

## The "Shornells" Conference

ARE marketing boards justified? Is education the function of the State? Is it the government's responsibility to see that everybody has a job? Is culture the business of the State?

These were some of the questions posed, answered and discussed in the comfortable setting of "Shornells," a well-appointed country house at Bostall Heath, Kent, during the weekend November 28-30. Residential accommodation was fully booked and meetings were fully attended. The lively discussions were testimony to the speakers' interesting, entertaining and controversial addresses, and to the well balanced programme as a whole. The verdict of many was that it was the best weekend school yet.

To praise any particular speaker would be invidious. The opening address on the Friday evening by Dr. Roy Douglas on the Machinery of Government laid the ground for following lectures. It ranged over Parliament, Statutory Law, Common Law and the Courts, etc.

Mr. John Kemp (Saturday morning) covered a wide field in a well reasoned analysis of the origin and effects of state planning. It was difficult, he said, to convince "plan-happy" economists and politicians that centralised control or state planning had formed the cardinal feature of stagnant societies for centuries and that its opposite, a relatively free economy, was a comparatively recent development. The planners' ultimate reliance on the man in charge being "good" exposed as unscientific the economic planning ideal.

Mr. Geoffrey Walker, perhaps the youngest member present, provoked a highly entertaining and instructive controversy on education by his short snappy address. His theme was that the Government could not be completely left out of education.

The formidable subject of money and employment was made to sound easy by Mr. John Bennett. With swift strokes he outlined the essentials of a sound currency and gave reasons why the government used monetary inflation as a weapon against unemployment as well as a means of indirect taxation.

Mr. Jack Merricks, the rebel farmer of Winchelsea, was the high light of Saturday afternoon. Describing himself as "only a country boy," he left no doubt as to the costly inefficiency of the marketing boards. After recalling how they were established, he cited some entertaining instances to illustrate their workings and public reaction to them. Most memorable was the story of the retailer who had scrubbed the Lion-brand mark off his eggs because, so he alleged, the public would pay more for eggs not stamped. Yet for other commodities the advertised, branded product usually commanded a premium.

Mr. Stephen Martin pulled no punches in attacking the theory and practice of nationalisation. The evil process must be halted and state-owned industries should be sold back to private enterprise. Legislation which would

secure an equitable reward for labour and return to capital was needed if monopolies were to be tackled effectively. Iron, coal, steel, transport, the B.B.C. and the post office were critically examined. In the ensuing discussion attempts were made to recover something from the wreckage but, generally speaking, Mr. Martin carried his views.

The Saturday sessions closed in a lighter vein when the motion "Culture is the business of the State" was ably debated by Messrs. Adrian Ince, John Kemp, W. J. Cadman and S. Broder. Coloured pictures of Hanover and the surrounding countryside were projected on to a screen as a prelude to an exhortation to attend the forthcoming International Union Conference. The evening closed with a social and dance.

Sunday opened with an address on Housing and Town Planning by Mr. John Bathe. This drew attention to the part that land speculation and the high price of land generally had played in causing congestion in the capital and its approaches, and in the rise of slums and the problems that confront town planners. Mr. Bathe presented the fruits of his research with a touch of humour to give added emphasis to particular points.

A masterly survey of the origins, underlying philosophy and nature of the Welfare State came from Mr. David K. Mills. The complicated structure could not be dismantled at will. If a Georgeist government assumed office it could not start at page one of the text book. Successive governments had been attacking effects and ignoring causes. There was a mid-twentieth century poverty problem in Britain to which the welfare state was nothing but a giant monument. The poverty problem could not be solved merely by redistributing incomes.

The joint honorary Secretary of the Free Trade Union, Mr. Lyndon H. Jones, speaking on Government and Trade, contended that the removal of restrictions to trade would do far more to gain for the west the friendship and support of uncommitted nations than would limitless aid. To assist those countries to develop their resources by giving them aid and then to slam the door against their goods was little short of economic lunacy. It forced them to look to Russia for a market and this, in turn, enabled the U.S.S.R. to bring political pressure to bear upon them. The ensuing discussion was enlivened by a self-confessed protectionist (a friend of one of the students).

Speaking on Taxation, Mr. V. H. Blundell, dwelt on the various methods used throughout the ages for raising revenue. Many eminent philosophers, economists and statesmen had spoken of the evil of levying taxes on labour, industry and trade but almost all of them failed to point to the real remedy. Question time eventually led to a discussion on the right approach that Georgeists should make to others in the field of propaganda.

