

Fairy Stories for the Kiddies

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TWO AND TWO have an irritating propensity to go on making four, whether we or the Government or anybody else happens to like it or not. That, above all, is the message contained in a remarkable and exceedingly useful fifteen page booklet recently published*. There have been few documents in recent years which have blasted asunder the cosy myths of Protectionists more effectively than this striking little pamphlet. It doesn't just give theoretical arguments; it gives the facts and figures which we all need. As the textile industry has been the subject of special pleading for protection over a great many years, it is peculiarly appropriate that this particular industry has been the subject of special study.

Exploded Myth No. 1. "Protection is a useful device to help an industry which is potentially strong, but suffering from temporary difficulties." For this reason textiles secured protection in the late 1940's and early 1950's. The industry squealed for protection in order to get itself reorganised. It got protection. Profits, naturally, shot up. Were they ploughed back into the industry, or promptly dispersed as dividends? Guess!

Exploded Myth No. 2. "Economic controls are of value to help poor countries." So far from being used to help poor countries, protection in the textile industry has been worked as a vicious system of discrimination to keep out the products of poor and developing countries, whether within the Commonwealth or outside it.

Exploded Myth No. 3. "Protection prevents unemployment" (or, as they used to put it in 1903, "Tariff Reform means work for all"). In spite (or because?) of all the Government's efforts, the number of jobs in textiles has declined by about two-thirds in the past twenty years. Yet until very recent-

tly unemployment has not been noticeably high in the textile areas. Why? Other jobs were available.

Exploded Myth No. 4. "Strong government (that is, active and interfering government) is the people's defence against powerful corporations." The Textile Industry Support Campaign has successfully twisted the Government's arm, forcing them to apply quotas which have not only harmed the developing countries, but harmed the consumer as well. When it comes to the crunch, the "stronger" a govern-

ment is, the more likely it is to submit to pressures of that kind.

Such examples should be studied



and used, not just as generalisations, but to provide actual examples to be used as powder and shot in the free trade campaign. Economic libertarians will do a great deal of good to their cause if they acquire this booklet, and use some of its arguments in letters and articles for the Press, both local and national.

* *Textiles—a Protection Racket*, by Peter Kenyon. Published by the World Development Movement, 20p.