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10

A Guide to Agricultural Policy

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FOREWORD.

A brief but comprehensive guide to the study of agricultural and rural policies has been lacking for a long time. Few people have time or confidence enough to evolve policies even after they have followed the analysis of problems, and all naturally look to the State and those political parties which are part of its non-legal constitution to propound them. The issues here dealt with are essentially of a political character, for they have arisen chiefly from the national economic and social evolution during the last fifty years. Persons and classes directly interested in agriculture might be able to solve the problems involved, but only by methods which would cause severe strains in the economic and social fabric which the community could scarcely bear in present circumstances.

All the powers of the State—in publicity, education, stimulation, inducement, compulsion—singly or in combination, have already been applied in some degree to the guidance and assistance of the industry and the restraint of what might jeopardise its welfare.

This Guide indicates what is being done by the State in these and other directions. It fully describes and briefly discusses the methods by which the recognised political parties in the country propose to apply the resources of the State to a still greater extent to the solution of agricultural and rural problems. But it goes further. It gives a great deal of information about the problems themselves, and recent changes in their character or intensity, and generally sets out a background against which the policies themselves may be reviewed. For work covering so wide a field in so brief a space, it appears to me to be remarkably accurate and well-balanced. With a fairly intimate knowledge of literature in this field I know no other brochure to compare with it.

My hope is that it may be widely read in both rural and urban areas, and that many individuals and study groups will study it carefully and be guided by the sectional and general bibliographies to build on the foundations laid in the text.

March, 1929

A W ASHBY

PREFACE.

The following Guide has been written in order to meet the need for a brief comparative study of the main policies affecting Agriculture submitted by the various political parties. Some preliminary work in collating the documents in which those policies are set forth was undertaken by Mr W J B Hopkinson and Mr W T McVittie, who successively held at Ruskin College the Buxton Memorial Scholarship for Agricultural Labourers.

The procedure which has been followed in drawing up the Guide may be briefly explained. An outline, necessarily much abridged, is given of the action of the State at the present time with regard to each problem, and this is followed in each section by summaries of the Party Policies. It is assumed that *the arguments* which each party puts forward in support of its proposals will be studied by the reader from the published policies themselves, since they cannot be adequately reviewed in the space of this Guide. At the end of each section there is suggested a small amount of additional reading, by which the skeleton outline may be further filled in, and at the end of the Guide a more extended bibliography is given.

The student of these policies is therefore enabled to pursue the following course. He may see from this Guide what the State at present does in the matters discussed, and may find out what extension of the State's activity is proposed by each of the parties. From the suggested readings he may learn in more detail the relations of the State with farming, and from the published policies of the three parties he may study the arguments upon which their proposals are based. From the various books mentioned either at the end of each chapter or in the bibliography at the end of the Guide, he will be able to make himself acquainted with other proposals or with amendments to the party proposals which have been suggested by individuals or representative bodies. Political parties have not a monopoly of political proposals. Party proposals are, as a rule, the result of a compromise between the views of different sections within the party. Many reasonable proposals have, therefore, to be excluded from the official publications, but it is necessary that a student of agricultural policy should know something of the rejected schemes. His knowledge in this direction may be extended by reading some or all of the publications given in the bibliography at the end of the Guide.

CONTENTS.

FOREWORD BY A W ASHBY

PREFACE

		PAGE
SECTION I	The State and Agriculture	5
„ II	Public Control of Agriculture	9
„ III	Education and Research	12
„ IV	Land Tenure	15
„ V	Farm Workers	20
„ VI	Direct State Aid by Protection	28
„ VII	Credit	29
„ VIII	Marketing	33
„ IX	Transport and Electricity	38
„ X	Afforestation and Utilisation of Waste Land	41
	Bibliography	43

SECTION I.—THE STATE AND AGRICULTURE.

What is an Agricultural Policy?

A guide to agricultural policies is a very ambitious project. Every organisation connected with agriculture has a policy of its own on some or all of agriculture's problems. A very large number of able individuals hold personal views on agricultural policies which they have expressed in print. Royal Commissions and Committees of Inquiry, of which agriculture has had its fair share, embody the results of their deliberations in conclusions and recommendations which can justly be included as expressions of agricultural policy. The undertaking would be huge if each and all of these had to be reviewed and given their due weight and the arguments for and against every proposal had to be elaborated.

Furthermore, agricultural policy in general, it would appear, is a very elastic term. It includes what farmers could do for themselves, and what the landowners could do for the farmers. It is taken to include the relations of the railway companies, the banks and all manner of institutions, with the farming industry. The width of definition of the general term "agricultural policy" is what makes the subject so vast.

Limitations of Political Policies

But, when it is definitely decided to limit the discussion to questions of *political* policy, the range of the subject is reduced to a consideration of the *relations of the State with farming*. When a political party publishes an agricultural policy, it is justifiable to assume that the schemes put forward are schemes which the party when in power can put into legislative or administrative practice. This sets quite definite limits to the scope of a political policy. For example, co-operation among farmers comes under the general heading of agricultural policy, but it can only justifiably be included in a political policy in so far as the State is prepared to assist the movement *directly*. Unless the State adopts a principle of compulsory co-operation among farmers, co-operation remains a policy which farmers and farmers alone can adopt. The activity of the State becomes limited to propaganda, financial assistance, and legal facilities. Co-operation is, therefore, a policy which the State can encourage or oppose, but which it cannot, by itself and without the voluntary action of the farmers themselves, put into practice by either legislation or administration.

Many other aspects of agricultural policy come into the same category. There are writers on agricultural policy who assert that the prosperity of the dairy industry depends upon the grading up of herds to higher milk yields. That is an agricultural policy, but the action of the State in the matter is necessarily limited. By State-aided schemes high-grade bulls can be put at the disposal of farmers, but farmers are not bound to use them. Live-stock improvement is a policy, therefore, which, like co-operation, is dependent upon farmers and not upon the State.

The point appears to be important, for the policies of the political parties themselves do not always make the distinction quite clear. A very ambitious scheme of reform of marketing may be outlined by a political party, which if put into operation might reasonably be expected to lead to increased farming prosperity. On analysis of the proposals, however, it may be found that the part which the State (and, therefore, the party when in power) can play is very small, and that even this small part would be futile if the farmers themselves did not adopt the scheme.

These remarks are not meant to imply that political parties are not entitled to publish a full diagnosis of the agricultural situation or to outline the schemes which they support even if they cannot carry them out by legislation or administration. The electorate ought to know whether a party is or is not in favour of co-operation or live-stock improvement or other policies which farmers may adopt. But the final test is the ability to give legislative or administrative effect to the schemes outlined. It is important, therefore, that the electorate should examine party proposals from that aspect.

The Uncertain Prosperity of Farming

Farming is the oldest and most fundamental of all industries. It is the industry upon which everyone depends for food and clothing. The farms of Great Britain supply only about half of the food required by the population of the country, the remainder being imported from abroad. The actual proportions of home-produced supplies to the total amount consumed of certain important commodities have been estimated as follows for the year 1924—Wheat, 23 per cent, Barley, 51 per cent, Beef, 46 per cent, Mutton, 41 per cent, Pig-Meat, 35 per cent, Butter, 18 per cent, Cheese, 32 per cent.

Yet although home consumption enormously exceeds the home supply of most farm commodities, British agriculture is very seldom uniformly prosperous. It is true that farming is not one single industry, but is made up of a large number of industries with different conditions of production and markets. Some branches of farming may clearly be seen to be earning profits, while others record losses. Generally speaking, however, profits in farming are always uncertain and severe losses can frequently be encountered.

It is the *uncertain prosperity* of so fundamental an industry which constitutes the first claim of agriculture to the special consideration of public interest and State support.

Public Interest in the Countryside

The aspect of commercial prosperity is not, however, the whole case for public interest. There is what can justly be called the sentimental interest of the people in the welfare of the countryside, and the belief that true health and contentment have their source only in rural life, and that they must be maintained there.

if they are to be permanently maintained at all. This sentiment persists even in a highly industrialised community like Great Britain—the feeling that something stable and enduring rests in agricultural and pastoral pursuits and forms a desirable background to the seeming economic and social instability of urban industrialism. The sentiment may be based upon misunderstanding by urban dwellers of the conditions of rural life, but the sentiment can be directed into a very real force in pushing forward sympathetic consideration of farming problems.

Principle of State Support Already Acknowledged

The principle of State support for agriculture has already been acknowledged in numerous statutes passed for the special benefit of agriculture, and by the elaborate machinery which already exists for agricultural education, research and administration.

The Three "Partners" in British Farming

Before proceeding to deal with the various problems individually, it may be useful to dwell for a moment upon a feature of British agriculture which marks a distinction from agricultural organisation in most other countries—namely the existence of the three main partners (so-called) in the agricultural industry—the landowner, the farmer, and the farm worker. It is not true, of course, to say that the three functions do not exist in all countries, but in no country is the division so clearly marked. In some countries, the number of large landowners is negligible, since the majority of cultivators own their own farms, while in other countries the prevalence of the small farm leaves only a limited place for the landless labourer.

All of these three partners in agriculture may be said to be jointly dependent upon the general prosperity of farming, but, especially where political policies are to be considered, it would be a grave mistake to argue that their interests are inseparably linked together. Each has his own problems distinct from, and in many respects antagonistic to, the others. In the subsequent discussion of policies, their independent interests are marked off and it would be well to define briefly the special place which each now holds in the agricultural industry.

(1) The *landowner* owns the land and provides permanent farming equipment in the shape of buildings, fences, drainage, roads, etc. He does not take an active part in the management of the farm. He receives from the farmer an agreed annual money rent for the use of the land and buildings. He is still responsible for the upkeep of buildings and permanent equipment and for the provision of new permanent equipment, but it is not known how far in modern times he fulfils the duties required to meet that responsibility.

