

Why Our Food is Dear and will get Dearer

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THE REAL gravamen of the C.A.P. is that it prevents prices going down following downward movements in world prices. If world prices go up the C.A.P. prices follow. If world prices go down, C.A.P. prices do not go down.

As the world's largest food importer we suffer as no other country in the E.E.C. suffers from the imposition of the C.A.P. The other member states are largely self-sufficient. Of the three new members Denmark and Ireland are pastoral economies; we are not.

The C.A.P. which is the very flesh and blood of the Common Market, and without which there would be no Common Market, exists to protect the Common Mar-



ket farmer from outside competition. And the level of protection is the protection of the smallest and most inefficient of Common Market farmers who are in the majority.

The cornerstone of the C.A.P. is that levies are imposed on all products on entering the E.E.C. no matter how small the quantity produced.

Two classic instances which will have the most serious repercussions for the British housewife are hard grain and oranges.

In the case of hard grain, the essential ingredient of the bread which we eat, the E.E.C. produces virtually none - nor do we. All the hard grain we need for our bread is imported - from Canada, the U.S.A. and Australia.

The Commission sets the threshold price above world prices so that we have to pay a levy on hard grain imported from the outside world to close the gap between the price paid and the threshold price.

As one of the world's largest hard wheat importers our buyers were able to do special deals whereby the grain was purchased, because of the size of the order, at lower than average price. Now all that is finished. There is no point in trying to buy at a lower price because the result will be that the gap will be larger and the levy imposed and paid over to Brussels will be higher. The folly of this levy is that it is protecting grain producers from competition. It would seem that this Government is prepared to go along with this monstrous folly and I very much hope that Parliament will assert itself in demanding that the Government calls for a change of this policy.

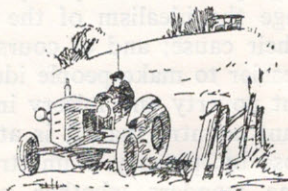
The common orange policy highlights the grotesqueness of the foundation on which the C.A.P., and therefore the Common Market itself, was built. Oranges are grown in the Common Market only in Sicily. Like everything else in that country, production of oranges is controlled by the Mafia. The Sicilians accounted in 1972 for 0.25 per cent of the oranges consumed in Britain. 99.75 per cent came from the citrous countries of Cyprus, Israel, Spain and South Africa - all of whom produce better oranges at lower prices. But because Sicily is part of the Common Market the threshold price for oranges is fixed at the Sicilian prices and the levy imposed on all oranges imported

from the citrous countries will therefore be subject to that levy. The immediate consequence for the British housewife will be that next winter she will pay at least 33 per cent more for her oranges than she paid this year.

Within a month of joining the Common Market, canned ham rose from 34p to 44p a lb. It has risen since and it will rise again, I am told, next month. These rises are attributable to the C.A.P. and to nothing else. The story is the same with bacon, luncheon meat and lard. What does the Government propose to do to free the British housewife from the intolerable burden which is being imposed upon her by the C.A.P.? We should not delude ourselves into thinking that it has any intention of changing the C.A.P. Mr. Godber in the House of Commons on the 3rd April said "We do not promise to undermine it by direct or indirect means. We always agreed if we accepted Common Market membership that we accepted the C.A.P." I seem to remember a different story in 1971/72 when government spokesmen said that once inside the Common Market as members we would be able to exercise our influence to change those policies which affected adversely our interest - perhaps my memory plays me tricks.

The Government continues to parade the Russian and Chinese famines of last year as being the exclusive cause of the astonishing and continuing food price increases in this country.

I wonder what the excuse will be this time next year, or for that



matter in any of the ensuing five years if Britain remains subject to the Common Agricultural Policy.