are disposed if, after which leisure will again become a reality. And they calculate that Oxbridge, which has survived so many reformers, will outlast these also, wherefore they face the prospect of a Royal Commission of Inquiry with the same confidence as inspired their remote predecessors when threatened with Cromwell's Visitors.

Over against these stand the New Men, younger though no longer young, and, in virtue of their greater energy, probably the dominant faction in Oxbridge affairs to-day. Many of them are well known. The voices of these new-style University Wits are everywhere, in bookshop windows, in politics, and on the Third Programme. One will use English History for his purposes, and another finds Plato a convenient platform. A historian has recently been rebuked by the Leader of the House of Commons for the extreme leftism of his broadcasts on foreign affairs. An economist is one of the best known living exponents of doctrinaire socialism, and there are other economists, less illustrious, who confuse instruction in their subject with propaganda through the medium of socialist political arithmetic. They drift in and out of politics, are as at home at Transport House as in their colleges, and may be found to-day tutoring in political theory, and to-morrow publicly opposing the foreign policy of Mr. Bevin. Most interesting of all are the left scientists, who openly aim at imposing upon thought and on social life as a whole a concept of discipline and control drawn partly from their own laboratories and partly from Moscow. These persons have created a New Orthodoxy which is perhaps the most significant feature on the Oxbridge horizon to-day.

Youth, however, is notoriously impatient of orthodoxy, however progressive ; and those who are interested to observe university thought and gossip call attention to a growing reaction against the Wits, as symbolised by the outcome of recent Union debates. Yet we think there is a danger of their being deceived by a false dawn. For, at present, ex-Service men preponderate at Oxbridge, and to their disenchanted eyes the antics of our modern sophists appear merely contemptible. The test will come some two years hence, when the student population is again young and, perhaps, reprieved from military service. Only then will it become clear whether we are about to witness a youthful intellectual reaction as strong as that which in Europe succeeded the French Revolutionary Wars.

Meantime, let all beware of supposing that the New Men and their fellow-travellers are a whit more amenable to our ideas than the older style academics whom George fell foul of. Quite the contrary, it is certain that there was far more of tolerance and accessibility to liberal notions among the old than among the new. Planners dislike and mistrust the creative individual ; he will not fit in and his inventions and dangerous thoughts cut across the blue-prints of ' orderly ' development. In thought, as in other spheres of life, our present rulers are likely to prove the Rehoboams of England.

DAVID CRABBE.

HOW DO THEY GET THAT WAY ?

READERS MAY have followed the recent correspondence in *The Times* between Mr. Douglas Jay, M.P., and various experts in the road and rail transport world. They will have seen the Prime Minister's late economic adviser being driven from point after point, caught out cooking his evidence and misquoting his authorities, pontificating on subjects on which his information was clearly inadequate and finally giving up the game.

But presumably no reader expected that as the result of his inglorious rout Mr. Jay was likely to reconsider his support for the Government's Transport Bill. Still less will it have been expected that he would give any reconsideration to the basis of his Socialist beliefs. Anyone who may have imagined this will have been disillusioned by Mr. Jay's contribution to the debate on the coal crisis when he announced his view that 'there was unquestionably a terrible amount of waste by domestic consumers.' This pearl of legislative wisdom can only have sprung from a mind quite impervious to reason. A government department has been completely caught out and stands convicted of shambling inefficiency; yet this new-style democrat can only think that the consumer is at fault. But Mr. Jay's was not the most lunatic contribution to this debate. Mr. Silverman accused the opposition of ' deliberately talking about a coal crisis which did not exist.'

How do they get that way ? How can men in responsible positions maintain this continuous froth of irresponsible inconsequence ? And, still more wonderful, how is it that our much enduring public, huddled round its pale blue gas fires with an inch and a half between its utility socks and its corduroy trousers, still continues at bye-election after bye-election to endorse the decision of 1945 that men of this standard of efficiency should be entrusted with the control of industry ?