(2) The *farmer* is, in modern times, the business organiser of the industry. He it is who provides the farming capital, he pur-

chases stock, seeds, manures, he hires labour to carry out the cultivations and to tend livestock; he sells his produce in the best market which he is able to obtain. He, therefore, is the responsible organiser of the industry.

(3) The *farm worker* has no responsibility in the management of the industry. He is hired for wages by the farmer and is a wage-earner in the same sense as workers in other industries. There are, however, features which mark him off from other workers. In the first place, a century of slow adjustment of farming conditions has rendered him one of the worst paid of all workers. In the second place, as compared with other workers, it was difficult prior to the Wages Boards to estimate his economic conditions. His wage did not constitute his whole earnings. He was nearly always supplied with a free or a cheap cottage, he still received part of his earnings in kind, in the form of milk, potatoes, etc., he was not subjected to broken time as are workers in other industries, and it was possible that his cost of living was not as high as in other industries. It is now possible as a result of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act to compare more easily his conditions with those of other workers and his conditions have been slightly improved, but it is still true that his conditions are among the worst in this country. His circumstances make trade union organisation difficult, and the enforcement of trade union conditions by strikes still more difficult. In recognition of this, the State has established wages committees to enforce a standard of living which the farm workers were unable to maintain through their own organised efforts.

Since the farmer is the industrial organiser in agriculture, it is in his hands that the prosperity of farming primarily rests. Political assistance directed towards the commercial prosperity of farming is, therefore, assistance directly to the farmer, though indirectly the other parties may benefit. Policies relating to the positions of landowners and of farm workers are discussed in Sections IV and V.

READING

Two discussions—from opposing points of view—of the parties engaged in agriculture will be found in—

Christopher Turnor *The Land and its Problems* Chap III
Agricultural Dramatis Personæ, pages 41 to 69

Joseph F. Duncan *Agriculture and the Community* Chap I
The Organisation of the Industry, pages 1 to 34

Points for Study. The functions of (a) landowners, (b) farmers
The limitations of political policies

Subject for Debate. "That the prosperity of agriculture is no concern of the ordinary town dweller"

SECTION II.—PUBLIC CONTROL OF AGRICULTURE.

The fundamental importance of agriculture to the nation has been made the justification for the giving of State assistance in many directions. The claim has therefore been put forward that the vital interest of a nation in agriculture justifies some measure of public supervision of the standard of farming. At the present time, direct public control is almost entirely absent. During the period of the war, as a result of the special circumstances of the time, representative County Committees were established, with wide powers of control over farmers in the management of their farms. These executive committees were given power to inspect land, to waive restrictive covenants in tenancy agreements, to issue directions as to cultivation, to enter on and cultivate land, to cause land to be properly manured, and, if necessary, to take actual possession of land which was improperly cultivated.

These powers were very wide and far-reaching, amounting to a virtual dictatorship by a public committee of the cultivation of the land in their area. The intention was (and, in general, the practice followed the intention) to attain the ends of the Food Production Campaign by engaging the voluntary co-operation of all farmers. Compulsory powers were, however, given and were used in some instances in the directions indicated.

With the passing of the wartime emergencies, special provisions for control of cultivation were abandoned. A scheme of organisation, however, was established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Act, 1919. At the head of this scheme was established the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (in place of the former Board of Agriculture and Fisheries) as an executive department of the Civil Service dealing with all matters relating to agriculture. The wide range of its duties will be referred to later.

For the purpose of assisting the Ministry of Agriculture in executing its powers and duties, there were established

- (1) a Council of Agriculture for England,
- (2) a Council of Agriculture for Wales,
- (3) an Agricultural Advisory Committee for England and Wales

Each of the Councils of Agriculture was to meet at least twice a year for the purpose of discussing matters of public interest relating to agriculture and other rural industries, the meetings to be held in public. The Agricultural Advisory Committee was to advise the Ministry with respect to all matters and questions submitted to them in relation to the exercise by the Ministry of any powers or duties which did not relate to the industry of fishing, and was to be at liberty to make recommendations to the Ministry in relation to other matters affecting agriculture or other rural industries.

In addition to these national bodies established under this Act, County Councils in every County (except London, which, with the

other County Boroughs, was at liberty to do so if it wished) were to establish *Agricultural Committees*. All the powers of County Councils relating to agriculture, with the exception of education, were to be referred to these Agricultural Committees. Matters relating to agricultural education might, by arrangement, be also referred by the County Councils to these Committees. The constitution of the Committee allowed for the inclusion of members other than persons who were members of the County Council.

By this Act, therefore, a scheme of representative Agricultural Committees was established throughout the country, together with national Councils in touch with the executive Government department—the Ministry of Agriculture. The powers of the County Agricultural Committees are not extensive. They do not embody anything in the nature of public control of agriculture.

Work of the Ministry of Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has, however, very extensive activities in connection with the industry. Instituted in 1889 as the Board of Agriculture, the Department has added to its functions continuously until, in 1919, it became the Ministry of Agriculture. An elaborate account of its work is to be found in a descriptive volume by the late Permanent Secretary.¹

The Ministry undertakes or supervises all work connected with the collection and publication of statistics of agricultural production and of market prices, the administration and enforcement of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act; the control, treatment and eradication of animal diseases, agricultural education and research in all branches; the administration of schemes of livestock improvement, the supervision of smallholdings, allotments and farm settlement schemes, the administration of the Tithe Acts; protection of farmers and the public from fraud under the Seeds Act, the Fertilisers and Foodstuffs Acts, the Merchandise Marks Act, and Food and Drugs Acts. It is also in charge of land draining and land improvement schemes.

These headings give only a brief indication of the extensive operations of the Ministry of Agriculture. They show, however, the extent to which the State is already engaged in the assistance of agriculture. Certain of the duties of the Ministry are, in part, delegated to the County Agricultural Committees, namely those relating to insect pests, animal diseases, smallholdings, and education.

Neither the Ministry of Agriculture nor the County Committees have powers for supervision or control of individual farm management, although the Ministry of Agriculture has certain powers of interference in connection with animal and plant diseases and in connection with applications of landowners for the removal of tenants who are not farming in accordance with the rules of good husbandry.

¹ *The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries*, by Sir F. L. C. Floud K.C.B., Whitehall Series (Putnam's Sons, Ltd.)

The development of the organisation of Local Authorities for the public supervision and control of farming forms an important feature of the agricultural policies of the Liberal and Labour Parties

Conservative Policy

The Conservative policy on the question is inserted in the discussion on Subsidies. It is definitely opposed to any system of compulsory control by committees or officials. The extension of the powers of County Agricultural Committees in other directions is not discussed in the policy.

Liberal Policy

The Liberal policy may be interpreted as setting up a County Authority as the nucleus of the Party's scheme of rural regeneration. The County Authority is to be representative of owners, farmers, smallholders, allotment holders and land workers. Its main duties will be to administer the new system of land tenure outlined by the Liberal Party (see later in this Guide), to displace farmers who are farming badly, to assist in administering schemes for agricultural credit, to promote co-operation and efficient marketing and agricultural research, and to encourage village industries.

Labour Policy

The reconstituted County Agricultural Committee forms an important part of the Labour plan of rural organisation. The constitution of the Committees is to provide for the representation of all rural interests—farmers, farm workers, smallholders and others interested and experienced in agricultural matters. Landowners will not, of course, be represented, since private land-ownership is to be abolished (see later in this Guide). The main duties of the Committees will be to administer the State-owned land in their areas, to supervise the maintenance and improvement of farm equipment, such as buildings, drains, etc., to supervise all agricultural affairs, such as education, livestock, marketing, to enforce good standards of cultivation and to encourage progressive methods. The Committees will operate by means of sub-committees, each specialising in a branch of the work. In addition to the organisation of County Committees the policy proposes the appointment of a National Agricultural Commission acting under the Ministry of Agriculture. Each Commissioner is to be expert in some branch of agriculture, such as finance, cultivation, marketing and so on. The Commission will be primarily a body concerned with planning the orderly development of agriculture and encouraging the improvement of existing standards.

Public Control of Agriculture

READING

Cloud. The Ministry of Agriculture. Chapters I and II, pages 1 to 57.

Conservative Policy Agricultural Policy H M S O 1926

Cmd 2581, paragraph 6

Liberal Policy Land and the Nation, pages 321 to 361

Liberalism and the Countryside, pages 13 to 15

Labour Policy Labour's Policy on Agriculture, pages 6 to 8

Points for Study What machinery exists for the State assistance of agriculture? In what respects do the Liberal and Labour policies propose to develop State machinery for the supervision of agriculture? Compare the Liberal and Labour proposals as regards (1) constitution, (2) functions and powers of the county agricultural authorities

Subject for Debate "Farmers should be permitted to go bankrupt in their own way The State has no right to interfere"

SECTION III.—EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.

Education.

State aid in the special teaching of agricultural subjects has been given for nearly forty years in Great Britain At the present time a very large sum is expended by the Ministry of Agriculture and by the County Councils upon this work A history of the help given for the purpose is included in "The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries" Apart from the limited amount of agriculture taught in schools, the teaching of agriculture is provided for mainly by two agencies (a) by Colleges and Departments of Agriculture in the Universities, (b) by County Farm Institutes, agricultural organisers and instructors

Agricultural Colleges

The former (a) are engaged mainly in developing the scientific side of agricultural teaching A certain amount of combined practical and theoretical training is given in short courses for practical farmers, their sons and others intending to take up farming There are in England and Wales alone eight University Colleges with Departments of Agriculture, and six Agricultural Colleges engaged in training men for degrees and diplomas in agriculture Facilities are thus made available for over two thousand students

Farm Institutes and County Staffs

The second (b) of the two agencies of agricultural education is that of the County Farm Institutes and the agricultural organisers and instructors *Agricultural organisers and instructors* are employed by County Councils, although about three-quarters of the expense is paid by the Ministry of Agriculture At the present time there are nearly 300 men and women employed in this work in England and Wales They are occupied in visiting and advising farmers, smallholders, poultry keepers, etc., in the County, organising day and evening classes in different localities, giving lectures and instruction, arranging demonstrations and superintending

experiments. Their chief purpose is to move among farmers and acquaint them with new ideas and new methods, as well as to give elementary instruction in the theory of agriculture. The instructors are usually specialised in one or two branches, such as poultry, bees, dairy, etc.

