men representative of, and distinguished in, a wide range of occupations." Alas! it envisages also only more machinery of the discredited specification; senior and junior members (one might say Members and Members' Labourers); subordinate Houses of Commons. "Faster, faster, said the Red Queen!"

The House of Commons, under the New Order, replaces the Poor House under the Old: it is a House of Paupers. Says Mr. George Schwartz:—"I shall be told that unless we remedy the grievances of members first they will not be in a proper frame of mind to deal with other people's tribulations. This suggests a comment on government which I refrain from expressing."

But why should he refrain from expressing it?

Is there no one among them to sit down and say: "Now, what do we want to do?" The objectives (the real objectives) peeps out shyly around the corners of argument. They can be listed:—

(1) Relieve the poor M.P. of the economic and social consequences of his own legislative follies.

(2) 'Attract' better quality among aspirants to parliamentary honours. (Better for whom?)

(3) Avoid the creation of a large class of professional politician (the desire of a minority of 'Conservative' members, who, presumably, do not recognise themselves as professional politicians—mere amateurs.)

(4) Avoid controversy on a point thought to be of some delicacy in face of a possible early election.

(5) "The largest group" of present 'Conservative' M.P.s wants a pay-rise from £1,000 to £1,500 a year, with non-contributory pensions, now. (Method.)

(6) A smaller group desiring the same without non-contributory pensions. (Method.)

(7) Avoid 'injustice' to the fellow who hasn't a 'safe' seat.

What does it matter whether politics is a profession or not provided it is a game played according to clearly formulated and publicly stated rules, to which there is continuing and strong agreement?

For the rest, will our readers work out for themselves

the consequences which would ensue from the establishment on first election of a life title to the receipt of £1,500 a year, tax-free, adjusted in future years to every fall (or rise) in the purchasing power of money, pension or no pension?—The consequences to the individual and to the elector, present and future?

To "spare the poor taxpayer," reduce, if you like the size of the House of Commons to 100 members, and the quorum to 10 *per cent.*

The proposal is *not* 'Social Credit': it is a proposal for relative economic independence for a key minority, who *could* claim it for themselves but don't.

The Church and Farming*

This book opens with a foreword on the teaching of Pope Leo XIII relating to the Christian Constitution of States and the confusion which has arisen through the influence of erroneous philosophies. Then follows a translation from the original Italian of the Allocution of the present Pope, Pius XII, to the Italian Farmers' Federation at their National Congress in Rome on November 15, 1946 and by a joint Pastoral Letter issued by the Cardinal Archbishop and the Archbishops and Bishops of the province of Quebec to their clergy and laity.

Both of these pronouncements stress the dangers which threaten the rural classes from increasing urbanization and industrialization and indicate how these tendencies might be countered by sound rural education, by the integration of the countryside *via* farmers' professional organizations and groups, by "redressing what might be defective in our financial system," by improvements in communications and transport, by hydro-electric developments and most important of all, by a return to faith and the Christian virtues.

From this background Fr. Fahey proceeds to examine in detail the effect of the disintegrating philosophies particularly those of Locke and Descartes, on farming and also on food and health. He finds Locke responsible for erecting "each section of human society, money manipulation included, into a separate domain with its own autonomous end, completely independent of the final end of man as a member of Christ. . . . The Nominalist philosophy of Locke, the philosopher of the Bank of England, has powerfully contributed to the control of life by the manipulators of money. In consequence of that disorder, money values have come to be regarded in practice as the supreme values, with disastrous results for soil fertility health and life." Similarly, "Descartes' influence powerfully contributed to the substitution of mathematics for philosophy as the supreme science. An exclusively mathematical formation tends to blunt a man's mind to the appreciation of factors other than quantitative ones. Minds thus formed accept more easily the treatment of human beings as ciphers." They are rendered less capable of seeing "the full horror of the reversal of order" which "sacrifices men for production and production for money, *i.e.*, for the alignment of figures in ledgers."

The readers' attention is then turned naturally towards subjects like soil exploitation and erosion, the use of artificial fertilizers *versus* organic farming, the sophistication of food, particularly bread, and the relation of these factors to health. In this section there are numerous references to, and quotations from, authors like Mr. Jorian Jenks, Lord Portsmouth,

Lord Northbourne, Sir Albert Howard and Lady Eve Balfour; in fact the book is a good review of the ideas held by members of the Soil Association.

As regards artificial manures, Fr. Fahey exercises proper caution. While considering that "the arguments of Sir A. Howard and Lady Eve Balfour and many other distinguished writers and farmers against their use are completely in harmony with the principles of St. Thomas" and "though this constitutes a strong *a priori* argument" he does not pretend that this is sufficient to decide the controversy. "The matter can only be decided *a posteriori* by means of such a test as is actually being carried out by the Soil Association on Haughley Research Farm of 210 acres." Indeed it seems to the present reviewer that, since feelings are apt to run very high on this subject, charges of incompetence and bad faith being bandied about freely on both sides, there will have to be a good many independent and careful researches before it can be decided whether artificial fertilisers should be banned altogether. In the meantime, statements like that attributed to Dr. E. Pfeiffer on p. 110 concerning carrots "grown with one-sided fertiliser applications" which "looked beautiful but contained no carotene," put a very great strain on our credulity. Ninety per cent. of the colouring matter in carrots is carotene and they would hardly "look beautiful" without it. One would certainly require further confirmation before accepting such a statement.

Similarly, in regard to the addition of 'chemicals' to foods, a subject which is, quite rightly, causing much concern at the present time, a critical approach is needed. The case against agene seems clear, and in regard to chalk we would agree with a speaker at a recent meeting at Caxton Hall, Mrs. Mew, when she said that "even if it can be proven beyond doubt as 'good for you'" the addition of such substances should not be allowed to crystallise into compulsory regulations. It is true, as Fr. Fahey states, that evidence is accumulating that phytic acid is not the bogey that it was thought to be in preventing the assimilation of calcium and that a properly balanced diet would make the addition of chalk to bread unnecessary. But it may be some time before everybody can always get a balanced diet.

In the chapters dealing with money, Fr. Fahey shows that he understands the methods by which banks create credit and much besides but, unfortunately, he gives the impression that money is still something that can properly be 'manipulated,' (see p.p. 75 and 76) instead of being a mere reflection of economic reality—of real credit: what seems to matter most to him is that the manipulation should be controlled by 'the right' people. He quotes at length from monetary reformers like Professor Soddy, Mr. Vincent Vickers and M. Vialatoux but omits all reference to the Just Price, which is surprising, and to Douglas who showed how the Just Price could be computed and applied.

T. N. MORRIS.

Charles Morgan

Concerning Mr. Charles Morgan's new play, "The Burning Glass," which has not had a good press, Ludovic Kennedy in *The Evening Standard* says that "in a superb verbal duel" between the hero and the "grotesque, bearded P.M." the former "explains why Science has been the handmaid of power too long." Well, why has it?

*"The Church and Farming" by the Rev. Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp., D.D., *The Forum Press*, Cork, 1953.