Readers of a non-political journal will not expect a party explanation. The Conservatives will tell you that it is due to dirty work behind the war-time party truce; the Liberals, that it is because they have not had time fully to educate the country in the Beauties of Beveridge; there is any amount of recrimination and doubtless out of it all the historian of the future will distil a ' non-party ' explanation suitable for inclusion in the school textbooks approved by the L.C.C. Meanwhile, using words which have some meaning and pursuing an argument whose steps are in some way related to each other, let us try to discover what has happened and why.

First let it be emphasised that very little has happened. In instance after instance, spokesmen introducing recent Socialist measures have been able to score the legitimate point that the Bill is no more than an extension of a principle already conceded. The tide towards collectivism has been in full flow for more than half a century now. Nothing is stranger in the modern political bedlam than the reiteration that the unemployment figures of 1931 illustrate what happens in a free economy : 1931 when a State broadcasting monopoly had existed for over ten years; when for over twenty years an important section of the public had been sticking stamps on to a card each week to symbolise their inability to pay their own doctor's bills without State aid; when the first generation almost entirely educated by the State was reaching old age; when death duties were thirty-five years old, income tax ninety, and factory legislation over a hundred; and when memory of the ancient right of each man to a share in the use of his native soil, imperfectly represented at any time, it is true, but never quite absent so long as the open fields persisted, had practically vanished from men's minds.

Maybe the election of 1945 was an important nail in the coffin of a free England, the nail perhaps which holds on the silver plate. But the lid was on in 1930, and the body was laid out in 1910. Indeed it was in the eighties of the last century that Herbert Spencer insisted on pointing out to the distracted relatives that their loved one, hardly yet out of adolescence, was going to leave them.

Hardly out of adolescence, for, to drop the metaphor the idea of a free economy had only a very short run, even among the theoreticians whilst it was hardly ever entertained by 'practical politicians.' In this country we had not got rid of nearly all our tariffs before the factory code had become so complex as to need a consolidating act. The old paternalism of the

18th-century squirearchy had hardly broken down before its place was taken by the new bureaucratic paternalism. At most there was a short interregnum during which the incipient working-class movements are found demanding that King Log should be replaced by King Stork, that the government should take over the price and wage fixing system which had collapsed in the hands of the J.P.s. Meanwhile the great enclosure movement was going on, to prevent even the breath of freedom from reaching the nostrils of the working classes. 'When the common lands are enclosed' we read in a Board of Agriculture report on Shropshire, dated 1794, 'That subordination of the lower orders of society which in the present time is much wanted' will be 'considerably secured.' And the common lands were, accordingly, enclosed.

And if *laissez-faire* had a short run in this country it was hardly even tried elsewhere. Socialist experiment trod hard on the heels of liberation movements, whilst Louis Napoleon and Bismarck provided precedents for practically everything the present British Government is doing, from popular education to nationalisation of the railways; from social insurance to town and country planning.

The New World offers little relief to this dark picture. It is appropriate that Gibbon Wakefield's 'Letter from Sydney' was written from inside a jail. And the Government followed the jailbird's advice, extending to the unoccupied lands of Australia and New Zealand a system of monopoly as damaging to liberty as any bolts and bars. By establishing its sovereignty over all unoccupied land and keeping the price artificially high it secured 'for capitalists of every description, without cost, as many labourers as they wish to employ' (together with a nice pool of unemployed to draw upon, we may presume). The quotation is from the report of the South Australian Commissioners to the Colonial Secretary in 1836.

Is it not clear that had men not been entrapped by the land monopoly, 19th-century history would have been very different; that the industrial changes, which were bound to come, would have been absorbed without social distress; that free men simply would not have entered such coal mines as actually came into existence, let alone allowed their wives and children to go down them; that they would not have put up, for a day, with the wage rates which came to prevail in the new industries? Yet it is this period, when men were less free than the serfs of the middle ages that is thought of as a period of *laissez-faire* by our modern legislators (repeating, alas, the lessons learnt from our modern school-masters). It is the complete confusion of mind in which unfreedom is called freedom which results in the socialist blather of the present day.