Farm Institutes have been established in some counties since the war, although money was granted and some schemes were approved before 1914. They are intended to provide short courses of instruction for people engaged in farming who cannot find an opportunity to attend Agricultural College or University courses. The work is designed to bear on the more practical sides of farming.

Scholarships are made available for the payment of fees and maintenance of students attending courses of instruction in agriculture. In 1922 an important addition to the provision of scholarships was made by a scheme for the benefit of sons and daughters of agricultural workers. The Scholarships offered are in three classes —the first class, tenable for three years at a University for the purpose of taking a degree, the second class, tenable for two years at a University Department or Agricultural College for a diploma course, the third class tenable for one year at a Farm Institute.

This constitutes only a brief outline of the existing organisation of agricultural education.

Research.

Closely linked with the problem of education is the furtherance of research in agriculture. A comprehensive State-aided scheme in this direction is of comparatively recent origin, dating from the establishment of the Development Commission in 1910. Since that date, and especially since the war, a system of research has been developed such as is maintained by the State for no other industry.

The field of Agricultural Research has been divided up into twelve main subjects and the investigation of these subjects has been allotted to twice as many *Research Institutes* (not to be confused with Farm Institutes), each specialised in one branch of research. Most of the Institutes are departments of Universities. They are not directed but are financed by the Ministry of Agriculture. The object and purpose of the Institutes is the investigation and ascertainment of fundamental principles of their special subjects where they have a distinct bearing on the problems of agriculture.

In addition to the Research Institutes, an *Advisory Service* is maintained in fourteen advisory provinces in England and Wales. The object of the Advisory Service is to form a link between the Research Institutes on the one hand and Agricultural Departments, Colleges and the County staffs on the other, and to provide a number of specialist officers who can advise farmers and carry out local investigations. The officers are attached to Universities or Agricultural Colleges, but salaries and expenses are paid by the Ministry of Agriculture. Altogether, approxi-

mately £300,000 is spent annually by the State in England and Wales on agricultural research

The political policies relating to education and research are as follows —

Conservative Policy

The work which has been done in recent years in creating and maintaining a comprehensive scheme of agricultural research and education and providing an advisory service in technical agriculture, in economics and farm costings, and in promoting livestock improvement, will be continued and developed. Funds necessary for the purpose will be made available when existing grants come to an end.

Liberal Policy

The County Agricultural Authority is to be made an important link in the development of agricultural education and research. Emphasis is laid on the existing weakness of the link between scientific education and the farmer. It is proposed to extend the number of local centres of training and to provide demonstrations for training farmers. The early training of country children in village schools is given prominence, in order that a rural bias may be given to their early teaching by creating an interest in rural affairs and continuing the stimulus to an adult interest in the countryside. For this purpose special training is to be given to rural teachers.

Labour Policy

The chief emphasis is laid on the continuity of education from elementary schools onwards. The extra expense of providing adequate elementary schools tends to render rural education inferior to urban. Special attention will, therefore, be given to remedying this evil. Even more important in this direction is the adequate provision of secondary education. As regards special agricultural education, the strenuous development of agriculture will call for greater facilities than at present exist. Emphasis is laid upon strengthening the staffs of county instructors moving among farmers and bringing facilities of this kind within the reach of all farm workers. The policy commends the existing scheme of research and advocates definite financial resources for extension, especially on the lines of research on the economic side of farming.

READING

Floud · The Ministry of Agriculture Chapters VI and VII , pages 89 to 128.

Conservative Policy . Agricultural Policy, paragraph 15

Liberal Policy : Land and the Nation, pages 379 to 387

Labour Policy Labour's Policy on Agriculture, pages 30 to 34.

Points for Study What is the existing machinery for the special teaching of agriculture? Do the existing facilities fail to bring the farmers into contact with the teaching of agriculture? Should teachers be specially trained in rural subjects for teaching in country schools? What are the intellectual needs of the countryman?

Subject for Debate "Money spent on agricultural teaching and research is money wasted, because the results never reach the practical farmer"

SECTION IV.—LAND TENURE.

Briefly stated, the policies relating to land tenure may be said to turn upon the *continuance* or the *abolition* of landowners as partners in the farming industry. Controversy has been waged over the question for more than a century, and throughout the controversy three main points of view have been put forward. The *first* of these is the upholding of the class of landlords under the English landlord and tenant system. The *second* is the insistence that the commonsense system of land tenure is that every cultivator should own the land he farms. The *third* is that the land should be national property and that individuals should be entitled to the use only and not to the exclusive ownership of the land.

The controversy has influenced much of the rural legislation of Great Britain, but no direct steps have been taken by government to change the prevailing system of British land tenure. *In recent years, however, a distinct turn has been given to the problem of land tenure* by certain marked changes which have taken place. The old traditional system of land ownership and tenant farming has undergone profound changes. Large estates have been broken up and there has been a considerable increase in the number of occupying owners. The change has been the result of half a century of legislation which has placed restrictions upon the powers of the landowners, together with the increase of taxation and management costs, including the higher charges for improvements and repairs to farm buildings and equipment. The legislation of the Agricultural Holdings Acts (the first of which was passed in 1875, followed by various Acts up to the present time) has given to the tenant farmers

- (1) freedom of cropping and management of the farm,
- (2) security of tenure and compensation for disturbance,
- (3) compensation at the end of the tenancy for unexhausted improvements made by the tenant

The effect of this legislation has certainly been to restrict materially the landowner's active participation in the industry. "The trend of modern land legislation has been to restrict the scope of the landlord as a director of farming enterprise and to reduce him, step by step, more nearly to the state of a mere receiver of rent."

On the financial side, taxation has tended to increase rapidly in proportion to the rents received. The margin which remains to the landowner from rents after paying the public burdens has been steadily diminishing during the last thirty or forty years. It is out of this margin that (1) maintenance charges have to be met, (2) new capital for improving the permanent equipment of the farm to keep pace with modern farming development has to be found, and (3) the landowner's income is drawn. The natural tendency is for the maintenance and development of permanent farming equipment to be neglected in the face of diminishing income.

The result of these two influences, viz —(1) diminishing responsibility in agricultural development, and (2) diminishing return on the capital invested in land, has led many landowners, in the post-war years, to break up their estates and sell them farm by farm to the occupiers. The extent of this change is shown by the following figures —

In 1914 about 10 per cent only of the farmers in England and Wales were the owners of their farms. In 1927, it is estimated that as many as about 37 per cent had become occupying owners. In other words, over a quarter of all the farmers in England and Wales have during the last fifteen years purchased their farms and from being tenants have become owner-occupiers.

The change has taken place without any interference by the State. The political problem which arises from it is whether or not the movement is to be allowed to continue unrestricted until the land tenure system of England and Wales has become one of occupying ownership in place of the old system of tenancy. It is very generally assumed that the old system of tenancy is passing. The two alternatives are the continuation of this movement towards the occupying ownership tenure or the definite adoption of a new type of tenure by which the State will be sole landowner and the farmers will become tenants of the State.

Conservative Policy

No specific pronouncement is made in the statement of Conservative policy regarding the ownership of land, but the policy may be interpreted as adherence to the principles of private ownership. The landowners of the country, it is recognised in the policy, are to an increasing extent less able than formerly to supply what is needed for permanent improvement. The policy, therefore, with regard to land tenure, is to assist the tendency which is taking place towards occupying ownership by a system of long-term credit (outlined later in this Guide).

Liberal Policy

The Liberal policy bases its case for a bold scheme of reform primarily upon the failure of the existing landlord-tenant system to

¹ Orwin and Peel, *Tenure of Agricultural Land*, p. 1

meet the progressive needs of agriculture Three main points of the policy's claim are —

- (1) Agriculture is suffering from lack of capital, from lack of leadership, and from evils arising from these causes
- (2) The present landlords are not likely to be able to supply the necessary capital and undertake efficient leadership
- (3) Given capital and leadership, the industry could increase production and maintain on the land a higher population

The whole case for land reform, together with the proposals of the Liberal Land Committee, was outlined in "Land and the Nation" The main proposal was that "on and from an appointed date the State should be deemed to have resumed possession of all land in the United Kingdom which at that date is used for, or is capable of use for, the production of foodstuffs, timber or other natural resources" (land used for building sites was excluded from the considerations of this Report)

The new tenure was to take the form of what was called *cultivating tenure* Every farm holding was to be transferred forthwith to its tenant, subject to a decision by a competent authority that the tenant was a person competent to use it to its full productive powers The tenant was to have security of tenure, similar in most respects to that enjoyed now under the Agricultural Holdings Act Rent was to be paid to a representative of the State instead of to a private landowner The farmer was to be responsible for the carrying out of his own repairs and improvements, but in so doing he was to have freedom and security When he wished he could increase his holding under the representative authority, and could not be removed from it except for bad farming or if the land were required for public use Just compensation was to be paid to the present landowners in the form of an annuity equal to the present fair net rent of the land

The scheme of reform as outlined in "Land and the Nation" by the Liberal Land Committee was not accepted in its entirety by the Liberal Land Conference which considered the Report The modified and approved proposals for the reform of land tenure are contained in the Land Policy Proposals as adopted at the Liberal Conference, 1926

