

A Ray Of Hope For England

BECAUSE THE ENFORCED DIET of hospitalization results in a healthier figure is no reason for undergoing an appendectomy to reduce one's weight. But, if the operation is necessary anyway, it is solace to know that unexpected benefits may accrue.

It is not necessary to suffer destruction of life, property and civil liberties to bring about a better

social order. Yet if war does come it is to be hoped that the economy which caused it may be improved, as a matter of necessity, during the holocaust.

As a matter of historical record, the socio-economic results of war are deleterious. The genesis of war being privilege, its character to protect privilege, its conduct per se a denial of all individual liberty, it is difficult to conceive of any result other than the entrenchment of privilege.

But totalitarian war, if continued to the point of exhaustion, may bring about the debacle of privilege itself. The terrific demand upon production which such a war necessitates may weaken the structure of tradition and legality upon which privilege rests. As predatory interests fatten on production, a complete diversion of the productive processes for war purposes may call attention to the true nature of these interests.

Some such hope for Englishmen at least (the Germans, because of their complete conditioning to slavery, seem doomed, regardless of the outcome of the war, to a dismal fate for generations) arises from the hardly heard remarks which their parliamentary system permits. For instance, the following by R. R. Stokes, Laborite Member from Ipswich, in a debate on the budget*, is a hopeful indication:

"I think the Government should make it a penal offense for any man to allow valuable land to lie idle. In the borough of Ipswich there is a total area of 8,692 acres, an industrial area in which there is only one cow, and of this area 3,500 acres are absolutely unused, and, being derated, make no contribution to local rates. ...

"There is a further example in the same area. The community has grown, and the power station is too small. The electric light authorities decided to build another power station. They did not choose the most delectable site in the middle of a residential area, but they chose what was, in fact, the worst possible site. It was land which had never been used except to graze a few sheep. ... They had to pay £13,000 for 84 acres when they wanted only about half of that land, so that really they had to pay over £300 per acre for what they needed, as the landlord would not let one half of the area go without the other. ...

"The easiest way to cure unemployment is to force all this idle land into use, and the right way to do that is to put a tax upon it and collect its communal value for the community. But you have this absurdity—another example of the inequality of sacrifice; what is considered as useless land is being taken for camps, aerodromes and factories. It is a great secret; it is not in the public interest that we should know what has been paid for it! Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer propose to take back from the landlords the sums which the Government have paid? Does he propose to take 100 per cent of their excess profits on land sales for the benefit of the community? If not, the fighting men will say that while they have been asked to go and die for their country, they must first buy the land before they do so."

Again, consider this lesson in fundamental economics delivered by Colonel J. C. Wedgwood (Newcastle-under-Lyne, Labor), in the same parliamentary debate:

"The committee will agree that in this budget we are raising £1,234,000,000 by taxation and £1,400,000,000 by inflation. I ask the Committee to consider what this inflation means. It means that everybody . . . is finding that his investment is being deflated. . . . He is being hit. But not everybody is being hit. The people who own the factories, who own the machinery, who own agricultural stock are not suffering from inflation. As the pound goes down, in the pocket of the person who has saved it, the value of the stock and the machines keeps on going up. We are getting, by this system of inflation, an exceedingly unfair taxation. Most of all is it unfair when it is considered that the inevitable result of inflation in every country in the world where it has taken place is that, as the currency depreciates, the salable value of land rises. Far more than the machinery, which wears out, or the stock, which dies off, the value of the land is rising all the time as inflation goes on. The owners of the land are in the blessed position of being