

and industrial location-cum-ownership problems, together with national powers of co-ordination and planning.

Without great powers of land acquisition there can be no planning. Yet, with half-hearted acquisition of land and a *bad compensation basis*, the transfer of land ownership may prove the speculators' paradise! Without the *public ownership of the means of transport* and certain key industries by co-operatives or the State, real planning for industry will be a very clownish sort of thing, leading to terrible crises.

Unless there is a creation of Regional Councils and a reform of the rating system, with an end to the regressive rates ruling in most towns, there will be no effective planning. The growth of municipal control of housing development and food supply will also be important. All this has to be said without any mention of the fact that whilst the capitalist system remains intact, the *political opposition* to all these measures will be very powerful. This means that there will be fights for planning far more severe than those over the Second Front, Pensions or Social Security. Progressive citizens obviously need to arm themselves with a full understanding.

Finally, we must see that the fundamental background to all the technical aspects of planning and housing are concerned with two things—the location and existence of post war industry as a whole and the nature of the housing programme and building industry. Modern factory estates with amenities for the workers, modern flat-blocks, and so on, necessitate a standardisation of building methods and a large-scale programme of flat building. In this country it will mean an *end to the cement monopoly* and the development of the *glass and plastics* industries. The people will have to step in to prevent the monopoly steel and chemical interests from retarding the development of these materials, or in any way obtaining a control over them.

Given an understanding of these matters, it is up to democrats to put their energies into the adoption of some such progressive plan as that typified by the (Abercrombie) L.C.C. plan. The winning of the war and the destruction of Fascism is the first necessity, but there will be no “homes” to follow unless the planning consciousness of the people is transformed into political consciousness.

Conservatives and Industry by MAURICE DOBB

THIS is a dull report* if one looks to it for a coherent policy for the post-war world; its vision crabbed, its thinking stale. Of positive proposals it contains remarkably few, and such as it does are drearily vague. Its economics are commonplace and have a musty flavour of pre-1914 textbooks. For realism it substitutes a cloud-cuckoo-land of enterprising capitalists (whom it prefers to refer to as

“the man-in-the-street”) straining at the leash to risk their fortunes in brave adventures for the good of us all. (We are even assured, in Samuel Smiles vein, that modern industry “offers full scope for the boy who comes from the bottom to advance right to the top on his own merits”). But if we look to it as a document which between the lines discloses the attitude of dominant circles in and behind the Conservative Party machine, then it is greatly revealing and well worthy of attention. It then becomes of interest because it shows us precisely the limits within

*Work : the future of British Industry: a Report by the Conservative Sub-Committee on Industry (January, 1944, 6d).

which such circles intend to compress—one might say crush—any ambitious proposals for economic and social reconstruction after the war. We get a picture of how much new we are going to be allowed to have in the New Britain if big business circles have their way. Here the very evasions of this pedestrian document are revealing, and the very commonplaces which serve to skip round awkward questions or to avoid blurting out what reactionaries really mean.

Let us take as touchstones the two central problems of Monopoly and Unemployment, which most other post-war policy-makers like the Nuffield College Committee or the Unilever document have put in the forefront of the picture. In both cases we meet here an evasion of the real issue: evasion so patent as to escape being ingenious. Monopoly is hardly recognised as a problem at all. In fact, an extension of Cartels, especially international cartels, is advocated; we are told that we should not be misled into thinking that all monopolies are bad; and against any bad behaviour in which they may indulge we are offered the safeguard of "enquiry and publicity." Apart from a few pious phrases about the State intervening if cartels should chance to abuse their powers, there are no proposals at all for controlling monopoly and countering their restrictive and predatory tendencies. We are simply offered the old policy which flourished in the 1930s of State-tolerated and State-buttressed monopoly, christened with the euphemistic title of "self-government of industry," which can serve as the passport of every type of monopolistic depravity.

On unemployment our authors cannot afford to be quite so complacent, since this question will be on the lips of every voter and has long been the burning topic of every army current affairs discussion group. We are told

that the committee was "united in the conviction that unemployment such as darkened much of the world between the two wars must not recur"; and that "in the forefront we put the aim of full employment." But it turns out that this aim is not to be placed so unreservedly in the forefront as to endanger the supremacy of private enterprise by any considerable enlargement of State activity. Government investment to combat unemployment, about which there has been so much talk in other reports and memoranda, is dismissed with the chilly phrase: "we are sceptical about the wisdom of relying heavily on public works." Such measures are grudgingly admitted as "a second string" and "as a buffer against depression, not a cure for it." Their scope is to be straitly confined by the proviso that a balanced budget must be achieved "as soon as is reasonably possible after the war." "Unorthodox" schemes of finance (e.g., financing such schemes by bank-credits) are frowned out of court: "indefinitely continued deficits" are condemned as harmful to the nation's credit. Above all, there must be no truck with the view that the "public works solution" should be supplemented by "the State or other public authorities taking over a number of large industries or transport services—or indeed the whole of private industry—in order to be able to control the rate of capital expenditure over a much wider field than at present." Dangerous vistas such as these must be shunned—vistas which open inevitably as soon as one begins to hint that, if private capitalism cannot provide employment, then planned communal action can and must.