The Official Party policy therefore does not propose that the State should take over all the agricultural land to the immediate extinction of all the existing forms of tenure It recognises that there are circumstances in which existing tenures work satisfactorily It, therefore, proposes that the representative of the authority of the State, namely the County Authority, shall have powers, within the area administered by the Authority —

- (1) To buy and administer for the State any land which the existing owner desires to sell,
- (2) To acquire farms which are vacant,
- (3) To take over, after six months' notice to the owner, any estate which is being managed below the proper standard of efficient estate management,

- (4) To take over, after due warning, any farms which are found to be in a state of bad cultivation; and
- (5) To acquire all the land of a parish or an estate where the farmers and labourers in the parish or estate express general desire that the land comprised in that parish or under that estate should be taken over in order that it may enjoy the advantages conferred on land under the Authority's control

By these means a new form of land tenure, viz, ownership by the State and control by the County Authority, would begin to exist alongside the existing forms. Four forms of tenure may therefore be expected to exist side by side under the Liberal Party policy —

- (1) Landlord and tenant system, *ie*, the present system with the option of sale to the County Authority
- (2) Occupying ownership, *ie*, the present system where farmers own their farms—again with the option of sale to the County Authority
- (3) Tenancy with the County Authority as landlord, *ie*, the present system of tenure of small holdings schemes
- (4) Cultivating tenure—the new Liberal Policy scheme

Estimating from the trend of the last two decades it is expected that by this gradual process cultivating tenure will quickly become the prevailing system

The administration of the State-owned land is to be in the hands of a constituted County Authority which is to be popularly elected (as outlined earlier in this Guide)

Labour Policy

The Labour policy states that British agriculture has reached the stage when its future depends upon a change in the system of land tenure. "State ownership of the land is essential to the effective development of the industry"

Reform of the land system is based upon the following grounds.—

- (1) That under the existing land tenure system the land is being starved of the capital necessary for its full utilisation, and that a widespread deterioration in the equipment of farms is taking place
- (2) That the new system which has been forced upon the country with the increasing number of owner-occupiers, does not solve but rather tends to aggravate the under-capitalisation of the land
- (3) That the large contributions by the State for the assistance of agriculture in the form of research, education, etc, can be used to best advantage by a system of national ownership of the land.

It is proposed that all agricultural land should be transferred as soon as possible to public ownership since "the need is too

urgent to permit of a gradual and piecemeal procedure ” Compensation will be paid to the dispossessed landlords on the basis of the Schedule A¹ annual value of the holding, diminished in the case of inefficient owners according as they have failed to maintain the proper condition of the holding

The existing occupiers are to be continued in their tenancy without interference with the present agreements and conditions until such time as modifications and changes can be made after full consultation between the tenants and the representatives of the State, viz, the County Agricultural Committees (discussed earlier in this Guide) The proposal is not made that farming in general should be carried on by the State—the State is to take over merely the functions of the present landowner and not the functions of the farmer

The publicly-owned land is to be administered by the constituted County Authority already outlined For the purpose, however, of fixing rents under the new tenure, special County Land Courts appointed by the Minister of Agriculture are proposed, with a higher court of appeal

Summary of Three Party Policies

If a comparative summarised statement of the practical proposals dealing with land tenure of the three political parties were made it might be as follows —

The Conservative policy proposes to encourage by a credit scheme the tendency which has been apparent for several years of a change from the landlord-tenant system to a system of occupying ownership

The Liberal and Labour policies favour a system of public ownership with administration by County Authorities

The Liberal policy has departed from its original proposal of a wholesale change to public ownership and the transference will be effected by a spasmodic growth in ownership by the State according as the land is put up for sale or is condemned as being inefficiently managed under its present ownership or by a kind of local option

The Labour policy favours the immediate transference of all agricultural land to public ownership, with the exception only of a number of cases requiring special consideration

As regards the condition of tenants under public ownership, the Liberal policy proposes that tenants shall carry out their own repairs and improvements, with (except in cases of bad husbandry) complete security of tenure The Labour policy is that the State take over the responsibilities of the existing landowners, including the maintenance and improvement of holdings The financial provisions for the compensation of existing landowners and the administration of the publicly-owned land by the County Authority

¹ Schedule A is the annual valuation upon which landowners pay Income Tax in respect of their ownership of land

are substantially the same in both policies, but certain important differences exist, and for these and for other terms of land tenure policy a study should be made of the published reports of the two parties.

READING :

Orwin and Peel *The Tenure of Agricultural Land*

Land and The Nation Especially chapters V, VI and VII, pages 191 to 361

Conservative Policy "Agricultural Policy," paragraph 9

Liberal Policy *Land Policy Proposals* as adopted at the Liberal Conference, 1926

Labour Policy *Labour's Policy on Agriculture*, pages 5 to 8

Points for Study What evidence is there that the permanent equipment required in agriculture is being neglected for lack of capital? Does the growth of occupying-ownership tend to remedy under-capitalisation of farm equipment? Note the distinctive features of the Liberal and Labour proposals

Subject for Debate "State ownership of the land is essential to the effective development of the farming industry and the need is too urgent to permit of a gradual and piecemeal procedure "

SECTION V.—FARM WORKERS.

Farming during the last century has experienced varied fortunes, but throughout the whole of the period the history of the farm worker has been one of misery and tragedy, a history of low wages, poor housing, almost complete lack of social life, and little possibility of escape from the underpaid monotony of farm work

The problems of the farm worker may be summed up as (1) low wages, (2) inadequate housing, (3) absence of opportunity for responsibility, and (4) lack of social life

Wages and Conditions.

In other industries trade union organisation has played an important part in improving the working conditions of the men and women employed. Owing to the peculiar conditions of farm employment the growth and influence of agricultural trade unions have not been so marked as in other industries

In more recent years, however, the agricultural trade unions have established a position of influence in the industry by organising, and giving expression to, the aspirations and demands of farm workers, and by representing the interests of the farm workers on the various Councils dealing with agricultural affairs

The interest of the State in the condition of rural workers has been displayed in numerous Commissions and Departmental Committees and Inquiries for more than half a century. During

the war (in 1917), the State first interfered in the question of working conditions by establishing the Agricultural Wages Board to enforce agreed wages and conditions upon all farmers. This legislation was bound up with the giving of subsidies upon cereal growing and, when the latter were abandoned in 1921, the regulation of wages and the machinery of the Wages Board were abolished. Legislation was passed to establish Conciliation Committees to replace the compulsory Wages Boards, but these were almost wholly inoperative.

In 1924, the statutory regulation of farm wages was re-established by the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act of that year. The Minister of Agriculture was empowered to establish an Agricultural Wages Committee for each county in England and Wales and a national Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales. In some instances, one Committee is made to serve two adjacent counties.

Constitution of County Wages Committees

The constitution of the County Agricultural Wages Committees was fixed as follows. Members were to be appointed representing employers and workers in equal proportions, together with two impartial members appointed by the Minister. Employers' representatives were to be nominated by the National Farmers' Union and the workers' representatives by the National Union of Agricultural Workers and the Workers' Union. The Committees were to elect their own chairmen annually.

Duties of County Wages Committees

The duties of the Committees are to fix minimum rates of wages for time work and for overtime for workers employed in agriculture, and may also include, as the Committees think it necessary or expedient, the fixing of minimum rates of wages for workers employed in piece-work. The hours of labour to which the present wages are applicable are also fixed by the Committees with the stipulation of a weekly half-holiday. The Committees may make exceptions to the fixed rates for physically or mentally deficient workers, by granting permits in the case of such individuals. The basis upon which wages are to be fixed is "to secure for able-bodied men such wages as in the opinion of the Committee are adequate to promote efficiency and to enable a man in an ordinary case to maintain himself and his family in accordance with such standard of comfort as may be reasonable in relation to the nature of his occupation."

Constitution and Duties of Agricultural Wages Board

The national Agricultural Wages Board consists of eight members representing employers and eight representing workers, together with five impartial members appointed by the Minister, one of whom is chairman (appointed by the Minister). The duties of the Board are to make the necessary orders by which the rates

fixed by the County Committees become effective, to fix wages in cases where counties have failed to establish committees and to act in an advisory capacity to the committees

Penalties for Evasion of Wages Orders

Where a minimum rate of wages has been made effective by an order of the Agricultural Wages Board under the Act, any person who employs a worker in agriculture shall, in cases to which the minimum rate is applicable, pay wages to the worker at a rate not less than the minimum rate, and, if he fails to do so, shall be liable on summary conviction in respect of each offence to a fine not exceeding twenty pounds and to a fine not exceeding one pound for each day on which the offence is continued after conviction. In addition to the fines, the employer may be ordered to make up the deficiencies in the rates paid to the work for a period of six months prior to date of complaint. Where the employer is convicted and due notice has been given the period of repayment may be extended to eighteen months preceding the period of six months already mentioned.

The duties of the Agricultural Wages Committee, therefore, are (1) the fixing of minimum rates of wages for all workers in agriculture, including the fixation of overtime rates, (2) the definition of the employment which is to be treated as overtime employment and (3) the definition of the benefits or advantages which may be reckoned as part payment of minimum rates of wages in lieu of payment in cash

Housing.

There are two, to some extent, distinct problems in the housing of agricultural workers, namely (a) adequate supply of better-conditioned cottages for agricultural workers, and (b) the fate of the tied cottage

(a) Adequate Supply of Good Cottages.

