

# LABOUR'S POLICY ON AGRICULTURE

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# LABOUR'S POLICY ON AGRICULTURE

## INTRODUCTION

**L**AND is the basis of life. The full and proper use of land is therefore a matter of first importance to the townsman and countryman alike. Yet the land, and the great agricultural industry which depends upon it, do not yield either the material return or the broad social results which the nation is entitled to expect. The countryside has suffered from an outworn land system on the one hand, and on the other from alternating periods of gross public neglect and futile expedients for the promotion of its prosperity. The nation clearly cannot continue to be satisfied with the present situation. It must arrest the decline of the last half century, and by a vigorous constructive policy achieve the threefold ideal of "better farming, better business, better living."

The Labour Movement stands for the public ownership of the land and the re-organisation of agriculture as a social service. It cannot tolerate either the continued misuse of land or the existing standard of life of the agricultural worker. Its policy is to establish agriculture as a prosperous industry and the countryside as a rural society enjoying the opportunities and amenities which are the moral right of a nation's citizens.

## THE PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND

**B**RITISH agriculture has reached a stage when its future progress depends upon a change in the system of land tenure. State ownership of the land is essential to the effective development of the industry for the following reasons:—

Given a system of tenancy, it is essential that the landlord should play his part. In Great Britain, he is ceasing to undertake the necessary supply of capital, and British farming has been gravely handicapped in consequence. The result is seen in the widespread deterioration of the capital equipment of the land and of the soil. The poor equipment of a great number of farms as seen in dilapidated buildings, lack of adequate shelter for livestock and machinery, the general absence of modern up-to-date cowsheds or piggeries, illustrate to an alarming degree the lack of maintenance capital, and the same neglect shows itself in inadequate drainage of the soil, which is starved or loses some of its fertility by becoming waterlogged. Landlords fail not only in supplying the necessary capital, but also in maintaining and promoting a good standard of husbandry. Too often they treat the land as an amenity, a playground, and as a means of obtaining social prestige.

If the landlord compels the sale of land, as now so frequently happens, the new owners who have to buy their holdings find themselves with insufficient means to carry on their working business. Indeed, their plight becomes increasingly difficult. Competition for farms raises the price of land and takes away from the industry funds which are needed for its development, so intensifying the lack of working capital. When purchase money has to be obtained on mortgage the future earnings are pledged to persons outside the industry, who so obtain a definite and irksome form of control. It is probable that the provision of a public system of mortgage credit would increase competition and tend further to raise the price of farms. This process is to be feared by both farmers and workers.

A vital reason for the public ownership of land is the fact that whatever assistance the State desires to give to the industry, it is impossible to prevent the ultimate diversion of at least part of the expenditure to the pockets of the landlord. This is one of the cardinal objections to improvements initiated by the State under private ownership, and it applies to all forms of encouragement or assistance, whether for research, education, drainage, or any other improvement; they all in part are in the nature of gratuitous subsidies to the partner who invests neither brains nor energy in the business. As landowner, the State can give effective assistance to agriculture. It can graduate assistance to the circumstances of particular land, and effectively maintain a good standard of husbandry.

### *The Method of Transferring Land*

The need for the substitution of Public Ownership for the present landlord system in agricultural holdings is too urgent to permit of a gradual and piecemeal procedure. It would be the general policy of the Labour Movement to transfer to the new ownership the agricultural holdings in all rural areas: that is to say, on the passing of the Act to vest the freehold in the State, and as soon as the necessary arrangements for compensation can be made—not later in any case than the Appointed Day named in the Act—to transfer the direction as provided in this scheme. There would, however, be certain important classes of holdings which might well be left over for later treatment, in particular, those in semi-urban areas with a substantial site value, together with the special case of occupying owners, including

smallholders. Many of the latter, crippled as they often are by lack of capital, will no doubt be glad to change ownership for tenancy so as to be able to use in their business the free capital provided by the sale of their holdings to the community. Where they do not so desire, they could be left in their temporary ownership until the land was required by the community on grounds of public policy.

### *Compensation*

The dispossessed landlord would be compensated on the basis of Schedule A annual value of the holding, diminished in the case of the inefficient landlord according as he had failed to maintain the proper condition of the holding.

The most practical way to acquire the freehold would be to give Land Bonds to the owner which would be redeemable by a Sinking Fund provided from the economic rent of the land. In the course of time these Bonds would all be paid off, and the land would be the clear property of the community.

These Land Bonds would in no sense increase the real debt of the State as they would be covered by assets constantly increasing in value as agriculture developed and as parts of rural land gradually became urban or semi-urban. It would not be necessary to raise any new capital for the creation of these Land Bonds, which would be marketable securities.

### *Tenure*

Present agreements and customs and conditions of tenancy will continue under public ownership until modifications are required to meet new circumstances, but these will be a matter for full and frank consideration between the tenants and the County Agricultural Committee (representing the State or the County Council, as the case may be).

Where tenure remains individual, as under present conditions, tenants will be secure in the possession of their holdings unless the land is required for public purposes or the tenant has proved himself to be a bad farmer. The efficient farmer, anxious to develop his holding and increase its productivity, need fear nothing from the change.

We contemplate that County Agricultural Committees will, in suitable cases, cultivate land themselves on a considerable scale, though, of course, such public farming will not entirely supersede tenant farming, which will for long continue to be the normal method of tenure and cultivation. The County Committees will possess wide powers to adapt their policy to the circumstances of their area. In some cases it may be found more advantageous to continue the system of tenant farming or small holdings; in others to establish public utility companies or forms of collective or co-operative farming for cultivation of large tracts of land; in others again for the Committee themselves to cultivate such land as may seem to call for direct cultivation by the Public Authority.

### *The Public Control of the Land*

Under a system of public ownership of land there would be immense possibilities of treating the agricultural industry as a great public service, free from the many inefficient and haphazard methods that characterise its conduct to-day. Its direction, nationally and locally, should be in the hands of those best acquainted with the wide range of problems that concern the industry. Every endeavour should be made to minimise bureaucratic tendencies and to extend the co-operative efforts of those who seek to find their life's work in the development of agriculture and so render a full share of service to the nation.

### *Local Administration*

It is obvious that, subject to the general policy laid down by the County Agricultural Committees, the actual conduct of the industry must be in the hands of those actually concerned in it.

Under our proposals, the present County Agricultural Committees would be reconstituted, and they would enjoy wider powers. Each Committee would, we suggest, consist of (a) an equal number of representatives of farmers and farm workers chosen by their respective organisations, and (b) members appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture from a list including experienced persons suggested by the County Council and other appropriate bodies, including smallholders, this section to constitute a majority of the Committee.

All questions relating to agriculture in the county would come within the purview of the County Committee. It would enjoy powers similar to that authorised by the Agriculture Act (1920) (now repealed) for the purpose of maintaining a good standard of husbandry. It would be empowered to enforce good husbandry, to improve existing methods of cultivation (*e.g.*, in regard to the eradication of weeds and the adoption of suitable methods of manuring), to provide necessary works of maintenance (*e.g.*, the cleaning of drains, embankments and ditches, the repair of fences, etc.). In the case of grossly mismanaged farms, there should be power to dispossess the holders. Coupled with these duties concerning agriculture, the County Agricultural Committee would also be responsible for the administration of publicly-owned lands.

The Committee would therefore be a very important body, and in order that the Committee shall not be confined to the well-to-do, the out-of-pocket expenses and loss of wages incurred in attending meetings should be met out of public funds.

Clearly the County Agricultural Committee could not itself deal with all the questions which would arise, and it would be necessary for it to work through sub-committees.

For example, there would need to be a sub-committee specially concerned with the letting of land, the proper equipment of the farms, the proper use of land, and the collection of rents and dues. Other sub-committees would deal with agricultural education, livestock, fertilisers and feeding stuffs, transport and marketing.

There would be nothing new in such a system of sub-committees. At the present time a local Education Authority or County Agricultural Committee finds it necessary to devolve particular duties upon specially constituted sub-committees

Committees and sub-committees so composed would not be suitable bodies for fixing rents. For this purpose we suggest that local Land Courts should be set up, say, for each County, consisting of persons appointed by the Minister of Agriculture after consultation with the County Council. It would also be desirable to arrange for some appeal tribunal should the Land Court give an award which either the State (or Local Authority) or the tenant deemed to be unjust. These Courts would fix rents alike for privately and publicly owned holdings.

### *Central Administration*

To assist and encourage the agricultural industry, it is suggested that there should be established a National Agricultural Commission under the Minister of Agriculture. Each Commissioner would be specially concerned with some particular aspect of the problem of agriculture. Thus there would be a finance member, an authority on methods of land cultivation, a transport expert, a power expert, a member with special knowledge of marketing and distribution, and a member conversant with labour problems and conditions. The finance member would be the chief official

dealing with the rents of State-owned lands, costings and credits. The transport and power members would keep in close touch with the proposed Power and Transport Commission\* to represent the special interests and claims of agriculture and the rural population as regards the provision of both power and transport. The member concerned with marketing and distribution would be engaged upon the organisation of proper market and distribution facilities, and would, of course, act in many matters in conjunction with the transport member. The member whose special province was methods of cultivation would maintain contact on the one hand with agricultural research work and educational institutions, and on the other with the educational activities of County Agricultural Committees and the organisations of cultivators. The labour commissioner would be primarily concerned with questions of wages, employment and conditions, but might also keep rural housing needs before the attention of the Ministry of Health.

The Commission, which would be presided over by the Minister, would meet regularly, and should at regular intervals meet with representatives of the County Agricultural Committees for discussion of the problems affecting agriculture and the countryside. The Commission would be primarily a body concerned with planning the orderly development of agriculture and encouraging the improvement of existing standards. It would be a body of practical and experienced men concentrating their combined knowledge upon the reconstruction and development of our basic industry.

### THE PUBLIC USE OF THE LAND

The object of the Labour Movement is to secure the fullest possible use of land for and by the community by the most economical and effective means. Temporary panaceas like subsidies on corn-growing or protective duties will not attain this end.

Without any assistance from the public purse in the form of subsidies, it has been admitted that the production of British food can be very largely increased.

If this increased output can be secured by levelling up the general methods of farming to the best methods now followed by practical farmers, still further progress awaits us in the future through the steady advancement in agricultural methods and the collective and co-operative development of the industry.

We realise the necessity for securing steady supplies of food for the nation, the possible contribution of other parts of the British Commonwealth to the economical supply of foodstuffs, and the absolute necessity of securing from British land the maximum output on an economical basis. It is generally acknowledged that the land of Great Britain is capable of making a greater contribution to the needs of the nation than at present without increasing the unit costs of the commodities produced.

If we are to increase our home supply of food every obstacle to good cultivation must be removed, and every facility which it is within the power of the State to offer must be provided for better farming. The increasing competition for farms is providing opportunities for the selection of good cultivators, but many of the present occupiers of agricultural land need greater facilities for technical training, and future occupiers should reach a higher standard of proficiency as cultivators. The Labour Movement believes that all agricultural land should be equipped for its proper use. So long as land remains in private hands, the community can do little. Once the community has, through the ownership of the land, a direct stake in the success of agriculture, the State can take active steps to assist the industry by the provision of adequate capital, by the encouragement of research and initiative, though in the last resort the final responsibility must rest with the cultivators, in whom it is hoped "there will be pride of calling and public spirit."

\* See *Coal and Commonsense*—Labour Publications Department.—post free, 2½d.



