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BACK TO THE LAND

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BY

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AND

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FOREWORD

It is natural, perhaps, at a time when unemployment in many of the great industries of the country is so great and so persistent, that the possibility of finding an outlet upon the land for many of the redundant workers in urban and mining industries should be considered. On the face of things, indeed, this should be something more than a possibility. Responsible statesmen have drawn attention to the disproportion of industrial and rural workers in Britain by contrast with other great countries, and they and other social economists have commented upon the persistence of the peasant farmer in all the older countries except our own.

The facts cannot be refuted, but the interpretation of them commonly given is misleading. It ignores the economic evolution of Britain in the last 150 years, which eliminated so many of the peasant farmers. It takes no account of the dependence of this country on its export manufacturing trade, and on its carrying services. It overlooks the necessity imposed on non-industrialised countries for exporting agricultural produce. It forgets that a standard of living lower, and often far lower, than that which has been achieved by the rural workers in Britain is accepted in all the peasant-farming countries of the rest of the world.

In the following pages, the authors have traced the history of attempts to re-settle the land in England, and they have indicated and discussed the limiting factors. It is no part of their purpose to discourage or discredit

the provision of smallholdings, but they are impressed with the danger of looking to land settlement as a means even of the smallest alleviation of industrial unemployment, and they feel that the advocacy which it has received calls for a reply.

C. S. O.
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CHAPTER I

THE DRIFT FROM THE LAND

“ I look forward with great expectation to a well thought out and adequately supported scheme for new land settlements, aimed ultimately at placing thousands of families back upon the land. . . . With an improvement in trade and a revival in country life, we can work at a policy to create a balance between town and country.”

RT. HON. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P., *New Year's Message, 1935.*

“ I regard a return to the land as being the best hope for the mining villages in Durham. Both as an immediate and interim policy and as a long term policy, I am certain that the future of a large part of Durham County which became industrialised when coal was found, must be a return to some form of agriculture, if it was only part subsistence.”

CAPTAIN D. EUAN WALLACE, M.P., Conference
of the Educational Settlements Association.
(*The Times, January 7th, 1935.*)

“ It is no use talking about settling a few thousands on the land. We had over 2,000,000 agricultural workers of all kinds when we had about half our present population to feed. We have now about 1,000,000 on the soil. . . . Their numbers are still going down. Let us get back to the 2,000,000.”

RT. HON. DAVID LLOYD GEORGE, M.P., at
Bangor. (*The Times, January 18th, 1935.*)

"Deduct from agriculture all the practice that has made it flourishing and you have precisely the management of small farms."

ARTHUR YOUNG (*Travels in France*, 1792).

THE three former statements express opinions widely held upon the scope for further employment on the land in Britain. They suggest a countryside drained of its people and its industry moribund. Mr. MacDonald would place thousands of families *back* upon the land; Captain Euan Wallace thinks that the future of Durham County depends upon the *return* of the unemployed miners to some form of agriculture; Mr. Lloyd George suggests that the agricultural population might be doubled. The inference always, whether expressed or understood, is that the population now unemployed in mining and in industrial enterprise has come from the land; that this drift from the land is a sign of a dying countryside; that a rural population so disproportionate to the urban is a menace to the social structure. On the other hand, Arthur Young, living in a century when British farming was still very largely a peasant industry, thought that the engrossment of farms was synonymous with agricultural progress. Let us consider the validity of these assumptions.

In Britain, the great drift from the land set in, probably, more than a century ago, and nothing could have prevented it. Following the growth of population throughout the eighteenth century, much land, some of it half-farmed and some of it not farmed at all, was brought into cultivation and gave employment to increasing numbers of rural workers. But so soon as the inclosure of commons and wastes had reached its practical limits, say in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is obvious that there was no further outlet on the land for the natural increase of the rural population, and a "drift from the land" was inevitable, with the growing openings for employment in urban industry. In most of the other countries of the world, conditions were different. In the new countries, such as Canada and Australia, land is still available to-day in great areas, and its extent is continually

increased as scientists discover crops which will grow nearer the Arctic Circle, or means of conserving rainfall in dry areas, and as mechanical invention simplifies the processes of cultivation. In the old countries, such as China, India and even in peasant Europe, in which there is little or no opportunity for agricultural expansion, and less opportunity for industrial employment, the natural increase of the rural population must be maintained upon the land, with consequences to the standard of living in those countries, when contrasted with that in rural Britain, which are well known. Public opinion in England would never tolerate conditions of life amongst its rural workers approximating, even remotely, to those obtaining in many peasant states to-day.

Nor is this true only of the primitive people of India and China and of some of the Middle European States. An inquiry in Würtemberg five years ago, where 98 per cent. of the farmers are peasant proprietors, showed that most of them earned less than such paid labourers as they employed, and to secure this reward the average farmer and his wife both worked at the rate of more than ten hours a day, Sundays included. In the whole of Germany, more than half the working population on the land were women (1925) and the proportion in France was nearly as high, by contrast with less than 10 per cent. of women in the working population on the land in England. A recent inquiry showed that in Belgium, in Holland, and in France the education of children not exceeding fourteen years of age can be interrupted to meet the exigencies of farm work. Even in Denmark, in spite of well-deserved tributes to its system of adult education, children between the ages of ten and fifteen were required to attend school only on three days in the week, so as to contribute their quota of unpaid labour to the family farm. We have got to make very certain that conditions such as these may not prove inseparable from any further concentration of workers upon our land.*

* For a discussion of standards of living in peasant countries, see Orwin, C. S., "The Future of Farming," pp. 30-34 (Clarendon Press), 1930.

Mr. Lloyd George quoted figures to illustrate the decline in Britain's agricultural industry by contrasting the proportion of the occupied population engaged in farming in this country with that of other nations :—

Proportion of the occupied population engaged in agriculture:

France	38·3	per cent.
Denmark	34·8	”
Germany	30·5	”
United States	30·5	”
Holland	20·6	”
Belgium	19·0	”
England and Wales	7·0	”

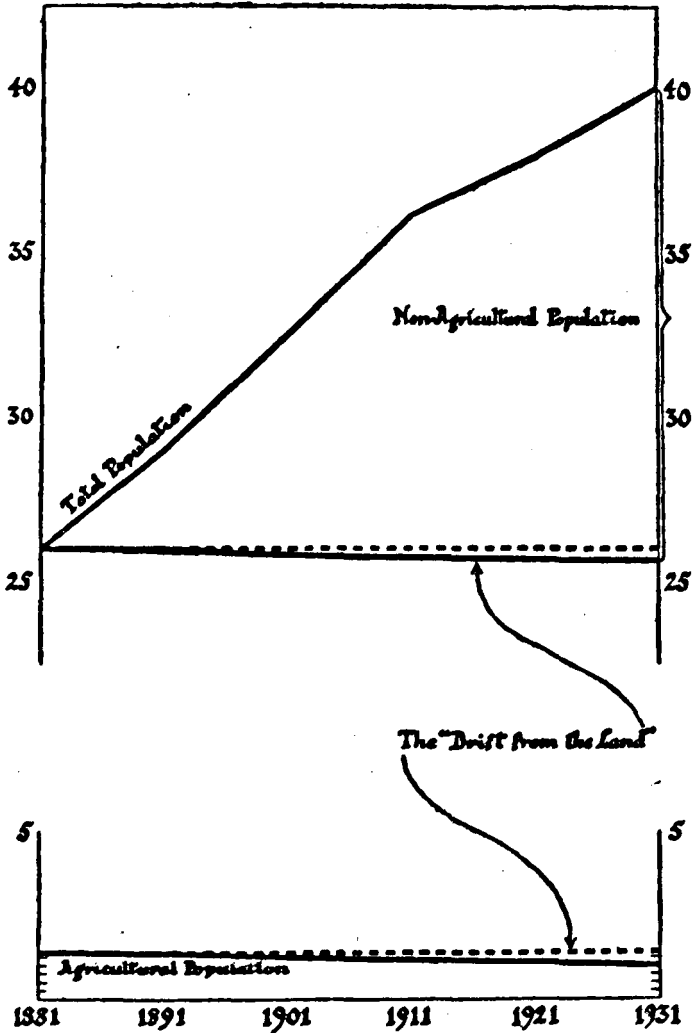
But a glance at the accompanying chart will show that the great and increasing disparity between the agricultural and the industrial population of Britain reflects much less the decline in the rural population than the increase in the urban. The great increase in the census figures of the nineteenth century represents a new community living on foreign trade, a community for the extent of which no parallel can be found in any of the countries included in Mr. Lloyd George's comparison.

Again, few people realise, probably, the rate at which land in Britain is being withdrawn from husbandry. Since the War, agricultural land has been passing into other uses, building, road making, sports grounds, etc., at the average rate of 125,000 acres yearly; since 1880, the total cultivated area has declined by 2½ million acres.* The “drift from the land” is, in part, the inevitable exodus of an expanding population from a contracting countryside.

The ratio of persons engaged in agriculture to the area of cultivated land is a better measure of the relative importance of agriculture in national economy than a comparison of the balance between urban and rural workers. In this sense, the figures for some of the countries named by Mr. Lloyd George are :—

* “Agricultural Statistics” (H.M. Stationery Office).

Population
millions



Changes in the Agricultural, Non-Agricultural and
Total Population of England and Wales,
1881-1931.

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Number of persons engaged in agriculture per 100 acres
of cultivated land.

France	9
Denmark	6
Germany	13
Holland	11
Belgium	14
England and Wales	4

Even this comparison, taken at its face value, is unfair to Britain. All through the second half of the nineteenth century, and on up to the outbreak of the Great War, the general tendency of industrial prosperity in Britain was upward, and standards of living amongst industrial workers rose. These rising standards were reflected, if slowly, in the wages and earnings of farm workers. Between the years 1867 and 1930, the purchasing power of the farm worker's average weekly wage expressed in quantities of wheat, increased fourfold; expressed in quantities of beef, it was doubled. Since 1930 the tendency of wages has been still upward, whereas the prices of wheat and beef have fallen.* All through this period the British farmer, competing in a food market open to all the world, has been forced to develop systems of farming and methods of labour organisation which would give his workers a standard of comfort which was nearly always rising and which was always higher than that of any rural community in the Old World. There was only one way by which he could succeed—he must increase the efficiency and reduce the number of the men upon whom he depended. The "drift from the land" into urban industries created a standard of living higher than that which would have been possible but for this outlet for the surplus rural population. A return to the land, in any considerable numbers, could only reverse the process and bring the standard of living down.

Briefly, the position is this. So far as the primary

* See Orwin, C. S., and Felton, B. I., "A Century of Wages and Earnings in Agriculture" (*Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Vol. 92, 1931).

agricultural products are concerned, corn, meat, milk and wool, the standard of production from the land in England is as high as that of any country in the world, and far higher than that of many. The wheat lands of England produce more than twice as much per acre as the virgin soils of Canada, and more than three times as much as the Wheat Belt of Australia; the dairy farms of Cheshire, of the West Riding, of Somerset, produce as much milk per acre as the pastures of New Zealand. As there is no possibility of increasing the acreage or any immediate prospect of increasing the output of these primary products, it follows that there is no possibility of increasing the number of workers engaged upon them, except by lowering the standard of life which agricultural employment affords to-day. The possibilities, then, of any extensive colonisation of England must depend upon the possibility of substitution of other commodities, such as fruit, vegetables and poultry, all of them calling for a more intensive use of labour than that which is needed in the production of corn, meat, milk and wool. The prospects for such substitution upon a scale which would "place thousands of families back upon the land" is a question which will be considered presently.

To-day, however, the belief seems to be growing that land settlement could contribute to the solution of the unemployment problem by putting industrial workers on the land not so much to produce for the market as to farm upon a system which would make them self-sufficient, or nearly so. The idea seems to be that unemployed miners, particularly, can be put upon small plots of land extending to no more than a few acres, upon which they can grow vegetables, keep fowls, etc., sufficient to supply themselves and to give them a saleable surplus to provide them with a cash income, thereby removing them permanently from the industrial labour market. It is true, of course, that in the Scottish glens there are still families who are almost entirely self-suppliers. They grow oats for oatmeal, they keep a few cows for milk, they fatten and salt one or two pigs and keep a few hens. Production for the

market is limited to a few store cattle, and the money enables them to buy tea, sugar, and clothes, almost their only requisites. It is impossible to imagine the reproduction of the life which these conditions represent, or anything even remotely like it, in connection with schemes for the workless, and while the organisation of self-supply combined with production of commodities for cash sale may have some possibilities, it is very easy to exaggerate the extent to which men can satisfy their own wants. The Scottish crofter is still living in the eighteenth century, the Durham miner in the twentieth. While the crofter's mind is bent wholly upon the production of his means of life, the miner thinks of his labour as something which will give him a weekly cash income for his wife to turn into food and raiment at the Co-op. round the corner. 'Buses, cinemas, football matches, racing, clubs, pubs., evening papers, libraries, paved roads and street lighting, water supply and sanitation mean nothing to the crofter. To the miner they represent a standard of living which he has come to regard as his due, and what chance is there that he will be content to forego all that industrialism has given him because industrialism needs fewer of his class to-day?

The comparison, of course, exaggerates that which is contemplated in the new "back to the land" policy, but in proportion as this represents a decline in the standard of living, so must it fail to satisfy more than a very small number of those whom it is designed to help. It may well be that the circumstances of industrial development and international trade in the past hundred years have raised the standard of living in Britain not only to a higher level than that in any European state, but also to a level which cannot be maintained in the circumstances of to-day and to-morrow. But if a lowering of this standard is thus to be forced upon the country, whether it take the form of a reduction of purchasing power, of a lengthening of the hours of labour or a withdrawal of some of the amenities of life—and the new land settlers would be called upon inevitably to make all these sacrifices—it should be shared

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alike by all the members of the community. Only failure can follow upon a policy which demands sacrifices of one section of the people to maintain the rest in a higher standard of comfort.

Any land settlement scheme must be judged in the main by its capacity to give the settlers a life and a living comparable with that which public opinion demands for the mass of the population. It was said of the allotments provided by the Guardians a hundred years ago that they enabled the destitute to grow their own poor rates. It must not be said of any new land settlement schemes that they have enabled the workless to grow their own doles.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT

It may be instructive to pass briefly in review the more important attempts at the settlement of the wage labourer upon his own land, made during the past century.

The argument for the closer settlement of the land generally begins with an assertion of the preponderance of small holdings in the days of pre-inclosure farming. Not infrequently the argument goes further, suggesting that a majority of these small cultivators were yeomen, that is to say, occupying owners. Upon this point more investigation is needed, but such evidence as exists seems to show that, from the Middle Ages, the elimination of the small freeholder was going on steadily, and that at the times when inclosures were effected, the larger landowners had already acquired many of the freehold interests of the humbler members of their class. Indeed, it is difficult to see how, otherwise, inclosure would have been possible in parishes in which the number of small freeholders preponderated.

However this may be, it is true that agriculture in this country was organised mainly on a self-sufficient basis before the great growth of industrialism and the centralisation of manufacture. Even during the Mercantile Age, the great majority of farmers were practising their art for the direct satisfaction of their own wants. Production for the market was limited to very few commodities, of which wool was the most important, and to those districts which lay round the larger towns. Where there was little or no agricultural production for sale, a system of organisation in large units cultivated by hired labour would have no purpose, and so it is fair to say that England was at one time a country, agriculturally, of

family farmers, men occupying so much land as would give them and their families sustenance, and no more.

The change from self-sufficiency to farming for a market was a gradual process, but the movement gained impetus with the growth of urban industry, and culminated in the middle of last century.

Commercial farming necessitated the engrossment of farms. Agriculture was no exception to the general principle underlying industrial organisation. If the land was to produce a surplus beyond the needs of its cultivators, it must be organised in units large enough to use capital and management as well as labour. The subject has received full attention from historians, and it need not be elaborated here. Suffice it to say that whatever hardships and injustices may have accompanied this economic evolution, and they were many, the evolution itself was inevitable if the growing industrial population was to be fed. So, the greater part of the English farming industry passed into the hands of a body of capitalists dependent upon wage labour for the work on their holdings. Every type came to be represented upon the land, from the man who directed a considerable business, through foremen, down to the small employer of two or three men, working alongside them, whose standard of living differed little from their own. At the same time, the self-sufficient type of farmer working with his family still remained, though much reduced in numbers.

LAND AS POOR RELIEF

The ultimate severance of so large a number of the agricultural population from direct interest in the land on which they worked was to create its own problems. The long years during which agriculture had thriven and employment had been good, were ended by the Peace of Vienna in 1815, nor was there now the same outlet for the rural worker in urban industry. And so it happened that, in 1819, Parliament made an attempt, as a measure of poor relief only, to restore land to the worker, by

authorising the overseers to hire or purchase any plot of land not more than 20 acres in extent, and to let it to persons who were poor and unemployed.