Low wages and bad housing are inextricably bound up together. The workers have been unable by reason of their low wages to pay the full rent for a good cottage. As a rule, they occupy cottages belonging to the farm, paying either no rent or only a very small rent. The farmworker may, therefore, be made to appear in an ambiguous position: his housing is bad because he appears to pay only a small rent or none at all, and his wages are said to be lower because, among other reasons, he gets a free or cheap house. The condition of rural housing before the war was admittedly bad: there was a deficient supply of satisfactory cottages, many in occupation were obsolete — rude, dark and damp, without any sanitary arrangements. These conditions have been continued since the war, and the acute shortage of housing of all kinds since the war is no less true of farm workers' cottages. Owing again to the low wages of farm workers, the early

housing schemes of the Government since the war failed to touch the problem. By the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1924, however, provision was made for an increase in the subsidy from the State for workers' houses, and a further additional grant in the case of cottages built in agricultural parishes (with a view to enabling the provision of houses to be made for letting at reasonable rents). The Act provided primarily that houses which were subject to special conditions as to their letting and to the amount of rent to be charged for them, and which were completed before October, 1939, should be eligible for increased Exchequer contributions, the total amount of the increased contributions to be £9 a year for forty years, or, in the case of houses situated in agricultural parishes, £12 10s a year for forty years (since reduced). State subsidy towards the erection of such houses was to be given on condition that "rents charged are such as workers can reasonably pay."

In 1926, further legislation was passed with a view to improving the existing cottages. The purpose of the Housing (Rural Workers) Act, 1926, was "to promote the provision of housing accommodation for agricultural workers and other persons whose economic condition is substantially the same as that of such workers, and the improvement of such accommodation by authorising the giving of financial assistance towards the reconstruction and improvement of houses and other buildings." Local Authorities are entitled to submit schemes to the Ministry of Health, and on approval of a scheme assistance may be given either by grant or loan, or partly by grant and partly by loan. Among other restrictions, assistance will not be given for works if the value of the house exceeds £400 when completed, and where the sum required for improvement is less than £50. Application for assistance under the Act must be received before October, 1931.

Local Authorities have therefore powers at the present time to replace insanitary cottages in use by up-to-date and yet low-rented cottages, and have facilities for obtaining grants from the State for the improvement of existing houses.

(b) The Tied Cottage

There is strong opposition among organised rural workers to the tied cottage (by which is meant a cottage which comes and goes with the job), and urgent demands are made for its abolition on the grounds that it imposes an unjust fetter upon the economic freedom of the farm worker. His home is bound up with his job. By asserting his rights against his employer or by seeking alternative employment in the neighbourhood, he is faced with the break-up of his home. On the other side it is claimed that adjacent houses are necessary for stockmen and that farmers must be assured of sufficient accommodation for their workers.

There has been no interference by the State on the question, although Bills have frequently been presented to Parliament for the abolition of the tied cottage.

National Unemployment Insurance

One other aspect of the conditions of farm labour may be mentioned. Under the National Health Insurance Scheme (1911), farm workers came under the compulsory benefits scheme. Farm workers are, however, still excluded from the National Unemployment Insurance scheme. A Committee of Inquiry, set up to enquire into the state of employment among farm workers, reported in 1926. The majority of the Committee was in favour of a special scheme of Unemployment Insurance for agricultural workers, but no action has been taken upon the Report.

The Absence of Opportunity for Responsibility.

The absence of opportunity for the agricultural worker to improve his status has given rise to considerable discussion in the last fifty years, and the phrase "agricultural ladder" has been coined in connection with this problem. It is maintained that the agricultural worker suffers in comparison with other workers by reason of the few facilities which exist for him to become other than a low-paid farm worker all his life. Openings for farm bailiffs and managers are very few in comparison with the number of workers, and opportunities for the farm worker to save enough capital to establish himself as a farmer are very rare indeed. These circumstances have been made the strongest plea for the establishment of small holdings schemes, the argument being that the existence of a large number of small holdings offers the first step to the man of small capital to embark as an independent cultivator. This argument is only one of the many put forward in support of the small farm-holding policy, but it is probably the one which has received most general support. The action of the State in the development and administration of small holdings schemes is therefore discussed in this section.

Small Holdings

The controversy for and against the extension of small holdings cannot be adequately treated here. References are given in a list of books below. All three political parties have given assurances of their intention to develop small holdings in the country. The existing Land Settlement Schemes date back to the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908, when County Councils and the Councils of County Boroughs were authorised to make provision for small holdings. The scheme was developed in many respects by the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, 1919, and by the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1926. By legal definition the term "small holding" applies to an agricultural holding not exceeding fifty acres, or, if exceeding fifty acres, of not more than £50 annual value.

County Councils were empowered to acquire land by purchase or lease. Where land could not be acquired by agreement with the owner, compulsory powers, subject to confirmation by the Minister

of Agriculture, were given County Councils were to adapt the land for letting in small holdings by the erection of buildings, fencing, roads, etc., and to sell or let to applicants who desired to cultivate the holdings. By the Act of 1919, Councils were enabled to make loans to tenants for the purchase of livestock, fruit trees, seeds, and implements required for the purpose of the holding, the amount of the loan to be limited to a sum in accordance with the amount of capital which the tenant himself was able to provide, and not at any time to exceed £500. Where the County Council fails to make provision for small holdings, the Ministry of Agriculture, acting through the Small Holdings Commissioners, may take the necessary steps. From 1908 to 1924 inclusive 30,177 new holdings were created in England and Wales, more than half of which have been created since the war.

The Act of 1926 gave powers to County Councils to provide for the purchase of *Cottage Holdings*—that is, holdings comprising a dwelling house and not less than forty perches and not more than three acres of agricultural land to be cultivated by the occupier and his family. The purchaser must be a *bona fide* agricultural labourer or a person employed in a rural industry.

Lack of Social Life

The lack of social life among rural workers has frequently been given as one of the reasons for the steady flow of rural workers to the towns. Attention has, therefore, been directed to the need for better social organisation in rural villages by the provision of recreation fields, public meeting places and so on. The State has taken some part in this movement by the giving of grants from the Development Fund for certain rural activities.

In 1921, the Rural Industries Bureau was established and has been maintained by grants from the Development Fund amounting to over £4,000 in the year 1926-27. The purpose of the Bureau is to revive interest in rural crafts. The Development Fund also assists the development of "Rural Community Councils" which exist in several counties for the development of facilities for recreation and education in villages. Grants have also been made to the Women's Rural Institute movement.

Conservative Policy

Wages and Conditions The Conservative policy affirms that the position of the workers in agriculture is dependent on the degree of prosperity of the industry as a whole, and the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act ensures that the wages paid are the utmost that the industry can afford. The Conservative Party is pledged to maintain the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act.

Housing The provision of more and better housing accommodation in the rural areas is a factor of great importance in the development of agricultural prosperity. Progress has already been made by Rural Councils and District Councils under the Act

of 1924. The policy proposes measures facilitating the improvement and reconditioning of existing rural cottages¹

Small Holdings The Conservative policy believes that production and employment on the land can be increased by the development of small holdings on sound lines. It is proposed to introduce legislation empowering County Councils to continue and extend the provision of small holdings and cottage holdings. Provision will be made whereby the *bona fide* agricultural worker will be assisted to acquire as his own property a cottage and a small area of land which he can cultivate as an addition to his other earnings.

Social Life The Rural Community Councils, Women's Institutes, and other agencies for the revival of rural industries and the social improvement of village life are doing much to increase the amenities of the countryside and to improve the lot of all classes of the rural population. The policy undertakes to do all in the power of the Party to foster and support this movement.

Liberal Policy

Wages and Conditions The Liberal policy aims at ensuring to land workers (a) a living wage, (b) a sufficiency of cottages and gardens not tied to particular farms, (c) a right to garden land and to at least half an acre of land at a fair rent, (d) ample opportunities to obtain small holdings (with an enlargement of the present limit of size) or family farms, (e) credit to enable them to use these opportunities. To ensure a living wage for land workers, the minimum wage for each county should be fixed by a Wages Committee with direct reference to the cost of living of a family, and if it is proved that the amount of rent paid for any land makes it impossible to pay a living wage to a labourer employed on that land, rent should be adjusted accordingly by arbitration.

Housing A Rural Housing Board should be established and be especially charged with the duty of building new houses in agricultural parishes by assisting every kind of housing enterprise, and by adapting any national housing policy to rural requirements.

Small Holdings The County Agricultural Authorities (outlined earlier in this Guide) will be empowered to meet the demands of qualified applicants for small holdings or family farms, and also to ensure that every land worker who desires it shall obtain at least half an acre of land at a fair rent. Commencing credit for land workers and others entering upon the tenancy of a holding will be made available through the Authority.

Social Life It will be the duty also of the County Agricultural Authority to encourage the development of village industries and to foster the amenities of village life.

¹ This proposal has been carried out by the Act of 1926 referred to above.

Labour Policy

Wages and Conditions The Labour policy proposes that the principle of the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act should be extended so that a Central Agricultural Wages Board shall have effective powers to revise wages fixed by County Committees. The policy recognises the agricultural worker's claim to an adequate standard of life.

Housing The policy recognises the need for improved rural cottages to let at rents only slightly, if at all, higher than the rents of existing cottages. The policy approves the principle of the 1924 Housing Act, but is in favour of more drastic use of the powers of the Ministry of Health to provide for the housing needs of any district in which the Local Authority is taking no steps to provide rural houses. The policy asserts that Local Authorities have adequate powers under the existing legislation and it rests with the Ministry of Health to see that these powers are fully used. The policy is in favour of the abolition of the tied cottage.

Small Holdings The policy is in favour of providing farm workers with an opportunity to obtain small holdings and allotments. Allotments and small holdings, the policy states, cannot provide a complete solution of the general problem of the farm worker's low standard of life or of his low social status, but they may help to modify the worst results of the present organisation of the farming industry.

Social Life Every village should be provided with recreation fields and the public meeting place should become the centre of the interchange of the social life of the village, the home of the village library, the headquarters of local societies and the village concert and dance hall. The policy disapproves of what is called the unsound principle of allowing *ad hoc* bodies of a non-representative character assisted by grants of public money (as at present) to be responsible for this work. Loans or grants by the State should be expended by representative authorities.