In two directions the Labour Movement will endeavour to secure active State assistance and stimulus. While many blunders have been committed in the establishment of small holdings in recent years, there is still a place for small holdings in British rural economy and social life, and where economic conditions are favourable to small holdings, in groups or otherwise, they should be established and encouraged. But such holdings must be properly equipped for their special lines of production, adequate transport and proper marketing arrangements must be made, and special facilities for training provided in the management of small holdings. Demonstration holdings should be started in suitable areas. Similarly, in the case of larger farms, we believe that the Public Authority should supply knowledge and guidance by the establishment of Demonstration Farms to be worked on commercial systems suitable for general application in different districts. By this means various systems of farming can be tested, and a standard provided by which the productivity of local farming may be judged.

### THE GAME LAWS

Amongst the obstacles to the productive use of land are those now made or fostered by the Game Laws. The special protection which they afford should be abolished. All game, whether ground or winged, should be the property of the occupier of the land, and no restrictive covenants regarding game should be allowed in agricultural leases. But provision must also be made for the control of game by County Agricultural Committees. Where an occupier of land is hindered in its agricultural use by game preserved, or otherwise maintained, on neighbouring land, the owner of the game should be made fully responsible for any damage that may be done. Further, we would give the County Committee powers to enter upon land and destroy game which is doing persistent damage to crops in the neighbourhood. In cases in which game is preserved or maintained on land which might otherwise profitably be used for agricultural purposes, the County Committee should have power to take over such land, to cultivate it, or to let it for agricultural purposes. The use of this power would, of course, need to be exercised with due consideration of the interests of the general public in free access to open spaces, for the open spaces in which the public are chiefly interested are not such as are of use for agricultural purposes requiring cultivation, although they may be used for pastoral purposes. The control of rabbits and rooks is not sufficient protection of the interests of the nation in food production, and wherever land now used for the maintenance of game can be economically used for agricultural production, it should be made available for that purpose.

### DEER FORESTS

Special measures will be required to deal with the problem created by the devotion of vast tracts of land in Scotland to the purpose of deer forests. The total area of deer forests in Scotland was, "in 1883, 1,975,209 acres; in 1892, 2,472,133 acres; in 1912, 3,584,966 acres; and in 1920, 3,432,385 acres."\* The last official inquiry into this question came to the conclusion that "many of the deer forests could still be rendered more productive," and that "where the ground is suitable for Sylviculture, production could be increased by this agency to a point far beyond the pastoral value, while the labour absorbed by the creation, maintenance, and utilisation of timber crops would surpass by many times that required for the service of sheep farms or deer forests."†

\* Report of the Departmental Committee on Deer Forests. Cmd. 1636. 1922. P. 1.

† Cmd. 1636. P. 28.

It is obvious that there is a considerable misuse of land in Scotland, and we concur in the Report of the Scottish Land Court for 1916, which said:—

“His Majesty’s Judges demand the complete reversal of the system of law and policy which places the preservation of deer and other game above the production of food, and which permits or encourages depopulation of the country for the pleasures of the wealthy of this and foreign nations.”

The whole area should be compulsorily acquired immediately and placed under the control of the Scottish Board of Agriculture, charging it with the duty of securing the proper development of the area, whether for cultivation, afforestation, water-power, residence or as a holiday ground, taking care that from henceforth no citizen is deprived of the enjoyment of the vision and acquaintance of this priceless national heritage.

## THE AGRICULTURAL WORKER

### *A Living Wage*

Every industry should be so organised as to provide a living wage for the workers engaged in it. Agriculture is no exception to this general principle. As in other industries, the Labour Movement will press for the recognition of the agricultural workers’ claim to an adequate standard of life.

For that reason we welcome, as a step towards this goal, the establishment of the Agricultural Wages Board system in England and Wales, set up by the Labour Government. By this system many of the evils from which the farm-worker has suffered for generations have been diminished.

Conditions prior to the establishment of the Wages Committees were a national disgrace. The average remuneration was 28s. a week, and thousands of workers had to subsist with their families on still less, in many cases on as little as 23s. and even 20s. per week. The working of the Act has since proved that these scandalously low rates were not justified by the economic circumstances of the employers. It has been too long merely a custom on the part of the farmer to pay low wages, and this in the long run reacts on the efficiency of farming in addition to being unjust to the worker. It is bad business as well as bad morals. The minimum rates fixed by the Committees, the regulation of hours, and the guarantee of a full working week register a decided advance, and the Labour Movement may congratulate the first Labour Minister of Agriculture on establishing the system as a permanent feature of the agricultural industry in this country.

Unfortunately, however, owing to the opposition of the Liberal Party the original scheme was not accepted. To deprive the Central Board of the powers to order the revision of rates fixed by local Committees reduces the meetings of that body to futility. It would be hypocritical to pretend that the Central Board, as at present constituted, serves any useful purpose. It cannot even suggest that a County Committee would do well to revise a particular rate. The removal of this defect, for the existence of which the Labour Party disclaims responsibility, should be one of the first tasks of the next Labour Government.

It is essential that the Central Board should be an effective body with powers to prevent such anomalies as have existed in the rates approved by County Committees; as, for example, the minimum rate below 30s. fixed by the Norfolk and Suffolk Committees in 1925.

Agricultural workers can accomplish much in the meantime if they will stand together and speak with one voice through their Unions. This would increase their economic power and their ability to use the machinery of the Act to greater advantage. Their social and economic conditions can be vastly improved if they stand shoulder to shoulder in Union membership.

### *Increased Responsibility*

The Labour Movement believes in economic democracy, and it calls for a more responsible place for the land worker in the conduct of the industry. We hold that a widening sphere of responsibility is desirable in the interests both of the workers themselves and of the industry. The rapid progress in the technical development of agriculture is providing fresh fields for skilled work, which requires from the workers new qualities, and imposes upon them new responsibilities. The fullest educational facilities should be made available in order that farm-workers may take advantage of new conditions. They should, for example, be enabled to visit county demonstration farms and attend lectures which are held in villages under the authority of the County Agricultural Committees. The extension work in agricultural education done by the local authorities has been too much the preserve of farmers and their sons, and has in many cases been organised almost solely in their interests. Efforts should, of course, be made to provide special facilities for the training of farm-workers, not only in manual processes, as has previously been the case, but also in the basic scientific and general knowledge which underlies the practice of agriculture and the economic organisation of the farming industry. When the schemes contemplated in the earlier part of this Report materialise, the possibilities of improvement of work and life for farm-workers will be largely increased, and the new social organisation of the industry will afford opportunities for them to fill posts of greater responsibility. Through their representation on the County Agricultural Committees they will have a definite influence on the future of the industry and their share in its present and future control.

But the position of farm-workers cannot be improved effectively until they are organised and assisted to exercise their full influence on local government in rural areas. The problems of provision of land and of housing, and of the supply of social amenities, are largely dependent for their solution upon the active criticism of Local Authorities by farm-workers, and upon their adequate representation upon these Authorities.

### *Access to Land*

Where there exists a proved demand for land, agricultural workers should be granted access close to their cottages.\*

While in certain districts it is undesirable that the cultivation of the land should be generally developed under the system of small farming, it is equally undesirable that farm-workers should be denied access to land. Where allotments are still required in rural areas every obstacle to their provision should be removed, but the chief requirement is to move Local Authorities to use efficiently the powers they now possess. The public ownership of land would in many cases make possible schemes of village planning which would render land available for garden and allotment cultivation near to the homes of the workers. Moreover, while the system of private occupation of agricultural land prevails there are good reasons for making provision for farm-workers to obtain small holdings. Under a proper system of organisation these can show economic and social results at least as good as those of the present farming system. In certain districts, and under some conditions, they can show even better results than the existing system of agricultural organisation, and where suitable conditions exist, more small holdings, properly planned and equipped, should be provided. Allotments and small holdings 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.

\* See also *The Public Use of The Land* (page 8).

## COTTAGES AND SOCIAL AMENITIES

When the war broke out there was an acute shortage of houses for farm-workers, while most of the existing cottages were very old, and large numbers were damp, dark and dilapidated. Many thousands of families were crowded into dwellings unfit for human habitation. Not merely did health suffer, but the effects on village life were disastrous and reacted seriously on agricultural production.

The evils were increased by the terms of tenancy of the farm-worker's dwelling. In far too many cases the farm-worker lived in a tied cottage. If, for any reason, he left his employment, or was dismissed, he also lost his house, and, owing to the shortage of cottages, found himself homeless.

How serious the problem is no one can say, for not only was there an actual deficiency in the number of houses available, but the standard was so low that a considerable number called for demolition; and the number of new houses required depends upon the standard of housing which we set as necessary for the rural population.

Rural housing, however, has special difficulties. Low wages in agriculture made it impossible for the farm-worker to pay more than a low rent. Because rents were low, house building was not a business proposition. Condemned to low wages, the land worker was also condemned to unsatisfactory housing conditions, and was, indeed, involved in a vicious circle. With the post-war rise in the cost of building, the disparity between economic rents and the workers' means became even more accentuated and intensified the difficulties of the situation. Moreover, the Rural District Councils, which are the local housing authorities, have, for the most part, shown themselves either unwilling or unable to accept their responsibilities.

### *The Provision of New Cottages*

During the war no cottages were built for the agricultural population. After the war, under the Addison Scheme, some of the Rural District Councils built a few cottages in the rural parishes. The rents, however, were generally beyond the means of the farm-workers, and in only a small minority of cases were the cottages let to them. Often the agricultural labourer who obtained one of the cottages has only been able to pay the rent by restricting other necessary expenditure on his family or by taking in lodgers.

Under the Chamberlain Act of 1923 few cottages have been built in purely agricultural districts. The houses erected in the areas of Rural District Councils have, for the most part, been extensions from the towns, and are suburban rather than rural dwellings.

The existing rents paid by the farm-worker vary from 1s. 6d. to about 5s. a week, inclusive of rates, the most normal rents being between 2s. and 4s. Where the cottage is free, it really means that, in fact, the tenant is performing extra service in the way of overtime or Sunday work, which more than compensates for the absence of rent. Even under the Agricultural Wages Board, the increase in wages secured does not justify a rent higher than at present prevailing.

The rents of new cottages, therefore, if they are to be available for farm-workers, must be only slightly, if at all, greater than the rents of the existing cottages. This was the view taken by the Labour Government, and recognised in its Housing Act, which provided for an increased annual subsidy from the State in the case of cottages built in agricultural parishes, an "agricultural parish" being defined as "one in which there are not more than fifty persons to the 100 acres and in which agricultural land constitutes not less than one-third of the rateable value." In such parishes the subsidy

from the State amounts to £12 10s. per annum, and for the first time in housing legislation there is a recognition of the fact that agricultural districts require greater subsidy than urban. The condition under which this extra subsidy is to be given is that the rents are to be the same as rents of pre-war houses in the district, unless the result of charging such a rent will involve a loss to the Local Authority of more than £4 10s. per annum.

This would permit of a rent being charged, including rates, of about 5s. a week, which is only slightly higher than the existing rents in rural districts.

Most Rural District Councils could build without casting any undue burden upon the rates, but many of them will probably require considerable pressure if they are to build a sufficient number of cottages, each one of which will involve a contribution from the rates of £4 10s. per annum. The actual cost to the Council will be slightly less than £4 10s., because a certain part of the amount collected for local rates on the houses shows a slight net profit in view of the fact that the people to be housed are already living in the district.

What steps should be taken to secure that sufficient cottages are, in fact, built in those rural districts where the Rural District Council is not prepared to face the £4 10s. per annum required in respect of each house?

