

economy and cease to appear a poor fourth in the race towards a planned society on Communist lines."

Miss Lakeman made reply as follows (*Lambeth Borough News*, February 4th):—

"Sir,—It is a pity Mr. Popplewell had to rely on a necessarily condensed report of the Lambeth Model Parliament, and was not himself present to hear the Liberals say precisely what he says in his letter!

"We pointed out that it is impossible to 'abolish' ground rent, but demanded that it should instead be used as the revenue of the community; we showed how compensation would merely perpetuate injustice, while taxation of site values involves no such difficulty. Finding that a good deal of what the mover said was in agreement with our ideas, I asked whether he would agree to interpret 'nationalisation of the land' as 'nationalisation of the rent of the land'; as he would not, the Liberal Party voted against the motion (as it was clearly carried on a voice vote, we did not insist on a division).

"I hope Mr. Popplewell will be able to return to the Parliament for the debate on the Bill which we, as the Liberal Government this session, are introducing to transfer rates from buildings to site values."

## THE POVERTY OF EGYPT AND WHY

*Review by H. Hillelson in the GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNAL, January, 1949, of the book EGYPT: AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS, by Charles Issawi. Published by the Oxford University Press. 15s.*

MR. CHARLES ISSAWI, Adjunct Professor of Political Science at the American University of Beirut, has written a thoroughly reliable account of the economic and financial structure of Egypt. He is familiar with the vast literature on the subject, including books and documents in Arabic, and there is evidence of personal observation of the Egyptian scene. The historical background and recent political trends are briefly and lucidly described, and there is a short review of education, literature and the Press. Post-war developments receive only passing notice, yet the economic chapters, with their wealth of statistics, are of permanent value because the basic features of the national economy remain much as they were before the war.

The facts are set out soberly, and the book is clearly not intended as an indictment of Egyptian society. The conclusion, however, emerges that the facade of material progress and outward prosperity hides a thoroughly unhealthy state of social maladjustment. A high death-rate has not checked the spectacular growth of the population from nine and a half millions in 1897 to nearly sixteen millions in 1937. The cultivated area has not increased in the last twenty-five years, though the heightening of the Aswan Dam and the construction of the Gebel Awliya Dam have added considerably to the water supply and rendered possible a programme of agricultural expansion which was planned to be completed in 1953. The great wealth produced by the most fertile soil in the world is reflected in the ostentatious luxury of the privileged few, while the mass of the population is living on the verge of starvation. The pitiful conditions of life in the villages have been exposed by many writers, and Mr. Issawi's unemotional array of facts and figures is possibly more eloquent than denunciation. Of the large landowners, who wield all political power, he writes that they display "all the defects of a privileged class

unredeemed by the virtues of a ruling class." Industrialization has produced an urban proletariat of some 700,000 workers whose lot is as deplorable as that of the fellahin. "The terrible overcrowding and promiscuity in which the bulk of the Cairene and Alexandrine populations live make European slums seem almost palatial in comparison." Under the iniquitous corn laws the town workers pay a yearly subsidy of some five million pounds to the agricultural interests and the efficiency of the industrial labour is much impaired by undernourishment and the prevalence of disease. Unrepresented in Parliament and faced with an indifferent or hostile public opinion, labour has not been able to do much to improve its lot, yet "unless the government shows much more wisdom than in the past in its dealing with the working class there is great danger of this struggle taking a violent form." The discontent of the fellahin, like that of the urban workers, lacks organization and leadership; it cannot, moreover, be ventilated in a parliament, the members of which, divided on personal issues and engaged in keen rivalry for power, represent no divergent social interests. There is a wide franchise, but in the country the electors' choice is, in effect, restricted to the two or three influential landlords of the district. Only 20 per cent. of the population are literate and the aggregate circulation of the Arabic daily papers is less than 200,000. The budget of the Ministry of Education has risen from £E.525,000 in 1914 to £E.4,438,000 in 1939, and the number of pupils and students in government institutions of all grades from 15,000 to 232,000; yet "it may fairly be said that Egyptian educationists have been no more successful than their British predecessors in providing either a highly educated class or a tolerably educated mass." Nevertheless, the spread of education has produced a class of intellectuals whose economic and social prospects fall seriously short of their legitimate ambitions. In 1937 it was estimated that 7,500 holders of the Baccalaureat and 3,500 graduates of the University of the Higher Schools were unemployed. The intellectuals have always played an active part in Egyptian politics and most of them belong to the unprivileged or underprivileged class. Politically conscious to an acute degree, they have hitherto been the supporters of fanatical nationalism and xenophobia, but the fulfilment of national aspirations has brought disillusionment and frustration and they are beginning to realize that their woes are not due to British rule and the competition of the foreigner. It is amongst this class that a social conscience is developing and that the demand for economic and social reform finds its most vocal expression. According to Mr. Issawi, "the failure of successive governments to tackle the urgent social and economic problems has disgusted the youth of the towns with the present political order and aroused a keen desire for change"; and, in a passage written in 1945, he alludes to "a very marked spread of Socialist sentiment among the petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia." It should be noted that the Socialism he has in mind is not that of a democratic Labour movement, and it is not surprising that Egypt is considered by many observers to be a promising field for Russian-inspired influences. Disappointed intellectuals are the natural leaders in a class struggle against landlordism and the abuses of capitalism.

The conclusions to be drawn from Mr. Issawi's book are disheartening for all friends of Egypt and her people, but careful analysis of her disease is necessary before the appropriate cure can be applied, and to this end Mr. Issawi has made an important contribution.