READING

Wages Report of Proceedings under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act, 1924, for the year ending September, 1925 H M S O , 1926 (and subsequent reports)

Trade Unions Selley Agricultural Trade Unions in Two Centuries

Housing Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1924

Housing (Rural Workers) Act, 1926

Reports of proceedings under these Acts in Ministry of Health Annual Reports

Unemployment Insurance Report of Inter-departmental Committee on Agricultural Unemployment Insurance, H M S O , 1926

Small Holdings and Allotments Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation .

Final Report 1924 (Cmd 2145) H M S O

Part I , paragraphs 102-119

Part II , paragraphs 79-111

Also Appendix V , pages 327-331

Land Settlement Ministry of Agriculture H M S O 1925.

Rural Social Life Bennett, E N Problems of Village Life.
(Home University Library)

Conservative Policy Agricultural Policy H M S O

Liberal Policy Land Policy Proposals as adopted at the Liberal
Conference, 1926

Labour Policy Labour's Policy on Agriculture.

Points for Study Is the standard of living of farm workers equal to that of skilled workers in other industries, all considerations being taken into account?

Are the provisions for creation of small holdings and allotments adequate to meet the demand for them? Is the tied cottage a necessity in farming?

Subjects for Debate (1) "Are allotments and small holdings mere palliatives of the rural workers' conditions?"

(2) "A decline in the numbers of farm workers is essential to the economic progress of the industry, but the existing conditions tend to rob the industry of its most enterprising members "

SECTION VI.—DIRECT STATE AID.

Protection.

In a country where the market for most farm commodities is dominated by imported supplies, it is natural that the protection of agriculture from foreign competition whether by tariffs, subsidies or guaranteed prices should be persistently advocated. The protectionist issue is so old and well-worn a battleground that it seems hardly necessary to re-tread it especially in view of the fact that all of the three political parties have seen fit to oppose the policy. Although, however, the great parties reject protection in any direct form from their programmes, it would be a misapprehension to assume that there is no support for the policy among sections of the farming community. Since there is no official political support, at present, for protection in the agricultural interests, readers are referred for brief statements of the case for protection to the Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation, Final Report, pages 143-149, and to the National Farmers' Union Policy included in N F U Year Book, 1926, page 97, and in Year Book, 1929, page 123.

The general principle of free trade apart, governments have made a few isolated exceptions. The Sugar Beet Subsidy proposal

was introduced first by a Labour Government, although the existing Act was framed and passed by the Conservative Government in 1925. A subsidy of 19/6 per cwt for four years was payable to manufacturers of sugar and molasses manufactured in Great Britain from beet grown in Great Britain. The subsidy is on a diminishing scale and is designed to terminate altogether in 1934. The subsidy carried with it, for the first four years only, provisions for a minimum rate of payment per ton of beets to farmers.

Party Policies

Conservative Policy The imposition of protective duties on imported corn would be contrary to the pledges of the Government and to the policy of the other political parties. Various proposals involving subsidies have been considered but the definite conclusion has been come to that the Conservative Government cannot support or advocate any of them.

Liberal Policy Protection and subsidy are both impossible.

Labour Policy Temporary panaceas like subsidies on corn-growing or protective duties will not attain the end of securing the fullest possible use of land for and by the community.

READING

Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation. Final Report, pages 143-149.

National Farmers' Union. Memorandum on Agricultural Policy.
Subject for Debate "British farming cannot hope to have a prosperous future except by protection."

SECTION VII.—CREDIT.

An important feature of the farming industry is that it is financed almost entirely by the capital of the individuals engaged in it. In other industries, the joint stock (or in the distributive trade, the co-operative) plan is predominant, whereby, by the issue of shares to the public, the directors of the companies are enabled to finance their business out of the capital of people who have no direct voice in the management. In farming, the farmer invests and risks his own capital. If his personal capital is limited and insufficient for his purposes, he has to borrow from outside sources upon his own security. This fact alone invests the problem of credit for farmers with special features. Other features which render agricultural credit a subject of peculiar attention are (1) the diversified and hazardous nature of the business, which make difficulties in the way of assessing the financial worth of a farmer, and (2) the slow turnover of his business. These constitute some of the reasons why the Joint Stock Banking institutions of this country have been unable to extend the same facilities to farming as to other industries, and have made farmers dependent on extra credit from the merchants with whom they trade.

In other countries, credit institutions have been established to deal specifically with the needs of farmers. In this country, the

progress of any movement of the kind has been slow and up till now singularly ineffective

For about eighty years, the Government through the Improvement of Land Acts has given legal sanction for the borrowing of money upon estates for the improvement of these estates but no public money was involved

For a few years before the war and after the Board of Agriculture endeavoured to foster the growth of Agricultural Credit Associations based on co-operative principles and, more or less, following the model which had proved successful in many other European countries Propaganda of this kind in general failed, and only a few credit associations have been formed

Long-term Credit, 1923

In 1923, an Agricultural Credits Act was passed The Act was divided into two Sections, dealing with long-term and short-term credit respectively Section I of the Act gave facilities for certain farmers to obtain loans from public money through the Public Works Loans Board on the security of a mortgage upon the farms which they owned The terms of the Section of the Act were, however, limited to farmers who had purchased their farms during the currency of the Corn Production Act, i.e., between April, 1917, and June, 1921 Farmers who sank capital in purchasing their holdings during that period and who in the post-1920 period of deflated prices wished to free this capital for other purposes were given these facilities The number of farmers who profited by the Act were, however, only a minority of all farmers who had purchased farms The majority of the new owner-occupiers were excluded from the Act and no provision was made for lending capital to those contemplating purchase

Short-term Credit, 1923

Section II. of the 1923 Act was designed to give State assistance for the formation of Co-operative Credit Associations The Government offered under the Act to advance money to credit societies formed on the basis laid down by the Act to the extent of £1 for every £1 share held by members of the Society Since only 5s per £ need be paid up by members, the Government grant was equivalent to £4 for every £1 actually paid up The scheme failed in its object of stimulating the formation of credit societies among farmers, and only a very small amount of assistance was claimed from the Government.

In 1924, the Government made provision for special loans to be made to farmers' co-operative marketing societies for the purpose of erecting buildings, etc. £200,000 was voted by Parliament, no individual loan to exceed £100,000; interest at 5 per cent., in some cases not chargeable for the first two years, and repayable over a period of twenty years.

Long-term Credit, 1928

The *Agricultural Credits Act, 1928*, recognised the failure of the previous Act of 1923 to meet the needs of farmers. The Act is divided into two Sections, dealing as before with long-term and short-term credit. Section I opens to all farmers who have bought or who wish to buy their farms facilities for obtaining mortgage credit upon terms made easy by Government backing and loans. Loans may also be obtained for the making of improvements upon holdings. The loans are to be operated through an agricultural mortgage loan company (representing the principal Joint Stock Banks in the country), to which the Government will make advances up to £750,000, to be paid in instalments over the next three years, free of interest for a period of six years, together with payments of £10,000 per annum for ten years as contributions towards the cost of administration of the Company. Loans are to be made to farmers on the security of mortgages on the farms the amount of the loan not to exceed two-thirds of the estimated value of the mortgaged property the loan to be repayable by equal yearly or half-yearly instalments of capital and interest paid over a period not exceeding sixty years, or repayable on such other terms as may be authorised. In view of the interest-free loan given by the Government to the Company, and the grant for payment of expenses, it is expected that the rate of interest on loans to farmers will be low.

Short-term Credit, 1928

The provisions of Section II of the Act, dealing with short-term credit, are based upon the principle that Joint Stock Banks will be prepared to make loans to farmers for ordinary farming purposes if the security which farmers have to offer, namely, their stock and crops, is made acceptable to the Banks. At present there are difficulties which render farmers' assets unacceptable as security for loans. The purpose of the new scheme is to give the Bank the first claim upon a farmer's assets, ranking after rent, rates and taxes. A Bank under certain circumstances will be empowered to take possession of any property that has been pledged as security and sell the property for the purpose of liquidating the loan. The farmer will be debarred from selling, without the knowledge of the Bank, any property thus pledged. Charges made upon property under this scheme will be entered, with full particulars, in a Register for the purpose, the intention being to prevent a farmer from pledging the same property for two different loans. The penalty upon a farmer obtaining loans on these terms who fails to comply with the obligations imposed by the Act or who removes from his holding any property subject to the charge, is that he will be liable on conviction to penal servitude for a term not exceeding three years.

Other Credit Schemes

The problem of farmers' credit has been the subject of frequent controversy in recent years. The Conservative Government's

scheme is only one of the many that have been advocated. Other proposals were reviewed by the Committee on Agricultural Credit, 1923 (Cmd 1810). A proposal put forward by Mr C S Orwin was published by the Agricultural Economics Research Institute, Oxford. A careful review of the whole problem was made by Mr R R Enfield in the Ministry of Agriculture Economic Series, No 8.

Political Policies

The policies of the political parties regarding credit require more explanation than other aspects, in view of the fact that credit is closely bound up with the land tenure and other proposals. The different types of capital required by farmers may be outlined as (1) land, (2) buildings, fences, roads, drainage, etc, (3) live-stock and implements, (4) manures, foodstuffs, etc, and (5) cash to pay wages and meet other current expenses.

By the Labour Party's land tenure proposals, and also ultimately under the Liberal scheme, capital will not be required by individuals for the purchase of (1) land, since all land will be the property of the State and rent only will be paid for its use. Similarly, by the Labour Party's scheme, (2) all equipment of buildings, fences, roads, etc, on farms will belong to the State and improvements will be undertaken by the State. Since (1) land and (2) buildings, etc, constitute the long-term capital of farming, the Labour Party proposals on land tenure completely cover the need for long-term credit by farmers. The Liberal proposals, however, are to the effect that tenants of the State-owned land will be responsible for (2) buildings, fences, roads, etc. The Party's proposals with regard to credit must, therefore, take account of the need for long-term credit for these latter purposes. The Conservative land tenure policy implies encouragement to individual farmers to purchase and equip their own farms, and, therefore, their credit policy must allow for both (1) and (2), namely purchase of land and equipment of buildings, etc.