Under Section 1 of the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1919, it is made the duty of the Local Authority to provide for the housing needs of its district, and power is given to the County Council, and in the last resort to the Ministry of Health, to act in default of a Local Authority which does not perform its duties. Where this happens, the County Council or Ministry of Health, on the Authority being declared in default, would build, charging the Local Authority with the cost of any loss. We believe that this procedure should be used where necessary. County Councils should build in cases where Rural District Councils refuse to carry out their duties, and should impose a rate on the Rural District to meet the expenditure incurred.

#### *Improving Existing Cottages*

The existing cottages can be divided into three categories:—

- (a) Those which are reasonably fit for human habitation, even though not up to the most modern standards. In the case of these houses nothing special requires to be said, except that in practice it will be found that a relatively small proportion of the cottages comes within this category.
- (b) Cottages which are in need of repair but which can, with a reasonable expenditure of money, be made reasonably fit for human habitation. With regard to these, the Rural District Council is possessed of adequate powers for dealing with the matter. They can serve notices on the owner requiring him to carry out the necessary repairs, and in the last resort can carry out the repairs themselves, charging the owner with the cost. This may be recovered by the Local Authority themselves collecting the rents until the amount is paid off. The Local Authorities will require increased stimulus from the central authority to use this power, as there is a tendency for some Rural District Councils and for their officials not to take sufficiently stringent action in this respect, particularly where the owner is a prominent person in the locality.
- (c) Houses which are so bad as to be definitely dangerous to health. In the case of such houses the Local Authority has power to issue a closing order requiring the owner to close the house until such time as the house has been made fit. If it cannot be made fit, or the owner is unable to do so, then the Authority can keep it closed or issue a demolition order requiring it to be pulled down. The difficulty in enforcing this at present is the lack of alternative accommodation.

The Local Authority can, if they wish, purchase houses for what they are worth, make them fit for human habitation, and let them as publicly-owned cottages. In cases where the actual outside structure of the house is good, Local Authorities should adopt this procedure. Experience has shown, however, that to make many such cottages into reasonable dwellings often involves an expenditure of money as great as building a new cottage.

The Local Authorities have adequate powers, and the whole problem, therefore, hinges, not upon further legislation, but upon the Ministry of Health seeing that these powers are in fact fully used.

### *Provision of Land and Gardens*

A substantial number of new cottages will be required in practically every village, and the problem of how much land should be attached to each cottage and the general lay-out of the scheme demands careful consideration. The cottages should be built in the villages rather than by ones or twos isolated on the farms. In a few cases it may be necessary to build some on the more remote farms, particularly for stockmen, but this is the concern of the farmers or landowners themselves. Public schemes must be in the nature of an extension of existing villages. In a few cases, where a large number of cottages are to be built, a completely new hamlet could be constructed. The cottages should not be built more than four to the acre, so that each cottage would have a quarter of an acre of land attached. A scheme might be so arranged that each cottage has one-eighth acre and the remaining land available, so as to bring up the average to four to the acre, might be let as allotments immediately contiguous to the cottage gardens, so that one person might take an extra eighth acre or more where another, or others, do not require more than the eighth acre supplied with each cottage.

### *The Tied Cottage*

For many years before the war tied cottages were regarded by the farm-workers as the most serious evil of village life. When a man's occupation of his home depends on his employment, he is placed in a position of thralldom, which is unknown to the ordinary urban worker. When this is coupled with the general circumstances of village life and the difficulties of combination to secure full advantages of collective action through Trade Unions, the farm-worker's position is rendered doubly insecure.

A farmer can far too easily obtain a certificate from the County Agricultural Committee authorising him to proceed to the magistrate for legal authority to eject the workman. We think that the clause in the Rent Restriction Act (1923) empowering County Committees to grant this certificate should be repealed. The farmer should establish his case on its merits before the magistrate, without the latter relying on the County Agricultural Committee's certificate.

Where a farm-worker is employed on a contract of service and occupies a cottage which is part of the equipment of the farm, on a service tenancy, the Rent Restriction Act cannot be extended to protect him without raising serious practical difficulties in carrying on the farm. The most serious hardship for such a worker is the power the farmer has to remove him from his house at any time by terminating the contract. If a dispute arises between the workman and his employer, the threat is often held over the workman, that if he does not submit to the employer he will be dismissed and removed from his house immediately. The law must be altered so that the onus

will be on the employer to prove breach of contract on the part of the workman before he can remove the workman from his house during the course of an engagement.

Undoubtedly, the building of a sufficient number of cottages in rural districts would mitigate the evils of the tied cottage to a very great extent, because once the farm-worker knew that, even if he did leave his tied cottage, he would be able to get another home, he would feel more independent. The hardship is intensified in cases where farmers have purchased ordinary cottage property in the villages away from their farms, and are able to turn out men and their families from their homes and gardens because they have left their employ. The Labour policy, then, is to supply an adequate number of un-tied cottages in every area.

### *Social Amenities*

Just as in the towns the housing schemes should be arranged in relation to the general town plan, so in the villages the scheme should be conceived as part of a village extension, and provision made for social amenities.

Every village should be provided with recreation fields and with a public meeting place which would become the centre of the intellectual and social life of the village, the home of the village library, the headquarters of local societies, and the village concert and dance hall. It is estimated that only a third of the parishes of the country have parish halls. It is obviously the duty of the local councils to undertake their erection with assistance from the State. It is an unsound principle to allow *ad hoc* bodies of a non-representative character to be responsible for this work and, as has been done, to assist them by grants of public money. Loans or grants by the State should be expended by representative authorities.

What we visualise is a village community, with its own vigorous life, unattracted by the meretricious glare of the nearest town, satisfied with its own amenities and happy in the knowledge that its activities support the nation's chief industry. We wish to see the drift from the countryside to the towns cease, and the village again become a community with varied interests and manifold activities. The problems of land, agriculture and village life are but parts of the same great problem—how to ensure that rural Britain shall find its proper place in the national economy, make its due contribution to the national well-being, and in the doing of these things find its own salvation.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING

Until the war agricultural reformers concerned themselves chiefly with the problem of land-ownership and tenure. The monopoly of land, the burden of rents, and the control over agricultural development exercised by a semi-feudal class, constituted the most obvious hindrance to agricultural progress. But vital as is a change in the system of land ownership, the last ten years have shown clearly enough that the question of marketing and prices is just as important. When agricultural land is nationalised, and a system of land administration brought into operation which will encourage and support improved methods of production and cultivation, the price received by the cultivator for his produce will still be by far the most important factor in determining whether the industry is prosperous or the reverse; and, in determining the prices actually received by the farmer, the methods of marketing and distribution are of primary importance. There is little dispute on the proposition that the marketing and distribution of the products of British soil fall far short of an efficient standard. The farmers cannot be held primarily responsible for this, for their chief concern should be with actual production. Between

producer and consumer there has grown up an elaborate system of merchants and distributors which, as Commission after Commission has reported, absorbs far too large a percentage of the total price paid by the consumer. The profits of speculators, of middlemen and of retailers, coupled with the currency and credit policies of Governments and banks, exercise a profound influence on the farmer's income and the labourer's wage. Until the land is cleared of the encumbrance of a landlord system, which has outlived such usefulness as it ever had, it is evident that the foundations of a prosperous agriculture cannot be properly laid. But once these foundations are laid the building up of the agricultural industry so as to enable it to render efficient service to the community and to provide a satisfactory life and livelihood to those engaged in it has no chance of success unless the industry is at the same time freed from the expensive and oppressive control of the commercial interests. In framing a satisfactory system of marketing and distribution of farm products, the interests of producers and consumers must be the determining factors. The consumer can properly claim that the price he has to pay should be no higher than will secure an adequate and steady supply, and at the same time yield those engaged in agriculture at home and abroad a fair return for their work. The price received by the producer is a vitally important factor in maintaining and increasing production. The amounts received by intermediaries have, in general, no such effect. So long as their services are necessary they must and will be paid for on a fair basis. But the interests of agriculture and of the consumer suffer grievously at present under systems of distribution which are maintained chiefly in the interests of small groups who have managed to establish themselves in strategic positions giving them a strong financial pull on the market, or the power to exact over-payment for such services as they render. The passing of commodities through four or five different hands, on paper if not in actual fact, between producer and consumer, each of whom takes a toll for his services, is unnecessary if distribution is rationally organised. Whilst paying adequately for such services as are necessary, including of course transport,\* there can be no justification for permitting the vested interests of distributors or transport agencies or of existing markets to stand in the way of a drastic reorganisation of the system of distribution between the farm and the household. The services, of course, of many of the persons now engaged in the processes of marketing and distribution would be required in a better organised and more efficient system. There is no reason to doubt that some of them would be better satisfied working under a system which provides better service to the community as a whole than under the haphazard conditions under which they are now compelled to labour.

#### *Improved Marketing in other Countries*

In other countries the importance of marketing in the business of farming has received far more recognition than in Great Britain. The prosperity of Danish agriculture has been linked up at every stage with the development of co-operative sales in bulk of the farmers' produce. By this means the price and quality of the national production have steadily improved; the Danish farmer has been largely freed from the grip of middlemen; the agricultural industry as a whole has secured for itself profits that previously were absorbed by commercial interests. In Australia, after co-operation had embraced a large proportion of the farmers, the Government set up Boards mainly representative of the co-operative societies, to exercise control over the whole export of various classes of fruits and dairy produce. In New Zealand similar action has been taken in regard to the whole export of meat and butter. In Australia also a considerable proportion of the wheat is handled through co-operative

\*See *Transport Section* (p. 26).



pools. In the United States already, according to a statement made by President Coolidge to the Session of Congress this year, one-fifth of the whole of the agricultural production sold by the farmers is handled through co-operative channels. In Canada about 70 % of the whole wheat production is handled by the farmers' co-operative pools. In Russia and Siberia, the bulk of the grain, dairy produce and flax is sold through co-operative channels, both on the home and foreign markets. Thus, in many countries organised sales by the farmers of their produce, sometimes with and sometimes without special Government assistance, has to a large extent replaced the old methods and machinery of private trade, and the farmers are rescuing themselves from the control of the commercial interests.

The immediate purposes of this remarkable development, most of which has occurred since the war, are evident. In the first place the farmers wish to retain for themselves that considerable part of the price paid by consumers, which previously was secured by distributors, middlemen and speculators, over and above the necessary costs of distribution. Secondly, co-operative selling in bulk enables the business of marketing to be handled in a much more efficient and skilled manner than by the individual farmer selling in small quantities. Full advantage can be taken of favourable market conditions and deliberate manipulations against the farmer can be prevented. Thirdly, where pooling takes place, the farmers receive at least the average price paid over the whole season for goods of the type they produce. In fact they are guaranteed a fair price as determined by average world market prices over a season.

#### *Co-operation in Great Britain*

But in this country no such progress can be recorded. Whilst every branch of industry and commerce has been organising on a wholesale scale in these last few years, the British producer, as the Linlithgow Committee indicated, retains the methods of marketing of a century ago when conditions were entirely different. Agricultural co-operation has made but little progress, though for twenty years efforts have been made to establish voluntary co-operative systems in England and Wales for the purchase of farmers' requirements and the sale of farmers' produce. The total result at present is that only about four to five per cent. of the sales and about 10 % of the purchases are made through co-operative organisations. Clearly, unless progress is far more rapid in the future than it has been in the past, neither producers nor consumers can wait for agricultural co-operation alone to improve agricultural distribution. The Labour Government in 1924 provided money on easy terms to be used for capital purposes by agricultural co-operative societies, and the Labour policy will be to continue to support agricultural co-operation wherever it can be developed by direct Government assistance or by financing. It will seek also to develop direct relations between the consumers' co-operative movement and the agricultural societies. In some cases already such trading relations have been established between agricultural societies and consumers' co-operative societies or the Co-operative Wholesale Society. Where this has occurred, direct distribution from collection at or near the farm to the consumer's door has been established without the intervention of any unnecessary intermediary. The development of such arrangements provides the producers with a steady and reliable market and enables them to share with the consumers the profits which intermediaries now absorb. But, unfortunately, such arrangements are far from being general enough to be adequate.