The Poor Law Commission of 1832 collected evidence upon the results of this letting of land to labourers, and decided that while the occupation was beneficial, the system of letting it by parish officials was rarely successful. They found that provision of land by private individuals was spreading, and they recommended that it should be left to the parties concerned to seek their own economic interests. The Royal Commission on Allotments, in 1843, confirmed the opinion of the Poor Law Commission as to the value of allotments. They had given the labourer a place on the land and had provided his family with good food. The Commission also wished to give factory workers access to land on which they might work on Saturdays and Sundays, expressing thus the current opinion on the moral value of occupation for the lower orders. Like the Poor Law Commission, too, it recommended that the size of holdings should not exceed half an acre, partly because of the scarcity of available land, and partly because this was as much as a labourer, working elsewhere during the day, could cultivate. There was no thought at this time of re-settling the land with men withdrawn from wage labour, nor was the movement inspired by the depression of urban industry. It was the outcome, solely, of low wages and unemployment in agriculture itself, at a time when the industry was heavily protected and the last of the unenclosed land was being reclaimed.

The General Inclosure Act, 1845, developed the connection between inclosure and allotments by providing that a plot of land for "field gardens" for the labouring poor of the parish should be set aside upon its inclosure. Later legislation has charged the local administrative bodies with the duty of providing allotment gardens, and to-day this economic and social movement has little, if any, connection with the problem of the landless farm labourer.

THE CHARTIST SETTLEMENTS

All of these movements aimed either at providing the agricultural worker with land from which to supplement an inadequate wage, or, particularly in more recent years, at giving the dwellers in towns, large or small, a garden.* The earliest attempt to create small holdings upon which men could employ themselves full-time, and support their families from the produce of their land, was the outcome of the failure of a political agitation, the Chartist Movement. One of its leaders, Feargus O'Connor, convinced himself that in the peasant holding were to be found the ideal conditions of self-supporting independence for the manual worker. So in 1848 there was formed the National Land Company, to which some £90,000 was subscribed, and the principle upon which it proposed to work was to buy land, divide it into small holdings equipped with house and buildings, which were then to be allotted among the shareholders by ballot. To-day, when many people seem to be looking to land settlement to afford opportunities for a new life to the urban industrial worker, it is of particular interest to note that most of the members of the National Land Company were men from London and the industrial north, who had no knowledge of agriculture. The joys of country life and the independence to be gained on a small holding, were the inducements which were held out to them.

Three estates were bought. Land values were high at the time, and almost certainly they were bought dear. But this was only one of many things which foredoomed the enterprise to failure. There were 26,000 subscribers to the company, and no more than 102 holdings were created out of the estates purchased. When the ballot amongst the subscribers for the holdings was taken, the authorities, not uninfluenced, perhaps, by the identification of the leaders of the enterprise with the Chartist

* For a discussion of the problems of the urban dwellers, see Hammond, J. and B., "The Age of the Chartists," Ch. VII. (Longmans, Green & Co.), 1930.

Movement, decided that the company was a lottery and thus illegal. It was dissolved, eventually, by Act of Parliament.

The largest of the estates was at Minster Lovell, in Oxfordshire, where eighty holdings, varying from 2 to 4 acres, were created, cottages and buildings were erected, and a road was made. It is not necessary to go into the conditions of tenure and other arrangements, for on the sale of the property on the liquidation of the company, most of the tenants returned to the industrial employment from which they had come, and the men who became cultivators after the reorganisation were mostly part-time agricultural labourers. It is of particular interest to note, however, that until about the year 1887, these small cultivators did well at Charterville, as the colony was called. The district seems singularly ill-adapted to occupation by small units, situated as it is in a region of large corn-growing, stock-raising farms. But the settlers turned their attention to potatoes, a crop which farmers in the neighbourhood were not growing, and they had almost a monopoly of the local market. But when the agricultural depression overtook the country, their larger neighbours were driven to find something more profitable than corn, and on their taking up potato-growing, the local market was soon swamped. The smallholders' produce, marketed in small quantities, could not reach a wider public, and this difficulty still confronts the small producer competing by himself against the large-scale producer.

By 1914 the original 80 holdings were reduced to 69, of whom only 25 were dependent, in the main, upon the cultivation of their plots. The remainder, of whom 18 were farm labourers, treated the holdings essentially as adjuncts to another source of income.

THREE ACRES AND A COW

Interest in the colonisation of England, which died down following the failure of the National Land Company, was revived in the early '80's of last century by

the enthusiasm of Mr. Jesse Collings. He and those whom he convinced in large numbers, were concerned not so much with the technical advancement of agriculture as with the idea that a numerous and prosperous peasantry, with the more general distribution of the land which their existence would entail, was essential to national welfare. Industry, thrift and other virtues, they regarded as the attributes, particularly, of the small cultivator, and facilities for the multiplication of small holdings would offer encouragement and hope to the wage labourer.

The time was ripe for agrarian reform. The agricultural depression was at its height. The Richmond Commission, appointed in 1882 to inquire into it, had just reported. In 1885 the franchise had been extended to the agricultural labourer. On January 26th, 1886, Lord Salisbury's Government being in office, Mr. Jesse Collings moved the following amendment to the Address :

“ But this House expresses its regret that no measures are announced by Her Majesty for the present relief of these (agricultural) classes, and especially for affording facilities to the agricultural labourers and others in rural districts to obtain allotments and small holdings on equitable terms as to rent and security of tenure.”

He pointed out that the land in every direction was crying out for labour, and if once the labourer could get possession of 3 acres, there was little doubt that by his own thrift and his own efforts, the cow and many other things would follow.

The leaders of both sides joined in the discussion of this amendment. It was supported by Mr. Gladstone, by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, at that date still an unhyphenated Liberal, and, of course, by Joseph Arch. For the Government, Mr. Goschen thought that difficulties of administration and equipment would be insuperable, and feared “ the army of inspectors,” that old bogey which is still put up on every occasion when Whitehall is asked to act. Mr. Henry Chaplin, soon to

be President of a new Board of Agriculture, thought that the creation of small holdings would only aggravate and increase the agricultural depression, and referred to the low standard of life of the French peasant, notwithstanding the protection which his industry enjoyed. He made a particular attack upon Mr. Chamberlain. "The hand is the hand of Jesse," he said, "but the voice is the voice of Joseph." The Government was defeated on the division, in a full house, and immediately resigned.

The new Government took no action, however, until 1888, when a Commission of Inquiry was appointed. Evidence given before it showed that the output of produce from small farms was greater, proportionately, than from large ones. The Agricultural Returns showed that small holdings were more intensively stocked, except with sheep, and it was generally conceded that in the production of things such as fruit and vegetables, the small cultivator had a definite advantage. A few witnesses held that the cultivation of land in large units was more productive and certainly more economic, for only in this way was there scope for the employment of capital in the form of labour-saving machinery and for the application of scientific management. But there was a preponderance of evidence to show that the small farmers at that time were standing the test of the agricultural depression better than the large ones.

However, the Commission held that small holdings suffered from the normal defects of small-scale enterprise. What was most needed was some means to bring land into the market more freely. The law of primogeniture, it held, had the effect of maintaining large estates in land, and it suggested that if settlements and life estates were prohibited, it would bring land on the market and make it available for the creation of small holdings. The Commission outlined a scheme to empower local authorities to acquire land, which was ultimately embodied in the Small Holdings Act, 1892.

This Act marks an interesting and important stage in the history of land settlement. The allotments reserved

under Inclosure Acts and provided by Poor Law legislation in the early part of last century, linked the provision of land to poor relief; there was no thought of providing a vocation or a social ladder for the landless labourers. The Chartist settlement at Minster Lovell was not remotely connected with relief, nor with the rural worker. It was an attempt to introduce the industrial worker to the pleasures of country life, based on erroneous assumptions of the profitability of farming and some confused physiocratic notions. British industries were flourishing at the time; there was no lack of employment, and this movement back to the land was designed to secure a better life rather than a better living for the townsman.

Mr. Jesse Collings and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, for their part, were not concerned to subsidise poor relief, nor were they interested in any way in a movement "back to the land." They wanted to help workers already employed upon the land to secure a fuller life and to give them opportunities for advancement, both in the social and the economic scale. Plough land was being put out of cultivation by corn imported from the North American continent, the standard of production from the land was going down, for the great conversion of corn and meat farming to dairying, fruit-growing and market-gardening which was to restore the gross production to its former level, had hardly begun. They saw a poor future both for the land and for those who worked upon it unless something could be done, and the first step proposed was that the farm labourers should have opportunity to rent small plots of a few acres—enough to make a start as occupiers, but not so much as to interfere with their normal life as wage earners.

The Act empowered County Councils to create small holdings if a sufficient demand were proved to exist. Capital for the purchase of land was to be provided by the Public Works Loans Commission, but the underlying principle of the Act was the promotion of owner-occupation, and successful applicants were required to

put down one-fifth of the purchase money for their holdings. Of the other four-fifths, three-quarters at least was to be paid off in half-yearly instalments extending over a period not exceeding fifty years, but one quarter of the total cost might remain as a perpetual rent-charge.

The Act was permissive, and compulsory powers to purchase land were not given to the County Councils. In all the circumstances, it is surprising to learn that the followers of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Jesse Collings had high hopes of the Act, but they were disappointed. Only five counties attempted to operate the Act, and after fourteen years only 790 acres of land had been acquired by them.

THE SMALL HOLDINGS AND ALLOTMENTS ACT, 1908

Interest in land settlement, however, continued, and nothing daunted by the failure of the Act of 1892, a demand for still another inquiry was made in 1905. The President of the Board of Agriculture, Mr. Ailwyn Fellowes (afterwards Lord Ailwyn), appointed a Departmental Committee, under the chairmanship of the Earl of Onslow, "to inquire into the administration and working of the Small Holdings Act, 1892; to examine the various arrangements made by landowners in recent years for the provision of smaller agricultural holdings; and to report as to the conditions under which such holdings are most likely to be attended with success, and as to the measures which may most advantageously be taken either by legislation, co-operative association or otherwise to secure the increase of their number."

Mr. Jesse Collings was a member of the Committee, as was Lord Carrington (afterwards Marquis of Lincolnshire), a Liberal landowner and a great supporter of the small holdings movement. He retired from the Committee on being appointed President of the Board of Agriculture, in succession to Mr. Ailwyn Fellowes, on the change in the administration in December, 1905.

The Committee found that the failure of the Act of

1892 was due less to lack of demand for small holdings than to the apathy of the local authorities towards it. The economic and social aspects of small holdings were once more investigated, the means for the acquisition of land and its adaptation were gone into anew, and the conditions of tenure were considered.

As a result of their work, the Committee reported that further efforts in the closer settlement of the land were desirable. They recommended that compulsory powers should be given to the County Councils to rent or purchase suitable land, which could be let or sold to small holders. The idea of peasant proprietorship was still strong—possibly the Committee had the Irish Land Purchase Act in its mind—and easier terms for the acquisition of their holdings by the proposed County Council tenants were recommended. One-eighth only of the purchase price should be put down in cash, and the remainder should be paid by instalments of interest and principal extending over a long term of years. This interest in ownership is not easily explained. England was a country of tenant farmers, and had been for generations. Moreover, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain based no small part of his advocacy of small holdings, in 1885, upon the need for an "agricultural ladder." From wage labour the rural worker was to enter upon a small holding; from this he should migrate to a larger one, and so on until he became himself a considerable farmer and an employer of labour. Occupying ownership would defeat this object, by tying the man to the holding which he was attempting to buy. Money which should be available for working capital on a larger farm would be locked up in the freehold of a smaller one. There can be little doubt that ownership was desired for political and sentimental, rather than for economic reasons, but the Committee recommended letting as well as sale of land.

After prolonged discussion of the Report, the Liberal administration passed the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, which was consolidated with previous legislation in an Act under the same title in 1908.

1908—1914

This new effort to put more men on the land was designed to help the agricultural labourer—to stop the drift to the towns rather than to bring men *back* to the land. Few measures of social legislation can have been launched with more energy and enthusiasm than was shown by Mr. Asquith's Government for this Act. Small Holdings Commissioners were appointed to assist the County Councils, and the inspectors of the Land Division of the Board of Agriculture addressed meetings in all parts of the country. Circulars on "The Administration of the Small Holdings Acts"; on "How to Obtain an Allotment or Small Holding"; on "Agricultural Credit Banks"; and on other topics were issued to assist both the administrative bodies and their clients. The County Councils appointed Small Holdings and Allotments Committees, to which many of them delegated full executive powers except to raise a rate or to borrow money. County Land Agents were appointed as the Executive Officers of the Committees.

As to the procedure under the Act, it was to be the duty of County Councils to prepare draft schemes specifying the land to be acquired and the number, nature and size of the small holdings to be provided, for the consideration of the Board of Agriculture, and, upon confirmation by the Board, to carry them out. The half of any losses incurred in carrying out an approved scheme might be recovered from the Board.

County Councils were empowered by the Act to purchase or lease land for small holdings, within or without their county. The price or rent to be paid was not to be more than might be recouped by re-sale or letting to the prospective small holders. Compulsory powers of acquisition were conferred by the Act where suitable land could not be obtained by agreement and upon reasonable terms. The County Councils were empowered to adapt and equip the land acquired by them in any way necessary for the creation of small holdings.

The small holdings thus created might be sold or let. One-fifth of the purchase money was required on sale, one quarter as a perpetual rent-charge, with the remainder as under the Act of 1892.

The second part of the Act empowered the County Councils to acquire land, by agreement or compulsorily, for the provision of allotments. These powers were given to enable Councils to act in cases of default by lesser local administrative bodies upon whom, primarily, the responsibility rested.

The rents of holdings created under the Act were to be based upon the annual fixed charges due to the purchase price or the rent of the land acquired, together with all outgoings, such as tithe-rent-charge and land tax, and a percentage (which has ranged, commonly, from 15 to 20 per cent.) for management, repairs, insurance and contingencies.

There was some difficulty over the question of sinking fund charges. Should the County Councils include in their tenants' rents a small annual sum for the redemption of their capital expenditure? If this were done, the tenant, in effect, would buy the land for the Council. Was this fair, or should the sinking fund be borne upon the rates? The decision was left to the Councils, and naturally, perhaps, most of them decided to make their tenants pay. This point was the subject of comment, in 1924, by the Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation, which pointed out that "even though the charge involved amounts on an average only to some two or three shillings per acre, it should not in justice be charged against the small holder; and the relief of two or three pounds annually is a substantial amount in his narrow budget. The cases of existing tenants under the Act of 1908 should be equitably considered from this point of view."*

Under a supplemental section of the Act, power is given to the County Councils to sanction schemes submitted to them by the lesser local authorities of their

* "Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation." Final Report, p. 44. Cmd. 2145. 1924.

areas, for the provision of common pasture. This section, in some ways the most interesting and certainly the most novel feature of the Act, has not apparently been put into operation. It was often urged against the inclosure of commons, in times past, that it deprived the poorest class of the rural community of the opportunity to gain a foothold on the land. The right to graze a cow on a common was highly regarded, even though so many of the commons were overstocked and the animals half starved. The effect of inclosure, almost always, was the loss of these rights, and of the injury sustained, Arthur Young, himself an advocate of inclosure, has said "the poor in these parishes may say, and with truth, '*Parliament may be tender of property; all I know is I had a cow, and an Act of Parliament has taken it from me.*'" It was in the endeavour to give back this lost opportunity that powers to provide common pastures were given to the County Councils in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, but a hundred years had changed the outlook and circumstances of the farm worker, and he prized no longer the opportunity which Parliament once had taken away from him and would now restore.

In most parts of England the propaganda under the Act produced a rush of applicants, but the first numbers do not reflect the need which the Act was designed to supply. A great many would-be small holders were quite unsuited to the life, being men from other trades who had been fired with a desire for a life on the land without any qualifications for it. Others, and they were a large class, were farm labourers and other rural workers well fitted for the life, who had over-estimated the benevolence of the Government and were disappointed to learn that the holdings to be created under the Act would not be handed over fully equipped with the live and dead stock necessary for their working; they had knowledge of farming and skill in farm work, but they had no capital. Others, again, thought they could commandeer particular fields, or they would demand land in their own parishes, being unwilling to go elsewhere. In fact, it would be

true, probably, to say that the greater number of the first applicants for holdings under the Act were unsuitable or ineligible from one cause or another.

While, however, the demand figures, as given, cannot be taken as a true measure of the desire for small holdings, they may afford an indication of it. They show a fairly steady tendency, after the opening year :—

Year.	No. of applicants.	Acreage applied for.
1908	11,825	173,603
1909	1,989	31,274
1910	2,404	29,271
1911	2,544	43,338
1912	2,278	35,752
1913	2,445	39,958
1914	2,100	30,439

There was no attempt to define rigidly the type of person qualified for a small holding. Selection was left to the Committees, and disappointed applicants had the opportunity of appeal to the District Commissioner. The available figures show that 30 per cent. of the total applications have come from persons described as "agricultural labourers," but no other categories are distinguished, and it must not be assumed that the remaining 70 per cent. were non-agricultural. From evidence quoted later, it is apparent that most of them were existing small farmers seeking more land, or their sons seeking a start, or the great variety of persons having occupation of one kind or another in rural districts—*i.e.*, butchers, publicans, carriers, etc.

