

GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR FARMING

In the to be expected and all too familiar warnings about economic crisis which the government have issued, and which—as we go to press—are to be debated this week, there is one slightly new note. This is the statement that to place the national economy on a more secure footing agricultural output has to be increased by as much as 60 per cent. over pre-war levels.

Over the past year or so FREEDOM has noted a tendency among economists and politicians to pay more attention to farming as an economic activity. Of course this tendency is directly connected with the falling off of industrial exports to the once under capitalized agricultural countries. In the past this country's industrial products were paid for mainly by agricultural imports—a process which has been gaining momentum for some seventy years and which caused the gradual destruction of British farming. In the course of these seventy-odd years more than half the country's arable land went out of cultivation (becoming permanent grass) while the numbers of men employed in agriculture fell to less than half its former figures. This decline becomes even sharper if one takes into account the considerable increase in the population as a whole.

Political Somersault

Figures such as these had to be dug out of text books and reports. Before the war the average newspaper reader was encouraged to believe that vast food imports were essential for our population, that the soil of Britain could not support the population, that "cheap food imports" were a major factor in raising the cost of living. FREEDOM decided this line of propaganda during the war when food production in Britain was vastly increased (despite the inability of the soil to support, etc., etc.). The calm way, in which the politicians now call for an increased agricultural output, however, will only surprise naive observers of the political scene.

Agricultural Stability

Anarchists have always regarded stability in the economy of food production as a necessary basis for a stable social system. It seems obvious that food production should be the primary economic activity of

every region, and should be balanced with industrial activity not ousted by it.

It is this attitude which has made Marxists deride anarchism as a "peasant outlook", etc. But anarchists have never fallen for the idea of large-scale industry which leads to increasing regional specialization, and in this country by concentrating almost the whole of economy into industrial production, created a national economic specialization which almost strangled agriculture altogether.

The Marxists in their uncritical belief in the "inevitable" superiority of large-scale enterprise carry it even further and believe that even agri-

culture should be carried on by large undertakings with the peasant proletarianized into a wage worker in collective agricultural collectives. In the post-war years in Russia, the smaller collectives have been progressively merged into larger and larger units.

Such a standpoint is essentially capitalistic and contains no revolutionary conceptions. The present proposals of the Conservative Government are in the same category. Their desire to expand British agriculture does not spring from social needs, but from the exigencies of a capitalist economy whose overseas markets are shrinking.

Nevertheless, any measure which increases the output of agriculture, provided it improves the productivity of the soil, is to be regarded as a social advance. The ability of the land to produce food is a social asset of the first importance to a rational economy and a rational organization.

FOREIGN COMMENTARY The "Broad Basis of American Capital Distribution"—Fact & Fiction

ACCORDING to the *New York Herald Tribune*, the "broad base of capital distribution in the United States" is shown in a study made by the Brookings Institution, a private research organisation.

The study reports that there are some 6,500,000 individual owners of publicly held stock issues. Furthermore, the study found, this ownership is distributed throughout all income groups with more than 200,000 families whose incomes are less than \$2,000 yearly holding shares.

Summarising the findings of the study, Brookings Institution said: "The study shows that vast numbers of people have a direct stake in the ownership of business enterprise. In addition to ownership of stocks, the general public has a substantial interest in the operation of corporations by virtue of ownership of bonds and other credit instruments—both directly, and indirectly through holdings of life insurance and savings accounts."

The report shows that there are 30,300,000 shareholdings in stock issues traded on the organised stock exchanges and in over-the-counter transactions.

But let us examine a little more closely how "broad" is the base of capital distribution in the United States. Firstly,

the term "shareholding" applies to individuals holding one share or a million shares in a particular issue, so that before being hypnotised by the 30,000,000 shareholdings, one must examine how the shares are distributed amongst them. We then learn that 46%—or 13,800,000 shareholdings are of only one share each and that 8%—or 2,400,000 shareholdings, are of ten or more shares. And since it is estimated that the total number of shares held publicly in the 16,655 stock issues is 5,000 million it will be seen that nearly 14 million shareholders possess nearly 14 million shares, whilst 2.4 million shareholders possess 4,900 million shares... not to mention the millions of Americans who possess no shares at all. So much for the "broad basis of capital distribution in America"!

FIGURES for the consumption of spirits in America tell a curious story, with a moral.