It is, particularly in the early processes of marketing, that farmers' co-operation can be effective. It could stimulate the development of better methods of grading and packing of fruit and vegetables, and could deal effectively with the collection and

marketing of eggs and poultry. It is already making some progress in the use of pig products and the manufacture of bacon, and could play a much larger part, as in Holland, Denmark and Siberia, in the manufacture and sale of dairy products.

Organised selling of perishables on a national scale would, as in the United States, enable local gluts and shortages to be avoided and supplies to markets to be adjusted to actual needs. It would render possible also the wider development of manufacturing and storage measures for the handling of temporary and often purely local surpluses. It is essential to the extension and prosperity of small holdings. At present small holdings and small farmers are much too weak to grapple singly with the powerful interests which control distribution in the big cities, and the absence of organisation involves vast waste in transport, the spoiling of produce and increased costs of distribution. Correspondingly, the margins between consumers' and producers' prices are notoriously too high.

In relation to classes of products such as wheat and meat, in which the market is dominated by the condition of the imported supply, hardly any progress at all in co-operative marketing of home supplies has been made. An attempt was made at the end of the war to establish co-operative slaughter houses to deal with local supplies of meat, but no lasting success was attained. The British meat trade is too dependent on the wholesale and imported meat trade to render possible satisfactory results unless comprehensive arrangements are made covering imported as well as home supplies. Where, indeed, local products have to pass to distant markets and sell in competition or in conjunction with imported supplies, the local societies can only deal effectively with the more simple and more primary aspects of marketing. Indeed, most of the existing societies use the ordinary channels of trade for the distribution of the commodities they handle.

### *Grading and Quality of Agricultural Products*

One special aspect of co-operative activity in other countries requires additional consideration. The standardisation of the quality and accurate grading of agricultural produce, achieved partly through the co-operative organisations and partly by State assistance, has immensely improved the market for the products of the Dominions and other countries. Danish butter, eggs and bacon, Dutch cheese, Californian fruits and New Zealand butter are illustrations of the immense advantages which may be conferred on a whole agricultural industry by gradually building up the standard and quality and thus the market reputation of goods produced for sale. British agriculture suffers lamentably from its failure to adapt such practices to its needs.

The farmer, if he is to get the best results from the market, must deliver his commodities in the form in which the consumer wants them. Changes in demand continue to occur, and probably will continue to occur whatever the system of distribution may be. The grading of the milk supply from the point of view of public health is stimulating the demand for cleaner and better milk. The importation of comparatively small and lean carcasses of mutton, especially from New Zealand, is setting a standard for the demand for mutton. The grading, packing and general presentation of imported fruit is setting a standard for the fruit trade. The British farmer must take account of all such changes and adapt his system of marketing to meet the consumers' demands. Compulsory grading would provide a great incentive to reorganisation of marketing on co-operative lines. An effective system of co-operative marketing would not only, as in other countries, enable standards to be adhered to and gradually improved, but would also much more conveniently enable the type and flow of produce to be adjusted to changing needs. Agricultural education and research, too, in their more immediate practical aspects,

must be brought to bear to assist the farmer to adapt his production to consumers' requirements in quantity and quality of produce. Wherever these results cannot be achieved rapidly by other means, the State must provide the organisation to secure the adoption of grading and standardisation of produce on the market. This has become a definite part of State activity in many countries, both in Europe and in the Dominions. Grading, standardisation of packing, and preparation for sale and distribution are a necessary part of an improved system of distribution.

### *Fluctuations of Market Prices*

There is much evidence in the reports of the Linlithgow Committee of the excessive cost of distribution between farmer and consumer. Far less attention has been given to the effect on farming in this country of constantly fluctuating market prices. Though the direct importance of wheat in a farmer's balance sheet varies from county to county, yet on account of its importance to the consuming population and the effect of variations in its price on the whole course of agricultural prices, it deserves foremost attention. The question whether or not a farmer makes a profit or a loss on his wheat in a particular year depends of course on the market conditions when he happens to sell it. So long as this price is determined by the chance whether he sells in this market or that market, in this week or that week, farming cannot be considered as a commercial enterprise, but as a more or less gambling speculation. Moreover, it is a gamble in which the dice are loaded against the farmer. Approximately 80% of the wheat sold in Great Britain is imported, and the price of the 20% or so of British wheat responds immediately to movements in the price of foreign wheat. Thus the price of grain from week to week depends on factors generally outside the direct knowledge or experience of the average farmer. Speculative movements on the Chicago or Winnipeg grain exchanges, bad weather in India or the Argentine, shipping conditions in the North Atlantic, rumours and reports—false or true—as to conditions in the Danubian countries, immediately reflect themselves in the price of wheat. Any one of these may make all the difference in a profit or a loss on a year's working to a British farmer marketing his grain in his market town in the ordinary way, more or less ignorant of the reasons why prices are up or down. The grain merchants and the millers are specialists in these matters and are well-informed. The farmer, whose main pre-occupation should be the actual working of his farm, is necessarily ill-informed and at the mercy of circumstances or of those who can use circumstances for their profit. Temporary disturbances of the kind indicated do not necessarily affect the average price of grain for the whole year. But they govern the day to day fluctuations of prices and, therefore, in the present organisation of British markets, the price which the British farmer receives for his produce.

The returns published by the Board of Agriculture of British markets week by week show how wide and how arbitrary these fluctuations are. Even in the comparatively steady period before the war, the difference between the highest and lowest average weekly prices was sometimes as much as 20% to 25% of the average price for the year. Since the war, fluctuations have been wider and have reached as much as 30% of the average price in particular years. These returns, moreover, relate to the average prices on all markets. Actually, in fact, a farmer is tied to one or two markets. Fluctuations in particular markets may be considerably greater than the average figures for all the markets. To some extent variations of prices are due to seasonal causes. Thus, there is a tendency for prices to be lower immediately after a harvest than later in the cereal year. But the figures show that this tendency cannot be relied upon, as is shown by the following examples\*—In the cereal year 1906-07 the

\* See also Appendix II.

average price was at its lowest at 26s. 1d. per quarter in September, and at its highest at 33s. 6d. in the following August. But in the following cereal year, 1907-08, the highest monthly average price was recorded in November at 35s. 3d., and the lowest monthly average was recorded in July at 30s. 10d. In 1924-25 the price was 54s. 7d. per quarter in August; it had fallen to 51s. 9d. by October 1; it had risen again as a result of speculation in the American market to 62s. 10d. in March and had slumped again to 52s. 6d. in May. The effect of these fluctuations is from the agricultural point of view almost wholly bad. The farmer only secures a part—frequently a small part—of the gain when prices are high, but immediately they fall he suffers to the full extent.

Apart from the actual risk of loss involved in these wide variations in prices, the general result of the uncertainty is very serious. So long as the farmer has no knowledge at all of the price he is likely to receive for his crops, it is nearly impossible to work farming on business lines. If prices were stabilised so that the farmer knew when he sowed approximately the price he would receive when he sold his crop, he could plan his operations much more confidently and on a more businesslike basis. Nor would he need to devote so much of the time he can ill afford from the actual supervision of his farming to personally following markets.

Moreover, as the experience of the war and afterwards shows, stability of moderately remunerative prices encourages production much more effectively than the chances of very high or low prices. The drift from arable to pasture has been largely due to uncertainty of prices. Farmers in planning the work of their farms have had to base their calculations not on probable prices, but the lowest they might possibly receive. So they have naturally in many cases played for safety—with small outlay of capital and low production of foodstuffs, rather than a larger outlay and large production of foodstuffs, and, therefore, a greater risk. The surest enemy to enterprise is an unknown risk.

Wages calculations, too, are based not on highest or even on average prices, but on lowest possible prices, and labourers have suffered accordingly. On the other hand, the miller, faced with certainty of fluctuations, has based his calculation for flour on the highest probable prices. Bread prices lag reluctantly when wheat prices go down. They immediately go up when wheat rises. Bearing in mind the extra cost of distribution, the profits of speculators and middlemen which constantly fluctuating prices involve are ultimately all of them reflected in the price the consumer pays for his loaf. As Mr. Bruce, the Prime Minister of Australia, said at the Imperial Economic Conference, October 9, 1923, "In the interests of both the producer and the consumer fluctuations in prices are generally detrimental. Fluctuations only benefit the speculative middleman."

### *Method of Stabilising Prices*

The method to be adopted in this country for steadying prices requires special consideration for each staple commodity. Co-operative organisation of selling would, in some cases, meet the situation. In one case, that of milk, the price has already been stabilised by direct arrangements between the National Farmers' Union and the organised milk distributors. Though there is much to criticise in these arrangements, stabilisation of prices to the farmer at figures which are moderate compared with those paid by the consumer, has undoubtedly had the effect of considerably stimulating production.

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, in order to achieve a steady price, that the import of such commodities should be carefully controlled. For the solution of the administrative problems involved, the war provided ample experience in this and other countries, both of methods which should be copied and of mistakes which can be avoided.

### *Wheat*

Considering wheat first of all, we propose to transform the whole import of wheat into a public service, to place the responsibility for it in the hands of an Import Board specially constituted as a business corporation for this purpose. The duties of this Board, which should be laid down by Parliament from time to time, 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. It would be specially required so as to organise the distributive prices and arrangements as to secure as steady a price as possible. The Board would be under the management of Directors, removed entirely from private business, who would be chosen with a special knowledge of the problems involved. Co-operative representatives would, of course, be included. The Minister of Agriculture or the President of the Board of Trade, as might be most convenient, would be responsible for the appointment of the members and for changing them if they failed to carry out the duties entrusted to them by Act of Parliament. The Board would be guaranteed by the Treasury under Parliamentary sanction a working capital sufficient for its operations. It should be as free to manage the details of its trading operations as a private concern would be. The broad outline of its policy, its estimates and, finally, its detailed results would from time to time be submitted to the Minister responsible who would be answerable to Parliament.

The policy would be to make bulk contracts for most of its requirements with the wheat pools and other organised exporters in the Dominions and elsewhere. Prices would naturally be based on market conditions and on the expectation of world supplies and needs. It would balance its supplies by buying from time to time as circumstances required at market prices. It would, as opportunity offered, make forward contracts in bulk for delivery over considerable periods, particularly with the organised Dominion producers. It would build up reserves when it could buy advantageously and would either hold them abroad or at home as was most convenient. In distributing its wheat its purpose would be to sell at prices which, over a reasonable period, would approximately balance its outlay, yielding neither a profit nor a loss, but making proper provision for reasonable emergencies. Taking into account the actual cost of its bulk contracts, the probable course of world supplies and prices as shown by the statistics and other information at its disposal, as to acreage and actual and expected harvests, it would estimate the probable average cost and would then publish narrow limits of prices within which it would actually sell the various grades of imported wheat for as long a period ahead as possible. In the first place, the period might only be for a few months; as experience was acquired and more stable arrangements were made the period would be lengthened. It would release supplies of imported wheat from time to time to the millers according to the home supplies of home-produced wheat, its purpose being to secure that the whole marketable quantity of British wheat was, week by week, absorbed at prices in conformity with the published prices of imported wheat. If more British wheat were available and prices showed a tendency to fall, the quantities of imported wheat would be diminished accordingly. If supplies were short, more imported wheat would be released. By this means the farmer would acquire a secure market and what would, in effect, be a guaranteed price on which he could rely for the sale of his grain.

