

THE NEW ITALY

IN A long article in *The Times* of 5th November a special correspondent describes the fairly united "free Italian" movement which is beginning to establish itself on Italian soil. Five non-Fascist parties recognised Count Sforza before he returned as their leader. The correspondent says:—

"At the head of the programme of the five parties is the expulsion of the Germans from Italy. Then follow far-reaching plans for industrial and agrarian reform, involving a redistribution of Italian land and a break-up of the very large estates (*latifondia*), some of which have for many years been ruled by absentee proprietors. The last census showed that 24,000 large landowners owned one-third of Italy's cultivated land, while another third was owned by medium property owners. The rest is held by innumerable small-holders in *podere* of two or three acres. Then come the landless, some 4,000,000 day labourers in agriculture, some of whom have a garden.

"It was Don Sturzo's Popular Catholic Party which in 1920 recruited most of its adherents among these struggling peasants, and among the tenets of that party was the familiar cry *La terra a i contadini* (The land to the peasants). That party to-day under its new title, the Christian Democrat Party, is another of the five parties. Then there is the *Partito d'Azione*, largely responsible for the great strikes in Milan and Turin last March, in which 30,000 to 40,000 workers came out to show their disapproval of the war.

"The Communist Party in Italy is strong in the north, with a long record of underground struggle.

"The Liberals in Italy are led by Benedetto Croce, whose last work, 'History as the Story of Liberty,' appeared in this country after Italy entered the war. This grand old man kept a torch burning in Naples which even Mussolini did not dare to extinguish in all his 20 years."

THE U.S.A. "FARM BLOC"

THE MONOPOLY behind the so-called "Farm Bloc," in both branches of Congress, is heavily subsidised by the Government, selfish, well entrenched, and, next to the submarine menace, constitutes the greatest threat to the successful prosecution of the war, and chances of an enduring peace.

The Agricultural Census of 1940 reports that the selling price of land, exclusive of all buildings, of the 264,225 mammoth farms of 500 acres and over, was \$5,104,493,545—nearly a quarter of the land values of America's 6,100,000 farms.

About 4 per cent. of the farms had nearly one-fourth of all land values.

The selling price of farm lands has increased about 18 per cent. in the past three years, because of higher prices for farm products, so the selling price of the land of these quarter of a million farms is now close to six thousand million dollars.

The selling price of the land of one twenty-fifth of America's farms is about one-third of the assessed value of land of the thirty-two American cities, with a population of over 300,000, and with tens of millions of inhabitants, and is almost three times the assets of the United States Steel Corporation with its 234,000 stockholders.

The selling price of the land of these Agricultural Astor-Economic Royalists is about one-sixth of the selling price of all stocks listed on the New York Stock Exchange—owned by 4,500,000 to 5,000,000 stockholders.

The buildings on these farms, where the hired producers live and livestock is sheltered, are worth only about one-sixth as much as the land!

The land of the 458,787 farms of 260 to 499 acres was, in 1940, \$4,257,271,629, and is now close to five thousand million dollars.

About a ninth of the farms have nearly half of the total farm land values, and will soon be worth about fifteen thousand million dollars, exclusive of homes for owners, shacks for hired workers, and shelter for stock.

Some of these farmers are among the 60,000 farm families averaging an income of \$19,831 last year, and most of them are in the tenth of American farmers who have got the major part of the five thousand million dollars of farm conservation and other Government payments made to farmers in the past eight years.

The Farm Bloc's programme, dictated by big Southern plantation owners, life insurance companies, and other Simon Legrees of factory farms in the west, threaten serious food shortages, and ensure high prices to consumers—and fatal inflation—all for the benefit of land speculators well represented in both Senate and House Farm Blocs.

(Quoting the PEOPLE'S LOBBY BULLETIN, Washington, May, 1943.)

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In "American Survey and Thunder of a Distant Boom" a correspondent in Iowa writes to the *Economist*, 13th November: "The past history of the American West has more than once shown that the most insidious threat to the ownership of farms by the men who do the work is the farm land 'boom.' . . . Bad times and low prices bring a flood of mortgage foreclosures, but good times and high prices set the stage for them by encouraging overcapitalisation and heavy mortgaging. Good times and high prices also lure speculators who are not farmers into the farm land market, to bid up the price and make it harder for an ambitious tenant to buy land for himself. . . . The evidence that a boom is now in the making is threefold: rising farm land prices, rising volume of farm land sales, and rising number of sales to absentee owners. . . . The Federal Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Economics already sees a 'striking parallel' to the price rise during the previous war, which culminated in a boom in 1919-20 and a sharp deflation afterwards. . . .

Thousands of Iowa farmers sold out at

boom prices last time—often to relatives—and retired to live in Southern California on their incomes from the mortgagees even though it made hard the lot of the next generation of farmers, thus burdened with debt for grossly overcapitalised farms."

In the *Western Mail*, 3rd November, Mr. Charles A. Gardner has pointed to omissions in the pamphlet "The Government of Wales," by Alderman Edgar Chappell, of Cardiff. "Is it not strange," Mr. Gardner writes, "that while condemning private enterprise for its failures, Alderman Chappell makes no mention of the obstacles it has had to contend with in the high cost of land and the rates and taxes which are imposed upon buildings? He calls for a Welsh planning authority to direct economic activities, but ignores the fact that such an authority would still have to get over the stumbling block of the private appropriation of the value of land, which makes it difficult to get houses and factories built, and of the taxation system which penalises them when they are built."

Replying to Councillor A. J. Williams (Cardiff) in the *Suburban News*, Mr. Gardner wrote it was against the public interest to purchase with public money development rights whose value is merely a speculative value due to land monopoly which should be taxed out of existence. He offered to send any reader the Memorandum on the Uthwatt proposals submitted by the Welsh League for the Taxation of Land Values to the Welsh Advisory Council for Post-War Reconstruction. "The land question affects individuals; they require land for their purposes; there is nothing in the Uthwatt Report calculated to ensure that land for such purposes shall become available more freely and more cheaply, the rating of Land Values, with a corresponding reduction in the rates as now levied, would reduce the price of land and decrease rents."

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