"Land hunger" amongst existing small occupiers was very much in evidence, and it was stimulated by the steady recovery in agricultural prices which had recently set in, following the agricultural depression of the 'eighties and 'nineties. In 1910, the Annual Report of

the Proceedings under the Small Holdings Act, 1908* stated "that a striking feature of the applications has been the large proportion of the applicants who were already holding land, and who desired to increase their holdings. In some cases, over 70 per cent. of those who have been supplied with holdings were already small holders, and one of the most satisfactory results of the Act has been to improve the status of those who made a success of a small quantity of land and who were in a position to take more."

This is a very interesting commentary on the working of the Act. Introduced to give access to the land to the landless labourer, it is commended in an official report for providing the second or third rung in the agricultural ladder rather than the first. There is very little encouragement here for those who look to the land to provide a living for unemployed industrial workers.

It is of interest, also, to note that most of the applicants wanted bare land. This is explained by the demand from established small holders, village tradesmen and the like, all of whom were already equipped with houses. Indeed, no more than 30 per cent. of the applicants wanted houses. Equipment of the land is an expensive business, and so far as possible the County Councils avoided it. By the end of 1914, some 20 per cent., or 2,510 of the holdings created under the Act were provided with dwelling houses, of which 1,736 had been purchased with the land. Of the 774 new houses built, 22 per cent. were in Surrey, Cheshire and Norfolk, while there were none at all in Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Rutland, East Suffolk, West Sussex and Worcestershire. This economy in capital outlay tended to keep the rents of the statutory small holdings low.

A striking feature of the experience gained of land settlement under the Act was the absence, almost complete, of applicants who wanted to buy holdings. Much had been heard of the magic of property, "which turns sand to gold," and the peasant proprietors of many

* Cd. 5615, p. 5.

countries had been held up to admiration. Provision was made under the Act, accordingly, for the revival of an English yeomanry, with the result that less than 2 per cent. of the applications received up to the end of 1914 were for purchase, and only 50 holdings, of a total area of 506 acres, were sold.

These results might have been foreseen. Persons with capital sufficient to buy land have no need for recourse to the County Council; they can satisfy themselves more expeditiously and satisfactorily in every way by private treaty. Purchasers under the Act would not be actual owners until the last instalment on their holdings had been paid, some fifty years ahead, and during this time they would have less freedom than a tenant, for they would be subject to the same supervision, while being anchored to their holdings and unable to move. In the absence of ample financial resources, the purchase of land could only reduce the amount of working capital available for productive investment. Tenancy, on the other hand, left the man free to migrate to a larger holding as his prospects improved or as his family grew up.

An interesting feature of the land settlement movement during the early years was the attempt to foster co-operative organisation of every kind amongst the tenants. The Board of Agriculture proposed a scheme, which was to be financed by a grant from the Development Fund, for enabling the County Councils to appoint organisers to advise their tenants in forming associations for the supply of requisites and the disposal of produce. The scheme was not pressed, however, and in the following year the Government decided to reconstitute the Agricultural Organisation Society and to charge it with the administration of a large grant for the promotion of co-operation. A great campaign of propaganda in the counties ensued, but for various reasons little was accomplished, and later, the Society was wound up.

Another form of co-operation, from which much was expected, took the shape of Land Renting Associations. The idea was that associations of individuals should rent

land in blocks from the County Councils and sublet it to their members. Such bodies might be expected to know the needs of their members and to be able to divide the land amongst them to the greatest advantage. They would also take responsibility for rent collection. Experience, however, was against this form of organisation. Although the land could be let more cheaply to such associations, the tenants were no better off when the expenses of the organisation were added to the Council rents. Moreover, there was no effective supervision of these estates. The Committee and officials of the Associations were elected from the members themselves, and their authority was negligible. Many of these estates were held by the County Councils on lease, and events proved that it would have been more satisfactory if their tenants had held direct from the superior landlord. In 1913 the Small Holdings Commissioners reported upon sixty Land Renting Associations, and found that only fifteen of them had done anything to organise co-operative trading.

Co-operative credit societies were another manifestation of joint organisation which the Board of Agriculture sought to foster. Arrangements were made with all the leading joint stock banks, under which they would consider applications for advances from co-operative credit societies upon the joint liability of their members, without further security. The principle was one which had been applied amongst peasant communities in Continental Europe with much success, but the idea of joint and several liability proved unattractive to English small holders. At the end of 1911, forty-five societies had been formed, with a total membership of 765, and two years later these numbers had risen only to fifty-three societies with a membership of 836.

A form of co-operative organisation which proved rather more attractive was live stock insurance. The loss of a pig or a cow can be a serious matter to the small farmer, and associations for mutual insurance against natural or accidental death were popular. Insurance was

effected through cow or pig clubs, the two classes being kept separate. Thirty-one pig clubs with a membership of 1,627, and covering 2,842 pigs in 1911, had increased to 691 clubs with 25,776 members, covering 46,766 pigs in 1913. During the same period, twenty-two cow clubs with 1,510 members and covering 4,517 cows, had increased to 108 clubs with 4,367 members, covering 10,860 cows. From these figures the smallness of each man's business and the seriousness of a loss even of one animal, is apparent. Members owned less than two pigs each, on an average, and less than three cows.

It has often been said that individualism carried almost to an extreme is an essential part in the make-up of the successful small holder. The comparative failure of almost every attempt to organise the new settlers, favourably grouped as they so often were for organisation, seems to bear this out. It was natural that the organisers of this great effort to establish the small man upon his own farm should have looked to co-operation as the most important aid to his success. There were examples and demonstrations on all sides. In England itself the industrial co-operative movement for the supply of requisites was already one of the greatest forces in retail trading. In Ireland, Sir Horace Plunkett was regenerating the countryside with his co-operative creameries. In Denmark co-operative manufacture extended to bacon as well as butter. In Germany, Raiffeisen and others had built up a great organisation for the supply of credit.

Obviously, co-operation in these and other forms would seem to be the natural keystone in the structure which the State was erecting. Its failure to appeal to the people most concerned is very striking, and it has never been adequately explained.*

* A notable exception, which organises successfully both the purchase of requisites and the sale of products for its members, is the Donyatt Co-operative Society, Ilminster, Somerset. Here there is a County Council estate of approximately 3,000 acres, which includes the patronage of the living, the mill and the public house, a resident agent and full complement of estate workmen, on which there is now a very successful mutual organisation, which the County officials have succeeded in making, to meet the obvious needs of the community.

Taking the country as a whole, no great enthusiasm for the Small Holdings and Allotments Act was manifest in most of the administrative areas, and in 1909 special Commissioners were appointed by the Board of Agriculture to stimulate the provision of holdings. By the end of 1914, some 205,103 acres of land had been acquired, of which 142,172 acres had been purchased by the County Councils, and the remainder leased. The number of small holders settled was 14,045, which gives the average holding an area of 14.4 acres. The average cost of the land purchased rose from £32.695 per acre in 1908 to £36 in 1914, reflecting, of course, the rise in agricultural prices. The contract for rent, however, is not usually adjustable at short intervals, and the rents paid by the County Councils for the lands which they leased remained fairly stable throughout the period.

The costs of acquisition amounted to £1 an acre, while the cost of ascertaining the demand was 1s. an acre. These preliminary expenses were repaid by the Board of Agriculture; costs of management are a charge as overheads upon the holdings.

To summarise the results of the expenditure of administrative effort and public money under the Act, in the pre-War years, the following table shows the total number of applicants settled at the end of the years named, and the numbers of tenants giving up their holdings voluntarily or receiving notice to quit them in those years.

Year.	Total applicants settled from 1908.	Gave notice to quit.	Given notice to quit.	Percentage given up from both causes.
1911	6,929	99	20	1.7
1912	8,851	152	43	2.2
1913	10,858	83	90	1.5
1914	12,461	266	83	2.8

The number of complete failures, as shown by the notices given to quit, is very small indeed, but it may be assumed that most of those who gave up by their own desire were also unsuccessful. Even when the two classes are added together, the total changes in each year were only some 2 per cent., while the rents in arrear due by sitting tenants were very small. From the financial standpoint, therefore, the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908, may be said to have succeeded during the period which ended with the outbreak of the War.

THE LAND SETTLEMENT (FACILITIES) ACT, 1919

The War made a breach in the progress of land settlement under the Act. From 1914 to 1918 it will be understood that administrative work upon County Council estates was reduced to a minimum, and as the national emergency grew, holdings were actually given up, in a few instances following conscription, but more generally from the opportunity of more remunerative work which presented itself to the tenants.

After the Armistice it seemed to be conceded on all hands that land must be made available for men who had fought in the War. Many of them had come to like an open-air life; many, too, had lost their employment and would have to start again. War scarcity and inflation had sent agricultural prices soaring, so that the immediate outlook seemed good, and it must be admitted that the proposal lost nothing from its strong sentimental appeal. And so, early in 1919, the Coalition Government passed the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, to modify and extend the powers created under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908.

The new legislation was to settle ex-service men on the land, and the authorities were no longer restricted in their activities to the purchase and equipment of land by any idea of recouping themselves for the expenditure out of the rents they could recover. Subject to the approval of the Ministry of Agriculture of the schemes, all necessary and reasonable losses incurred by the County Councils

were to be defrayed yearly by the Ministry, until 1926, when all the holdings created under the Act were to be valued, and that part of the capital cost which was not covered by the valuation was to be paid by the State.

Another section of the Act empowered the County Councils to guarantee loans made to their tenants.

It is unnecessary to comment with the wisdom that comes after the event, on an Act passed under the conditions which gave birth to the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act. It was natural that with the wide and generous terms which it offered, the demand for holdings should have been heavy and the costs high. By the end of 1920 more than 49,000 applications had been received, though this number was later reduced by more than 50 per cent., and 14,061 applicants were settled forthwith.

It was impossible, in the urgency of the work, to exercise the same careful selection either of tenants or of land as before the War. Land values were inflated, but land had to be bought and demobilised men had to be settled as quickly as possible. In the six years between the Armistice and the end of 1924, the County Councils acquired by purchase and by lease 250,000 acres, by contrast with some 205,000 acres acquired in the six years from the passing of the Act of 1908 up to the outbreak of war. The price paid for the land purchased averaged £42 10s. an acre, contrasted with an average cost of £32 16s. before the War. To make another comparison, about 87 per cent. of the land acquired under the new Act was purchased, whereas before the War more than one-third of the land was leased.

The cost of land purchase was only one factor of the many which made the ex-service settlements impossible as an economic proposition. The proportion of bare land holdings was negligible, and houses and buildings had to be erected when rates of wages were very high and the costs of all building materials inflated. And the capital monies needed to pay for the land and its equipment had to be borrowed also under conditions of inflation, the average rate of interest being $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. To a capital

cost for purchase of £42 10s. an acre was added a capital cost for equipment of £24 16s. an acre.*

Loans to the new settlers to provide them with working capital were not made by the County Councils direct, but through the joint-stock banks on the guarantee of the Council concerned. The maximum advance to any individual was £500, repayable in two years if made for the purchase of seeds and fertilisers, or in three years if needed for purchase of livestock, implements or fruit trees. By a special arrangement with the banks, the interest charge was not to exceed 5 per cent.

This new departure in the finance of land settlement was a risky business, which can be justified only by the circumstances of the time. It was an invitation to the tenants to speculate with borrowed money, whereas the pre-War tenants lost only their own capital if things went wrong. The position on the new holdings quickly became particularly bad, for the fall in prices alone, which set in so soon, wiped out fully one-half of the money invested in the holding. A tenant who started before the end of 1922 with half his capital borrowed found himself in debt to his bank to the value of all his live and dead stock by 1925.

Turning now to rent, it will be recalled that under the Act of 1908, the County Councils were expected to make a fair return upon the capital invested by them in the purchase and equipment of the land. Under the Act of 1919, rents bore no relation to the cost of the tenant's land, house and buildings, which generally far exceeded anything which could be regarded as an investment. Land was bought and equipped and let to tenants at the annual value at the time of in-going, the difference between costs and returns being borne by the Treasury. A good deal of trouble was caused by the differences in the rents charged for the pre-War and the post-War holdings in the same county. Rents paid by old tenants had not been brought up to the full post-War competitive

* "Land Settlement in England and Wales," 1919-24, p. 38. (H.M. Stationery Office.)

values, and this was a cause of friction. The Government required the County Councils to revise their old rent rolls so as to remove anomalies, but the response, not unnaturally, was half-hearted, and when the depression in agricultural prices set in, differences were quickly settled by downward adjustments in the rents paid by post-War tenants. Temporary abatements and remissions to the value of £180,000 on a rent roll of nearly £1,000,000 were made between 1921 and 1924, and at the end of 1924 rents were permanently revised throughout the country.

Proprietorship was no more popular under the Act of 1919 than it had been before, although many of the ex-service settlers had capital to invest. Only 225 holdings, comprising 1,463 acres in all, were purchased, 70 per cent. of which were in Hampshire, Worcestershire and Nottinghamshire. Holders who were buying on the instalment system found themselves at a special disadvantage, for there was no revision of the rates of interest for which they were liable on the unpaid balances of purchase money, although tenants obtained reductions of their rents as prices deteriorated.

Before recording the experience of the settlers under the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, reference must be made to other methods for putting men upon the land. The Small Holdings Colonies Acts, 1916 and 1918, inaugurated group settlement. The idea was to combine the social advantages of small holdings with the economic advantages of large-scale organisation. Considerable estates might be bought by the Ministry of Agriculture, upon which men would be settled in small holdings, while leaving a considerable part of the estate to be run as a central farm, supplying certain services to the settlers and available as a reserve of land into which the settlers could encroach as they established themselves and needed more land for the expansion of their holdings.

Twenty-two group settlements were made in various parts of the country, but while it might be claimed that the idea did not get a fair trial in the peculiar circum-

stances of the immediate post-war years, all that can be said is that the academic advantages of the principle were not realised in practice, and the settlements were a failure. Some of the estates were sold, and others were re-settled in individual holdings.

A third part of the 1919 Act enabled cottage holdings to be formed. The cottages were built upon small pieces of land, and they were mainly part-time holdings, so that this section of the Act was more a housing scheme than land settlement. It proved very expensive in operation, as there was no chance of recovering anything approaching a fair return on the cost of creating the holdings. In 1920 the extension of cottage holdings was discontinued, although later there was an attempt to use them as a provision for disabled men. The idea was revived in the Act of 1926, and was no more successful.

The main work carried out under the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, 1919, came to an end on March 31st, 1926, and all the losses necessarily incurred by the County Councils in running their estates had been defrayed by the Exchequer. In 1926 a valuation of all the properties, pre-war and post-war, purchased by the County Councils was made, and they were handed over to the Councils at these figures, the capital loss up to that date falling on the Exchequer and the Councils taking the chances of further losses or of profits in the future. The total sum expended had been about £20,750,000, of which about £7,600,000 was now agreed to be irrecoverable.*

The net result of national land settlement policy during the eighteen years from 1908 to 1926, under the Acts of 1908 and 1919, was the acquisition by purchase and by lease of 438,522 acres of land by the County Councils. Besides this, 4,358 acres had been acquired by the Councils and re-sold to their tenants. The number of holdings created was 29,532, of which nearly 8,000 were fully equipped with houses and buildings, about 3,600

* See Venn, J. A., "The Foundations of Agricultural Economics," pp. 134-6. (Camb. Univ. Press, 1933.) Also, "Report of Land Division of the Ministry, 1931," pp. 14-17.

were partially equipped, and about 18,000 were bare land.*

THE SMALL HOLDINGS AND ALLOTMENTS ACT, 1926

Of those settled during the post-War years, about 15 per cent. had failed by 1926, a figure not unduly high in the very difficult circumstances, and there was still evidence of an unsatisfied demand, particularly from civilians who had generally been excluded from the benefits of the 1919 Act. The County Councils reported a list of nearly 15,000 unsatisfied applicants, about 45 per cent. of whom had been interviewed and approved as suitable. So, notwithstanding the difficult position of agriculture and the formidable cost of equipment of the land, Mr. Baldwin's Government decided to make fresh efforts to extend land settlement, and in 1926 it passed the Small Holdings and Allotments Act. This Act amended those of 1908 and 1919, and conferred upon the County Councils certain additional powers. The definition of a small holding was amended so that it could exceed 50 acres in extent if, at the date of letting, the annual value for income tax did not exceed £100. Previously the limit had been £50. Councils were charged with the responsibility of providing holdings without incurring losses, though where it had been agreed with the Ministry of Agriculture that any loss was necessarily incurred, 75 per cent. of such loss would be borne by the Ministry. Section 12 of the Act revived the type of holdings called "cottage holdings," which were to comprise a dwelling house together with not less than 40 perches or more than 3 acres of agricultural land, to be cultivated by the occupier of the dwelling house and his family. Such holdings could not be let, and the purchaser had to be an agricultural labourer or a person employed in a rural industry.