Credit proposals are also bound up with marketing policy, both of purchase and sale. The effects, however, of the party policies on marketing are less clearly definable than in the case of land tenure.

Conservative Policy

The Conservative policy on Credit is not elaborated in "Agricultural Policy," but the Agricultural Credits Act, 1928, already outlined, presumably embodies the Party's policy.

Liberal Policy

The County Agricultural Authority (already outlined in this Guide) is to act as the medium of credit for farmers. The various types of credit required are outlined as follows: (a) Commencing credit for land workers and others entering upon the tenancy of a holding, (b) Long-term credit for permanent improvements, for the purchase of farms by sitting tenants; repayment of mortgages

on farms already purchased and (c) Short-term credit for the turn-over of crops and stock

Labour Policy

The Labour Party policy makes provision for long-term credit for the permanent improvement or equipment of lands and farms, pending completion of land nationalisation. A special loan fund will be made available by Parliament to be administered through the Ministry of Agriculture and the County Agricultural Committees. These facilities will be available for tenants and owner-occupiers only.

A scheme for giving short-term credit to farmers through agricultural co-operative societies will be put into operation. It is estimated that a very large number of farmers are even now members of co-operative societies either for sale or purchase of goods. By utilising this machinery, therefore, it is expected that the public credit will reach a very large number and ultimately the large majority of farmers.

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Liberal Policy Land and the Countryside

Labour Policy Labour's Policy on Agriculture, pages 28-29

Points for Study What are the reasons for State action in framing credit schemes for farmers? Compare the party proposals with special reference to their likelihood to reach the farmers of this country. If farmers are to improve marketing systems, they will need capital for trading, processing, and/or manufacturing. Should the State provide credit for these capital purposes?

Subject for Debate "Agricultural credit is inseparably bound up with (a) land tenure and (b) marketing, and the solution of the problem ought to be sought by reform of the systems of each."

SECTION VIII.—MARKETING.

The marketing of farm produce appears at the moment to most people to be the problem of most far-reaching influence upon agricultural prosperity. There is a growing volume of evidence that the existing system is not the most efficient either from the farmers' or from the public point of view.

The nature and the circumstances of production of farm produce which create a special problem are these —There are a large number of small producers each having a comparatively small amount of produce to place on the market, the farms where production takes place are widely-scattered, farmers, as a rule, are producers not of one commodity but of several, production is, as a rule, seasonal, finally, a large proportion of the produce is perishable or semi-perishable

These circumstances make certain services necessary (1) The small units of the commodities must be assembled into bulk for transport to consuming centres (2) The uneven quality which results from the large numbers of independent producers makes sorting into grades essential (3) Seasonal production means storage where the commodity is not perishable (4) The perishable nature of some produce makes processing (such as canning of fruit, cheesemaking or condensing from milk) necessary in the case of the surplus, and quick transit and even distribution on markets of the produce which is for immediate consumption (5) Different farm commodities pass through different channels of trade and require different selling policies

The circumstance of farm production are such that the farmer, being, as a rule, a comparatively small producer of a number of commodities and not a large producer of one, has had to be content to leave the many services connected with the marketing of farm produce (assembling, grading, storing, processing and so on), in the hands of traders or middlemen Criticism of this existing system centres round the belief that the multiplication of intermediaries which has grown up in the trade is inefficient and expensive and leads to deterioration of the produce before it reaches the consumer The expense of it is a tax both upon the producers and upon the consuming public. The nation has, therefore, both in the interest of agricultural prosperity and in the interest of the public as food consumers, justification for examining the prevailing methods of marketing

The distinction (already referred to in Section I) is most clearly necessary in this problem of marketing, between the kind of policy which farmers themselves can carry out and political policies which imply the activity of the Government and public authorities The marketing policy which is being urged forward on all sides in Great Britain and abroad is the policy of co-operation, whereby farmers are urged to organise themselves to undertake corporately the services involved in the marketing of their produce The principle of farmers' co-operation is approved by all three political parties, but co-operative organisation is a matter for farmers themselves and the political question arises only with regard to the Government's relation to the co-operative organisations

Market Services of the State

The State is already involved in routine work pertaining to the purchase of farm requisites and the sale of farm produce

These may be briefly summed up under the headings of —the collection and publication of statistics of farm production, the issue of weekly market reports giving supplies and prices in the principal markets in the country, protection against fraud in the sale of farm requisites under the Seeds Act, 1920, and the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act, 1926, the protection of the public against fraud and adulteration under the Food and Drugs Acts and Merchandise Marks Act, 1926. All of these may reasonably be said to relate to farm marketing.

Grants for Co-operative Organisation.

In other directions, however, the activity of the State in relation to marketing is limited. For many years, from 1910 to 1924, grants were given by the Treasury to the Agricultural Organisation Society for the work of promoting co-operation among farmers. In 1924, the Agricultural Organisation Society was wound up and the work of the Society transferred to the National Farmers' Union.

Marketing Research

The Ministry of Agriculture recently established, by means of a grant from the Empire Marketing Board, a markets branch for the purpose of investigating the existing methods of marketing of farm produce. The fruits of the investigation have been published in the Economic Series, or "orange books" of the Ministry.

National Marks Scheme

Arising out of this work, the activities of the markets branch have been extended to develop a scheme of *national standard grades of home-grown produce* with appropriate marks for each grade. The purpose of the scheme is to bring home-grown produce into line with the selected grades and well-advertised brands of imported produce. The Ministry of Agriculture, in agreement with the trades concerned, proposed standard grades and national marks for certain commodities (*e.g.*, eggs, potatoes) and legislation has been passed to give the Ministry power to control the use of the national mark. The adoption of the proposed standard grades is not compulsory upon producers or dealers, as it is for certain commodities in the United States of America. A scheme has been fully developed for the grading of eggs, and is now in operation.

Control of Food Prices

Finally, the State has taken certain steps in the control of the marketing of food by the establishment of the Food Council. The Royal Commission on Food Prices in the First Volume of their Report issued in 1925, recommended that a Food Council be established to maintain continued supervision over the staple food trades. The duties of the Council were —to make a continuous study of the situation in regard to bread and meat supplies and to keep the public fully informed as to the working of these essential

trades The Council was also to make year to year examination of the profits being earned in these trades The Council was also to act as an agent of the Government to deal with monopolies, trusts and combines in the food trades, by making investigations, and in the event of the Council being satisfied that a firm was behaving in a manner contrary to the public interest, to instruct the firm to desist from such behaviour The Council was to depend upon publicity and the force of mobilized public opinion in persuading traders to comply with the requirements of the Council

Party Policies.

There is more divergence in the party policies on the problem of marketing of farm produce than on any other problem with the probable exception of land tenure

Conservative Policy

The Conservative policy favours the extension of sound schemes of co-operative organisation and promises sympathetic consideration of any application for assisting such schemes

Liberal Policy

The Liberal policy aims at establishing the machinery of farmers' co-operation on a firm business footing The proposals deal mainly with what farmers themselves can do The action of the State is to be limited to the appointment and financing of a permanent Commission whose duty it will be to hasten the growth of co-operative societies, with wide powers to deal with the obstructions which prevent agriculture short-circuiting and simplifying its distributive services

Labour Policy

The Labour policy aims at more direct action on the part of the State in organising the marketing of foodstuffs. Facilities are to be given to promote and encourage co-operation among farmers with State machinery of inspection for grading and standardisation of produce

On the ground that fluctuation in prices is one of the British farmers' greatest handicaps and that the uncertainty of prices destroys enterprise in the industry, the policy of the Labour Party is directed towards stabilising the prices of essential food products Co-operative organisation of selling would be able in some cases to meet the situation, but co-operation among British farmers can only achieve partial results in cases such as those of meat and wheat where the market is dominated by imported supplies. It is necessary, therefore, in order to achieve a steady price, that the import of such commodities should be carefully controlled

Special schemes are outlined for a system of State purchase of all imports of wheat and meat A Wheat Import Board, specially constituted for the purpose, will undertake all responsi-

bility The Board's duties will be to organise on the most efficient and economical lines the actual business of purchasing, transporting and distributing in bulk the whole import of wheat Bulk contracts for most of its requirements will be made with the wheat pools and other organised exporters in the Dominions and elsewhere. The Board would regulate the release of supplies to millers in accordance with the supplies of home-grown wheat. For a full outline of the scheme reference must be made to Labour's Policy on Agriculture

It is expected that the system as applied to wheat will in due course be applied to other cereals

A further step in the Party's policy will be the nationalisation of the milling industry and control of the baking industry by local authorities acting under the direction of the Food Council

The Party's policy with regard to meat is similar to the wheat purchasing scheme A Meat Imports Board will be established with duties similar to the Wheat Imports Board

With reference to milk, the proposal is made to nationalise the wholesale collection and distribution of whole-milk, and to combine the national organisation with municipal control of retailing either by direct municipal trading or through co-operative societies

The policy further proposes public control of all local markets

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Points for Study What are the difficulties of marketing farm produce? What are the weaknesses of the existing system? Apart from its social aspects, can farmers' co-operation bring about more efficient marketing? Examine the party policies in order to distinguish clearly the proposals which can only be brought about by farmers' organisation from the proposals of direct government action. What is meant by 'monetary stabilisation' in reference to prices of farm produce?

Subjects for Debate (1) "The future of the marketing of food rests with the farmers and with consumers both organised co-operatively"

(2) "Granted that stabilisation of prices is essential for progressive farming, can the Labour Party's proposals achieve the desired end?"

