

to say, it is not sufficient that they should be able to raise "part of their revenue" by land value rating, for that makes it compulsory on them to obtain the rest of their rate-revenue by the old and the condemned method, which they may wish to refuse doing. Nor should there be any suggestion that the rating of land values shall wait upon or be necessarily connected with the revision of the block grants. It is true that all Government subventions, if they must be spread around, necessitate the taxation or rating of land values if they are not to go in the wrong direction. But the reverse is not true. Land value rating and taxation stands on its own footing as a self-contained, independent, urgent and just reform. Accordingly we ought to know that, with the other legislation which the Chancellor and Mr. Bevan are

working upon, the Land Value Rating Bill is also in an advanced state of preparation.

During the years between the wars no fewer than 240 local authorities have demanded such a Bill and its early passage. They include the London County Council, 13 Metropolitan Boroughs, and many large Boroughs such as Accrington, Bolton, Cardiff, Crewe, Darlington, Gateshead, Hull, Leeds, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Sheffield, Swansea, etc. etc. They are among "some who think" that site values should be rated as distinct from the values of buildings and improvements. Their expression of opinion points to the widespread popular demand for Parliamentary action, but it needs re-expression now so that the Government is assured in proceeding with the least possible delay. A. W. M.

IN THE NAME OF PLANNED ECONOMY

(Article in the Danish commercial journal *DANSK GROSSIST-TIDENDE* reprinted in *VEJEN FREM*, April 13)

A FEW years ago, a group of Danish Press men were quizzing good-naturedly a Free Trader in their company who was inclined to be optimistic about the possibility of freer commerce after the war. "Yes, but," said one of them, "why are you so sure of that?" "Because otherwise millions of people will die of hunger," was the reply. The remark was no doubt treated as a reckless exaggeration, but to-day there are many who will admit that the reply was not so absurd.

Much has certainly been done for famine-stricken countries through UNRRA, and many private agencies have helped. But it is becoming more and more evident that there is a limit to what can be achieved on those lines. What we have not addressed ourselves to is the most important thing of all, the vital necessity of restoring production athwart all exchange controls and allowing free passage for raw materials and finished products across the frontiers. If we do not establish that good order in our affairs, there are years of distress in front of us, ending as anyone can foresee in desperation and new wars.

Those countries which were most ravaged by the war will naturally require some time to recover, and this is true particularly of Germany. Even under conditions of complete commercial freedom, Germany cannot at present procure very much in the way of imports since, at the moment, it is not in the position to provide the goods to pay for them. In this case measures of relief are in place and the same applies to several of the countries formerly under German occupation.

On the other hand it must be realised that such countries will have little chance of rescuing themselves if the world around denies them the right of obtaining, by their export trade, the imports that they need. If a country, which as a whole has suffered much by the war, offers us in Denmark certain goods, and if our own authorities, as has happened, cut down a necessary import, then we should be quite clear in our minds that we are at the same time debarred from helping some other country, say Holland, in its need. If such practices are allowed to obtain here at home and, unhappily, also in other countries, which by the way keep on pouring out money to help UNRRA, how can we hope to get further? After all, we are all members of a great world community and each suffers by the distress of the other.

All of the people of England, for whom we have the highest regard and admiration, are severely rationed for foodstuffs. What is the reason? Is it because, upon the whole, there is no more food in the world? Not at all. We in Denmark within but 24 hours' voyage could send them much more food if only the world was not ruled by economic planning politicians and officials putting up their barriers both there and here.

Here at home we cannot get our production of bacon and butter under way because we lack the dollars to buy feeding

cake. After long and tedious negotiations within government departments permission is at last given to apply part of a sterling balance to purchase from a dollar country. Then the transaction is suspended by the English side putting forward all sorts of hypotheses as to the prices to be paid for Danish goods, and by the exacting consideration that has to be given to the question of subsidies and other matters that have nothing to do with a free commerce. Ultimately, when negotiations under these difficult conditions have been concluded, the business is placed in charge of a Minister who by training is a jurist and politician but who has never produced nor sold as much as a single pound of pork.

If the world had not been ridden with all this planned economy, these restrictions and the host of meddlers, Denmark could by this time have rendered very different help against hunger in devastated Europe. It would not have taken very long to build up our livestock so that butter, bacon, eggs and cheese could have streamed from this country. But precisely the opposite road has been followed. At a moment when millions are faced by starvation, our livestock is reduced and diminished. Since November the number of pigs alone has fallen by 134,000.

Regarding all this and seeking to forget all the pseudo-scientific economic planning theories which now govern the world and its politicians, one is easily driven to wish that—instead of conducting these futile conferences between the governments of the various countries, through committees of the trade and foreign and agricultural ministries, and many others who in fact have no commercial competence—we could do just as we did in the old days: simply allow Mr. Hansen in Denmark, with his intimate knowledge of his own trade in his limited field of operations, to sell to his good business friend Mr. Smith in England what he requires, the latter in return sending us what we can use. But such a thought is all too simple and straightforward to gain the ear of this world's "scientifically" trained economic planners. If we followed these primitive and absolutely infallible business methods, Europe would at the same time get out of its distress many years sooner than is now likely to happen.

The hope of freer commercial conditions is not so pronounced as it was immediately after the war. There is no particular sign that the prospect of a new war, despite the atom bomb, is halting the political developments. Similarly, there is failure to stop and think of the possibility that in matters economic and related to our food supplies the economic planners may bring a whole world to wreck and ruin.

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