Progress under the Act was very slow, and the reasons are fairly obvious. Agriculture was passing through very

* Report on the Work of the Land Division of the Ministry for the year 1927, p. 6. (H.M. Stationery Office.)

difficult times, and the County Councils hesitated to embark upon schemes which might involve a rate to defray a loss. When subsidies to agriculture are hidden in national expenditure, they may pass unnoticed, but County expenditure is very closely watched, and a rate for small holdings, that is to say, a tax upon a great many to support a very few, at once arouses a protest. Self-supporting schemes are rare, and their rarity reflects the economic position of land settlement at the present time. The following table indicates the growth of the movement since 1926 :—

Year.	Acres owned.	Acres leased.	Total acreage.
1926	356,486	82,036	438,522
1933	382,914	71,570	454,484
Increase or decrease	+ 26,428	- 10,466	+ 15,962

The net increase is about 3·6 per cent. on the total area in 1926. There has been a tendency to reduce the amount of land leased, which was principally the bare land properties.

THE AGRICULTURAL LAND (UTILISATION) ACT, 1931.

The slow rate of progress under the Act of 1926 led Mr. MacDonald's Labour Government to make an attempt to speed things up under Part II. of the Agricultural Land (Utilisation) Act, 1931, which dealt with the provision of small holdings and allotments. It was, in part, an attempt to restore the power of the Ministry of Agriculture to create holdings if the County Councils could be held to be too slow in meeting the demand, but it attempted, more particularly, to deal with the problem of the unemployed person whose capital and experience were alike insufficient for him to get a holding in the

ordinary way. The Minister of Agriculture was given powers to provide small holdings for unemployed persons after consultation with the County authorities. He might make loans or guarantee loans under certain conditions. By arrangement with the Ministry of Labour, training centres might be established and demonstration holdings could be created.

The benefits of the Act were extended to agricultural workers, and the existing provisions for the creation of cottage holdings for agricultural and rural workers were extended to include anybody having the necessary qualifications. The provision under the 1908 Act to compensate agricultural workers displaced by the operation of the Act remained. Further, the Government were empowered to defray losses incurred by local authorities in providing allotment gardens for unemployed persons.

The only part of this Act which can be said to have been applied is the last, and this only to commitments by a few allotment authorities incurred before the passing of the Act. The financial crisis which supervened, however, almost immediately after, led the Government to decide that no expenditure could be sanctioned under it for small holdings, and this decision has been adhered to up to the present time.

INDUSTRIAL UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE LAND SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATION

In 1934 there was once more a revival of interest in land settlement. The number of the unemployed in certain industries was such that the reabsorption of all of them within any reasonable period of time was obviously impossible, and people began to think that the land might offer the only alternative occupation. Influential private bodies, such as the Society of Friends and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, devoted time and money to the subject.

The Government decided that the idea ought to be explored, and it resolved to supplement the existing

machinery of land settlement by the County Councils by offering grants to approved private societies for the creation of small holdings. On March 17th, 1934, the Minister of Agriculture announced that the possibility of constituting a Land Settlement Association was under consideration, the immediate object of which would be to provide, by way of experiment, a number of small holdings for intensive cultivation by suitable unemployed persons. The Government, he said, would be prepared to contribute up to £50,000, afterwards increased to £75,000, a year for each of three years, on a basis of £1 for every £1 raised by the Association in money, or its equivalent, from non-State sources. On July 30th it was announced that such an Association had been formed, with Sir Percy Jackson as chairman.

Almost immediately, an estate of 540 acres at Potton, in Bedfordshire, was presented to the Association by Mr. Malcolm Stewart, now the Commissioner for the Special Areas, and it was inspected by the Duke of Kent, in October. The estate is situated in a market-gardening district, and it is being developed in holdings of a few acres for vegetable growing and for poultry and pig-keeping. The tenants are being drawn from the Durham mining villages and selected for the aptitude they have shown already for the cultivation of allotments. Training is being provided, and part of the land is being retained as a central farm to supply certain services and requisites to the tenants, upon the lines of the group settlements created after the War under the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, 1919. The first contingent of twenty Durham miners arrived in January, 1935.

This association of agriculture with unemployment relief received support in the reports on the depressed areas published in 1934, particularly in that for West Cumberland.* The Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act, 1934, passed by Parliament in

* Reports of Investigations into the Industrial Condition in certain Depressed Areas, 1934. (H.M. Stationery Office.)

December, provided a sum of £2,000,000 for the relief of unemployment, a considerable part of which is being spent on the provision of small holdings and allotments.

In January, 1935, the Commissioner for the Special Areas issued a circular to local authorities asking for the creation of at least another 10,000 allotments, and offering to make grants-in-aid out of the Special Areas Fund, under certain conditions. The Commissioner proposes also to create small holdings. Groups of holding of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre each, for intensive poultry keeping and vegetable growing, organised with the aid of the Society of Friends, are being taken over by the Land Settlement Association.

It is hoped, also, to take men permanently out of the field of industrial employment by stimulating County and Borough Councils to create holdings of 5 acres and upwards. Working capital will be provided in the form of loans and otherwise for unemployed men drawn from the Special Areas, while the Unemployment Assistance Board has agreed to pay allowances to men undergoing supervised training. The County Councils, too, which under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1926, have to bear one-quarter of the estimated losses on their land settlement schemes, are promised supplementary grants under certain conditions, to reduce any losses incurred under new schemes.

Thus, a hundred years brings the question of land settlement back, full cycle, to its starting point. We have seen how the principle behind the first statutory attempt, in 1819, was the relief of rural unemployment and destitution, when Parliament authorised the overseers of the poor to hire or to purchase land. We have seen, further, how from the year 1886 onwards, there were repeated attempts to promote the closer settlement of the land, culminating in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908, which had nothing to do with poverty or unemployment in rural areas. Rather were they based upon belief in the economic stability of peasant farming

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and the need for providing a ladder by which the agricultural labourer might rise. We have seen, again, how in the middle of last century, attempts were made to settle industrial workers in the country upon small plots of land where they might be largely self-sufficing, and we are witnessing to-day an attempt to repeat this experiment under circumstances otherwise resembling those which led to the formation of the Poor Law holdings of the early nineteenth century.

CHAPTER III

SIZES AND TYPES OF SMALL HOLDINGS

SIZES OF HOLDINGS

THERE is, of course, no general optimum in the size of the small holding. It is controlled for each individual by his type of farming, by his capital, his age and the number of his children. But some idea of the tendency of the sizes of small agricultural holdings can be got from the "Agricultural Statistics." The Ministry of Agriculture classifies small holdings by size in three principal groups : 1 to 5 acres, 5 to 20 acres, and 20 to 50 acres. The figures cannot be taken as an absolute representation of the number of holdings in individual occupation for agricultural purposes. A man may have two or three holdings under different landlords, each of which may be returned separately, although for his purposes they are one farm. In the groups below 20 acres, there are often parcels of land which are not used strictly for agricultural purposes ; a neglected orchard, for example, or a football field used at odd times for grazing purposes.* Further, the total cultivated area of England is declining, as has been said already, and small holdings suffer as much as larger ones from the encroachment of urban areas and new roads.†

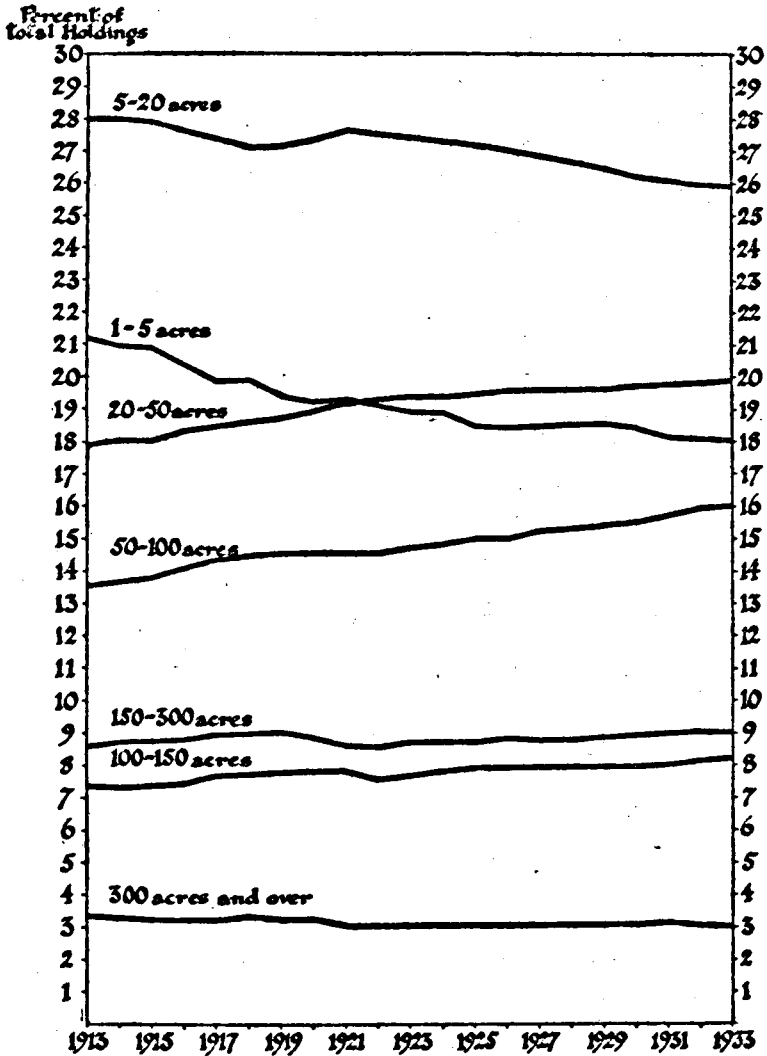
* See "An Economic Survey of Hertfordshire Agriculture," p. 12, for further details. (Cambridge Report, No. 18).—Gardens and parks, 14.3 per cent. ; contractors', brewers' and butchers' yards, 3.8 per cent. ; public houses, garages and cafés, 3.7 per cent. ; holdings derelict, 1.9 per cent. ; and recreation grounds, 1.5 per cent. Total, 25.2 per cent.

† The decline in the total number of small holdings is sometimes attributed mainly to this cause. It is said that the land immediately round the towns is predominantly laid out in market gardens and small farms, which disappear with the encroachment of building. If this were so, all the large towns of England would be surrounded by this time entirely by large farms. The truth is, of course, that the encroachment which destroys small holdings also creates them ; as market gardens and small farms are built over, the larger holdings behind them are converted to these more intensive uses.

A study of the tendencies of all the agricultural holdings in the country, classified by size groups, is of primary importance, for it gives a picture of what is really happening under the economic conditions of agricultural production in this country. The accompanying graph has been constructed from the "Agricultural Statistics" to show the percentage number of agricultural holdings classified in seven size groups, from those of 1 to 5 acres to those of over 300 acres, and the changes in their relative numbers during the past twenty years.

Four features are at once apparent. First, the steady decline in the number of holdings from 1 to 5 acres and from 5 to 20 acres throughout the whole of the period, broken only, in the 5 to 20-acre group, between the years 1919 and 1921, when the settlement of ex-soldiers on the land was being actively pursued. Second, the increase, equally steady, in the number of holdings in the size groups 20 to 50 acres and 50 to 100 acres. Third, the stability of the number of holdings in the size groups 100 to 150 acres and 150 to 300 acres, with a slight tendency for their numbers to increase. Fourth, the stability of the number of holdings above 300 acres, with a slight tendency for the number to decline.

The evidence of these twenty years applied to all types of farming is conclusive and beyond question. It proves that holdings of less than 20 acres exist already in numbers that are greater than the demand. Notwithstanding an active land settlement policy, both before and after the War, for the creation of holdings largely within these limits of size, their numbers, so far from increasing, have not even been maintained, but show a considerable and continuous tendency towards engrossment. On the other hand, it proves also that the holdings which have been in demand, as proved by their steady increase in numbers, are those from 20 to 150 acres and more particularly those from 20 to 100 acres. These are the predominant features which the "Statistics" bring out. Little importance need be attached to the decline in the number of holdings of over 300 acres, for the



Changes in the Percentage Composition
of Agricultural Holdings by Size-groups,
1913 - 1933.

figures themselves are not very significant, and a further sub-division of this group into farms, say, of 300 to 500 acres, 500 to 1,000 acres, and those over 1,000 acres, is needed before any useful conclusions can be drawn.

For the purposes of land settlement, consideration is limited to holdings from 1 to 50 acres in size. Whatever the economic evidence, a national policy for the settlement of men on farms above the 50 acre maximum is impracticable. Let us now consider what has been the experience of the various counties in the demand for holdings of various sizes within this limit.

Holdings, 1 to 5 Acres.—The biggest change has been in the 1 to 5-acre class, and even allowing for the unsatisfactory classification, which includes private gardens, athletic grounds, and other units not strictly agricultural, the decline in this group has been severe, especially amongst full-time cultivators. The records of the County Councils show that there has been much amalgamation. Only in Lancashire (3·22 per cent.), in Middlesex (2·88 per cent.) and in Kent (0·4 per cent.) have there been increases between the years 1913 and 1933, and of these only Lancashire shows an absolute increase. In the other two counties there have been declines in the absolute numbers, although the proportion of holdings of 1 to 5 acres to the total number of holdings in each has risen. The situation in Lancashire is explained, of course, by the phenomenal growth of the poultry industry. The number of poultry holdings in this county in 1930, for example, was 2,234, being 2½ times as many as the number in 1924.* Middlesex, on the other hand, has been profoundly affected by building development, which eats into holdings of all sizes and encourages intensive horticultural production on small areas. Such businesses call for little permanent equipment, and they can be given up without much capital loss as estates are built up. Large districts of Kent, too, are similarly affected, while more than in most counties, perhaps, the sum of its holdings in this group are affected by the number of

* "Agricultural Statistics," Vol. LXVII., Part I., 1932.

"amenity" holdings attached to private houses, which are in no commercial sense agricultural.

In all the other counties of England the decline in the number of holdings from 1 to 5 acres is universal, ranging from so much as 11.9 per cent. in Berkshire to 0.3 per cent. in West Suffolk. As the greatest number of these small farms are horticultural or poultry holdings, it may be interesting to quote the summarised experience of the country during the six-year period, 1924-30, in these forms of production. It should be noted that this was a period of relative prosperity in the agricultural industry, but the number of purely fruit and vegetable holdings not exceeding 5 acres declined by 7.5 per cent. and the acreage by 10 per cent. The decline in the poultry holdings was 31 per cent., and in the acreage devoted to them the loss was the same. The figures are as follows : *

CHANGES IN THE NUMBERS AND IN THE ACREAGE OF
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE HOLDINGS AND OF POULTRY
HOLDINGS, 1 TO 5 ACRES IN EXTENT, 1924-30

Type.	Numbers.			Acreage.		
	1924.	1930.	Per cent. change.	1924.	1930.	Per cent. change.
Fruit and vegetables	14,886	13,760	- 7.5	43,436	39,020	- 10
Poultry	7,139	4,927	- 31	21,199	14,645	- 31

The causes of these declines will be considered later.

Holdings, 5 to 20 Acres.—The next size group, that of holdings above 5 and not exceeding 20 acres, has had a history during the last thirty years which repeats that of the smallest group. Once more only three counties, Bedfordshire (1.1 per cent.), Herefordshire (1 per cent.),

* Compiled from "Agricultural Statistics," *Ibid.*

and Essex (1 per cent.), show an increase in the proportion which this group bears to total holdings, and the increases are nominal. Six other counties, Cumberland, East Sussex, Kent, East Suffolk, Cornwall and Devon, show nominal declines, while over the rest of England the reduction in numbers varied from 10.63 per cent. in Norfolk to 1.18 in West Sussex, the fall in most counties being between 3 and 4 per cent.

These little farms have some importance in the agriculture of the country. Although they represent no more than 5 per cent. of the total area under crops and grass, they maintain so much as $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the total cattle in the country, 12 per cent. of the pigs, and over 14 per cent. of the poultry, as well as 4 per cent. of the sheep.* A classification of the group showed that no less than 26 per cent. of the holdings was made up of accommodation land in the hands of tradesmen, amenity holdings and others of a non-agricultural type; 22 per cent. were small dairy holdings, 4 per cent. mixed livestock holdings, 1 per cent. sheep farms with rough grazings, leaving 47 per cent. in other types of agricultural or market garden holdings. The small dairy holdings were most numerous in the north-west—the West Riding, Lancashire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire—and in the south-west—Somerset, Devon and Cornwall.

Holdings, 20 to 50 Acres.†—It is this group which almost everywhere in England has increased steadily during the past thirty years. In Lancashire, owing to the abnormal development of poultry keeping on very small holdings, there has been a decline of 1.29 per cent., and in five other counties, Leicestershire, Middlesex, Nottinghamshire, Westmorland and Suffolk, the proportion is practically unchanged. Over the rest of the country the

* "Agricultural Statistics," Vol. LXVII, Part I., p. 41, 1932.

† This group contains about 12 per cent. of the total agricultural employment and about 11 per cent. of the total agricultural output of England and Wales, by contrast with 21 per cent. and 23 per cent. respectively in the group, 300 acres and over.—A. W. Menzies-Kitchen (*Economic Journal*, 1934).