In its purchasing operations the Board would obviously be much helped by the growth of the centralised selling agencies in other countries, to which reference has already been made. Indeed, the concentration in the sale of wheat for export in Canada, Australia, Russia and the Argentine, which are now the chief exporting countries, and the movement of which signs are already evident of closer co-ordination of the selling policies of all these countries on a world wide scale, coupled at the same time with the growing trustification of the milling industry in this and other countries, has already destroyed the grain market as it existed before the war. Sooner or later these tendencies, apart altogether from the urgent needs of British agriculture, would necessitate a drastic re-organisation of wheat importation. Other countries faced with similar problems are contemplating similar remedies. Inevitably concentration between organised producers and organised consumers will be necessary in the national interests, possibly under the auspices of the League of Nations. The cheapening of transport, of financing, of insurance and other charges, the avoidance of over or under production; indeed, the stabilising of world prices, would be the natural object of such co-operation. This would clearly facilitate the stabilisation of British prices over longer periods than would otherwise be possible.

Since the objective of the Wheat Imports Board would be to steady prices over considerable periods of average world prices, for short periods, as world prices fluctuated, it would make losses or profits. But these would be balanced. In proportion as it extended its contracts and built up its reserves the risk would diminish. General arrangements on a world scale would, of course, diminish it still further. In actual practice, variations in average world prices over considerable periods are, apart from changes in the value of money and the adjustments of production to the growth in consuming populations, surprisingly small in extent.

Moreover, the scale of its operations would enable the Board to effect large economies in the cost of transporting, handling, financing and distributing the grain, and thus provide a considerable margin for adjusting possible variations to the producer without affecting the prices paid by the consumer. It may be noted that during the War, the Wheat Commission's administrative expenditure, including the whole cost of the salaries and establishment expenses of the Commission and of its Landed Grain Committees and Controlled Firms, was computed at one-eighth of one per cent. on the total sales, a figure of remarkably small dimensions. The administrative expenses of the Commission itself, in connection with its business transactions, averaged 1s. 2d. per £100, *i.e.*, one-seventeenth of one per cent.\*

### *The Milling Industry*

The inevitable re-organisation of the milling industry would probably render it unnecessary to set up any special State organisation for purchasing wheat direct from the farmers. For in any case the centralisation of import and the elimination of speculation would accelerate changes in the organisation of the milling industry which are already in course of being made. The war expansion of the productive capacity of the industry, followed by wasteful and expensive competition immediately after the conclusion of the war, was followed in a couple of years by regional agreements for the fixation of prices designed to avoid the losses which competition had caused. The formation of milling combines has now carried this process farther. Apart from the C.W.S., which operates about 30% of the milling capacity of the country, three powerful groups now control considerably more than half the other mills. Thus competition in one of the most essential of all industries as a means of

\* Royal Commission on Wheat Supplies: First Report of the Commissioners. 1921.  
(Cmd. 1544.)

protecting the consumer has ceased to be of much value. The industry, indeed, is ripe for nationalisation and transformation into a public service run on national or public utility lines in the interests of agriculturists and consumers alike. By this means great economies will be effected in the organisation of production and transport and in overhead and other charges. It would, in addition, be more easily possible to secure a steady price for British wheat and its increased utilisation in the loaf.

Another point of considerable importance to agriculture could also receive attention. The gradual concentration of milling at the ports for the purpose of dealing more conveniently with imported grain and the closing down of the inland mills has itself contributed to the supplanting of home by imported wheat in the loaf. The greater difficulty of obtaining offals at cheap prices has added to the problems of the up-country farmer. A re-organised milling industry would take into account the location of its mills, not merely from the point of view of the immediate interests of milling shareholders interested in overseas supplies, but also broader matters of public policy.

### *The Price of Bread*

The stabilisation of wheat prices and, therefore, also of the price of flour would provide a steady foundation in its turn for much closer control over the price of bread and over the re-organisation of the baking industry in the interests of the consumer. A steady price for flour fixed over considerable periods would enable the baking industry to concentrate on economies in the cost of baking. The present variations in costs between the large well-organised bakery and the small bakers is remarkable. The figures of the co-operative societies show that improved conditions of labour can be given to those employed in the large scale bakeries, bread can be sold at cheaper prices and still considerable surpluses be made. The costs of distribution also offer ample opportunities for reducing prices of bread to the consumer by the elimination of unnecessary waste. It is vital in the interests of the wage-earning classes that there should be no unnecessary charges in the cost of baking and distribution. We propose, therefore, that it should be the duty of the local authorities to control or organise the baking and price of bread, under the direction of the Central Food Council, including the power to remit the problem of bread production in their areas to the co-operative societies or to special public utility companies formed for the purpose, or to organise, where necessary, municipal bakeries of their own. Successes already achieved by the co-operative societies in reducing costs of baking and distribution indicate the part they can play in those areas where they are sufficiently established. Other special measures would, in the meantime, be necessary.

### *Meat*

In the case of meat also, imported supplies are one of the governing factors in the price received by the farmer for his production. Approximately 60% of the meat consumed in this country is imported from abroad. Any attempt at orderly marketing in this country which ignores this substantial contribution is bound to fail. In this case also there is the additional factor, from the consumer's point of view, that certain classes of imported meat are practically controlled by two groups of powerful interests, one American and the other British, which, though they occasionally disagree and compete, ultimately and probably inevitably co-ordinate their trading operations. Their policies are framed neither in the interests of the consumer nor of the producer, but purely, simply and solely of their shareholders. The supply of imported meat is too vital, both to the interests of the agricultural producers here and of the consumers, to permit its being controlled purely for the financial advantage of these vested interests.

We propose, therefore, that an Imports Board should be set up on the same lines as is contemplated in the case of wheat. Already in the Dominions the export of meat is being placed under the control of semi-governmental, semi-co-operative export boards, who would welcome the opportunity of dealing direct with a body representing the British consumers on lines which would free them from the danger that consumers equally suffer of exploitation by the powerful meat trusts. By bulk contracts over considerable periods, production in the Dominions of classes of meat suitable for the British market might be stimulated and secure supplies in the future guaranteed to the consuming population of this country.

Moreover, the Imports Board in its arrangements for the distribution of imported meat would work closely together with schemes for the co-operative marketing of home-produced cattle and meat on a national scale designed to secure a fair price to the British farmer, free from the obnoxious control of dealers' or other rings. It would extend where necessary and control the cold storage space in the interests of consumers and producers, linking up the disposal of its imported meat with a system of local public or co-operatively controlled slaughter houses, from which British meat could be distributed with proper economy of transport and distributive charges. Similarly, also, as in the case of wheat and bread, the local authorities should be given wider powers for controlling retail prices and organising distribution either direct or through co-operative societies or otherwise.

### *The Nationalisation of the Wholesale Distribution of Milk*

In the trade in whole-milk the position at the moment is dominated by the collective agreements between the English Farmers' Union and the group of milk distributors. In Scotland the co-operative movement has made more effective progress in some stages of milk distribution. The huge scale organisation of the English milk trade, especially in the London area, has practically precluded the possibility of effective co-operative organisation. The producers have, therefore, adopted for their advantage a system of collective bargaining. Of the immediate advantages which have accrued to producers from this system there can be no doubt, but doubts may be expressed whether the ultimate advantages will be as great as the immediate ones. As for the consumer, though he may gain something in quality of supplies, he loses in price by these arrangements.

Generally, numerous Health Reports as well as the recent findings of the Food Council show conclusively that as regards purity, quality and quantity the food requirements of the people, so far as milk is concerned, are most insufficiently met at present.

It is quite safe to say that economies in the system of retailing milk could be introduced, which would reduce the costs substantially without reducing the real services rendered to consumers. The costs of wholesale operations in the milk trade could also be reduced, or greater services rendered at present costs. Some consumers' co-operative societies can carry on processes of wholesale treatment and retail distribution of milk at less than 75 per cent. of the present wholesale and retail margins, and render good services to their customers. With general organisation, even greater economies than those made by co-operative societies could be secured. But in the milk trade it is not only necessary to consider the direct sale of whole-milk, but also the use of surplus milk which will always be found at some seasons in the areas producing milk for sale; and, in addition, the manufacture of milk produced in areas remote from direct markets. Some combinations in milk distribution have



made big inroads into the handling of surplus milk and the general manufacture of milk products. Nothing less than a national organisation of the wholesale collection and distribution of whole-milk would now suffice to supplant the combination of traders. While immediate collection from farms, especially for manufacturing purposes, might be left to co-operative societies, if it were desirable, a system of national purchase and distribution of milk for the whole-milk trade is now required. This should be combined with a system of municipal control of the process of retailing, municipalities being allowed to choose whether they will organise a municipal retail system, or make arrangements with co-operative societies.

### *Barley and other Cereals*

The case of wheat has been dealt with at length because it is the most important of all cereal products, in its general relation both to agriculture and to the interests of the consuming public. In due course the same principles, so far as circumstances permit, would be applied to other agricultural products. As regards barley, the question of the higher grades needed for malting purposes would need separate attention. We do not, however, recommend the adoption of protection in this case, for reasons which are of general application.

### *Fruit and Vegetables*

In the fruit and vegetable trade the most desirable immediate development is that of organisation of supplies for grading, packing, and general preparation for transport and distribution. Until better methods of organisation for the primary processes of distribution have been evolved, no comprehensive scheme of organisation for the trade can be usefully indicated.

The Labour Movement will secure every modification and development of the systems of marketing and distribution of farm produce which is of a practical character. While no general or comprehensive schemes will be built in the air, the peculiarities and conditions of the trade in each group of farm products will be studied with a view to securing improvements of technical methods and economic systems. Wherever mutual organisations of producers can deal with their requirements and those of consumers in practical and effective ways, the Labour Movement will seek to use the powers of the State to assist and support them. It will equally foster the efforts of consumers' Co-operative Societies to secure methods of direct trading with producers whereby efficient services and cordial relations may be established. But wherever these fail to provide adequate systems of marketing and distribution, the Movement will endeavour to use the powers of the State, legislative and otherwise, for the control of existing systems and for their supersession by simpler, less wasteful, and more satisfactory services.

### *Municipal Markets*

Whether as owners or controllers of primary markets, such as the general markets in many country towns, or of large wholesale markets, or of urban retail markets, few public authorities have had any adequate policy for the provision of facilities and the control of market operations. Sometimes they are concerned with the maintenance of ancient rights to the detriment of improved methods of marketing. Quite frequently their chief interest in the markets under their control is a financial one, and even here their policy has been short-sighted, and failure to provide adequate facilities either restricts public income from markets, or increases costs to producers and consumers. But the inadequacy of markets owned by private authorities is

worse. All markets should be publicly controlled and the responsible authorities directed and encouraged by the State to develop a definite policy of maintaining adequate facilities, reducing charges where possible and exercising control of actual operations in the markets. In such a policy for the provision and control of public markets, the State must play a part, and the activities of the Ministries of Health and of Agriculture, the Departments primarily concerned, must be co-ordinated to secure this end.