Apparent consumption last year was 194,000,000 gallons, which works out at an average of not more than 1.26 gallons per person. The average for the years 1939-1951 was 1.23 and for 1947-1951 at 1.22 gallons. During the years under examination the consumption of spirits was legal.

Now, according to Dr. Warburton's *Economic Status of Prohibition*, an authoritative work on liquor consumption during the prohibition years, the consumption of "hard-liquor" in 1929 was 226 million gallons or an average consumption of 1.86 gallons per head and for the whole period of prohibition the average consumption is given by Dr. Warburton as 1.71 gallons.

In other words, Americans drank more in prohibition days than they do now that drinking is legal.

FOR the defenders of capitalism as an efficient system here are two items of information which appeared on different pages of the same issue of an *Economic Supplement of the New York Herald Tribune* recently. From Singapore it was reported that imports of cement to Malaya from Japan have been cut by a half. No reason is given, though it is pointed out that builders prefer using Japanese cement because of its low cost and that there will nevertheless be no shortage as the deficit will be imported from other sources. The amount involved is 88,000 tons.

From Hanoi, in French Indo-China, the A.P. reports that the big French-controlled cement plant at the Port of Haiphong in the N.E. of the country, boosted its production to 204,000 tons in 1951 from 137,000 tons in 1950. A large part of the output was absorbed by the needs of the military but their was also "a considerable export to Japan."

We know this is nothing new, but there is no harm in pointing out these cases when the very business leaders who send coals to Newcastle spend their time exhorting the workers to produce more, and more efficiently in the national interest and all that. But business goes on in its own sweet way, and the people foot the bill in higher costs for raw materials.

LIBERTARIAN.

Summer School 1952

THOSE requiring accommodation have been circulated with forms. It would help facilitate arrangements if they would complete these forms whether they have written previously or not, and return immediately to the Summer School Committee.

If any comrades in the London area have accommodation to offer we should be grateful if they would contact Summer School Committee, L.A.G., Freedom Press, 27 Red Lion Street, W.C.1.

Railwaymen Miss the Boat

WHEN the Railway Executive began to recruit new workers to counteract the "work-to-rule" of Western Region locomotive shed men last week, they underlined the definite change that has taken place in labour relations in the last few months.

The "pool of unemployed" which the workers have so long and so rightly feared returning is in fact here now, and the first definite use of it as a management weapon against employed workers sounds a warning of what is to come.

The locomotive shed men—who clean the fireboxes, fill the boilers and light the fires of engines in service—began a work-to-rule by cutting out overtime and piece-work. This they did as a protest against the fact that increases in pay for piece-work have not kept pace with that for time, and they are claiming back pay—amounting to as much as £145 a man—dating back to 1947.

Since then, national wages awards have amounted to 16s. on basic rates, but no increases have been given on piece rates. But it is surely logical that, since there is a recognised connection between basic pay and piece-work pay, if the basic is increased, so should the rates for the piece. Simply to benefit by an increase in basic means only that a man working on payment by results is given an increase representing a smaller per-

centage of his earnings than the man on day work.

That is the logic of the men's case, and it seems fair enough. But the Executive think otherwise, and its firm stand has uncovered the dependence which many workers now have upon piece-work and overtime to make a living wage.

These locomotive shed workers, for instance, have been earning from £7 10s. to £14 a week—but their basic rates are between £5 10s. 6d. and £5 19s. 6d.—which is well below the average wage for the country and even further below a decent living wage for a family man.

Thus, by working at piece rates the men have masked the low standard of their pay. The union, incidentally, have negotiated the increases on the basic but have not, for all the apparent results, done a thing about increasing piece rates. Hence the men's action now, and at depots throughout the Western Region, a work-to-rule resulted in a hold-up of trains at Paddington on main line holiday services and also on freight traffic.

The management's answer was to begin recruiting new men to take their place. Saying that work-to-rule could work both ways, and that if the men chose time-work they could stay on it, the management brought three men from London to the Banbury depot to learn the job and get the work done that was piling up.

This was only the beginning, but it was enough for the men to see they were not going to win. Although nine depots were working-to-rule and others were on the verge of joining, very little support was forthcoming from railmen in other grades. Realising their weak position, the shed men gave in and returned to normal working. All they have managed to do is to prod the N.U.R. to take up the case on their behalf, so protracted negotiations can now be expected.

Far more important, to our mind, than the issue of the wages, however, is the fact that the management were able to take the measures they did. Why did the men wait so long? Their grievance has been building up since 1947; to wait until the boss was in a position to beat them was not exactly good tactics.