20 to 50-acre group has increased from 0.76 per cent. in Cumberland to 5.91 per cent. in Huntingdonshire. As the next size groups, farms of 50 to 100 acres and 100 to 150 acres, show also a universal tendency to increase, it is clear that the rise in the proportion of holdings in the largest group (20 to 50 acres) of those classified as "small holdings" is the result of the amalgamation of holdings in the smaller groups. Thus it is apparent that the general tendency of all the small holdings in the country has been towards engrossment. The reasons will be discussed in some detail later, but it is clear that the organisation of agriculture in units of less than 20 acres does not give sufficient scope in any form of profitable agriculture, other than market-gardening and poultry-keeping, for the full-time employment of a small farmer and his family. The tendency is almost universal, and the few exceptions to it do not represent successful farming in small units so much as the influence of other activities of the community upon the demand for land.

CHANGES IN THE NUMBERS OF SMALL HOLDINGS, IN
THREE SIZE GROUPS, IN THE ENGLISH COUNTIES,
1913-33

County.	Size Groups.								
	1-5 acres.			5-20 acres.			20-50 acres.		
	1913.	1933.	incr. or decr.	1913.	1933.	incr. or decr.	1913.	1933.	incr. or decr.
Bedfordshire .	1,344	1,037	- 307	1,157	1,124	- 33	522	587	+ 65
Berkshire .	877	567	- 310	1,035	762	- 273	524	503	- 21
Buckinghamshire .	1,262	807	- 455	1,312	1,004	- 308	795	840	+ 45
Cambridgeshire .	1,226	930	- 296	1,038	805	- 233	593	574	- 19
Cheshire .	3,139	2,412	- 727	3,480	2,758	- 722	2,148	2,011	- 137
Cornwall .	2,956	2,188	- 768	4,177	3,909	- 268	2,766	3,008	+ 242
Cumberland .	967	843	- 124	1,671	1,533	- 138	1,440	1,418	- 22
Derbyshire .	2,367	1,629	- 738	3,556	2,568	- 988	2,333	2,121	- 212

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County.	Size Groups.								
	1-5 acres.			5-20 acres.			20-50 acres.		
	1913.	1933.	incr. or decr.	1913.	1933.	incr. or decr.	1913.	1933.	incr. or decr.
Devon	2,824	2,181	- 643	3,712	3,604	- 108	2,968	3,467	+ 499
Dorset	1,286	886	- 400	1,340	975	- 365	789	896	+ 107
Durham	1,231	902	- 329	1,979	1,538	- 441	1,145	1,041	- 104
Fly, Isle of	1,212	1,046	- 166	1,272	1,437	+ 165	714	863	+ 149
Essex	1,978	1,637	- 341	2,075	1,929	- 146	1,340	1,173	- 167
Gloucestershire	2,851	2,104	- 747	2,554	2,027	- 527	1,413	1,532	+ 119
Hampshire	2,719	2,188	- 531	2,480	2,088	- 392	1,164	1,108	- 56
Herefordshire	1,309	1,162	- 147	1,888	1,823	- 65	964	1,119	+ 155
Hertfordshire	1,000	640	- 360	848	650	- 198	430	437	+ 7
Huntingdonshire	621	349	- 272	702	551	- 151	402	245	- 157
Kent	2,405	2,330	- 75	3,124	3,022	- 102	2,066	1,948	- 118
Lancashire	3,008	3,234	+ 226	5,753	4,498	- 1,255	5,479	4,657	- 822
Leicestershire	1,386	860	- 526	1,993	1,273	- 720	1,363	1,095	- 268
Lincolnshire—									
Holland	1,451	1,392	- 59	1,770	1,570	- 200	1,074	1,304	+ 230
Kesteven	754	504	- 250	1,174	795	- 379	765	688	- 77
Lindsey	2,629	1,932	- 697	3,654	3,090	- 564	1,903	2,032	+ 129
Middlesex	501	284	- 217	650	295	- 355	322	157	- 165
Mosmouthshire	809	715	- 94	1,331	1,128	- 203	986	920	- 66
Norfolk	3,599	3,055	- 544	3,534	3,266	- 268	2,306	2,489	+ 183
Northamptonshire	942	575	- 367	1,150	772	- 378	779	671	- 108
Nottinghamshire	1,401	1,157	- 244	1,953	1,442	- 511	1,146	973	- 173
Oxfordshire	678	634	- 44	1,069	675	- 394	618	546	- 72
Peterborough,									
Soke of	207	110	- 97	203	98	- 105	113	95	- 18
Rutland	145	66	- 79	209	105	- 104	150	131	- 19
Shropshire	2,731	2,117	- 614	3,663	3,196	- 467	1,521	1,854	+ 333
Somerset	3,468	2,428	- 1,040	3,537	2,879	- 658	2,435	2,591	+ 156
Staffordshire	2,673	1,593	- 1,080	3,703	2,813	- 890	2,179	2,159	- 20
Suffolk—									
East	1,023	981	- 42	993	921	- 72	835	825	- 10
West	686	601	- 85	602	513	- 89	476	426	- 50
Surrey	1,175	755	- 420	1,408	942	- 466	781	601	- 180
Sussex—									
East	1,104	940	- 164	1,640	1,505	- 135	1,079	1,048	- 31
West	725	540	- 185	816	694	- 122	543	559	+ 16
Warwickshire	1,582	1,053	- 529	2,119	1,592	- 527	1,210	1,093	- 117
Westmorland	402	301	- 101	690	435	- 255	758	618	- 120
Wight, Isle of	216	178	- 38	305	216	- 89	199	205	+ 6
Wiltshire	1,480	1,117	- 363	1,685	1,207	- 478	1,028	1,095	+ 67
Worcestershire	2,827	2,393	- 434	2,456	2,169	- 287	1,088	1,168	+ 80
Yorkshire—									
East Riding	1,666	1,130	- 536	1,720	1,304	- 416	960	926	- 34
North Riding	2,574	1,487	- 1,087	3,231	2,385	- 846	1,992	1,889	- 103
West Riding	5,275	3,619	- 1,656	8,978	6,357	- 2,621	5,377	4,562	- 815

TYPES OF FARMING

The fully-equipped small holding takes one of four principal forms: the market-garden holding of a few acres, with a cottage, but needing no permanent buildings except perhaps a shed or two and a pig sty; the poultry holding; the mixed holding or the dairy holding, either of them up to 50 acres and each equipped with cottage, and the appropriate buildings. The two latter are just mixed farms or dairy farms in miniature.

Dairy Holdings.—The 50-acre dairy holding has always been one of the most popular. The individual attention needed for dairy work makes it particularly suitable for a man and his wife and family, and the profits of milk retailing, particularly before the introduction of the Milk Marketing Scheme, were attractive, even though the work was hard and continuous. Small holdings of this type are compact miniature farms. On new holdings there is a large cottage with dairy attached, cowshed with standings for up to a dozen cows, or more in Wiltshire or Cheshire, a box or two, calf house, stable and food houses. Very often, however, the existing buildings of the large farm out of which the small holdings are carved have to be divided amongst two or more tenants, and adapted for their purposes.

Many small holders following this type of farming retail the milk which they produce, particularly in the industrial districts of the Midlands and North. They are often, too, the sole suppliers of many village communities, particularly since some of the larger dairy farmers who produce mainly for the wholesale market will not apply for the retailers' licences now needed if only small quantities are sold retail. But to maintain a dairy herd on a small acreage calls for skilful management and considerable capital, for an outbreak of contagious abortion or other disease may ruin the proprietors of these little milk factories. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the tendency is to add to the size of the holdings on any opportunity, and this accounts, in the main, for

the great increase in the number of holdings in the 50 to 100-acre group. The larger the holding, the greater the proportion of the food for the dairy cows that can be home-grown, and extra acres are often taken by the small dairy holder in the name of the wife or of a son, bringing the combined holding well above the statutory 50-acre limit.

The popularity of the small dairy holding owes a good deal, no doubt, to the relative profitability of milk production. The index number for the price of milk in December, 1934, was 171, by contrast with one of 113 for all agricultural products included in the index.* Cows, too, need constant personal care, and no one can give it better than their owner. On the other hand, the care of the cow and of the milking equipment call for the exercise of skill which can only be acquired by long experience, so that this, probably the most profitable form of small farming, is useless for the purposes of land settlement under a "back to the land" policy.

Mixed Holdings.—While dairying is one of the most important types of small farming, it is also a highly specialised business, and it is the "mixed" holding which accounts, probably, for the greatest number of full-time small holdings in the country. Naturally, the arrangement and exact production of farms of this type cannot be stated, for they vary on different soils and under different market conditions and according to the particular aptitudes of their tenants.

The marketable output of the mixed farms is small by contrast with that of the dairy specialists, because there is a greater dependence upon home-grown hay, green crops and corn for stock-foods, and less upon purchased feeding stuffs, and this reduces, of course, the numbers of livestock which can be maintained per unit of land. But if their output is lower, so also are their costs.

The mixed farm is manifested in almost every conceivable combination. Generally, there is one product

* "Agricultural Market Report," January, 1935 (H.M. Stationery Office).
The years 1911-13 = 100.

which provides most of the cash income, the other activities being subsidiary to it, but each of them contributing something to the total returns and essential to the main enterprise. Milk production and sale is, perhaps, the branch of greatest general importance, and stock-raising comes second to it. Corn-growing for the market is not a considerable part of mixed farming on small holdings, for the scale is too small for the employment of machinery, and the farmer's labour can be more profitably employed.

On the mixed holding the work is strenuous, and it calls for knowledge of many branches of farming. Only those brought up to it can derive a living from it, for the financial results are not spectacular. Indeed, the indications are that the small mixed holdings are fighting a losing battle, for there are few of the operations involved in their management which cannot be performed more cheaply on a larger scale. Moreover, they are in competition with the bigger farmers for the same markets. It was estimated in 1932 that the family income of an East Anglian holding of the 20 to 50-acre type, with an average capital of £450, was only £91. This included the wheat subsidy and the sum of £37 to represent the value of farm produce consumed by the household.*

Market-garden Holdings.—The tendency of the small dairy farms and of the mixed farms is towards larger units, and of the two, the dairying type is the more intensive. There is, however, another type of small holding more intensively farmed than any other, and in smaller units. This is the market-garden holding. In good times a man can support himself by his own labour on so little as 3 acres of land devoted to vegetables; if he has more than 5 acres, he is often an employer of labour. Every kind of hardy vegetable and soft fruit is cultivated, in one part of the country or another, but market-garden holdings are concentrated in certain well-defined areas,

* "An Economic Survey of Agriculture in the Eastern Counties of England," 1932, p. 20 (Cambridge Report, No. 21).

determined by soil, climate and ready access to the industrial market. Soil is perhaps the least important of these three factors, though the cultivation of some crops, such as asparagus, is limited by it; but, in most places where climate is favourable and transport facilities are good, the soil can be manipulated to do what is required of it. Climate is of the first importance to the market-gardener, for the ability to have his produce on the market a few days earlier than the main supplies may make a difference of 100 per cent. in its price. But neither a suitable soil nor a favourable climate will avail him unless he has speedy access to the big consuming centres. Much of his produce is highly perishable, and its value is determined largely by the freshness of its appearance on the market.

Thus market-gardening is always in evidence round all the big towns, where access to market over-rides all other factors. On the other hand, the climate of Cornwall is so favourable to small culture that its remoteness from the principal markets is no obstacle, while soil and climate together account for the concentration of strawberry-growing in places such as the neighbourhood of Southampton, Cheddar and the Tamar Valley. Tradition, too, has been responsible for at least one important market-gardening area, for the monks of Evesham were encouraging their tenants in the art of horticulture centuries before the industrial towns of the Midlands and North had risen to provide a great market for the produce of the Vale.

The land of the market-gardener is always under crop; he cannot afford to have it otherwise. Spring, summer and winter vegetables follow in quick succession, and when the crop is ready, it must go. There can be no holding back for better prices. A night's frost, a drought, or prolonged wet, may ruin a crop altogether, but the biggest vicissitude confronting the grower is the market—particularly that for soft fruits. Prices fall very quickly as supplies increase. Two days may mean the difference between his getting adequate returns for his

costs of production or having to dump the crop on a saturated market.

Taking the industry as a whole, there is practically nowhere any organisation of growers for marketing their produce. A few of them may hawk their own mixed produce round the suburbs, but the bulk of it has to travel to its market. Moreover, there is much specialisation in production by districts, and the Cornish flower or broccoli growers and the Hampshire strawberry growers, for example, can only resort to the big commission agents in the main centres of population, where they can exercise no control either of supplies or of prices, being sure only of one thing, namely, that it is they who take all the risks of the market. It is a common remark among these small producers that they cannot count upon more than one good season in four, but given this they can keep their heads above water.

The market for vegetable produce has undoubtedly increased as the desire for a more varied dietary has extended to all classes of society. But food of this kind is still a semi-luxury for many, and the demand fluctuates with the rise and fall of the purchasing power of the industrial classes. Then, too, the low price level for the main agricultural staples has led many ordinary farmers into vegetable production on a large scale. The extension of the acreage under Brussels sprouts, for example, from 16,910 acres in 1923 to 35,890 acres in 1933, does not represent an increase in the market gardens so much as the entry of the big farmer into the market-garden business. At the present time, the small growers are severely depressed, largely as the result of this competition. On a County Council estate it is recorded that market-garden tenants, who retailed their produce in a small industrial town, find it more profitable to-day to give up production and to supply their customers' needs by consignments sent down by rail from the Covent Garden salesmen.

It is suggested, sometimes, that on this type of small holding the tenant can produce a good deal of his own food. On most market gardens this is a fallacy. If the

man is a specialist, a strawberry-grower, for example, this is obvious, and if he is producing mixed crops, each comes on in due season, and can make only the smallest contribution to the family dietary. An Evesham grower cannot live on the spring onions which he is drawing for the Midland market, nor on the scarlet-runners which form a large part of his summer output, nor on the winter leeks which go (oddly enough) in great quantity not into Wales, but to Glasgow. Except for potatoes, the proportion of vegetables in the family dietary is small, and even if doubled or trebled, it would not be important. The smaller the area under cultivation, the larger must be the proportion of the produce which goes to market, to produce the cash income needed for rent, tools, seeds and manures, as well as for the clothing, groceries and meat for the family; and the greater the competition for the market, the lower is the proportion of the output which can be retained. In fact, the market-garden type of small holding can make no larger contribution to the family food supply than any rural worker can get already from a good cottage garden or a garden allotment. Indeed, many such produce a surplus, as is shown by the success, in some counties, of the market stalls of the Women's Institutes, established to provide an outlet for the surplus vegetables, eggs, etc., of their members.

On the other hand, it is true that the art of the small market gardener can be acquired more quickly, probably, than that of the dairy farmer or the small mixed farmer. All rural workers and many urban dwellers cultivate a garden or an allotment, and while not depreciating the skill exhibited by so many of the small growers, their science is a more exact one, and there is nothing in it which quite demands anything like that "eye for stock" with which the cow-keeper and the mixed farmer must be endowed. True, the gift of the "green finger" is not vouchsafed to all men in equal degree; but the standard of performance exhibited on any group of garden allotments suggests that skill in market gardening can be acquired fairly quickly. Against this, however, if it be

used as an argument for the multiplication of holdings devoted to the production of market crops, must be placed the economic disabilities recited above, and in the face of these it is not surprising that the evidence both of the national "Agricultural Statistics" and of the records of many County Councils show that the number of holdings of 5 acres and under is dwindling.

Poultry Holdings.—As noted already, the most remarkable of post-war developments in small holdings has been in poultry keeping, for the production of eggs rather than for table birds. For some reason, the movement has been particularly identified with the county of Lancashire. As a small-holdings industry, intensive or semi-intensive methods are essential. To keep birds in any number on free range or in Mr. Hosier's arks, is a branch of mixed farming, and it can be practised only on farms beyond the 50-acre limit.

There seems no doubt that the intensive poultry specialists did well in the early years. In the winter months of 1919, for example, eggs were making 5s. a dozen in the wholesale market.* Since that time, the increase of production, changes in the value of money and the reduction of the consumer's purchasing power, has brought the price down, and in the corresponding months of 1934 it was 2s. per dozen.† There is a general complaint that profits are hard to make. Moreover, there is a doubt whether the system of keeping poultry as thickly as they can be stocked in houses on a small plot of land, or that of running them semi-intensively on a few acres of grass land which quickly becomes saturated with droppings, are practices which can persist. Such flocks on many holdings are being ravaged by disease. A holding came under notice recently on which a flock of 10,000 birds was reduced by *coccidiosis* to about 6,000 birds in a few months, and it may well be that the constitution of the birds becomes so reduced when they are kept in such close confinement as to jeopardise the whole

* "Agricultural Market Report," 1919 (H.M. Stationery Office).

† *Ibid.*, 1934.

future of intensive poultry keeping. Unless some remedy for this and other diseases which afflict birds kept under these conditions can be found, it is almost certain that the cost of replacement of flocks will prove too high to be economic.

A small stock of poultry, even at the prices prevailing for eggs during the past year, may be an asset on any small holding, chiefly, perhaps, for self-supply, but there seems little scope for any increase in the number of poultry specialists in a back-to-the-land policy.

