

SUBSIDIES TO AGRICULTURE

Official Total £20,800,000

IN REPLY to a question asking what was the amount contributed by the Exchequer to agriculture the Financial Secretary to the Treasury stated (9th December, 1937) that the amount included in the votes for the current year was £15,727,599 made up as follows :—

Class VI	Vote	Amount
No. 8	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.	3,037,487
21	Department of Agriculture for Scotland.	694,710
16	Development Fund (Rural Economy) (App. Part II).	100,025
9	Beet Sugar Subsidy	2,250,000
10	Milk, England and Wales	} 931,110
22	Milk, Scotland	
11	Live Stock Industry and Cattle Fund.	4,774,967
11A	Land Fertility Improvement	864,300
—	Rebate on Taxation of Beet Sugar.	2,600,000
		<u>15,727,599</u>

He pointed out that nothing was included in respect of de-rating under the Local Government Act, 1929. The amount included in the block grant in respect of 1928-29 was £10,800,000.

In reply to a further question as to the annual sum from all sources at present added to prices which farmers would otherwise receive he gave the following table :

Beet-Sugar Subsidy	2,250,000
Milk Votes	931,110
Live Stock Industry and Cattle Fund (Payments to Producers)	4,630,000
Land Fertility Improvement	850,000
Wheat Deficiency Payments	1,340,367
Total	<u>£10,001,477</u>

It was pointed out that the beet sugar subsidy is payable to the Beet Sugar Corporation Ltd., and it was "impossible to apportion the benefit between the Corporation and the growers." The difference between the figures for Live Stock and Land Fertility in this and the previous table appear to be due to omission of administrative and other expenses.

The total of the direct benefits to agriculture from subsidies and de-rating are thus shown to be £20,800,000, but this figure should be increased, both because with the increase of rates which has taken place since 1929 the value of de-rating is greater, and because no account is taken of the enhancement of the prices of agricultural products by tariffs, quotas and marketing schemes.

The estate agents, Messrs Bidwell & Sons, of Cambridge, Ely and Ipswich, in their annual review of business, reported in *The Times* of 29th December, say : "We should like to express our wholehearted appreciation of the Government Land Fertility Scheme, namely the grants in respect of lime and basic slag ; this in our opinion is constructive legislation on the right lines." Anything that boosts the rent of land helps to butter the bread of the estate agents.

IN THE GRIP OF THE RINGS

MR S. CRAWFORD HOGARTH, speaking on 11th February, (*Glasgow Herald* report) as president of the Glasgow Shipowners' and Shipbrokers' Benevolent Association said that to-day the price of new tonnage was nearly double that of 1933-34. The British steelmakers had formed themselves into a very powerful combine—they were told with Government approval—and now were in a position completely to control prices and deliveries. They had announced recently that for the ensuing 12 months the price of steel would be standardized, and that price as applied to ship plates was £11 8s. per ton less—a rebate of 15 per cent to builders who undertook to purchase exclusively through the Steel Federation. It was also reported that a very watertight cartel had been arranged with Continental and American steelmakers, so it was apparently quite hopeless for any shipbuilder to kick against the pricks.

The allocation of the steel output by the steelmakers had given much cause for complaint. He thought all shipbuilders had been held up more or less by steel shortage, and it had not yet been satisfactorily explained why some yards had received the most meagre supplies of material while others had obviously been receiving preferential treatment.

The development and extension of trade rings or combinations in those recent years had been surprising, and he thought they were a feature of modern business which had a very serious aspect. Those trade organizations in some cases dictated by price differences where a shipbuilder or shipowner must place his orders.

He thought no one would deny that that system tended to stultify all individual initiative and enterprise, increased costs, led to inefficiency, and finally crushed out small businesses and prevented new enterprises being formed.

JAMES McCULLOCH

THE PASSING of Mr James McCulloch has left a blank in the ranks of land reformers. He had been in poor health for some considerable time, and closed a life of struggle for Social Justice in the London Hospital at the comparatively early age of 55 years.

Mr McCulloch had a complete understanding of the philosophy of Henry George and could make an unanswerable case for the Taxation and Rating of Land Values. He never reached the House of Commons, which was a decided loss to the movement he understood and loved so well.

He left his mark on West Willesden as a Councillor and a Parliamentary Candidate. His speeches at Paisley are still remembered, and no Candidate ever united the progressive forces of Liberal and Labour on the land question as Mr McCulloch did. He refused to sign on the dotted line for the Election of 1931 at Paisley so a real reformer was lost to Westminster, through the political trickery indulged in by the National Government caucus there, and the absurdity of our present electoral system. At the last Election he opposed Sir Robert Horne in the Hillhead Division of Glasgow.

He was a native of Langholm, Dumfriesshire and had all the fine fighting spirit of the Border country he loved so well. He was the author of some excellent pamphlets on the Land Question, which had a wide circulation.

A keen student of Robert Burns, he filled the bill exactly for the lines of Burns—

"The man o' independent mind,
Is King o' men for a' that."

T. ATHOLL ROBERTSON.