

# IRRELEVANT NONSENSE

By T. O. EVANS

could achieve it, it would mean higher wages. People were socially conscious. They would respond if they understood the simple economics. An incomes policy would work when people saw it as necessary and desirable.

A chief shop steward, MR. GEORGE CRUMP, said that he wished to bring a breath of air from outside into the academic minds of the other speakers. He was a lifelong supporter of the Labour Party but was bitterly opposed to the wage freeze. The Government, he said, was trying to put over the biggest confidence trick of modern times. The incomes policy was just the latest move to screw down the workers. Half the men at his factory had now been laid off. As chief shop steward he had had to help organise this "shake out" of his mates. He wished the Prime Minister were one of them.

Britain was no longer an imperial power, he said. We must stop waving the union jack around the world, and cut foreign expenditure. When they got social justice, the unions might consider stopping wage claims, but not before.

"Redeployment is switching workers from high paid jobs to low paid jobs," said MR. J. L. JONES, of the Transport and General Workers Union. The Government must get back on the road to economic expansion. It was not excessive imports but excessive overseas expenditure that was responsible for the balance of payments difficulties. We should introduce import controls, cut military expenditure and stop using sterling as a reserve currency.

There was a need for minimum wage legislation, said Mr. Jones. Basic wages and hours of work should be negotiated on a national scale, leaving job differentials and shift rates, etc., to be bargained for at local levels.

The last speaker was MR. W. RODGERS, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Economic Affairs. There were three basic questions to be answered, said Mr. Rodgers. Was an incomes policy desirable? Was it possible? Were the Government's present policies the right ones?

A prices and incomes policy was not a panacea, said Mr. Rodgers, but it was essential for growth in any economy. And it worked. The level of retail prices, as measured by the retail price index, had fallen since July.

Referring to the agitation against low wages and long hours by the first trades unionists, Mr. Rodgers said that freedom to them meant planning. Planning, he said, made freedom a reality.

## VIETNAM

**T**HE Vietcong gave the peasants land. That is what they really want. Then the landlords returned with the Government soldiers and took back the land or collected the old taxes. And now the bombs. It is only surprising the peasants do not all go over to the Vietcong."

—Martha Gellhorn in *The Guardian*

ANGUS MAUDE, who is a conservative member of Parliament suggests in *The Observer* October 30, that a scheme of compulsory saving be introduced as a solution to inflation.

In other words, if people cannot be persuaded to stop spending the extra paper money being introduced into the economy by the Government, then they must be made to.

Angus Maude confines his scheme (he calls it "just a glimmer of an idea") to teenagers who, he says, have too much money to spend anyway. They should be made to save for posterity, and not waste their money on useless trash.

The young must be saved from the commercial exploiters. "From the moment the teenager starts earning, there should be deducted from his wage or salary through the tax machinery, a certain proportion of his income. This sum should be credited to him in the books and placed in a special fund.

"The money thus forcibly saved would be repaid, with interest, at whatever age is deemed to represent maturity. It would not be repaid on marriage before that age, since this would only encourage even more immature and disastrous marriages.

"This money borrowed by the State would be used exclusively for the reclamation and improvement of the countryside, for the building of noble legacies to posterity and for the patronage of the kind of art that may endure."

This paternalistic and pontifical nonsense had better remain a glimmer of an idea.

In the first place it is not more spending that causes inflation, but inflation that causes more spending. Who wouldn't spend when money values are being continually debased by Government inflation?

In the second place, who is Angus Maude to decide what is trash and what is not?

In the third place, why pick on the teenagers? Let them spend their money how they like. They have not much to look forward to with people like Angus Maude and other socialists trying to run their lives for them.

In the fourth place, Angus Maude, with a blinding glimpse of the obvious puts his finger on the worst aspect of all. "Of course, no one would ever trust any Government to use the money honestly or even pay it back."

I should jolly well say not. I'm no teenager but I do have about £140 in post-war credits conned out of me by the war-time government which has yet to be repaid.

If I ever do get it back, it will probably be taxed at nineteen-and-six in the £ (at the rate we're going on) or else deducted from my state pension.

I have a thought to leave you with, Mr. Maude. Many teenagers in your constituency will be of voting age at the next General Election!