- The duties of public authorities are not limited to those connected with public markets. In the meat trade they control slaughter-houses, public and private; and in many towns both the sanitary and the economic interests of citizens would be advanced if a vigorous policy of establishing public abattoirs were pursued.

## TRANSPORT

It would be difficult to find in Western Europe a more inefficient transport of produce from the farm to the market than that furnished by the railway companies of Great Britain. Large farming areas are barely served at all, others are inadequately served, and all suffer from the poor service and incessant delays which mark the transit of agricultural goods in this country. Added to this badly organised service is the disproportionately high cost of freight charges. The home farmer is at a serious disadvantage compared with the foreign importer of food, for whom the railway companies are able to organise a cheaper and more efficient system.

Cattle and corn have to be sent long distances to railway stations, and in Lincolnshire, for example, potato growers are severely handicapped by an inadequate railway system. Fruit sent from Worcestershire to Glasgow takes anything from three to five days.

In order to avoid delay, growers send their produce to large and important towns served with a prompt train service whence the commodities are re-distributed to smaller towns. This adds to the cost of marketing and increases the number of intermediaries handling the goods. Farmers are put to great inconvenience because they are not informed by railway authorities when trucks are available for loading. The companies persistently refuse to supply telephone facilities at loading stations. Rolling stock falls short of the farmer's requirements. Often coal trucks, instead of properly cleansed vans, are used for the transport of vegetables, or trucks with no shelves for the efficient transit of strawberries are supplied; while the use of uncovered vehicles and careless handling (as in the case of egg boxes) add to the wastage and damage for which there is no adequate redress.

It is a serious matter for the British farmer that it is cheaper to send, for instance, broccoli from Holland to the north of England than from Cornwall, or to send goods from France to Covent Garden than from Cornwall. Charges for the transport of fat stock are much higher than the rates fixed for imported dead meat supplies.

Drastic reorganisation can alone effectively deal with these shortcomings. The nationalisation of the entire railway system in Britain is obviously the first essential, and as the Labour Movement has already committed itself to this principle, the matter need not be elaborated here.

The present freight rates on agricultural produce should be carefully examined, with a view to establishing a coherent system of rates and to reducing them to the lowest possible level. The Linlithgow Committee emphasised the imperative need of lower freights, particularly as regards the heavy charges on home-grown wheat.

Further, there should be more suitable rolling stock for the transport of agricul-

tural produce; and more especially for perishable goods. All milk, for example, should be carried in refrigerator and ventilated vans.

It may be possible, in many areas, to develop a system of light railways connected with existing railway lines. But the countryside needs a far more widespread system of transport than can ever be provided by the railway system. It requires a co-ordinated scheme of modern transport, which will link the farm with the railway siding in the case of produce to be sent relatively long distances, and with the distribution in the case of produce for local consumption. Collecting stations would be necessary in sufficient numbers to bring them within easy reach not only of the farmers, but of small-scale egg producers and vegetable growers, who would thereby be able to pool their produce for transport and sale. There should be a regular motor service for the collection and transport of produce from the collecting stations, and as far as possible for the farm to farm collection of produce.

Already certain municipalities have organised a parcel collection and delivery service with marked success, whilst in many villages public-spirited organisers have proved the value of the organised collection of produce. What is needed is the development of a comprehensive service in these directions, and we propose that County Agricultural Committees should be empowered to establish and conduct a motor transport service with the necessary collecting stations, or to make suitable arrangements with other public transport authorities. The motor service would be held an auxiliary to railway transport and a direct means of linking up the producer with the trader.

Such an organisation under public control, working with a single eye to the most efficient and speedy collection and transport of supplies, would relieve the producer of the handicaps under which he now suffers, would eliminate unnecessary costs, to the benefit of both the producer and consumer, and would encourage increased supplies for the market, partly because the farmer would grow more if he could get his output without difficulty to the market, and partly because produce which is now only too often wasted would be brought to market.

## AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

British agriculture has been gravely hampered by lack of capital. Until recently the general method of supplying capital was for the landowner to let the land and provide its permanent equipment, buildings, fences, roads and drainage; and for the tenant to supply the more movable equipment of the farm known in farming terms as "live and dead farming stock." Modern legislation and recent events, however, have reduced the landowner's interest in land, and his willingness or ability to supply his part of the equipment in an adequate quantity, or of the necessary quality. Consequently, there are now many farms on which new and improved buildings or drainage, or other equipment, are required which are not obtainable under present circumstances. Although many farmers have purchased farms during recent years, the great majority of farms are still rented by farmers from landowners, whose function it is to supply buildings, etc. Many of the farmers who have purchased holdings have crippled themselves in the process, and where new or improved equipment is required on these farms it cannot easily be obtained. There are, indeed, cases in which holdings have been purchased by farmers on which equipment is deteriorating, and on which the chances of obtaining improved equipment are now poorer than when they were rented. An increase of occupying-ownership of farms would, in these circumstances, undoubtedly tend to a poorer rather than a better equipment of farms in general.

### *Long Term Credit*

The Labour Movement cannot tolerate the present system which tends to restrict the effective use of farm land, through the deterioration of farm equipment or through lack of provision for the necessary capital developments. Until the process of national ownership is completed, it therefore proposes to establish a system of "long term" credit, which may be used for the permanent improvement or equipment of lands and farms. All financial provisions for the supply of loans for this purpose should be made by the County Agricultural Committees. In cases in which tenants of lands or farms need permanent improvements for the maintenance or increase of production, and these are refused by the owners of lands if the estates are in private hands, there should be provision for appeal to the County Agricultural Committee. If the claim to the supply of buildings or improvements can be justified to the Committee, the tenant should be given authority to carry out the work, to borrow the money required from the special fund, and the Committee should be authorised to take a charge upon the land and buildings for the security of the capital and interest of the loan. Any subsequent necessary adjustment of rent will be referred to the Land Courts which will be established, and to which previous reference has been made. In the case of owner-occupiers of farms similar facilities for obtaining capital for equipment should, of course, be provided. With the sanction of the County Agricultural Committees loans would be available on the basis of a charge upon land and buildings for security of loan and interest. In this way capital could be provided on a safe basis for the improvement of equipment for production without prejudice to the future public ownership of the land.

For this purpose a special loan fund should be made available, which will be administered by the Ministry of Agriculture through the County Agricultural Committees. The rate of interest payable on loans should be that of the current bank-rate, with an addition for sinking-fund calculated upon the "life" of the improvement to be effected. Expenses of administration of such a fund would only be small.

### *Short Term Credit*

Many statutory small holders and other occupiers of small farms enter the industry with little or inadequate capital. Some capital is saved in the industry in times of comparative prosperity, and some is borrowed from many and various sources. But during the last forty years the industry as a whole has been more or less in want of capital that could be economically or profitably used for productive purposes. Credit is obtainable, partly from joint-stock banks, but more frequently from dealers or merchants. While the joint-stock banks may serve the purposes of the farmers with the larger businesses, many small farmers have to be content with the facilities offered by "trade credit," often at exorbitant cost and with indirect results which are not to their advantage. In the case of statutory small holders some facilities for obtaining credit through the Small Holdings Committees have been available, but similar facilities are required by other occupiers of small farms if the small-farming system is to be an economic and social success.

While this is the case, little success has hitherto been achieved by organisation for the supply of credit to small farmers in Great Britain. A few Rural Credit Societies have existed and done useful work in local areas for many years, but many Credit Societies have failed. More recently the Agricultural Credit Act, 1923, Part II, provided some facilities for forming Societies, and for obtaining capital, but this measure of a Conservative Government has failed to achieve any real results, for only a very few Societies have been formed under the Act. There are, however, other

means by which "short term" credit may be provided. The Agricultural Co-operative Movement is now fairly strong in some areas, and should be further encouraged. This Movement should provide the means whereby credit may be made available to farmers, especially occupiers of small farms who have not sufficient capital to enable them to make the fullest use of their land and personal capacities. A scheme should be established whereby public credit can be made available to Agricultural Co-operative Societies to enable them to extend their businesses, and to enable them to give credit to such of their members as need and deserve it. Such public credit should be provided to all agricultural co-operative societies, whether they exist for the supply of farmers' requirements, for the marketing of farmers' produce, or for dual purposes, on fair conditions of interest, repayment being secured on the assets of the societies.

But credit facilities at the public expense ought not to be used to bolster up the present obsolete and unorganised system of farming production and marketing. When the industry is properly organised, the supply of necessary credit can be obtained effectively and cheaply, and the Labour Movement will endeavour to foster all schemes of organisation which will lead to the effective use of the capital available in agriculture and of public credit for the development of the industry.

### CURRENCY POLICY

A subject closely allied to credit is that of the control of financial issues and the effect of currency on prices. It has been shown that in recent years changes in currency conditions have had important effects on agricultural prosperity, and that the agricultural industry is peculiarly liable to suffer from depressions in prices caused by monetary changes. These depressions have severely affected the supply of capital for the industry.\* While the general interests of the nation and the interests of all industries must be considered in relation to changes in currency conditions, it is essential that the financial interests of agriculture are given adequate consideration in connection with any future changes in currency systems and conditions.

### AGRICULTURAL INSURANCE

Information on the insurance of agricultural risks is difficult to obtain. All real knowledge is mainly confined to persons directly connected with the organisation of insurance for profit-making. Yet at various times there has been considerable interest in the subject. There has been a strong feeling that the premiums paid for insurances now obtainable are far too high, and that certain risks which might be covered by a properly organised system of insurance are not now insurable. Farmers in some countries have developed insurance systems to meet their special needs, with great advantage to the industry. In the United States, for instance, there are nearly 2,000 farmers' mutual fire insurance companies, carrying risks amounting to about \$8,411,000,000, or over £1,700,000,000. While in the case of British profit-making companies which insure farmers' fire risks the expenses of administration and profits usually amount to 40 or 50 per cent. of the premiums charged, these farmers' mutual insurance companies, on the average, did not require more than 21 per cent. of the premiums charged for the administration of their businesses. In France the mutual insurance of livestock has now been organised on a large scale, covering risks not previously covered by other insurance organisations.

We are told:—

"The field of agricultural insurance is an aspect of agricultural organisation in which development abroad has far outrun the corresponding progress in this country; the principle of co-operative insurance has been applied abroad

\* See *Report of Committee on Stabilisation of Agricultural Prices. Part I.*

to many different sides of the farmers' interests, to livestock insurance, to fire and accident insurance, to insurance of crops against hail, blight and other risks."\*

In Great Britain agricultural insurances at present fall into two main groups: first, Cottagers' and Small Holders' Mutual Societies; and secondly, Farmers' Insurance. The first group consist principally of mutual societies formed for the insurance of livestock, and perform a most useful function. Farmers' mutual insurance societies have usually been organised on a very loose basis, often without any real assessment of the risks involved, sometimes without the collection of premiums, and merely on the collection of a subscription on a known basis after loss has been incurred. In comparison with the Cottagers' and Small Holders' Mutual Societies, the Farmers' Mutual Societies have been poorly organised and short-lived. We think that there should be a thorough expert inquiry into farmers' risks, with a view to including all that are insurable in a comprehensive scheme organised and managed by the State.

