

estates has resulted in considerable social problems. Conditions are particularly unfavourable wherever the problem of inadequate farm sizes is aggravated by other structural deficiencies, e.g., fragmentation of land, irregular water supply, etc.

"(2)The predominance of big estates (either as large-scale farming units operated by hired managers and dependent upon hired labour, or as concentration of landed property in a few hands but farmed by tenants) hampers the economic development of farmers and has contributed frequently to the growth of social tension. In some Mediterranean countries large estates are still prevalent, while others have introduced comprehensive land reform projects. In most land reform areas, the family farm is considered as the model unit to be adopted for the establishment of a better agrarian structure. This view, however, is not so much based on the conception that the family farm gives the best revenue, but rather on social reasons and general considerations of policy."

Of the financial consequences of all this reforming legislation we are given no concrete idea by the authors of this survey; it is, of course, outside the scope of their work. It would, nonetheless, be of considerable interest to have some figures, but as it is one is left to exercise one's imagination. And it does not need much imagination to visualise the millions involved in the currencies of the countries concerned. The authors are careful, in the opening pages of the book, to proclaim their impartiality as observers only and to make clear that they offer neither criticism nor opinion of the legislation reviewed. They come as near as they dare, however, to offering advice in a later part of the chapter just quoted from, under the heading "Financing Land Consolidation":

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

By Paul Knight

IN THESE days of the veneration of statistics, the Department of Agricultural Economics of Wye College (University of London) continues to make a very solid contribution to the swelling libraries of reports and surveys with which Britain, in common with most civilised communities, is becoming cluttered.

A selection of the Department's publications during the past eight years comprises the following: *Land Requirements for the Production of Human Food*, (1954); *The Garden Controversy*, (1956); *The Recession in Farm Profits in South East England* (1958); *The Major Land Uses of Great Britain*, (1959); and *The Potato Crop: Policy and Practices*, (1962). Each of these works, ranging in size from 30 to over 100 pages, is beautifully produced and is the result of intensive research and com-

"European countries finance consolidation operations fully or at least to a considerable part because they are well aware that farmers are not in the economic or financial position to pay the full expenditure associated with reconstruction work. The participants, however, have to contribute to the costs of projects of common interest be it by work or cash payment. The examination of the present methods for financing land consolidation indicates the need for new approaches to the problem. Difficulties in financing arise particularly where governments' contributions are relatively low. In such cases, measures of the following kind can be considered:

- establishment of a consolidation fund by the community,
- advance payments by the participating owners,
- construction credit at a low interest rate (use of public funds),
- sufficient time for amortization, to allow the owners to pay off their debts. The right combination of subsidies with loans is very important; governmental credit guarantees for loans at a subsidised interest rate could contribute substantially to the success of the schemes. In the interest of smooth financing of consolidation schemes, serious attention should also be given to the various methods of levying a rate on landowners some years in advance of land consolidation."

This is the sort of advice that might be expected to be offered by people whose chief pre-occupation is with purely legal concerns, in whom knowledge of economics is not to be expected. The operation of the Law of Rent is obviously a matter outside their comprehension — unless one may detect a slight gesture of recognition in their obscure reference to "levying a rate on landowners."



position by experts in their subjects. They are, no doubt, of inestimable value to somebody or other; though, whether their influence on major economic concerns will be permanent or even important, is a matter open to considerable doubt.

Land Requirements for the Production of Human Food, (1954) is frankly limited in scope to the subject of feeding Britain in time of war, and reflects the not unnatural pre-occupation of a country only a few years away from the most dangerous emergency in its history since the Conquest. As such it is a highly commendable piece of investigation aimed, successfully, at showing just how much food of the right calorific value could be produced to support the existing population under a tightly organised system of controlled production and

distribution based on the experience of two world wars. Its only value, however, outside this limited field of war organisation, is in its demonstration that, within existing conditions of suitable land area, agricultural policy and population, Britain must remain dependent on outside sources of supply for about fifty per cent of her food; a proposition which has been common knowledge, based on the simple facts of life under free trading conditions, for many a year.