Cottage Holdings.—There is still another type of holding for which there is a good demand, particularly in the Home Counties. It comprises a house and an acre or so of land, cultivated for garden crops, combined, perhaps, with a few poultry and sometimes a pig. Such holdings, even under the most intensive form of cultivation, cannot provide full-time occupation. The demand for them comes from persons mainly employed in some other work, and from pensioners from the railways, police, post office and so on, seeking light occupation in their retirement, and a small supplementary income. For the purpose of a full-time livelihood, this type has proved the most disappointing of any.

CHAPTER IV

THE STATUTORY SMALL HOLDERS

IT is necessary, now, to examine the experiences of the small holders established under the various Acts, so as to draw some conclusions upon the conditions of success or failure. From what environment were they drawn? What capital had they to invest? In what districts have they been most successful? What types of farming have they preferred? What has been the acreage needed to provide a living under these types? The answers to these questions should provide essential information if statutory land settlement in the future is to be anything more than a voyage of discovery in which the lives of the crew are at stake.

The review of the experiences of small farmers which follows leaves out of account the far greater number, who live as tenants of private landowners. The "Agricultural Statistics" enumerated 247,356 holdings of 50 acres or less, in 1933, and of these, no more than some 30,000 are under public administration. It is suggested, however, that while a survey of the social origins and economic circumstances of the small farmers on private estates might be of great interest, it would throw no light on the problems of the extension of small farming under public authorities. For the circumstances of the private holdings and their tenants are no parallel for those of the County Council or the State-aided association. Like the larger farms, the cost of equipping the privately owned small holdings, borne by landlords long dead, is no consideration to-day. These little farms are let, as they become vacant, for what they will fetch, and the original costs of land purchase and division of the houses and the buildings—charges which stand out in the finance of

land settlement by public authorities—have long been forgotten.

In the selection of the tenant, too, the conditions afford no parallel. On the private estate the landlord will select a farm worker of the locality who has saved some money, or a farmer's son from his own or a neighbouring estate. In either case, the applicant is well versed in local farming practice, and his personality and character are well-known. There is no question of taking a chance with a man from another trade or another locality. Least of all is there any question of using the small farms on the private estates as contributions to the solution of unemployment. If there is to be any fresh effort, then, to extend the area occupied in small units, it is to the experience of the County Councils and their tenants that we must look for guidance rather than to that of the far larger number who are settled on private estates.

The sizes of holdings for which applications are made to the County Councils vary considerably. Applicants in the agricultural group* usually look for the biggest acreage, in fact, demands for farms up to 80 acres have been common in recent years. Townspeople seldom want more than 10 acres, being chiefly interested in land near the town and hoping to get a living from market gardening. But a fair number of agricultural labourers are applicants for the smaller holdings, particularly in those counties where market gardening is well developed. Applicants from the group of "other rural occupations" differ in their requirements, some wanting full-time, and others part-time holdings.

Applicants rarely get holdings of the size for which they ask. One reason is that the demand is too often localised and the applicant is not prepared to move from a certain area. This demand even takes the form, sometimes, of requests for particular fields or holdings. Out of a sample of 151 applicants settled in one county since the war, 76 wished for land in a limited area, while 56

* See Table on p. 63.

specified the holdings that they wanted, and only 16 were willing to go anywhere.

Applicants are often given smaller areas, notwithstanding that their capital may be sufficient for the larger areas that they want. The mistake of giving men too small a plot of land is shown by the demand for more land which comes so often from a settled small holder, and by the steady progress made in the amalgamation of holdings.

The equipment of the statutory small holdings has undergone a marked change of recent years. Before the War, bare-land holdings, that is to say, fields let just as they were acquired, without houses or buildings, were very common, the tenant being someone already living in the vicinity. These were often accommodation land, holdings let to persons in the villages as adjuncts to their principal occupations, or for part-time work, but in market-gardening districts they were also common. Holdings of this kind could be provided at the minimum of cost. The objection to them was that they were often difficult to re-let after the first tenants had given them up. New applicants were not always forthcoming who lived near enough and who wanted holdings of the size and nature that had commended them to their first tenants. The tendency of recent years has been to amalgamate these small parcels of land and to equip them with houses and buildings suited to occupation by a resident tenant.

APPLICANTS

The Small Holdings Committees of the County Councils consist of practical men—landowners, farmers and farm workers for the most part—familiar with the hard life of the small holder and with no illusions about the glamour with which peasant life is sometimes invested by those who have no experience of it. They know that the small holder is generally ill-supplied with cash capital, that there is no credit organisation available to him as there is in some countries, that he suffers all the economic disadvantages of small-scale organisation, and

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they know that he can overcome these disabilities only by exceptional industry and force of character. And so the applicants for County Council holdings have always been very carefully sifted to eliminate those unfamiliar with hard work on the land. As an example, an examination has been made of the previous occupations of men settled on County Council holdings since 1919, and of applicants approved by the Small Holdings Committees and waiting for settlement, in a group of five counties.

**PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF MEN SETTLED OR APPROVED
FOR SETTLEMENT IN FIVE ENGLISH COUNTIES**

Previous occupations.	Numbers settled.	Percentage of total.	Numbers approved.	Percentage of total.
Farmers	29	6.12	37	12.01
Farmers' sons	19	4.01	8	2.6
Small-holders	69	14.56	63	20.45
Small-holders' sons	20	4.22	4	1.3
Farm labourers	145	30.59	66	21.43
Farm bailiffs	10	2.11	11	3.57
Farm pupils	6	1.25	2	0.65
Miscellaneous	4	0.84	0	0.0
Total agricultural occupations	302	63.71	191	62.01
Other rural occupations	77	16.25	42	13.64
Urban occupations	61	12.87	49	15.91
Miscellaneous occupations	34	7.17	26	8.44
Total all occupations	474	100.0	308	100.0

It is evident that " farm labourers " desirous of making a start supply the greatest number of recruits to the land settlement schemes. How these men contrive to save the

necessary capital will always be a mystery, but they do it, and cases are not uncommon of farmers who have started thus and have succeeded in settling their sons in farms out of their later savings.

The next largest class are "small holders," and this is significant, for it represents a demand for more land to add to their original small holdings to make larger farms. This land hunger on the part of small farmers is very real, and in most counties, as has been shown, there is a well-pronounced tendency towards the reduction in the number of the smallest class of holdings, those below 20 acres, and an increase of size in the farms of the larger groups.*

Applicants amongst "farmers' sons" and "small holders' sons" are less numerous than might be expected. Farmers' sons, probably, go into other occupations or are settled by their fathers in larger farms; the sons of the small holder also change their occupation, or else they are debarred from starting on their own account on the land by lack of capital.

The small proportion of "farm bailiffs" amongst the applicants suggests that their economic position is sounder, probably, than that of the small holder, or that when they surrender the security of a salary for an adventure on their own account, they want something larger than a County Council small holding.

That there should be a fair demand from "other rural occupations" is not surprising. In many villages, the turnover from businesses of all kinds is often small and the tradesman is not fully occupied, so that a small holding in the vicinity, affording part-time employment and a supplementary income, is valuable. Village inn-keepers, carriers, butchers, blacksmiths, carpenters and builders, etc., come into this category.

The demand from "urban occupations" comes chiefly from those who cannot get regular work in their normal employment, or who are dissatisfied with it, and possibly from a few people born and raised in the country

* See p. 46.

who have a genuine desire to return to it. Most of the applicants in this group want a few acres of suburban land outside their own towns where they hope to make a living from fruit, flowers and market gardening, while still enjoying many of the amenities of town life.

A simple average of the ages of all categories shows thirty-six years for those settled and 38·9 years for those approved. More analysis would be needed of the range of the age classes before the figure could usefully be discussed, but with the biggest group falling between the ages of thirty-five and forty, it is fair to assume that this represents the age by which most men had acquired both the capital and the experience needed for land management on their own account as well as a growing family to help them.

The foregoing figures are derived from intensive studies of statutory land settlement made in a group of five counties. The experiences of the counties differ, of course, with the differences in their agriculture, population, accessibility and so on. As an example, however, the results of the study of the Council holdings and their tenants, in one of them, are now given:—

TYPES OF FARMING

A classification of 143 holdings, made in 1932, provided the analysis shown in table on page 62.

TYPES OF TENANT

Of these holdings, 100 were in the hands of full-time tenants, 31 were occupied by part-time small holders, 7 were rented by men who had other farms and were not strictly small holders, 4 were let to allotment societies for subdivision in small plots, and the history of one has not been determined. A full equipment of cottages and buildings was provided on 84 holdings, 12 were partially equipped and 43 were bare land. There were 10 holdings in the size group 1 to 5 acres; 46 holdings from

Type.	Number.	Total.
Dairy specialists	—	48
Mixed farming, viz. :—		
Corn and dairying	11	
Corn and stock-raising	11	
Stock-raising and dairying	8	
Corn, stock-raising and dairying	2	
Stock-raising and poultry	1	
Corn and poultry	1	
Corn and market-gardening	2	
	—	36
Stock-raising		25
Corn-growing		8
Market-gardening		17
Poultry-keeping		3
Gardens		2
Group-allotments		4
		—
All types		143

5 to 20 acres ; 61 from 20 to 50 acres ; and 26 holdings over 50 acres. Further subdivision shows that there are 18 holdings of 5 to 10 acres against 28 from 10 to 20 acres. It is manifest that the demand for holdings of less than 10 acres is very small, and that here, at all events, any attempt at further land settlement on holdings of this size would have to be an experiment in some type of production entirely new, without any local experience to guide it.

The twenty-six holdings of over 50 acres represent amalgamations of smaller farms.

Apart from this, the most striking points about these holdings are, first, the pre-eminence of dairy farming ; second, the high proportion of bare-land holdings ; and third, the large number of part-timers amongst the tenants. The importance of the part-time holding in rural economy is not always realised. The main occupations of these

thirty-one tenants, who form more than 20 per cent. of the whole, were as follows :—

Carriers and hauliers	8
Coal merchants	4
Plate-layers and railway workers	3
Post Office linesmen	3
Blacksmiths	2

and the occupations of auctioneer, inn-keeper, builder, bricklayer, postman, farm worker, gardener, mill hand, "retired," one each, while the two remaining were not identified.

This analysis may be compared with one of some 4,000 holdings in Carmarthenshire, made in 1925, which showed that about 46 per cent. of their tenants had some additional employment.* A further analysis, made in 1931, for an area near Edinburgh, showed that, of 1,165 holdings containing not more than 50 acres of land, no fewer than 917 were in the occupation of part-timers or of persons with other sources of income.†

A classification of the origins of 150 tenants settled on holdings of all kinds since the War, and another of the approved applicants, sixty in number, still unsettled, showed their origins to be :—

Previous Occupations.	Settled : per-centage of total.	Applicants : per-centage of total.
Agricultural	65	67
Other rural	16	10
Urban	12	12
Miscellaneous	7	11
	100	100

* Thomas, E., "The Economics of Small Holdings," pp. 26-30 (Cambridge University Press).

† King, J. S., "The Profitableness of Farming in Scotland." Report on the financial results obtained on certain groups of farms in Scotland in 1928-29 (Department of Agriculture for Scotland, 1931), pp. 127-29.

So it appears that some four-fifths of the men settled and nearly as many of the applicants approved are drawn from the rural community, and that the movement "back to the land" is represented by no more than one-fifth. It might be supposed that the high proportion of men coming forward from the country was an indication of the steadying effect of the small holding on the agricultural population. This deduction, however, is not warranted, anyhow in this county, for the biggest part of the agricultural demand comes from farmers (16 per cent. of the whole sample) and from small holders (17 per cent. of the whole sample) wanting more land, and not from the labouring classes. This demand from existing small holders is evidence, however, of the agricultural ladder. They have been successful on a small area, and they want to go up. The number of holdings which have been divided amongst neighbouring tenants when they fall vacant suggests that the original size of many of these holdings was too small.

The demand from farm workers was about one-fifth of the whole, and this might appear satisfactory to those who believe that agricultural labourers can use the small holding as a stepping-stone. These men do not take part-time holdings, but they become small farmers outright.

The demand from those in other rural occupations is mainly for cottage holdings or for a little land by which to supplement another income.

The analysis of the urban demand is of considerable interest at the present time. As has been shown, it was small, and the applicants proved to be, almost exclusively, dairymen or gardeners—men, that is to say, who were already connected in some way with agriculture.

Another feature of the demand which has been noted already,* is that it was highly localised. If this immobility should be general over the country, it would add to the difficulties of any attempt to colonise the country from the depressed areas.

* See p. 57.

The ages of these tenants at the time of settlement ranged from twenty to sixty-four years. Thirty-five per cent. of them were between thirty and forty years and 65 per cent. between twenty-four and forty-four years. The farmers' and the small holders' sons averaged under thirty years of age, while the tenants derived from the agricultural labourer class averaged about five years older.

Of the settlers drawn from rural occupations other than farm work, the average age was thirty-five. This represents the age, no doubt, when the men have been able to establish themselves firmly in their country businesses and are looking round for opportunities to increase their income in one way or another.

The settlers of urban origin, mostly dairymen and gardeners, average thirty-eight years of age.

CAPITAL RESOURCES

The amount of capital in the hands of tenants, settled or applying, is remarkable. On all the holdings in the county the average was about £13 an acre, but amongst applicants this figure now shows an all-round reduction, explained in part, no doubt, by the fall in the prices of farm requisites.

THE DURATION OF TENANCIES

The duration of tenancies under the County Councils is not necessarily a guide to success or failure. A man may give up a holding because it has beaten him or because he has done well and has the opportunity of taking a larger or a better place. But when the causes of quitting are known, a record of the duration of tenancies may have great interest.

In this, as in other counties, there has been a good deal of amalgamation and re-grouping of holdings. For the purpose of this analysis, therefore, the tenancies have been put into two categories—those “unchanged” and those “amalgamated.” Again, the differences in the economic conditions of the pre-War and the post-War

years have suggested a further subdivision to show the changes in these periods.

CHANGES IN TENANCIES, 1909-31

Holdings.	Number of holdings.	Tenancy changes.	Changes per holding.	Life of tenancy (years).
Pre-War { size unchanged.	51	116	2.27	10.64
	25	39	1.56	10.13
Post-War { size unchanged	55	108	1.95	6.75
	10	20	2.0	5.65

The greater stability of the pre-War holdings is manifest, as might be expected.

The frequency distribution of the changes in all tenancies shows that tenants are most prone to move during the first seven years. There are many reasons for this, but death, ill-health or removal to a larger holding do not account for the majority, and financial troubles are the chief cause. If these men, living under the sympathetic administration of a County Council, experienced in farming, carefully chosen and well-equipped with capital, are in such difficulty, the prospects of industrial workers, inexperienced and with inadequate resources, for a life on the land are discouraging.

A significant fact is that the tenancy with the longest life occurs on the isolated holding. It is amongst the small holding colonies, where advantages from co-operation and association might be expected to give additional strength, that changes are most frequent.

Another interesting feature is the dominance of certain families on some of the estates, showing how most of the success in farming, as in other walks of life, is due to personality. Two brothers may have started in the early years of land settlement; in the post-War period their

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sons appear, taking over vacant holdings nearby, and by inter-marriage two families have been known thus to get a complete hold on one estate.

It seems fairly certain that most of the County Council settlers of whatever type have begun their tenancies with reasonable capital resources, either in cash or in stock. Statements of capital resources are not easily compiled, because of a natural reluctance on the part of the applicant to make a full disclosure of his financial standing. Compared with ordinary farming standards, capital adequate to the working of the holdings has been the rule rather than the exception.

CHAPTER V

THE LESSONS OF LAND SETTLEMENT

THERE is nothing, probably, that the small holder does which the larger farmer cannot do better. Most labour-saving machinery is beyond his means, and could he afford to buy it, the scale of his operations is too small to make use of it enough to earn interest on capital thus invested. Nor can this difficulty be overcome by co-operation amongst small holders to purchase machinery. There is something in the lives of these small farmers which seems to associate success with the fiercest individualism, and even if co-operation could be secured, the problem of the simultaneous demand for the fruit-tree sprayer, for the cabbage planter, for the small caterpillar tractor and cultivators, etc., would still have to be solved.

It is often suggested that the personal attention given to livestock on the small holding is of a higher order than that which is supplied by the hired worker, but such a generalisation cannot be substantiated. Devotion to stock and aptitude in their management are natural gifts vouchsafed or denied to individuals regardless of their status, and while many small holders possess these gifts in the highest degree, it is equally true that the horsemen, stockmen or shepherds on many a large farm may claim as much. Indeed, the success of most exhibitors at agricultural shows is due as much to their servants' skill and devotion as to the masters' judgment and supervision.

In the purchase of requisites, the small holder is at a disadvantage. He is rarely in a position to profit either by transport rates for full truck loads, or by cash discounts. The only credit usually available to him is merchant credit, and while it must be remembered that the advocates of intensive land settlement propose to

organise both the purchase of requisites in bulk and the supply of credit, it must not be forgotten that the well-wishers of the small farmer have been attempting this, without conspicuous success, any time these thirty years.