SECTION IX.—TRANSPORT AND POWER.

Transport.

The importance of transport in the development of agriculture and rural conditions is vital. The opening up of new countries by railways has been an important factor in intensifying the competition which producers in Britain have to face from abroad. Unfortunately for agriculture, in the case of transport, communications and power, agriculture is not the sole user of these facilities, and other considerations than rural development have to be taken into account.

The organisation of transport within the country has *two aspects*. The first is the opening up of facilities by railways and roads; the second is the organisation of marketing in order to use the existing facilities to the greatest economic advantage. The former, the improvement of communication between producing and consuming areas, is at the present time in a state of uncertain development, due to the decline in railway traffic and the rapid growth of road transport.

Railway Transport

During the war, the State undertook the whole management of the railway system of the country. Re-establishment of company control was made in 1923, but under new conditions defined by the Railways Act, 1921. By this Act, amalgamation reduced the 120 odd railway companies in the country to four great companies, exclusive of the metropolitan railways and one or two minor, mostly light, railways.

Also freight charges, which had before the war been regulated to the extent of a fixed maximum by an Act of 1894, were to be revised to meet the changed price level. In addition to a temporary arrangement for increased charges, the Railway Rates Tribunal was established by the Ministry of Transport, acting in accordance with the Railways Act, to have full control over all the charges a railway company might lawfully make. The preliminary work of the Railway Rates Tribunal in preparing the new classification of merchandise and in fixing the new rates, fares and charges, and defining the terms and conditions under which the companies are to carry, has been completed and the new system came into force on January 1st, 1928. The Tribunal continues to act to fix exceptional rates for special purposes where an applicant fails to secure concessions direct from the companies. In the process of working out the new conditions, representations were made to the Tribunal by a large number of traders and industrial concerns, including the agricultural interests.

The importance (for the purpose of this Guide) of this feature of the new conditions of railway management, is the fact that a Tribunal appointed by the Government, and not by the companies themselves, has framed the charges and conditions for the carriage of goods by rail and remains the final arbiter on these questions.

Road Transport

As regards road transport, the part of the State in providing good roads throughout the country is apparent. A subject of importance to agriculture, however, is the policy of financing road construction by the national government or by local authorities. Sparsely populated rural districts are naturally handicapped in the construction of roads where the funds for the purpose must be derived from local rates.

The duties of construction and maintenance of roads have always been in the hands of the Local Authorities. Under the Development and Improvement of Roads Act, 1909, amended by the Ministry of Transport Act, 1919, and Road Fund Act, 1920, the Government has been empowered to give grants from the national funds to Local Authorities, but local councils are still the responsible authorities.

Other Communications

Other methods of communication such as the Post Office, Telephones, Wireless and so on are referred to in the Party Policies.

Power.

The spread of electrical power to the countryside is regarded as one of the greatest benefits of the future. The generation and distribution of electrical power has been developed locally by public authorities and by public utility companies. Direct State interest in the equalising of facilities and supplies throughout the country began with the Electricity Supply Act, 1919, and was extended by an Act of 1922. Under the former, Electricity Supply Commissioners were appointed to regulate the relationship of the various supply companies. The country was to be scheduled into areas, each district to have its own Electricity Board, representative of all interests, producers and users. The Act, however, denied any compulsory powers to the Commissioners. A further step in the co-ordination by the State of the electrical supplies of the country was taken by the Electricity Supply Act, 1926, and the appointment of the Electricity Board. A Committee has been set up by the Electricity Supply Commission to consider the whole question of electricity supply in rural areas. The problem briefly is one of cost of transmission over long distances to small users, making high overhead costs for an uneven and comparatively low power consumption.

Conservative Policy

The Conservative policy does not deal with Transport and Power.

Liberal Policy

The Liberal policy puts into the hands of the County Agricultural Authorities the responsibilities and duties of organising

rural transport. The Liberal Party's policy on the supply of electricity to the countryside is outlined in the "Coal and Power" scheme

Labour Policy

The Labour policy recognises that under the existing conditions of transport, farmers' freights are too high, that carriage of perishable commodities to markets (except to the big cities) is slow, that wagons and trucks used for the conveyance of perishable goods are unsuitable, and that preferential charges are given to imported products. Drastic reorganisation, the Policy states, can alone effectively deal with the shortcomings. The nationalisation of the entire railway system in Britain is the first essential and the Labour Movement is already committed to this principle. The development of regular co-ordinated motor services will be required to supplement railway transport. It is proposed that County Agricultural Committees be empowered to establish and conduct motor transport services with collecting stations, or to make suitable arrangements with other public transport authorities. The Committees would also encourage the preparation and collection of produce and make the best use of transport facilities.

The Labour Party policy for the nationalisation of the electricity supply is outlined in "Coal and Commonsense". The ideal must be to bring an efficient form of lighting, heating and power to the work-place of every craftsman and to every farmhouse and cottage.

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 Coal and Commonsense

Points for Study: Distinguish between the two problems of transport, namely (1) provision of transport facilities and (2) organisation of goods for transport. Examine the State's responsibilities under the Railway Act, 1921, and compare the State Railways of other countries. Discuss the statement that the farmer to-day is more dependent on good roads than on railway rates.

Outline the obstacles to electricity supply in rural areas

Subject for Debate "Capitalist ownership of the means of communication and of the supply of electrical power cannot be expected to develop these quickly for the benefit of the small rural users, since the business does not earn large profits "

SECTION X.—AFFORESTATION AND UTILISATION OF WASTE LAND.

Afforestation.

A very large area of Great Britain, estimated variously from three to seven million acres, is said to be suitable for afforestation and is at present in use for the production of almost negligible quantities of food. Further, the proportion of forest to the total productive area is lower in Great Britain than in any country in Europe, being, before 1914, 5·8 per cent, as compared with 8·2 per cent. in Holland, 9 per cent. in Denmark, 19 per cent. in France, 20 per cent. in Belgium, and 28 per cent. in Germany.

Successive Government Commissions—notably those of 1902, 1909 and 1918—have issued Reports dealing with the country's afforestation. It is recognised that afforestation, since it involves so long a period of investment, as well as the use of very large areas of land, requires the support and guidance of the State as a measure of national development (1) for the safety of supplies of timber, (2) for the extension of rural employment, and (3) for the fullest economic use of the land.

The Commission of 1909, chiefly concerned with afforestation as a measure of unemployment relief, recommended an extensive scheme of steady planting of nine million acres, at the rate of 150,000 acres per annum. The Commission of 1918 reduced the recommendation to one of 150,000 acres in ten years, with a total of 1,770,000 acres spread over eighty years, which, combined with planting by private owners and Local Authorities, would give a total of three million acres under timber at the end of that period.

Progress of Forestry Commissioners

Forestry Commissioners were appointed in 1919 to carry out the scheme laid down by the Commission of 1918, namely, to afforest 150,000 acres in ten years, in addition to the giving of grants to develop privately-owned woodland. The actual planting work of the Commission has been carried out continuously. From 1919 up to September, 1927, 244,838 acres were acquired by the Commissioners for planting, of which 94,289 acres were actually planted. In addition to the work carried out directly by the Commissioners planting has been done (chiefly by Local Authorities) by means of grants given by the State to private owners and to Local Authorities. The area planted by these State grants amounted to 41,861 acres from 1920 to 1927. The Commissioners undertook also the *provision of small-holdings for forest workers* on their schemes. Up to 1927, 357 holdings had been completed and 219 were in process of preparation.

* Utilisation of Waste Land

Apart from large tracts of unproductive land in Great Britain which is suitable for, and finds its best use in, afforestation, areas of waste land exist which, by the expenditure of labour and capital, would become capable of cultivation. The expenditure upon reclamation, like that upon forestry, yields very slow returns and is not readily undertaken by private owners. State interference in the improvement of land by arterial drainage dates as far back as the Romney Marsh Commission in 1225. Up to the present time, by various methods of procedure, statutory authority exists for the carrying out of drainage schemes, the expense being defrayed by the levy of local rates upon the owners benefitted by the improvement. By the neglect of arterial drainage, it has been estimated that no less than two million acres of agricultural land are seriously water-logged, owing to the lack of efficient channels and outfalls. Since the war, the Ministry of Agriculture has assisted to the extent of £850,000 in carrying out improvements.

The political party policies on these problems are as follows.

Conservative Policy

The development of forest policy is largely dependent on State action continuously applied for a period of years. The policy of the Forestry Commission will be carried on without interruption.

For the purpose of remedying the water-logged condition of considerable areas in different parts of the country, a Government grant of one million pounds spread over five years will be expended to aid the cost of carrying out approved drainage schemes undertaken by Drainage Authorities. In the case of similar schemes, powers are to be given to County Councils to carry out the necessary work and recover the cost by the levy of a rate¹.

Liberal Policy

A land survey will be made, acting upon which the Ministry of Agriculture and the Forestry Commissioners will examine the problem of waste land for the definite purpose of bringing under timber every acre of land suitable for afforestation and with a view to utilising the services of unemployed in schemes of reclamation.

Labour Policy

The Labour Party's policy of the public ownership of land will greatly facilitate afforestation by establishing the necessary continuity of policy. Afforestation is pre-eminently an industry which can best be undertaken by the State. It is proposed to extend the present afforestation efforts as soon as possible to attain an annual programme of 150,000 acres.

¹ Since the publication of the Conservative Policy this scheme has been put into operation.

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Points for Study Has the absence of a State policy of afforestation caused the waste of forestable land? What influence will the existing and proposed afforestation schemes have upon (1) timber supply, (2) food supply, and (3) employment?

Subject for Debate "Afforestation and utilisation of waste lands are problems of the remote future The urgent problem of agriculture is to improve the management of land already in cultivation and the selling of its produce "

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