The only Government measures which are acceptable are those which "cause *private* capital expenditure at a high level"—namely, cheap and plentiful credit (this is apparently permissible if it is granted to capitalist indus-

try and not to finance State activity), State-guaranteed loans, generous depreciation allowances for capital in tax-assessments, and above all political and economic security (to be interpreted presumably as the avoidance of any slur of flirtation with anti-capitalist policies). That musty textbook flavour appears when the problem is referred to as consisting in "cyclical unemployment" and "structural unemployment," without any hint of what Sir William Beveridge has called "mass unemployment"—unemployment as a chronic disease of capitalism, and showing itself in a substantial reserve even in boom years (the boom which Lord Woolton seems more concerned to prevent after the war than he is to prevent the slump). To the measures designed to stimulate private capital expenditure there is added the curious proposal that the Government should finance "bulk purchase of universally desired household goods" to maintain the prosperity of consumer goods industries in times of depression. It is not made clear whether the Government is to store the goods so purchased and unload them on the market when better times have come again or to give them away or to dump them in the sea. Nor are we told, of course, that it would be much simpler (and in the last analysis essential—unless it is proposed to burn the goods or give them away) to redistribute incomes so that the mass of the population could have the means to purchase these "universally desirable household goods."

Regarding the transition from war to peace, the report does not, like the crude individualists, shout for the immediate scrapping of the controls. These, it admits, "may be necessary during a transition period for organising the vast structural reversion from war to peace." Nevertheless, their days are to be strictly numbered: "as soon as these special conditions disappear,

the case for Government control dwindles," and they should be scrapped as tending to thwart the initiative of those "men of individuality coming from every class of society" on which capitalist industry has been built and to retard "the speed of industry to adjust itself to consumers' needs." An exception is made of Government control of the location of industry in the spirit of the Barlow & Scott Reports; and what is called "the principle inherent in Joint Production Committees" as well as the Guaranteed Working Week, are singled out for a place in this brave new world. There is some talk about the need for "smooth and co-operative human relations" in industry, with more stress on the "human side," and emphasis on the importance of research and education. On the other hand, the Essential Works Order must go, since it "conflicts with the Conservative ideal of personal liberty," as does any limitation on a worker's right to refrain from joining a Trade Union.

This self-confessed "statement of lasting principles and salient facts concerning twentieth century industry" ends on a note of paean to private enterprise and the private capitalist. "It was private enterprise that designed and built the Spitfire and the Lancaster." (If the argument is at this level, of course, there is the easy retort that private enterprise built the slums and Socialism built the Stormovik). We should speak, not of the "profit motive," but of the "profit criterion," since "the system does not breed in this country an unprincipled desire for gain." What is needed to make us all prosperous and happy is that industry shall be "able to rely on Government departments understanding its problems, recognising the harm which arbitrary State action can do." What is needed (presumably to unleash the "vigour and vitality" of "the man in the street") is "dynamic co-operation

between industry based on private enterprise and Government departments," instead of the "narrowly regulative, restrictive, negative" attitude of Government towards industry before the war. If the attitude of Government toward industry in the Chamberlain epoch is written down as "restrictive

and negative," what a world of bigger and bolder State-aided monopolies we have to look forward to in this new epoch of positive "dynamic co-operation" between the State and capitalism after the war! An inspiration to our men in the landing-barges and on the beaches indeed!

Book Review

Science in the U.S.S.R.

Russia's Secret Weapon by Dyson Carter, with foreword by the Dean of Canterbury (Major A. S. Hooper, 2s, 102 pp.).

IN 102 pages the author has managed to assemble an astonishing amount of information, which even his rambling style cannot prevent us from absorbing with the greatest interest. In a word, the "secret weapon" is SCIENCE, and for those who are in close touch with the progress of science in Great Britain and the U.S.A., this book does not provide entirely new and unexpected revelations; but what is more important, it makes you think, compare, and regard science from an entirely new angle.

"What he (Lenin) planned was to take science out of the hands of the few and make it understandable and useful to millions of people" (p. 22). In reading this book one realises that this aim has

been achieved and the most amazing results obtained. The author describes the work of Yefremov (agriculture), Stakhanov (mining), Kapitza (chemistry); the underground gasification of coal (proposed in England by Professor Ramsay and forgotten); a cathode ray robot operating hundreds of lathes and turning out ammunition day and night without fatigue or mistakes; the marvellously successful experiments in blood transfusion—and shows how all these wonderful inventions were made by the people, for the people. By the people, because in the U.S.S.R. even the type of scientists has changed from aloof beings to workers whose sole aim is to use science to better the world, to keep it in contact with the masses, and to strive after simplicity rather than complication. In this task they are supported, not by the meagre subscriptions of industrial magnates, interested only in their own profits, but by the wealth of the entire nation.

N. N.

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