Nor is the small holder better served in the disposal of his produce. Here and there may be found co-operative selling agencies which bulk and grade the produce of their members and find markets for it, and the disposal of milk and bacon pigs is now provided for, under the respective Marketing Boards. But for market-garden produce, fruit, potatoes and eggs, the small holder suffers from all the disabilities inseparable from the sale of small consignments of ungraded produce on the wholesale market.

The small holder and his family enjoy no protection under the statutory regulation of hours of labour. There is no Saturday half-holiday for them, no overtime pay, no special rates for Sunday work. When the time worked by the small holder and his family is priced at the current rates of the Agricultural Wages Board, it is often found that their actual labour income is far below that which they would have earned had they been working for wages.*

Against this, it can be argued that the small holder is working for himself and that the eight-hour-day means nothing to him if there is work to be done on his holding. He is his own master, his home is not a tied cottage, and he cannot lose his employment at a week's notice. His standard of life is that of the farm worker, but in status he is a farmer. Often he may feel that his foot is on the ladder, and sometimes, as will presently appear, he moves up it.

* "It's nothing but work, work, work, morning, noon and night. I'm about sick of it all. But it's no use, we have to go on. I will tell something of what I did during the past summer and autumn. Of course, we are short-handed; most of the boys get into the nearest towns these days, and we are in the same fix as other holdings. The women are expected to take the place of the boys and do their own work as well. . . ."—"The Countrywoman on her Day's Work on a Small Holding." (*The Countryman*, Vol. XI., No. 2, 1935, p. 609.)

Success is a family concern, to which the small holder's wife and children must contribute. Whereas the wage-earner has no more than a living, they have also a way of life. It is this, coupled with the hope that is realised only by a few of them, of advancement, which leads them to endure and sometimes to overcome all the disabilities of small-scale organisation. Land reformers who would settle men in tens of thousands on the land, must be prepared to find them in these numbers inspired with the desire to live their lives in this way, however narrow their circumstances, if their efforts towards agricultural reconstruction and the relief of industrial distress are to do more than re-people the countryside with disillusioned and resentful communities.

It is important to have a clear idea of the place of the small holder in English rural life to-day. Unfortunately, it is impossible to estimate his numerical importance with any accuracy. The number of persons classified as "farmers" in the "Census" bears no relation to the number of agricultural holdings enumerated in the "Agricultural Statistics," nor is there any statement of the proportion of the total area under crops and grass which is occupied in holdings of not more than 50 acres.

A rough approximation may be made by assuming that the holdings in the group, 1 to 5 acres, average $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres; that those in the group, 5 to 20 acres, average $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres; and that those in the group, 20 to 50 acres, average 36 acres. The total cultivated area of England and Wales, in 1933, was 25,119,648 acres, and, on this assumption, some 4,123,582 acres, or no more than 16.41 per cent., was occupied in holdings not exceeding 50 acres.

It is quite plain, therefore, that the small holding, important as its part may be in the social life of rural England, is only a very minor factor in its economic life. Nor could any conceivable increase in the number

materially alter this position, ruling out as impracticable the fantastic figures that are sometimes suggested.

For what are the broad facts? At the last census, in 1931, the total population engaged in agriculture was 1,172,256, and the total cultivated area in the same year was 25,283,320 acres. Thus 21.5 acres of land was needed to give employment to each person in the industry. It is not very much, and social reformers who wish to settle men in tens of thousands on the land will be hard put to it to show that this area can be reduced without an accompanying reduction in the land-workers' standard of living.

This is not to say that the place and function of the small holder in rural life is unimportant. Those who can claim some knowledge of the organisation of agriculture throughout the country are aware that there is considerable segregation of the smaller and of the larger farmers. For while every county in England has its mixture of farms of all sizes, there is a definite tendency towards a concentration of the larger holdings in the eastern half of England and of the smaller ones in the western half. This is true, particularly, if we substitute for the acreage classification which limits the small holding to a maximum of 50 acres, a classification by labour organisation, which would define it as one which is cultivated, in the main, by the farmer and his relatives, with little or no dependence on hired labour. It is true that the majority of holdings not exceeding 50 acres are of the latter type, for although 50 acres of glass-houses or of market-garden land are highly capitalised undertakings, employing much hired labour and suggesting nothing of that which is understood by a small holding, such businesses are relatively few. But it is equally true that there are many holdings of more than 50 acres on which the whole of the work is done by the farmer and his family, and these are small holdings in every sense, for, from the standpoint of economic organisation, the small holding is synonymous with the family-farm, quite regardless of its acreage.

Discarding for the moment, then, the arbitrary 50-acre limit, and considering small holdings under this new definition, the analysis of the population census for the counties of England and Wales shows that there are wide divergences between them in the numbers of "relatives assisting" on the land, and this gives a measure of the economic organisation. Where farms are larger, the farmer's dependence is mainly on wage labour; where they are small, his wife, children and other relatives divide the bulk of the work with him. The proportion borne by "relatives assisting" to the total number of persons employed in agriculture in England and Wales has been calculated at 13.5 per cent. But in the four eastern counties, Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, this percentage ranged from no more than 4.6 in the first-named, to 6.1 in the last; on the other hand, in the four Welsh counties, Glamorgan, Merioneth, Cardigan and Carmarthen, the range lay between 28.1 per cent. and 44.8 per cent., and in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall it ran from 16.7 to 24.7 per cent.* These counties, east and west, mark the extreme variations, but a full analysis justifies the generalisation that capitalist farming is a manifestation of the eastern half, and that family-farming, that is to say, true small holdings, are more characteristic of the western half of the country.

Capitalist farming was a development, very largely, of the last century, and it was associated with arable farming and corn-growing. While the repeal of the Corn Laws, in 1846, had little effect on the fortunes of arable farming for the next thirty years, it opened the country to the flood of cheap wheat which followed the organisation of transport from the North American prairies and the introduction of the reaper-and-binder. The consequent depression in prices in the 'eighties and 'nineties hit the capitalist farmers, with their weekly wages bills and their high standard of living, very hard. Many of them went out of farming, and there began a migration of hard-

* For a fuller statement, see Lorrain Smith, E., "Go East for a Farm; a Study of Rural Migration" (Clarendon Press), pp. 23, 24.

working, thrifty family-farmers from the West of England, from Wales, from Lancashire and from South-west Scotland, into the depressed areas of capitalist arable farming. They came from districts in which there was a land hunger, and they moved into districts where land was cheap. They brought with them a lower standard of living and a higher standard of work than the men they followed. Incidentally, too, they were livestock and grass farmers, and they substituted these forms of husbandry for the less profitable arable systems which they found.

But the outstanding fact is that, like the Continental peasants, they were working farmers, tilling the soil and tending their livestock with the aid only of their own households. This, coupled with their habits of frugality and hard work, enabled them to live at a price level which had broken the capitalist farmers dependent on hired labour. The migration once begun has never stopped. It has been active or slow according to the economic conditions of the agricultural industry, but it has been constant to such an extent that there are places in the Midland and Eastern counties, to-day, where the majority of farmers are removed only by one generation from Devon or Somerset, from North Wales or Lancashire, or from South-west Scotland. And associated with this migration and rise of the family-farmers has been the rise, without the migration, of a certain number of them who are native in the areas predominantly devoted to capitalist farming.

The inference is that the family-farmer, the real small holder, is of fundamental importance in British rural economy. Indeed, he is its most permanent constituent member. His standard of living can never be high, for merely to maintain himself he must work long hours and deny himself and his family many things which the organised industrial worker no longer regards as luxuries. To advance, he must impose both upon himself and his family a degree of frugality which only those who know him can appreciate. But his position gives him a

stability which few producers of primary commodities enjoy. He is secure in his home and in his employment. His own health and strength are a large part of his capital equipment. A considerable part of his needs may be supplied from his farm, and his rent is the only heavy outgoing which is beyond his control. If times are bad, the margin between receipts and payments may be very small, but there is generally something, and his expenditure on his own living is adjusted accordingly. He knows nothing of the dead weight of the weekly wages bill, of the maintenance of expensive machinery equipment, and little of the cost of fertilisers and feeding stuffs, all of which tip the scales against the capitalist farmer in any long period of low prices.

These are the men who occupy much of the farming land in the western half of England, and, to a less extent, of the rest of the country. They are the fount of much of the farming stock of England. They can be classified only by their labour organisation, and even thus they present a variety of shades of difference, ranging from the smallest of their type, working 30 or 40 acres with such help as his wife can give, to the man on 150 acres or more, which he farms with two or three sons, or with a son and a hired man, all of them living together and working side by side. Genuine small holders every one of them, and successful when measured by the standard of life which satisfies them, but very different in every particular—upbringing, experience, character and physique—from the members of the industrial classes who would be involved in the movement "back to the land."

Observation, supported by such evidence as exists, suggests that agriculture, regarded as an industry, is inherently a one-man business. But this is only saying, probably, that large-scale organisation has never yet been tried in England. The stability, notwithstanding his obvious disabilities, of the small farmer of 40 or 50 acres is demonstrable, and it increases with the growth of his family and the extension of his acreage to the farthest limits that they can control. In the next stage, the

increase of acreage necessitates the hiring of some labour, and as this process evolves, the point is reached at which the hard-working family has given place, entirely, to the farmer-manager directing a hired labour force.

The evolution of farm management in England has not yet proceeded beyond this point. It is conceivable, but it still has to be demonstrated, that agriculture is no exception among industries, and that its further evolution to the stage at which financial and technical control become separate functions, while management is departmentalised and labour operations are specialised, would be justified in the results. It was the purpose of Dr. Addison's ill-fated Land Utilization Bill, 1931, to test the organisation of farming on these lines. But, so far as experience has gone, we can say no more than that in times of stress the larger farmers, who represent the half-way house between the family business and the joint-stock concern, have an economic weakness greater than that of their smaller neighbours.

From these observations it is not to be inferred that small holdings of *any* type enjoy an inherent strength. On the contrary, the experience of the County Councils, which has already been described, proves beyond question that it is only the larger of their small holdings which stand for security. Such holdings are rarely less than 20 acres in size, and they run often up to 100 acres. Many of them have been created by amalgamations of smaller ones, and all over the country the tendency is the same.

To sum up, although the opening sentence of this chapter holds good, namely, that there is nothing which the small holder does that the large farmer cannot do better, the fact remains that the capacity of the former to live hard, and his ability to adjust his expenditure to his income in times of stress, give him an advantage which has always carried him through bad times more successfully than his larger neighbour. In good times the best of his type are enabled to accumulate reserves and to start the ascent of the agricultural ladder. Be it clearly

understood, however, that such men are not urban industrial workers gone back to the land, nor village tradesmen with accommodation holdings, nor pensioners from the Post Office and the police eking out their weekly pay. They are men who have been bred on the land, sons of small farmers, or agricultural labourers who have saved some money. For the most part they are concerned with types of farming in which dairying or stock raising bulk larger than the cultivation of crops. The only generalisation permissible from their example is that there is a living on the land for the man who is bred to it and who can occupy so much of it as will employ him and his family, full-time, with little or no additional labour.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUTURE OF LAND SETTLEMENT

IN the opening chapter it was shown how land settlement by State action in this country since the passing of the old village community with the dawn of the nineteenth century, has been inspired, alternately, by the need to relieve *agricultural* unemployment and by the desire to give an opportunity to the farm worker. In the agricultural depression which followed the Treaty of Vienna in 1815, the Poor Law authorities were concerned to find land for agricultural labourers thrown out of employment. In the closing decades of that century and the early years of the twentieth, politicians were seeking to re-establish the small farmer, partly from the idea that he would use the land more intensively, and partly to give wage labour employed in agriculture some chance of advancement. To-day, we have got back to the first position, with this difference: that it is the unemployed *industrial* worker for whom an outlet is now sought in land settlement.

The position is interesting. Trade depression and the exploitation of labour was as acute in industry in the 'twenties and 'thirties of last century as in agriculture. But the solution of the difficulty for the industrial worker was found, ultimately, when general prosperity returned, in labour organisation and in legislation. Trades Unions and the Factory Acts protected the general standard of life, while the organisation of large-scale enterprise provided a ladder for the more skilled and the more intelligent of the workers. In agriculture, on the contrary, there was neither organisation nor legislation, throughout the nineteenth century, to protect the workers, while the small-scale organisation of farming gave so little opportunity for advancement that the farm labourer twenty years

of age had reached the limit of his progress. To-day the situation both in industry and in agriculture is exactly reversed. In industrial life neither the solidarity of labour, nor social legislation nor the evolution of joint-stock enterprise can secure to the worker either his standard of life or his opportunity to advance. Trades Unions, Factory Acts, Trusts and Combines—all are powerless to employ all the mass of men who have been brought into being by them, and who have been taught to look to them for life and living; in despair, their friends are trying to find a new life for some of them upon the land. In agriculture, on the other hand, the principles of collective bargaining and State regulation of conditions and hours of work, which did so much for the industrial worker in the nineteenth century, have only recently been applied, and the farm worker is looking to them and to further industrial control, such as the extension to farming of the principle of unemployment insurance, to give him reasonable conditions of life, rather than to the opportunity which might be vouchsafed to him under a land settlement scheme.

The industrialist is looking to a life on the land; the land worker is looking to more industrialism.

A CAREER FOR THE INDUSTRIAL UNEMPLOYED?

Let us be clear as to what should be the purpose of a new movement in land settlement. Is it to create a British peasantry or is it to provide an agricultural ladder? Is it to be relief work for the industrial unemployed, or is it to be their opportunity to a new life? The answers to these questions are by no means easy, but most speakers and writers are thinking, obviously, of some means for the alleviation of urban unemployment. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald talks of creating a balance between town and country. If this means that the urban population is top-heavy and a balance is to be re-established by moving a percentage of it into agricultural pursuits, it can only be done at immense expense to the State and at the sacrifice of the rural standard of living. The figures of the Land

Settlement Association and the experience of the County Councils show that to settle a man on his holding costs something like £1,000. Now, to redress the balance between town and country must mean the transfer of not less than half a million industrial workers to agriculture, if it means anything. Would any responsible statesman contemplate for an instant an expenditure of something like £500,000,000 on such a scheme? But imagine it done, and the one-time industrials established, each of them under his own vine and fig-tree—what sort of a life is there to be for them? Their number would add nearly 50 per cent. to the rural population, and no one, even with the most superficial knowledge of the conditions of rural industry, would think it possible to employ such an increase except at a heavy sacrifice of the standard of living.

For there is little possibility of arresting the decline in the area of available land. The withdrawal of so large a number of families from an industrial environment would be the withdrawal, in part, of an equal number from the market for the farmer's produce, even though, as unemployed, their consumption of fresh farm produce is deplorably low. They would add nothing to the demand for manufactured goods, so that their presence on the land would add nothing to reciprocal trade between town and country. In short, the produce of the same acreage would be called upon to maintain the greatly increased number of workers, and this could only be done at a proportionately lower level of comfort for all.

Alternatively, the State would have to associate its back-to-the-land policy with some form of protection of agriculture which would enhance the value of home produce. This, of course, could be adjusted so as to maintain the standard of life, but the cost of it would be paid by the general body of consumers, and the maintenance of rural standards would have been achieved by the depreciation of urban standards. It may be that the lunacy of economic nationalism will carry the country even to these lengths. It may be, on the other hand, that prolonged trade depression may necessitate, ulti-

mately, a general lowering of those standards of living which labour of all kinds so painfully established during the spacious days of peace and plenty.

So far, the only movement to settle the industrial worker on the land has been the formation of a State-aided charity to establish out-of-work miners upon market-garden holdings. The Land Settlement Association is supported by voluntary contributions, the amount of which, in any year, is doubled by the Government, to a figure not exceeding £75,000, though this may be increased from the funds available to the Commissioner for the Special Areas. Work of the kind which the association is doing should not be left to private benevolence. If the State has any belief at all in this land settlement policy it should be vigorously prosecuted, either by central or by local administration. If land settlement is to be a means of industrial relief, the issues involved are far too important and too serious to be left to casual charity.

So far as discussion has gone at present, the type of farming most favoured by the advocates of land settlement on the grand scale is the intensive cultivation, for one purpose or another, of very small holdings. The Land Settlement Association is establishing market gardening holdings combined with pig-feeding. A recent writer would create group holdings of five types, ranging from the one-acre glass-house holding to 5-acre holdings for market garden production or for market gardening plus poultry, or for pigs and poultry.* This writer claims to have "devised" these types of holdings, and while he produces budgets for each which show estimated profits from established holdings ranging from £74 up to £168 per annum, he suggests that a large-scale experiment should be tried before settling the 100,000 members of the unemployed for whom, he says, a life and a living can be found on the land. Similarly, the Land Settlement

* G. Herbert, M.B.E., "Can Land Settlement Solve Unemployment?" With Foreword by the Rt. Hon. David Lloyd George, O.M., M.P. (George Allen and Unwin Ltd.), 1935.