A hundred years ago the policy was deliberately adopted of turning the mass of mankind into operatives, interested not in production but in wages. Can we now complain when the operatives reject the idea that industry must suit the consumer or go without customers; or when they flock into non-productive occupations like the civil service unaware altogether of its parasitic nature? Should we not weep rather than laugh when an honest housewife from the Labour back benches describes the establishment of a national electricity monopoly as 'the democratisation of electricity?' A free market would of course distribute everything in its due proportion and 'planning' is quite unnecessary; but the market the wage-earner thinks of as free—the market of the 19th century—was one to which he always came with an empty purse.

Stories of the brave days of British industrial pioneering, so full of improvisation, confidence and vigour; stories of the astronomical figures of present day American production, cannot but make one's mouth water as the pontifical inefficiencies of Whitehall cut us off from one amenity after another. But it is futile to object to this or that error of the politicians if we are not prepared to condemn as well the entire monopolistic background which governs their historical thinking. The 19th century was a century of monopoly just as much as the 20th, but there were different beneficiaries. It talked of liberty, but was not just.

'Your enemies have called your bluff; for in your city
Only the man behind the rifle had free will.'

And now the 'man behind the rifle' is a trade union official.

J.R.M.S.

BEVERIDGE DISPROVED BY EVENTS

LIBERAL PARTY politicians who took their cue—to their own undoing—from the teachings of Lord Beveridge and accepted his 'planned economy' are well confirmed in their growing disillusionment by the striking article which Mr. Oscar A. Hobson, the financial editor, had in the *News Chronicle*, February 17. We quote some of the material passages:

'The present crisis has provided the country with a valuable, if painful, lesson on the economics of full employment. It has demonstrated the inadequacy of many of the ideas put forward during the war by Lord Beveridge and others, which now hold the field in determining Government policy.

'The lesson of the crisis is that industry is an organism and that full employment is a matter of preserving its rhythm or balance. The Beveridge thesis that full employment is dependent on the maintenance of outlay (public or private) on a scale sufficient to pay wages at current rates to all workers desiring jobs is shown to be superficial and inadequate. Mr. Dalton's recent assertion that there will be no 'financial crisis' is shown to be a vain and empty boast.

'Industry has broken down in spite of there being plenty of money to employ the whole population. Its breakdown is for the moment more complete (though we hope it will be much briefer) than any financial crisis ever produced. Its completeness is due to an egregious ministerial blunder. But in a less extreme form it would have come anyhow. It would have come because industry had got out of balance. . . .

'The crisis is the price we have to pay for structural defects in many industries. Lord Beveridge and his school have, of course, recognised that such defects can cause unemployment. But they regarded structural or frictional unemployment as relatively unimportant. Now we see that it can be all-devouring and devastating. . . .

'What then, is the practical lesson of the crisis? Surely that we must revise our present ideas of the proper relationship of Government and industry. . . . Either we must be prepared to accept a ruthless totalitarian system of comprehensive central planning of production (and by necessary consequence, consumption) and thoroughgoing compulsion of all the factors of production, including labour, or we must work back towards the Liberal system which is traditional to us.

'That system assigns important economic powers and duties to the central Government . . . but except in extreme emergency it does not empower the Government itself to conduct industry or to compel industry to work according to a prescribed pattern. It does not admit the right of Government to plan production centrally and enforce its plan by compulsion, because it does not believe in the capacity of Government to plan successfully the economic activities of a free society.

'Our present troubles are due basically to trying to work a hybrid system. The planning failure which caused them is no mere accident, no flash in the pan. Such failures will be inevitable and constant so long as we persist with a system which is neither flesh nor fowl.'

The fallacies of this Beveridge doctrine were exposed quite convincingly in our pamphlet *The Problem of Employment Beveridge Fails to Solve It*, price 6d.

ANNA GEORGE DE MILLE

As we go to press we learn with deep regret of the death, in New York, March 17, of Anna George de Mille, daughter of Henry George. The world movement is bereaved of one of its most eminent and devoted servants. We convey to Agnes de Mille (25, East 9th Street, New York, 3) her sister Margaret and all relatives our sincere sympathy in their loss.