But the whole thing is an indication of what is to come. The employers will be taking a tougher attitude and the workers will wake up to the fact that because they allowed themselves to be talked into apathy when they were in a strong position, they are in a very weak position when the real fight begins.

For there is a fight ahead. We were saying eighteen months ago that we should have to fight, not only to better our conditions, but even to maintain them. The railwaymen are beginning now to see the force of that.

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THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE WHITE MEN

MISS Euphemia Cowan, a 20-year-old Scots girl who was invited to spend a six months' holiday with a Coloured pen-friend, was declared a prohibited immigrant when she arrived in the Edinburgh Castle, and was transferred to another ship returning to Britain.

For the last six years she has been corresponding with Miss Winifred van der Ross, daughter of the principal of the Battuswood Training College in Wynberg. The pen-friendship began when both girls were at school. They met for the first time last month.

The immigration authorities refused Miss Cowan permission to stay in South Africa because she had insufficient money to satisfy them that she could maintain herself. Mr. van der Ross said he had offered the necessary financial guarantees, but they had not been accepted.

A South African correspondent of FREEDOM writes: "It is, of course, all lies about not having sufficient funds. We South Africans have become the laughing-stock of the whole world—the black sheep of the white men."

A POLICE JOB

THE rationing system was intended only to ensure that the holders of the card got the food to which they were entitled. But he has been shocked to find that the information required brought in other things than food. "A friend recently was lucky enough to find someone to come and cook for his family. She applied in the normal way for a ration card but, to my friend's amazement and the cook's fear and disgust, who should turn up but a cruel and sadistic husband, whom she was frightened of and had escaped from, to cash in on her job, tipped off so to do by none other than the police."

—Report of speech by Lord Sempill in the House of Lords debate on Lord Samuel's "Liberties of the Subject Bill."

OBJECTORS

THE June issue of *The Objector*, reports that of 286,635 young men registering for National Service in 1951, 722 registered as conscientious objectors. In 1950, there were 635 and in 1949, 595. There were 672 applications to the seven local tribunals.

Eighty-six National Servicemen were prosecuted during the year. The corresponding figures for 1950 and 1949 were 61 and 34 respectively.

Of 80 men who were prosecuted for refusing to submit to medical examination, 60 were imprisoned, 17 were fined and 3 submitted to examination. One man was prosecuted for failing to attend for examination, but no order was made for him to submit. Twelve of the 80 had been prosecuted once during 1950, and 20 more were prosecuted a second time during 1951. 14 being imprisoned and 6 fined. One man was prosecuted three times during 1951, and 2 others were prosecuted for the third time. Prison sentences ranged from one to twelve months, and fines from £5 to £50.

Four conditionally-registered C.O.s

for failing to comply with their conditions.

Z MEN

Of Class Z Reservists recalled for training this year, at 12th June, 324 applicants had been before the local tribunals and exemption had been granted in 184 cases (56.8 per cent.). Sixty-eight appeals had been heard and thirty had been allowed.

Twenty-two Z Reservists who claimed conscientious objection have been prosecuted for failing to report for the training in 1951. There were five prison sentences: one of fourteen days, two of one month and one of two months. The remaining seventeen were fined amounts ranging from £1 to £20. Several who have been summoned again for training this year have been exempted by the tribunals.

SCHOOLBOY OBJECTOR

Paul Brown, a student at the City of London School, has refused to serve in the school Combined Cadet Corps and has been expelled in consequence. Membership of the Corps is compulsory for all boys from the age of fourteen.

The *Objector* is issued by the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors, London, W.C.1.

Profit & Loss in the Cherry Orchard

ON SYNDICALIST PYRAMIDS

ON Sundays when the radio programmes take on a bucolic note...

gin just can't lose, even if he slashes his price in half...

The same observation is made by Mr. Robert Raymond in an article...

"As the cherries ripen, the growers hire pickers, mostly part-time...

"The evening of the day they're picked the cherries are sent to Covent Garden by road or rail...

"When the cherries reach Covent Garden, they are subject to a portage charge of 1d. for 10lb...

"Around midnight the unloading starts, and by 5 a.m. the fruit is displayed on the stands of the wholesaling firms...

"At this point, before the cherries have even been sold, they have cost the grower about 3s. 9d. to 4s. per 12 lbs...

"When they're sold, the salesman takes his commission, and credits what's left to the grower...