Such an inquiry should cover both the methods and results of obtaining insurances which are now generally taken, together with the possibility of applying methods of insurance against risks which are not now insurable. It should deal with:—

- (1) The risks now covered by existing insurance businesses.
- (2) The premiums paid for insurance against different risks.
- (3) The proportions of premiums paid which are returned in compensation for loss and those which are absorbed in profits and administration of companies.
- (4) The experience of Farmers' Mutual Insurance Offices in Great Britain and in other countries.
- (5) The possibility of applying methods of insurance against endemic and epidemic diseases amongst livestock.
- (6) The possibility of applying methods of insurance against crop risks (plant diseases, etc.).

The Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation recommended that the State should make grants for the organisation of co-operative livestock insurance societies, and that it should assist in making provision for re-insurance of risks by the establishment of a State organisation which would help to bear the incidence of severe epidemic losses in particular districts. But before State assistance is offered to organisations for the mutual insurance of agricultural risks, the whole field of agricultural insurances should be thoroughly explored. It will probably then be found possible to devise schemes of insurance which will provide protection for the industry against recurring risks and may provide for the State a safeguard against unnecessary losses of the nation's material resources.

## AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Although administered and financed separately, agricultural education cannot be separated from the general educational system. The fact that it is administered by the Ministry of Agriculture has, unfortunately, led to the view that it is a very specialised branch of education.

Much effort and public money have been spent on agricultural education and research during the last twenty years without very tangible results. The process of transferring knowledge from the research stations or colleges to the actual practice of farming is exceedingly slow and costly. It is still said that farmers learn mainly by

\* *Report of Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation, paragraph 212.*

"looking over the hedge." While this is not wholly true, and while the desire for ocular demonstration of facts which are essentially practical may justifiably be required, it is still true that progress is greatly hindered by the standard of general education among farmers, and their lack of appreciation of scientific research and its results.

### *General Education*

One of the essential needs of the countryside is the provision of generous educational facilities. We repudiate the view (so often expressed by those who think education should be the prerogative of the well-to-do) that the folk of the furrow need next to no education. We cannot too strongly emphasise the Labour view that education is as vital a human need in the country hamlets as in the large centres of population.

The country child is entitled to opportunities for personal development and for acquiring the educational background necessary for good citizenship. Moreover, our future agriculturists should receive a sound general education as a basis for technical education. The development of effective agricultural education is impossible apart from the improvement of primary and the extension of secondary education in the rural areas.

Without embarking upon a general outline of the Labour Movement's educational policy, it is desirable that a brief reference should be made to that policy as applied to the country districts.\*

The sparseness of the population in the countryside, apart from the shortsightedness and parsimony of many County Education Authorities, is a serious obstacle to the development of adequate educational standards.

In too many elementary schools in rural areas small staffs are engaged in struggling with the education of a handful of children of varying ages. The equipment is often inadequate, and the school buildings hopelessly out of date, if not actually structurally defective. Such conditions are unfair to both pupils and teachers and a blot upon the countryside.

The organisation of an adequate motor service for the transport of the children from their homes to the schools should be undertaken by all rural Education Authorities in much the same way as is at present operative in Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire and other counties. Motor transport would render it possible to establish larger schools, with adequate staffs and equipment, and with provision for midday meals. Only in this way can the rural child enjoy advantages similar to the town child, and the rural teacher be relieved of impossible burdens.

Moreover, there must be free secondary education in rural areas; partly by the provision of day schools in convenient centres and partly by the provision of residential schools in those areas where daily attendance would render attendance difficult, if not impossible. It is necessary that County Authorities should provide maintenance and travelling grants and take all possible steps to encourage rural children to enter the secondary schools, pending a general extension of the school leaving age.

In some areas secondary schools have been established with a definitely rural bias. We believe that nature study should be an integral part of the curriculum of the elementary school and that in the secondary school the subjects of study should include those of special interest to the country dweller and lead naturally to the direct study of agricultural problems. We are not suggesting that general education should

\* On the Labour Movement's general policy see *From Nursery School to University* (8d. post free) and *Secondary Education for All* (1s. 2d. post free).

be sacrificed to specialised training, but that the secondary schools in country districts, whilst fully maintaining their secondary character, should have regard to the environment and interests of the rural population.

With an improved system of elementary schools and an extended system of secondary education, much would be done to promote the scientific attitude of mind and to develop the powers of the people in the countryside. Specialised training in the principles of scientific agriculture and in agricultural pursuits would then become a fertile field for development. The practice of holding summer schools for rural teachers and others in the Farm Institutes and Agriculture Colleges should be encouraged.

It is important also that there should be adequate provision for non-vocational adult education in rural districts. A considerable amount of work has already been done in this direction by various adult educational associations and other bodies, either alone or in co-operation with Local Education Authorities or Universities. But in most villages no serious provision is made for cultural education and the villagers are deprived of the educational opportunities which are becoming increasingly available for the townsman.

### *Agricultural Education*

The more strenuous the efforts made to develop agriculture, the more urgent will become the need for technical education. There will be need for more scientifically-trained agriculturists. But what may be called land and agricultural administration will demand an increasingly efficient service, whilst teachers, research workers and advisory officers must be trained for their work. These requirements call for greater facilities than at present exist.

County education and advisory work in Agriculture should be extended by the local authorities increasing the number of Farm Institutes, organising lectures and classes, and local demonstrations, so that there would be at least one Farm Institute, with a Demonstration Farm attached, in each county. Special efforts should be made to bring all these facilities within the reach of all farm workers.

There should be a greater co-ordination between County agricultural staffs and the advisory service; that is, officers attached to Colleges and University departments for "local research," who advise on practical problems. The Agricultural Colleges should concern themselves primarily with two-year courses leading to diplomas or with three and four year courses leading to pass and honour degrees.

It should be a condition of State grants to Colleges and University departments granting diplomas or degrees in Agriculture that no certificate will be given to any student who cannot give evidence of one year's experience of the art of farming either at home or abroad.

We do not think that special Agricultural Colleges should be encouraged. Their geographical and intellectual isolation is bad for both staff and pupils. But where such colleges already exist, they should be linked up with neighbouring Universities. Such a connection, even if a very slender one, would do much to broaden the otherwise inevitably limited horizon of a specialist college.

Higher agricultural education should be carried out at the Universities in conjunction with the Ministry's scheme of Agricultural Research. For both pupils and staff it is highly desirable that there should be close contact between Agricultural teaching and Agricultural Research on the one hand, and between Agriculture and other branches of learning in the University on the other. The Agricultural course should provide not only for training teachers, advisory officers, and researchers, but also for those who are going to be practical agriculturists and estate agents. It is also



desirable that each county should have a Director of Agricultural Services who would be responsible for the organisation of local services of education and demonstration. It is therefore highly desirable that all University Departments of Agriculture and Institutes of Research should undertake some extra-mural teaching, as, for example, by giving special courses at the Farm Institutes. This would help to keep contact between research, teaching, and practice, and it might well be made a condition of a Government grant.

### *Agricultural Research*

It is clear that progress in Agriculture depends on the application of the results of scientific research to the practical problems of husbandry and marketing. The eminence which British stock-breeders have enjoyed for over a century is not likely to be retained in the face of growing foreign competition without vigorous prosecution of research at home into the fundamental problems of heredity, reproduction, disease and nutrition. Nationalisation of the land, an improved system of marketing, the extension of allotments and small holdings will, in themselves, be insufficient to maintain a prosperous country population, unless scientific research into the basic problems of production is pursued with every reasonable means at our disposal.

We have at present the foundations of an efficient system of Agricultural Research. This research is carried out almost entirely at existing Universities and Agricultural Colleges with the aid of grants from the Ministry of Agriculture. The policy of subsidising the Agricultural Departments of Universities has very great advantages, in that it utilises existing institutions and administrative machinery; it makes for diversity of treatment; it enables Government work to be carried on in an atmosphere entirely free from the proverbial red tape of a Government department; it brings the research worker in agriculture into daily contact, on the one hand, with the researcher in pure science, and on the other hand with the teaching side of the Agricultural Department; and through the Advisory Staff it brings him in touch with the practical husbandman and his local problems on the farm. The allocation of grants rests with the Ministry, and it would be unwise to lay down in advance any rigid system on which such payments should be made, since clearly the problems which urgently call for attention vary from year to year.

Nevertheless greater financial resources should be provided for scientific investigation than are available at present. We, therefore, favour the setting aside of a large sum of money to be specially devoted to intensive research into special problems of which foot and mouth disease and epizootic abortion are good examples. The fund so provided should be administered in such a way as to ensure the co-operation of selected and appropriate researches in the different Colleges and Universities. The almost entire absence of reliable figures on farm costing constitute a most serious obstacle to increasing the efficiency of the "business" side of farming and calls for immediate investigation on a far larger scale than is at present the case.

Steps should be taken to ensure that every centre has a complete staff of competent advisors; and that the farming public is made aware that these officers exist. The Ministry should more freely advertise the facilities which it already provides for assistance and advice in agricultural problems; it should not be difficult to find methods of publicity which would be effective.

It is most important that the teaching staffs of the Farm Institutes should always be kept in contact with research.

In short, the Labour Movement stands for the following main demands and particularly emphasises the necessity of all these various opportunities being made available for all agricultural workers:—

- (1) A good general education for life in rural areas through the elementary and secondary school system.
- (2) An efficient system of county agricultural education and demonstration, both in the "extension" forms, lectures, classes, demonstrations, summer schools and advice, and by the increase and development of Farm Institutes.
- (3) A sound and adequate system of higher agricultural education in agricultural colleges associated with universities.
- (4) Adequate facilities for research.

### RURAL INDUSTRIES

Thriving rural industries are an indispensable condition to the growth of a rural civilisation. Without a vigorous rural life it will be impossible to neutralise the magnetic influence of the towns. Moreover, it has been truly said that the conditions of civilisation in Britain are top-heavy. To speak of a "balance" between rural and urban populations is to use an ambiguous expression. When a nation becomes predominantly industrial, the national life suffers, and we should, therefore, strive to maintain a substantial portion of the population away from the towns.

A prosperous sugar beet industry should prove to be to the advantage of the farmer and the countryside in certain districts. The promotion of the industry, apart from its own intrinsic merits, commends itself especially to agriculturists because it increases the area of arable land and gives employment to more people on the land, and in its final processes should afford an opportunity for providing factory work in rural areas at a time when farm work is slack. Moreover, by using the beet crop, farmers are cleaning the soil far more efficiently than they would by growing mangolds or other root crops. A profitable beet crop is thus a direct encouragement to keeping the land under the plough.

Encouragement should be given to the idea of carrying on purely industrial activities in the country. In Czecho-Slovakia and other countries the traveller may see factories, situated in the heart of the farming district, engaged in work which is not connected with agricultural industry. The decentralisation of industry and its distribution over greater areas of Britain awaits the improvement of transport and the development of power supplies, but when it can be accomplished industrial workers may obtain the benefit of better surroundings, while agricultural workers will enjoy the benefit of a larger and a more varied social life and the amenities which a greater social organisation can provide.

### AFFORESTATION

Successive Royal Commissions have stated that there are not less than 5,000,000 acres of land in Great Britain suitable for afforestation which are at present largely wasted and derelict, and that for many reasons the scientific afforestation of them is urgently required in the national interest.

Under public ownership of agricultural land afforestation would be greatly facilitated. Private landlords are seldom disposed to finance the afforestation of new areas, and even if they could the return on their expenditure would probably not be secured in their own lifetime. Again, when private estates are broken up the woodlands are laid waste by timber merchants, or otherwise neglected by buyers of the various lots. But under public ownership the State would possess all the woodlands of the country and control their management, and establish the necessary continuity of policy. Afforestation is pre-eminently an industry which can best be undertaken by the State.