The Garden Controversy, a critical analysis of the evidence and arguments relating to the production of food from gardens and farmlands, while appearing at first sight to be an exercise in statistics for the sheer love of it, does produce at least one interesting conclusion, i.e., that the average householder, in a density of 10 or 12 to the acre, can produce only a fraction less food than the better-than-average farm land which it may have usurped. This demolishes the argument that high-density housing is essential to the preservation of agricultural land for adequate food production.

The Recession in Farm Products in South East England, confined to the study of a group of farms in a particular region, is as good an example of the worst features of this pre-occupation with statistics for the sake of statistics as one could find anywhere. The only possible justification it can have is in the type of society which Britain is fast becoming, in which industries are all, and the individuals who engage in them nothing but cyphers. It is an inevitable accompaniment of the everdeepening trend towards regimentation of which, of course, agriculture, in the grip of the subsidy and price support system, is the willing victim.

An example of the fatuity an expensive survey of this kind can produce, is the conclusion stated on page 16 of this pamphlet that "national trends in farm profitability and production may be at variance with regional trends." One small but significant item disclosed by the survey was "the noticeable upward trend in rents," a fact which was doubtless well known to all concerned before this statistical exercise was undertaken.

The Major Land Uses of Great Britain, on the other hand, represents a project of some value to those engaged or interested in aspects of rural and urban planning, though it may well be questioned whether the extent of the work, the report of which fills no less than 113 pages, including acres of the usual graphs, tables and appendices, could be justified by any conceivable public purpose. Again we are confronted with the basic assumption of economic necessity; of the modern economic gospel with its sublimation of the industry and the abasement of the individual. The author, with commendable humility and restraint, sells the pass to those who question the value of these surveys. In a chapter on agricultural statistics he stresses the importance of simplicity in the forms farmers are expected to complete every year, and expresses his doubts as to whether this is in fact, being

borne in mind in view of the trend in recent years. Not only has the number of forms increased over the years, but the number of questions also; maybe it has by now topped the 200 mark. "One may perhaps be forgiven for wondering," says the author diffidently, "at the necessity for some of these items . . . Is it absolutely necessary to have five sub-divisions for peas, seven for clover and temporary grass, nine for pigs and still even three for horses, not to mention the twelve for farm labourers?"



A glance at the form in question, "Agricultural Return Form J57" (appendix 6), is well calculated to divert anyone contemplating farming to any other industry less under the domination of the bureaucrats (if any there now be). The author even quotes, rather daringly, "a delightful piece of irony on the subject, contributed to the *Manchester Guardian* three years before."

"Having received, filled in, and sent off after only one reminder my June Return, I feel I am really back in farming. Even now the Statistical Branch, Block A, will be making what it can of figures supplied by me (who cannot add up) and my neighbour (who cannot read). Next month we should know where we stand for large dimple-seed marrowfat peas. The Minister is insatiably curious as ever; more so, indeed, for he now asks me 153 questions instead of the 130-odd when last I had these inquisitorial dealings with him . . . Of the 153 questions on the June Return no fewer than twelve are devoted to sums, from the simple addition of goats to the tricky total of Nos. 109 to 151 (this total must equal No. 24). These warnings in parenthesis are helpful in keeping the acreage of the holding fairly constant: I easily find myself twenty or thirty acres out either way from one end of the form to the other. Even so, I get stumped when relating the figures to the land I actually farm . . . If I venture out on these statute acres, it is clear that something has gone wrong somewhere and I am driven into 'knowingly and recklessly furnishing false information' to keep my sums right. I feel a worm about it, of course but it does save a lot of correspondence . . ."

It is observable that irony is not apparently a dilutant of whatever substance it is that makes up the carapace of a denizen of Statistical Branch, Block A.

The last of this group of pamphlets is a 76 page study entitled *The Potato Crop: Policy and Practices*. It is a very thorough-going piece of work indeed, covering every aspect of potato-growing—cultivation, marketing, labour, investment, efficiency, costing, distribution, etc. And, while it may be generally considered that this is an ex-

cellent thing of its kind, well worth to potato growers as a class the five shillings charged for it, that would be the limit of its usefulness. But the authors are not content with such a limited sphere of influence. In their "conclusions" (page 63), they leave one in no doubt of the role they intend their publication to play in the wide drama of National Economics.