The last session struck just the right note to conclude a successful conference. It was serious yet amusing and at times almost hilarious. The subject was "Morality

and the Government." Messrs. Adrian Ince and Keith Baynes fired questions in rapid succession, inviting brief, spontaneous replies from the audience. Almost everybody present contributed something to this "What is Your Opinion?" session.

No small part of the smooth-running and congenial atmosphere of this most successful weekend was due, as always on such occasions, to the chairmen, among whom were Mrs. Margery Bathe, Mrs. Peggy Saldji and Miss Jessica Baker.

#### A Tutor's Notebook—1

## The Science of Political Economy

**Y**ES, Political Economy is a science—the science that seeks the natural laws that govern the production and distribution of wealth.

If this comes as something of a shock to the student fresh to the subject it is hardly surprising. He sees production and distribution throughout the world subject to some degree of government control.

Why, he asks, are not the natural laws with which this science is concerned known as widely as those with which other sciences treat? If Political Economy is, indeed, a science why do I find such divergent and often contradictory opinions about it expressed?

Well may he ask. The answer is in the subject—wealth. Wealth is desired by and is essential to all mankind. Leaving aside gifts, it can be acquired only by effort or by theft, whether actual or concealed under the transparent cloak of legitimacy.

The present organisation of society is the fruit of a (deliberately?) distorted approach to Political Economy. Is it surprising (indeed, is it not inevitable?) that those who stand to gain from it should do everything possible to keep from common sight the simple basic truths of Political Economy? Only the keenest mind can penetrate the quickset hedge of complicated jargon, the statistics, graphs, charts, indices, trends and what have you which has been deliberately planted. Only the most valiant are not deterred by the "Private—Keep Out" signs.

To introduce a child in his early school days to the differential calculus would be considered the sheerest folly. But if that course were followed everybody would consider that the science of Mathematics was completely beyond comprehension. Instead, of course, the child starts at the beginning, gradually progressing to ever more complicated problems until eventually, provided that he is of normal intelligence, he can cope with the highest mathematical conceptions.

As with Mathematics, so with Political Economy. Our studies should start at the beginning, from simple obvious facts seen around us in our daily lives, to see just what is in the world, how it arrived there, what is wealth and what is not, how ownership arises and what can be owned

and what can not. The next step is to find the underlying rules that govern production—for production does not "just happen"—and then to discover the laws that govern its distribution.

Handled in this way, Political Economy is seen as a science, simple to grasp. It is well that it is within the power of ordinary people to understand the subject. For what can be more important to any person than an understanding of the factors that determine how he shall live during his short term in this world and, in fact, whether he shall live at all?

## Home Making

By J. Rupert Mason, San Francisco

**T**HE opportunity for home making on the frontier free land within the U.S.A., was one of the most important influences that caused our growth and progress. For more than a century free land was the magnet that attracted hardy, liberty loving souls from all over the world. Millions blazed their own trails through wilderness, cleared forests, built sturdy log cabins and made most of their own clothes and personal effects. How many outstanding leaders grew up amid surroundings that would be considered "under-developed" today? They would surely have qualified for "federal aid," according to the current propaganda.

The trek of settlement westward continued for many years without any interruption until the plains and valleys west of the Mississippi were reached. There, the rainfall decreases, and is unknown in large areas throughout the growing months. In these valleys, settlement by individual effort was quite impossible, because the droughts and lack of water could not possibly be overcome by anything less than community co-operation.

Irrigation agriculture, the oldest system of agriculture, requires a social effort and economic psychology, because the long rainless summers make artificial moisture (irrigation) absolutely necessary if the land is to produce crops of fruit and vegetables, and there is to be drinking water for people and animals.

In many valleys throughout the western U.S.A., the important cities and tens of thousands of small farm homes surrounding them, depend for their existence and survival on the supplies of water, stored behind vast dams (barrages). Most of these great public works have been financed by local community effort, under State laws, which made the land benefited responsible to pay the cost of the irrigation systems.

In recent years there have been drives to shift the cost of projects away from the land holders, and on to the backs of tenant water users.

There are also drives for the federal government to finance projects of this character. Any such shift means a tax-free ride for the holders of the land benefited by the projects, because there is no direct, annual federal ad-valorem tax (rate) on land holding.