The effectiveness of afforestation as a measure of relief for unemployment should not be exaggerated. When the number of unemployed exceeds the gigantic figure of a million, the relief that can be afforded by any practical scheme of forestry is relatively small. The present policy of the Forestry Commission, which aims at planting 150,000 acres in ten years, finds employment for, at most, 1,800 men during the winter months, and when the entire 1918 scheme is completed at the end of eighty years, settlement will have been found for 25,000 families. During the planting season employment is found for twelve men per 100 acres, and as the forestry operations develop, the number of men required is reduced to one man per 100 acres. If the proposals of the Royal Commission on Forestry of 1909\* were in operation, which aimed at the afforestation of 150,000 acres annually, temporary employment would be secured for only 18,000 men during the winter months, and, accepting the basis of one man per 100 acres afforested, permanent employment would be afforded directly to 120,000 forest workers at the end of eighty years.

Though these numbers do not seem large in themselves the families of the forest workers, together with those who would become associated with them, and the other activities which would develop in connection with the State Forests would represent a large population, living under healthy conditions. The economic and social value of such an enterprise would be difficult to estimate. More immediately the forests and woodlands denuded by the requirements of the war should be replaced, and as there is likely, in the future, to be a world shortage of soft timber, the need for action becomes all the more urgent. We approve the emphasis given by the Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation to the value of forestry as an important auxiliary to agriculture. It provides timber for fencing, buildings and fuel, and would greatly encourage the small subsidiary rural industries.

Usually, an efficient policy of afforestation can best be undertaken in conjunction with small holdings, for the forester who combines the management of a small holding with his work in the woods is likely to be far more efficient in the long run. The winter months he would devote to forestry, and the rest of the year would be devoted to his holding. It has been proved that afforested areas are best in the hands of small-holders whose holdings adjoin the plantations, while under other arrangements it is often difficult to avoid wastage through neglect.

We, therefore, recommend that the afforestation efforts should be extended as rapidly as possible so as to attain an annual planting programme of 150,000 acres.

The administration of a public policy of afforestation should be a part of the work of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Forestry Commission should become a department of that Ministry, particularly as its future policy should be closely connected with small holdings. Afforestation needs Cabinet attention and a Cabinet spokesman answerable to Parliament and the forestry policy should be closely co-ordinated with general Agricultural policy.

### ELECTRIC POWER FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

The extension of industrial enterprises to rural areas, whilst it may be encouraged by relatively cheap land and low rates, in some cases, is likely to be retarded by transport costs, which would affect the price of coal and therefore of power.

Both as regards this development and the improvement of agriculture, much depends upon the existence of a readily available power supply. The Labour Movement has elaborated its proposals for the future of coal, power and transport in the evidence which was submitted by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain to the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, 1925-1926.†

\* See *Report of Royal Commission on Forestry*. Cd. 4460. Price 6d.

† See *Coal and Commonsense* (p. 8).

The ideal must be to bring an efficient form of lighting, heating and power to the workplace of every craftsman and every farmhouse and cottage. In all probability it will in the countryside take the form of electricity. Electric light in the cowshed would make for a higher standard of cleanliness and less waste; to the poultry farmer its use in winter would improve appreciably the laying qualities of his stock. If it were cheap enough, electric machinery could replace beneficially all the machinery in use at present on the farm for chaff-cutting, grinding, threshing, root-cutting, wood sawing, pumping and similar purposes. It could also replace manual labour in such operations as milking, cream-separating, butter-churning, sheep-shearing, horse-clipping. It can be used for incubating eggs and drying crops. So far, electric plant for field work has not proved practicable, but the uses to which reference has been made provide plenty of scope for development.

With the centralisation of generation and a national scheme of inter-connection of generating stations, coupled with public main transmission lines, utilising railway track wherever possible, electric current could be supplied to every district, local distribution being in the hands of the local authorities. It is desirable that in order to reduce costs of transmission underground cables and elaborate sub-stations should be superseded by overhead lines and open-air transformers, such as are common in other less densely populated countries. Moreover, care should be taken to see that wherever possible transmission lines between urban centres should serve rural areas, as this may often be done with very little addition to the cost.

The effective cost of the transmission lines will be less the greater the amount of power consumed and the better the "load factor," for the cost of a line depends only on the maximum power it carries and does not increase so rapidly as that power. Here arises the need for village industries to supplement the demand of the pure agriculturist. One finds in villages motor engineers, gelatine works, builders, carpenters and wheelwrights, iron foundries, leather works, mineral-water works, blacksmiths, paper factories, breweries, chemical and manure works, agricultural machinists, creameries, beet factories, etc. All these are potential users of power.

This brings us to the question of consumption of current. The capital charges of installing plant become fixed after operation has commenced. Providing for depreciation, once the demand has reached a certain point, all supply above that point may be looked upon as so much to the good. The cheapening of power would lie then in an increase in consumption.

But it must be recognised that a purely rural load has unsatisfactory features, for both agriculture and village industries will tend to concentrate their demands in the winter rather than in the summer months.

If electricity is to be used extensively, arrangements must be made to bring the purchase or hire of apparatus and equipment within the reach of consumers. With a large potential demand for an electric service, equipment would be improved and cheapened.

There is so much leeway to make up in the matter of electricity for rural areas, if we are to judge by the developments which have been made in the United States and in many continental countries, that no time should be lost in bringing into operation Labour's Coal and Power scheme, so that the various Authorities concerned with this aspect of the rural problem could co-operate with the proposed Power and Transport Commission in a constructive power policy which would revolutionise the countryside.

APPENDIX I

MINIMUM RATES OF WAGES FOR ADULT AGRICULTURAL WORKERS OPERATING ON  
JULY 9, 1926

Area	Ordinary Male Workers		Female Workers	
	Wages	Hours	Wages	Hours
	<i>s. d.</i>		<i>per hour</i>	
Beds and Hunts ..	30 6	50	6d.	All time
Berkshire .. ..	30 0	50	5d.	" "
Buckinghamshire ..	31 0	50	6d.	" "
Camb and Isle of Ely ..	30 0	51	5½d.	8 per day
Cheshire .. ..	35 0	54	6d.	All time
Cornwall .. ..	31 0	51	5d.	" "
Cumberland and West- morland .. ..	32 6	54	5½d.	" "
Derby .. ..	8d. per hour	54	5d.	All time on weekdays
Devon .. ..	32 6	52	5d.	All time
Dorset .. ..	30 0	51	5d.	51
Durham .. ..	32 0	50	2s. 6d. per day	8
Essex .. ..	30 0	50	6d. per hour	50
Gloucester .. ..	30 0	50	5d.	All time
Hants and Isle of Wight	30 0	51	5d.	" "
Herefordshire .. ..	31 0	52	4½d.	" "
Hertfordshire .. ..	31 0	48	24s. per wk.	48
Kent .. ..	32 6	52	5½d. per hr.	8 per day
Lancashire:				
Eastern Area ..	42 0	60	6d.	All time
Southern ..	33 6	50		
Northern ..	37 6	60		
Leicester and Rutland:				
Leicester .. ..	34 0	54	5d.	All time on weekdays
Rutland .. ..	32 6	54		
Lincolnshire:				
Holland District ..	35 0	50	6d.	All time
Kesteven and Lindsey District .. ..	32 0	52	5½d.	" "
Middlesex .. ..	34 4½	50	6d. per hour	" "
Monmouthshire ..	32 0	50	6d.	" "
Norfolk .. ..	30 0	50	5d.	50
Northants and Soke of Peterborough .. ..	30 0	50	6d.	All time
Northumberland ..	33 0	52½	5d.	52½
Nottinghamshire ..	32 0	50	5d.	All weekday employ- ment
Oxfordshire .. ..	30 0	50	6d.	All time
Shropshire .. ..	32 6	54	5d.	All weekday employ- ment

APPENDIX I—continued

Area	Ordinary Male Workers		Female Workers	
	Wages	Hours	Wages	Hours
	<i>s. d.</i>		<i>per hour</i>	
Somerset .. ..	32 0	52	6 <i>d.</i>	—
Staffordshire .. ..	31 6	54	5 <i>d.</i>	54
Suffolk* .. ..	7 <i>d.</i>	50	5 <i>d.</i>	All time
	per hour	guaranteed		
Surrey .. ..	32 3	50	5½ <i>d.</i>	50
Sussex .. ..	31 0	52	5 <i>d.</i>	52
Warwickshire .. ..	30 0	50	5 <i>d.</i>	50
Wiltshire .. ..	30 0	50	5 <i>d.</i>	All time
Worcestershire .. ..	30 0	50	4½ <i>d.</i>	8-hour day
Yorks:				
E. Riding .. ..	35 0	52½	5 <i>d.</i>	44
N. Riding .. ..	33 0	52½	6 <i>d.</i>	44
W. Riding .. ..	36 0	52½	5 <i>d.</i>	44
Anglesey and Carnarvon	31 0	50	6 <i>d.</i>	All time
Carmarthenshire ..	31 0	54	5 <i>d.</i>	8-hour day
Denbigh and Flint ..	30 6	50	5 <i>d.</i>	8½-hr. day
Glamorganshire ..	36 0	50	6 <i>d.</i>	8½-hr. day
Merioneth and Montgomeryshire .. ..	31 6	54	5 <i>d.</i>	All time
Pembroke and Cardigan	31 0	54	5 <i>d.</i>	8-hour day
Radnor and Brecon ..	31 0	54	5 <i>d.</i>	48 hours

Average Minimum Rate in operation during June, 1926—3*s.* 8*d.*

Percentage increase over pre-war wage of 1*s.* per week—76%.

\* Suffolk rates under revision, July, 1926.

## APPENDIX II

AVERAGE "GAZETTE" PRICES OF BRITISH WHEAT PER 480 lbs., AND INDEX NUMBERS  
 COMPARED WITH THE AVERAGE OF THE THREE YEARS 1911-1913, WITH  
 FLUCTUATIONS IN MONTHLY AVERAGE PRICES.

Calendar Year	Average Price		Index No.: (1911-13=100)	Lowest Average Price		Highest Average Price	
	s.	d.		s.	d.	s.	d.
1906	28	3	86	26	1	30	3
1907	30	7	94	26	1	35	3
1908	32	0	98	30	10	35	3
1909	36	11	113	31	8	43	3
1910	31	8	97	29	4	33	6
1911	31	8	97	30	1	33	2
1912	34	9	106	30	6	38	6
1913	31	8	97	30	3	33	8
1914	34	11	107	31	0	42	6
1915	52	10	162	43	6	60	10
1916	58	5	179	49	4	73	4
1917	75	9	232	70	3	83	10
1918	72	10	223	71	2	74	5
1919	72	11	223	72	5	73	4
1920	80	10	247	72	6	90	7
1921	71	6	219	45	0	89	3
1922	47	10	146	39	3	55	4
1923	42	2	130	38	2	48	2
1924	49	3	152	42	1	54	7
1925	54	1	167	44	3	62	10

### MARGATE CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS.

The following Resolutions were adopted by the Annual Conference of the Labour Party at Margate, and are to be taken in association with the sections indicated:—

"PUBLIC CONTROL OF THE LAND" (p. 6).

"This Conference instructs the Parliamentary Labour Party to press upon the Government the imperative need for a full survey of all agricultural land throughout Great Britain."

"A LIVING WAGE" (p. 10).

"This Conference resolves that in the interests of the Agricultural Worker and for the safeguarding of his health it shall be illegal to put in bags, grain or fertilisers exceeding eight stones in weight."