"The retailer takes the cherries back to his shop in the suburbs and, working at anything from 75 to 150 per cent profit, sells them at 2s. 6d per lb."

Is there no way of getting cherries to the public (which spends about £5 million a year on them), more cheaply...

There is no single solution to the problem, Mr. Raymond thinks. "The grower, for instance, is the big loser...

"Then the retailer. Is his traditional profit margin of 100 per cent, plus still fair? No one seems to question it...

Finally there is the consumer. Mr. Raymond emphasises that "the responsibility for high prices in glut periods lies with you..."

LAND OF PROPERTY

TWO hundred soldiers, five armoured cars and police were called to a migrant camp near Melbourne, Australia...

—News Chronicle, 19/7/52.

COMRADE P.S. writes in his reply to my letter: "It is feared that the syndicalist system of delegation would lead to pyramids of delegates..."

In his pamphlet, "Syndicalism—The Workers' Next Step," P.S. states (p. 36): "The workers in a factory form their works council, all the works of that industry in a certain region send delegates to a regional council..."

All this, we are assured, will not lead to the delegates being remote from the workers on the job. This is probably true in respect of the delegates to the local council—or even the regional council...

On p. 37 of his pamphlet he also writes of "control from the bottom up" of the permanent committees. From the bottom up to where? The top? There is some value in Marx's criticism of Bakunin's concept of "control from the bottom"...

P.S. considers that this method of "linking up" industry does not lead to "pyramids of power". Nowhere in my letter did I imply that the anarcho-syndicalist envisaged any power structure in their concept of the organisation of industry...

In his efforts to prove that other forms of organisation are subject to a like danger, he cites the soviets of the Russian revolution of 1917 as an example of non-pyramidal organisation. To cite them thus is, to say the least, erroneous.

soviets being small units, one could hardly call the soviets of Petrograd and Moscow "small".

The Bolsheviks were able to achieve their domination of the revolution, not because the other revolutionary elements were any less conscious, but because the soviet system was capable of being used for the achievement of power...

Perhaps our basic disagreement arises —as P.S. suggests—from the differing attitudes we have towards modern industry. P.S. is in favour of it. I am not. With the usual exaggerated objections of the opponent of the "simple life", he writes of not wanting to return to the era of the rushlight...

Father Scratched His Nose...

"My father was a Lancashire working man," said Mr. Michael Harold in a recent broadcast. "He was born and grew to young manhood during Lancashire's Golden Age—although he was quite unaware of this..."

"I remember talking to my father about this only a few weeks before he died and painting rather a self-conscious word picture of the Manchester of the turn of the century and the early nineteenth-century Manchester Liberalism, Free Trade, and a Ship Canal that really meant something: a Hallé Orchestra, Monkhouse and Montague at the Theatre Royal and Miss Horniman's seasons at the Gaiety; carriages and pairs, German commerce and German culture, and the Old Trafford cricket ground where you could see Magdalen on his good day hit a century before lunch..."

Difficult Position

For years, bottles of water from St. William's Well, Norfolk, have been sent by the vicars of Bawburgh to ailing people all over the country.

In his desk the Reverend Herbert L. Davies has 80 letters from people wanting water from the well—which is credited with miraculous cures since early in the tenth century. "I am now in a difficult position," said the vicar last night.

mass-man) and the amount of mechanisation that such a division implies, are in themselves a potential condition for the growth of technocracy. Only in a drastic simplification of our present methods of industry in the shape of the system of production (with the tendency towards creativity and away from "machinism") can the "multiplicity of free associations" of which I wrote be achieved and the dangers of syndicalist industrial unionism be avoided.

S. E. PARKER.

Walk into my Parlour

The Spanish Communist leader in exile, Dolores Ibarruri (famous as La Pasionaria), has come out for a "national anti-Franco front" in which the working-classes and the "petty bourgeoisie" and "intelligentsia" would fight together to establish in Spain "a democracy the achievements of which are in harmony with the principles of the bourgeois democratic revolution"...

MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP OPEN AIR MEETINGS

Weather Permitting HYDE PARK Every Sunday at 4.30 p.m. MANETTE STREET (by Foyles, Charing Cross Road) Every Saturday at 6.0 p.m.