"Agriculture has a vital contribution to make to Britain's Economic Progress, and its record over the last twenty years is second to none. But it is its role over the next twenty years that must now be decided. The problem has two facets: 'What contribution can agriculture make to the country's future economic well-being?' and 'how can those who work on the land earn incomes comparable with those in other occupations?' The future prospects of British Agriculture will depend on three main factors: the rate of growth of productivity in farming, the continuing development of an affluent society, and the influence of European economic integration."

The rest of their "conclusions," more specifically concerned with potatoes, may be taken as a warning, backed by their 76 pages of documentation, graphs, tables, etc., that growers of the humble spud are in for a thin time all round unless "the producers and distributors . . . exploit every opportunity for advancement." The way to achieve this, apart from greater efficiency on the farm, appears to be through a tightening up of the methods and powers of the Potato Marketing Board, which of course is the sort of conclusion one would expect from the type of mind which can discuss potatoes in relation to such factors as the "continuing development of the affluent society and the influence of European economic integration."

MACLEOD CUT DOWN TO SIZE

MR. IAIN Macleod's recent statement that a change from the present method of determining rateable values to one based on site values "could hardly cost less than £500 millions," far transcends the bounds of credibility.

As one with experience of property valuation for rating purposes, I can assure him that the only additional costs involved in making any revaluation would be the salaries and working expenses of any additional valuation officers who might have to be employed. Thus, if a generous figure of £2,000 were allowed for each additional valuation officer, the £500 millions would be sufficient to pay for the services of 250,000 new valuation officers, or one new valuation office for every 64 rateable properties in England and Wales!

Since 1950 the work of rating valuation has been carried

out by the Inland Revenue Department. This Department, besides collecting over £3,000 millions in taxes and stamp duties, in 1961 carried out a revaluation (for gross rateable values) of some 16 million properties.

Yet the total number of staff employed in the Inland Revenue Department in 1960 was only 56,000 and the expenditure of the Department was only £50 millions in 1959-60.

Mr. Macleod was extremely unwise to assume that valuation costs have increased, during the period 1911-1962, in the same ratio as the increase in the total rate burden of England and Wales.

The total number of properties to be valued has only doubled in this period, but the total rates levied have increased from £50 millions in 1911 to nearly £700 millions today. During the same period the total value of Assessments in England and Wales has increased fourfold and the average rate in the £ (which in 1910 was 7s. 1½d. for County Boroughs and 4s. 4d. for Rural Districts) has increased by between three and four times.

Taxation on the basis of site values is just another method of producing redistribution of the rate burden. Some of us may differ as to the extent to which the valuation should be restricted to unimproved land values. We are, however, certainly all agreed that land, which was rated from 1601 to 1896 and partially rated from 1896 to 1929, should again be rated.

If land which is scheduled for development within the next five years were to be rated, the rate burden carried by existing ratepayers could be substantially reduced. Such land would also become liable to a Schedule 'A' assessment, since this is at present based on the pre-1956 rateable values.

One thing is certain. The present basis of valuation which was first introduced in the Parochial Assessment Act of 1936 is completely out of date and it must be replaced.

The standards of valuation still vary from district to district and from one class of property to another. The general public has little or no confidence in it. Public dissatisfaction will become more vocal and more widespread when the 1963 valuations are published at the end of this year.

Mr. Macleod should be interested to learn that rates cost between £4 and £5 per £100 to collect and that the annual cost of rating valuation is of the order of ten shillings per £100. I should certainly be interested to find out how he explains the spending of £500 millions in order to collect £800 millions in rates.

It is, I am sure, safe to assume that the remainder of his calculations of the costs of the Liberal Party's proposals are as absurdly inflated as are his estimates of the effect of the introduction of site value taxation.

— Councillor Arthur Gaskell, *Liberal News*, July 28.