

CULTIVATION OF VACANT LAND Regulation under Defence of the Realm Acts

The following regulation under the Defence of the Realm Acts was contained in an Order in Council, published in a supplement to the LONDON GAZETTE, of 5th December, 1916:—

2L.—(1) Where the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries are of opinion that, with a view to maintaining the food supply of the country, it is expedient that they should exercise the powers given to them under this regulation as respects any land, the Board may enter on the land,

(A) without any consent, if the land is for the time being unoccupied, or was unoccupied on the twenty-ninth day of November, nineteen hundred and sixteen, or if the land is common land, and

(B) in any other case, with the consent of the occupier and the person in receipt of the rent of the land, and cultivate the land, or arrange for its cultivation by any person either under a contract of tenancy or otherwise.

(2) The Board may, after entry on any land, do or authorise to be done all things which they consider necessary or desirable for the purpose of the cultivation of the land or for adapting the land to cultivation, including fencing, and may also during their occupation of the land or on the termination thereof, remove any such fencing or work of adaptation.

(3) Any person who cultivates land under any such arrangement shall, on the determination, by or on behalf of the Board, of the arrangement, if the determination takes effect before the first day of January, nineteen hundred and eighteen, receive from the Board such compensation as may have been agreed under the terms of the arrangement, or, in default of any such agreement, as the Board may consider just and reasonable, and shall not be entitled to any other compensation.

(4) On the determination of the occupation of any land by the Board under this regulation, compensation shall be paid by the Board to any person injuriously affected by any deterioration of the land caused by the exercise of the powers under this regulation, the amount of that compensation to be determined, in default of agreement, by a single arbitrator under and in accordance with the provisions of the Second Schedule to the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1908.

(5) The Board may, with respect of any land, authorise any local authority to exercise on behalf of the Board any of the powers of the Board under this regulation.

(6) In this regulation the expressions "occupied" and "unoccupied" refer to such occupation as involves liability to payment of poor rates, and the expression "common land" includes any land subject to be enclosed under the Inclosure Acts, 1845 to 1882, and any town or village green and any other land subject to any right of common.

(7) This regulation (except the last preceding sub-section) shall apply to Scotland with the substitution of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland for the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, of arbiter for arbitrator, and of the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act, 1908, for the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1908; and as regards Scotland "unoccupied land" shall mean land in respect of which no person was entered as tenant or occupier in the valuation roll for the year ending on the fifteenth day of May, nineteen hundred and seventeen.

By the cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, dated 8th December, 1916, made by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries under regulation 2L of the defence of the Realm (Consolidation) Regulations, 1914, the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries has authorised the council of the administrative county of London and the council of each municipi-

pal borough and urban district to exercise on behalf of the Board the powers conferred by Regulation 2L as respects any land within the county of London or the borough or district, or which in the opinion of the council can conveniently be cultivated by persons residing in the county of London or the borough or district, subject nevertheless to the following among other provisions:—

1. A council shall not enter on any unoccupied garden or pleasure ground usually occupied together with a dwelling-house and shall not enter on any common land, as defined in Regulation 2L, without a further consent given by the Board.

2. A council shall as soon as possible after entry on any unoccupied land give notice of the entry to the owner of the land.

3. A council may in the case of occupied land agree to pay a rent for the use thereof but not in excess of the rent payable by the occupier for the land, or if held with other land, in excess of a fair proportion of the total rent so payable, or where the land is occupied by the owner, in excess of the annual value for the purposes of income tax together with the tithe rentcharge (if any).

4. A council may arrange with any society having for its object the cultivation of vacant land for the cultivation of any land on which the council has entered, by and delegate to such society such of the powers of the council under this order as may be necessary for the purposes of the arrangement.

POWER TO SEIZE LAND FOR FOOD

Mr. Prothero's Advice to War Committee

Mr. Prothero, President of the Board of Agriculture, in his address at the meeting of the Hertfordshire War Agricultural Committee in High Holborn on January 8th, said that he favoured the county being mapped out into small districts, and advocated a small executive committee which would be invested with considerable powers. "Do not use those powers until you are driven," he said. "Try to induce those farmers who will not cultivate their land. If you fail to induce them, then it is your duty to use your powers against them.

"You will have the power to enter upon and take possession of any land," he added. "You will be able to go on the land for the purpose of seeing how it is cultivated without any risk of trespassing, and you may begin at once—the sooner the better. To make your survey is your first plan. We want to know what land there is in your county which is imperfectly cultivated and also what land there is under inferior grass which can be ploughed up and sown with some crops for this spring sowing. It is this spring sowing that we are after. We want all the wheat.

"Half a crop of wheat is not so much as a full crop of either oats or barley. I also want you to look forward to the land you can bring into cultivation for the harvest of 1918. That can wait. It is the other that is urgent, and naturally you will concentrate principally on bringing the arable land to the highest possible pitch of cultivation."

Mr. Prothero impressed upon the farmers the necessity of having everything ready. It was urgent that as much land as possible should be ploughed up for the harvest of 1918.

MR. PROTHERO AND THE POTATO

Sir,—In pre-war days the landlord and agent gang used to deride land reformers as ignorant and unpractical. The practical men, who understand farmers and agriculture, have now taken control. But if they understand the farmers, the farmers do not yet understand them; and