Association has been established primarily to experiment in land settlement. Now, a survey of land settlement in several counties of England has shown that it is almost impossible to conceive of any type of holding which is not already in being, and available for study. From the few square yards of darkness and manure which constitute the mushroom house, to the miniature mixed farm of 80 or 100 acres, every permutation and combination of farming systems, probably, is to be found, and the outstanding fact which emerges from a study of them is the weakness of the holding of 1 to 5 acres. Even in the counties which are prominently associated with market gardening, such as Worcestershire, Bedfordshire, Cornwall, etc., the decline in the number of holdings of 1 to 5 acres in the last twenty years is universal, and the summarised experience of the country as a whole during the six-year period 1924 to 1930, has already been quoted to show the decline in the number of market-garden holdings.*

Mr. F. A. Secrett, who speaks with the highest authority on market gardening, replying to a correspondent of *The Times*, in May, 1935, wrote as follows:—

“A visit to Covent Garden Market, Spitalfields, or any of the large provincial markets at 9 o'clock in the morning would be an object lesson to your correspondent. He would find vast quantities of beautiful fresh vegetables still unsold.

“Your correspondent mentions land settlement. The cheaper type of vegetable is already being over-produced, and leaves no room for further expansion. In a pamphlet on land settlement published by the Land Settlement Association, it is stated that each smallholder is to be given 100 Dutch lights for the production of early vegetables, but such a scheme is doomed to failure, as this work requires many years of experience before it can become profitable.”

It is true that Mr. Secrett goes on to suggest that small market-garden holdings to grow onions and brining vegetables might succeed, but only if a tariff of some $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. could be imposed on the imports on which the country now almost entirely depends.

* See p. 44.

In support of his experience, some specimen sales-notes for soft fruit, hard fruit and vegetables supplied by a grower in the Vale of Evesham district for the month of August, 1933, may be quoted to illustrate the vicissitudes of market gardening. This grower began in 1909 and did fairly well until after the War.

Best Victoria Plums:

23 chips (12 lb. each = 276 lb.), prices ranging from 1s. 6d. to 2s. Total £2 2 7

<i>Less</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
Commission	3	3	
Hamper hire	4	0	
Carriage	4	1	
	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>		11 4
			<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>
			£1 11 3

or 1½d. per lb.

Early Apples:

10 bonnets (20 lb. each = 200 lb.) *s. d.* 12 6

<i>Less</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
Commission	1	1	
Hamper hire	1	3	
Carriage	2	6	
	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>		4 10
			<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>
			7 8

or just under ½d. per lb.

Kidney Beans:

10 pots (40 lb. each = 400 lb.) *s. d.* 10 0

<i>Less</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
Commission	0	10	
Hamper hire	1	8	
Carriage	5	0	
	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>		7 6
			<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/>
			2 6

or 13 lb. a penny.

These sales are representative of the season. Picking and carting to station were further charges, and there was then the cost of rent, cultivations, manure, etc., to be met before the grower got anything.

The only elements of experiment involved in the work of the Land Settlement Association or in Mr. Herbert's proposals are in the efforts to turn industrial workers into agriculturists and in the attempts to organise group settlements. As to the former, time will show. It is reported that allotment holders under the Friends Allotments Scheme and other organisations have, many of them, proved good gardeners, and if carefully selected they might be expected to develop their interest in the land, though it must be remembered that the cultivation of an allotment for self-supply is a business very different from that of production for the market. As to group settlement in highly organised colonies the results are far more a matter of speculation. The intention is to promote co-operation in every form for the supply of requisites, for the performance of the heavier operations, for the processing of products in factories and for their marketing. In its extremest form, this organisation would reduce the part of the small holder himself to the production of vegetables and fruit from seeds, plants and manures supplied to him from a central depot; to feeding bacon pigs, laying hens or table poultry—the store pigs or the chicks being supplied to him from a central farm; to delivering his produce, vegetable or animal, at factories or packing stations, which would process or grade it and market it for him.

This would indeed be an experiment. There is no existing organisation which resembles it. Hitherto, it has been evident that the quality most essential to success in the small holder is self-reliance. The new proposals for group settlement would relieve him from personal responsibility for nearly everything. When it is remembered, further, that the new land settlers are to be drawn from the industrial classes and that it is stipulated in all the schemes proposed for them that they must undergo

a period of training, it is clear that the men are going to be in leading strings from the start, and that they will be dependent at every turn not upon themselves, but upon the technical skill and the organising ability of those in charge of the settlements.

Success under such conditions does not seem even remotely to be possible, quite apart from the prospects for market-gardening at the present time, as the final responsibility for success or failure could not be placed upon anyone. The technical experts and group organisers might complain that the settlers were idle and incompetent, while the settlers, for their part, might make trouble at every turn if they were not supplied with goods and services always just as and when they wanted them. It would be difficult to conceive of an organisation so vulnerable at every point. Managers competent to make a success of such an undertaking would be better employed on a corporation farm where the whole of the control of production was vested in them,* while settlers so dependent would be better employed as wage labourers.

Indeed, it is much to be regretted that Dr. Addison's scheme for a demonstration of corporation farming was eliminated from the Land Utilisation Bill in its passage through the House of Lords. The cultivation of small holdings, even as members of a group settlement, would mark a complete break with everything in the previous lives of the unemployed; as workers on corporation farms they would find the conditions comparable in many ways with those to which they had been accustomed as members of an organised labour force.

The difficulty, of course, which confronts those who seek a remedy for industrial unemployment through land settlement is how to settle men in numbers large enough to be in any way effective. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald looks forward to "placing thousands of families back upon the land." Captain D. Euan Wallace is certain "that the future of a large part of Durham County, which

* The salaries offered to its group managers by the Land Settlement Association are £-50 per annum, with quarters.

became industrialised when coal was found, must be a return to some form of agriculture." Mr. Lloyd George says "it is no use talking about settling a few thousands on the land," and he suggests that the number of agricultural workers, farmers and men might be increased by nearly 50 per cent. Mr. G. Herbert is prepared to find places on the land on individual holdings, for 100,000 men born in the factory town or mining village and trained to work under the most rigidly controlled and regulated conditions of service and reward which the world has ever known.

Land settlement as industrial relief could only be effective if men could be established on plots of land small enough to make it a practicable proposition. Such holdings, however, cannot support experienced tenants, to-day, in the numbers in which they are already available. The "Agricultural Statistics" have been quoted to show how their number has been steadily dwindling. In fact, this evidence, and the experience of the County Councils, show that the greatest success amongst small farmers is associated with holdings of from 20 acres upwards. All over the world there is evidence that food is being produced with a declining expenditure of labour. In this country, at the present time, employment in agriculture is given by 20 to 25 acres for each person engaged in the industry, and to settle 100,000 families on small holdings on this basis would mean the re-settlement of about one-fifth of the cultivated land of England. The fullest sympathy will be felt with those, who, in their deep concern for the great number of industrial workers overwhelmed in the breakdown of an economic structure which they did not erect, are trying to-day to help them to a new life. It would, however, be wrong not to point out in the plainest terms that nothing but disappointment and disaster could result if land settlement came to be regarded as offering a possible solution to the problem of industrial unemployment.

The obstacles have been stated in the foregoing pages. They may now be summarised as follows :—

(a) The practical difficulty of a wholesale acquisition of land and the expense of its equipment would make it impossible to settle the unemployed upon it on holdings of the most favourable type in effective numbers (p. 79).

(b) Thus, any holdings created would necessarily be very small ones, and this would restrict them to the market garden and small livestock type (p. 80).

(c) Such holdings contribute very little to the subsistence of the family, and the market for their produce is so quickly saturated, that a cash income is problematical (p. 52).

(d) The competition of the capitalist grower for the produce market is increasing rapidly (p. 52).

(e) The suggestion that the weakness of the little grower can be overcome by systems of group settlement raises problems of organisation and administration of a type for which there are no parallels either in agricultural or in industrial life (p. 83).

(f) The fundamental differences in the lives of family farmers and of industrial wage-workers are such that very few of the latter may be expected to succeed in the rôle of the former (p. 7).

(g) The settlers would be called upon to accept a lower standard of living than the industrial standard, both as to their cash income and as to their hours of work, and the increase of production for a market already over supplied would depress still further the standard of the present body of small holders (p. 8).

(h) Alternatively, the general body of consumers would have to be taxed to raise the present rural standard (p. 79).

In brief, the urban population of this country is top-heavy, not because men have left the land to crowd into the towns, but because the economic policy of Britain during the past 100 years has fostered the expansion of industry. It may be said that there are two industrial communities in England to-day. One of them lives by the exchange of goods with the agricultural community at home, and the other by the exchange of goods with the

agricultural communities of the Empire and of foreign countries. It is the breakdown of reciprocal trade overseas that is causing depression and unemployment in the second of these communities. Its members are the creation of overseas trade. They are not derived from the land, and there is no place for them, in Britain, upon it.

Surely, this analysis leads to the conclusion that the attempt to alleviate industrial employment by means of land settlement could succeed only at an enormous sacrifice demanded of the settlers themselves and of the rest of the community. It is for the country to decide whether the economic outlook is such as to call for this general lowering of the standard of living, or whether there are grounds for trusting that this vast reserve of labour may once more be reabsorbed in industrial enterprise. If anything is to be done upon the scale which the advocates of land settlement for the unemployed seem to ask, let it be done deliberately and facing the consequences—not in the mistaken conviction that the land can afford a living and a life for the unemployed which would be comparable, even remotely, with the life that they have known as organised industrial workers.

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

It may be, however, that the country will have to consider the association of unemployment and land settlement for the purpose, not of providing a new economic life for the unemployed, but as a slight alleviation of their distressing circumstances. An example is afforded by the work of the Allotments Committee of the Society of Friends, as unobtrusive as it is magnificent. It was reported in May last that over 117,000 men had been provided with means to work allotments, and the moral and material effects upon them have been most marked. A speaker at the Yearly Meeting of the Society, a miner without work, asked those present to imagine his case.

“ He went out of the house to sign on at the Labour Exchange, after which there was nothing he could do except hang about the

streets. He would ask them to imagine what an allotment meant to a man in that position. Through it he was able to increase his resources and to provide fresh vegetables for his wife and six children over the greater part of the year.”*

From the discussion which followed, it is clear that the Friends do not think that land settlement could be a cure for unemployment; they are providing a palliative. If, however, the country has to contemplate the maintenance of men in hundreds of thousands for some years to come, it may well be that the beneficent work of the Society should be adopted by the State and fostered with all the resources at its disposal as a means of maintaining spiritual and physical well-being. The difficulties, no doubt, would be many, and they would have to be attacked locally according to the needs and the opportunities of the areas affected. But this, certainly, is a “back to the land” movement which should command the sympathy and the support of everyone. There is no idea in it of turning the miner into a farmer. The stuff grown on his allotment does not compete with that of the professional grower, for it is consumed by himself and his family. Nor does it materially reduce the demand for such produce, as the purchasing power of the unemployed does not allow of much expenditure on fresh fruit and vegetables.

As a constructive proposal, it is suggested here that the association of industrial unemployment with the occupation of land should be limited to the provision of allotment gardens. Whether the Society of Friends should be assisted in this work as an extension of that which they have already accomplished, or whether they should be associated with the Land Settlement Association in it, are questions of organisation which would have to be considered. On the face of it, it would seem that the provision of allotments would best be effected by the decentralisation of authority. The depressed areas comprise a few large towns and a large number of smaller

* “The Friend,” May, 1935.

urban and semi-urban communities. What seems to be wanted is some means to stimulate and to assist County Borough Councils, Municipal Borough Councils and Urban District Councils in the depressed areas to undertake a great forward movement for the provision of allotments for the unemployed in their areas. There should be no question of private charity. The Treasury should undertake financial responsibility as part of the cost of the maintenance of the unemployed in a state of well-being. In many of the mining areas land is available within walking distance of the men's homes, although powers of compulsory acquisition might have to be exercised to get it. The larger cities and towns could not, of course, acquire land within such easy reach, but here the difficulty of access could be overcome by granting free transport on municipal trams and omnibuses to men in receipt of unemployment pay travelling to or from the Corporation allotments.

As to the provision of tools, seeds, manures, etc., the practice of the Society of Friends might serve as a model, these requisites being treated as loans repayable in whole or in part.

This is the proposal in bare outline, and no purpose would be served by elaborating it further at this stage. It would, of course, do nothing to remove men permanently from the field of industrial employment, as the Land Settlement Association hopes to do. But what chance is there of settling on the land any measurable number of the two million men who are returned as out of work? What chance is there that any large proportion of the few whom the Association may remove and settle will become self-supporting? On the other hand, an immensely greater number of men could be given the means to the preservation of mind and body through the development of allotments for the unemployed. The Land Settlement Association estimates that £30,000 must be found from public and private sources to settle forty men on the land, with very little chance, as it is the purpose of this study of small holdings to suggest, that

any of them will reach economic independence. But sums of this order applied to the provision and equipment of allotments would bring an amelioration of the conditions of life to men in thousands instead of in tens. There would be none of the attendant risks of a big social disaster; the men would not be called upon to uproot themselves from their homes and their friends; they would be ready to take advantage of any employment offering in their own trades if industrial conditions should improve.

Is it too late to press for a complete reconsideration of the contribution that land utilisation can make to the unemployment problem, with the object of abandoning the costly and doubtful experiments of the Land Settlement Association in favour of a rapid extension of the inexpensive and proved methods of the Society of Friends?

THE RURAL COMMUNITY

But if land settlement proper, to give vocational employment, must be confined to the agricultural classes, to provide them with a start on the ladder or a better life, what steps should now be taken?

There is no need further to stress the economic weakness of the small holder as a producer, and it is increasing rather than diminishing with the spread of mechanical cultivation and of the competition of the large farmer in certain forms of production. Rather should we remember the strength of his position as opposed to that of his larger neighbour in times of stress, which has been brought out so clearly in the investigation of rural migration to which reference has already been made. The migrants are not necessarily statutory small holders; they occupy small farms of every size and type within the compass of the tenant and his family. Nor are they distributed with any uniformity about the country; on the contrary, they tend to be segregated in certain districts. Again, there is no evidence that such holdings

do not exist already in numbers sufficient to provide the stock from which so many of the tenants of the larger farms are drawn.

But it must not be supposed that the small farm exists merely as the first rung in the ladder of progress ; on the contrary, it may be supposed that the majority of the smaller farmers remain very much in the condition in which they began, feeling justified in their lives if they have placed their sons and daughters successfully in the world. In the districts where these farms predominate there is a genuine land hunger. Moreover, the registers of the County Councils, for the most part, show long lists of applicants for small holdings of every kind who have been approved by the County Committees, but who remain unsatisfied, partly because of the recent financial stringency, partly from the difficulty of securing land suitable for them, and here and there, no doubt, from a certain lack of enterprise on the part of the local authorities. While the hopelessness of attempting to settle industrial workers in a life so strenuous, in a trade so technical and at a standard of life so different from everything to which they have been accustomed has been demonstrated, there seems no reason why small holders' sons, agricultural labourers and other rural workers should not be assisted to the life that they want and understand, in greater numbers. They know its difficulties and its drawbacks as well as its possibilities. Nor is there any reason why the needs of the part-timer, the retired man who wants to eke out a pension with some light occupation on a few acres, largely by subsistence farming with some small surplus production to supplement his cash income, should not be met. The former class would be provided with the opportunity which is lacking under the small-scale organisation of agricultural enterprise, and their settlement might tend to check the tendency towards unemployment which is a new and disturbing feature of rural industry. The latter class, the part-timers, would bring another element into rural society, and even regarded more as a housing scheme

than as land settlement, provision for them could be justified.

In short, the future of land settlement lies not in organising highly speculative schemes for putting industrial workers, in large numbers, into an unfamiliar environment, but in the prudent continuation of the work which was begun under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908, and which was interrupted by the recent financial crisis. No new administrative or financial machinery is needed. The County Councils should be told that funds have been and still are available to enable them to finance the purchase and equipment of the land, and they should be encouraged to proceed with an active land settlement policy. No doubt it would be desirable to exercise more discrimination in this work in the future than has been evident in the past. There are districts of England in which the small holder is more indigenous than in others, and there are some types of farming more suited than others to his capacity. A rapid survey would bring these facts to light, if indeed they are not already available. There should be an investigation, too, of the conditions which have made some County Council properties, such as the Donyatt Estate of the Somerset County Council, so interesting, and the work of the Plant Breeding Station, at Aberystwyth, on the improvement of hill pastures should be watched, as indicating, possibly, the way to the colonisation of considerable areas of unimproved hill pastures, in the north and west, by a race of store stock-breeders who, if not small holders by acreage, would have all the attributes and the organisation of the family farmer.

But this marks, probably, the limit of that which can be done in this highly industrialised, over-populated country for the settlement of men upon the land, unless as a desperate remedy for unemployment which would mean the abandonment of almost everything that has been achieved in the last hundred years to make life more tolerable for the industrial classes. Under any other conditions there is no more justification for raising the

cry of "back to the land" in the mining villages of Durham or the shipyards of Barrow and the Tyne, than for raising the cry of "back to the village blacksmith's shop," in Sheffield, or of "back to the hand loom," in Lancashire.

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