INDOOR MEETINGS

at the CLASSIC RESTAURANT, Baker Street, W.1 (near Classic Cinema) MEETINGS SUSPENDED

NORTH-EAST LONDON

DISCUSSION MEETINGS IN EAST HAM Alternate Wednesdays at 7.30 AUGUST 6—BRAINS TRUST

WEST LONDON

Enquiries to—C. Brasnett, 79 Warwick Ave., W.9

LIVERPOOL

DISCUSSION MEETINGS at 101 Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool, 8 Every Sunday at 8 p.m.

GLASGOW

OUTDOOR MEETINGS at MAXWELL STREET Every Sunday at 7 p.m. With John Gaffney, Frank Leech, Jane Strachan, Eddie Shaw, Frank Cardin

LEEDS

Anyone interested in forming a group in Leeds, please contact Freedom Press in first instance.

COVENTRY

Anyone interested in forming a group in Coventry, please write Freedom Press.

FREEDOM

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Housing: Hypocrisy and Deception

with her parents because her husband is serving overseas, she is classed as a 'lodger' and the tenants become liable to 'lodger tax'. When a Labour councillor asserted last week that no private landlord would dare to make such a charge, the Housing Committee chairman made, in effect, the astonishing reply that if the girl's husband was in the army, then, in the example given, the army authorities would see that the tenant was all right. Opposition to these mischievous charges came from both Labour councillors and the Trades Council, as far as Brentford and Chiswick is concerned. The position now is that the borough council has waived the 'tax' in some cases but not others, and refused to disclose detailed reasons for doing so.

The point is that there is much to be said for each point of view. If I were a Councilman I should say "Why should my rates and taxes help to subsidise the rent of someone better off than me?" If I were a borough councillor I should say, "My council levies a rate and administers a government subsidy to help people afford a decent house or flat. If a tenant occupies a part of his accommodation, possibly very much to his own profit, isn't it fair to increase his rent for the opportunity he has with the council not with us? But if I were a council tenant I should say, 'I pay my rent; if I in this time of housing shortage go to the inconvenience of having other people in the house, that's my business.' And if I were Brentford and Chiswick Council answering Mr. Ellis's last point I should say, 'Of course we refuse to disclose detailed reasons for the cases where we

have waived our 'lodger tax'. How would you like your Borough Council to make public your private affairs?' In fact, this is a case where within the economic and financial structure of our society there is no 'fair' solution, just as it is impossible to say what is a 'fair' rent.

The occasion for Lord Selkirk's consternation over the effect of the reformed measures which he has been advocating for a quarter of a century was the second reading in the Lords of the government's Housing Bill. Now I said that Lord Woolton explained that the bill "raised subsidies to meet increased building costs, but in fact he wasn't quite telling the truth. The Bill in fact is to offset (albeit the address in the interim charges that the Councils have to pay because the government has raised the tax rate. Mr. G. R. Mitchell, M.P. says in *Parliament* that the Tories proposed for the increase in subsidies because when the Bill was introduced the Councils' subsidies were still to come and without the increase there would have been 'an extra four or five shillings a week on the rental of a Council house and that would have brought an avalanche in the election instead of a mere landslide.' He goes on, 'As Mr. Bevan pointed out on his Second Reading, the increase in subsidies was based on the Councils' building the cheapest possible standard houses. The most inferior type of house.' It made no allowance for their wanting to build better ones. Not, as Charles Gwynn and others told the Minister, did the increase meet the rising cost of building."

These "most inferior" houses are those based on the recommendations of the Ministry in the pamphlet *Houses* 1952, the second supplement to the Housing Manual. But though this pamphlet is introduced by Mr. Macmillan, he christens them "People's Houses", the designs and standards were prepared under the Labour government on the basis of its circular 38/51 of 28th April, 1951. Whether it is really worth while to scrape and save on these minimum plans is the question asked by Mr. R. P. Fitzmaurice, for many years director of the Housing Research Station. He writes, as technical editor of the *Architect's Journal* (12/7/52): "It is time it was generally realised that the architect has little influence on the total cost of housing, which includes fees, land, road services, loan charges, rates and repairs. A reduction of building costs by, say, ten per cent, would be only two per cent of the total cost."

Why should the architect be asked to reduce the cost of houses when everyone else is paying the cost up? While he tries to get costs lower by cutting areas and fittings and economising on construction, other costs are rocketing. For example, the C.I.B. is so saved by cutting out the use of the M.O.H.C. house plans that has to be spent on the increase in public works loan charges from three and a half to four per cent."

Where, of course, all the politicians are deceiving as it is in the suggestion that our economic plight has anything to do with expenditure on housing subsidies and house-building.