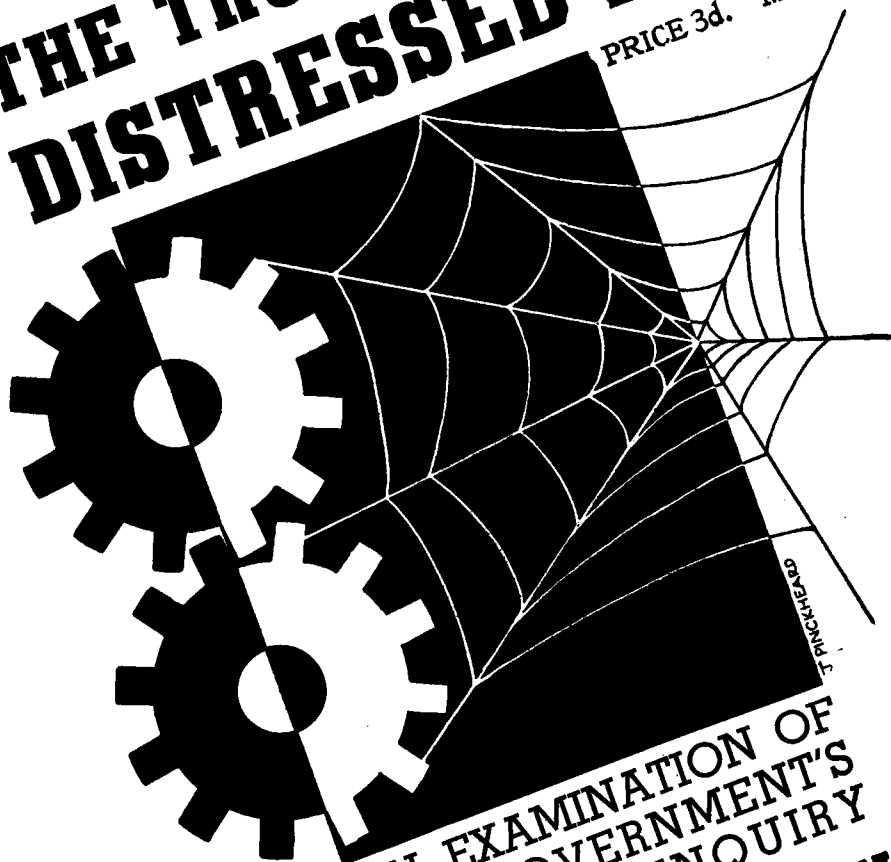


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THE TRUTH ABOUT THE DISTRESSED AREAS

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AN EXAMINATION OF
THE GOVERNMENT'S
OFFICIAL ENQUIRY

BY ANDREW MACLAREN

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THIS pamphlet presents, in a succinct form, the main facts given in their Official Reports (November 1934) by the Commissioners, appointed by the National Government, to enquire into the conditions in the "Depressed Areas." It examines their Recommendations, and offers a Remedy, not only for the special and local problems of these Areas, but one that is equally applicable to the general Problem of Poverty and Unemployment.

The pamphlet is published by the English League for the Taxation and Rating of Land Values. From its foundation in March 1883, the League has demanded a Valuation of all the Land in this country as the necessary preliminary to the progressive lifting of the burden of National and Local Taxation from the industry, trade, earnings, food and homes of the People, and the concurrent substitution of Taxation and Rating on the Land Values, created by the community—the true source of all National and Local Revenue.

A list of the Publications issued and sold by the League will be found on pages 3 and 4 of this cover.

Further information may be obtained from the League Office, where Economic Lectures are held every Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the Lecture Room at

7 St. Martin's Place, Trafalgar Square, London, W.C.2.

Depressed Areas Reports

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

THE following is a review of the now notorious Distressed Areas Reports, made public in November 1934. Before proceeding to deal with these Reports in particular, I think it necessary to review their political and economic background.

In 1931 we had the May Report, the whole trend of which was to cut down expenditure on Public Services, wherever possible. The recommendations of this Report were adopted by Parliament in order, we were told, to meet the necessities of Treasury exactions. Their adoption led to the Economy National Government of 1931 which, through the mouthpiece of the present Prime Minister, told the working classes to "tighten their belts."

After three years of administration and putting into operation the policy prescribed by the "doctor's mandate," the industrial areas in Cumberland, Durham, South Wales and Scotland had been so much affected by industrial and economic distress that the Government were obliged to make investigations which are now embodied in these Reports.

The present Minister of Labour, on July 25th, in referring to the object of the enquiries which gave rise to these Reports said :

"It is not only a question of the Commissioners going out and getting facts. Even if these facts could be collected by somebody else, the important thing is the possibility of seeing the facts through these new eyes and the obtaining of their personal reactions on what is really a problem of persons."

It is evident throughout the Reports that the reactions caused much perturbation in the minds of the investigators. Mr. Davidson, in the preface to his Report, says :

"Prolonged unemployment is destroying the confidence and self-respect of a large part of the population. *Their fitness for work is being steadily lost* and the anxiety of living, always upon a bare minimum, without any margin of resources or any hope of improvement, is slowly sapping their nervous strength and their powers of resistance."

Thus a prominent leader of the Conservative Party is compelled to speak as a result of his examination of the conditions in Cumberland.

Mr. Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in the House of Commons on Wednesday, November 14th, 1934 :

“ It is not possible to read that passage without some stirring emotion or without saying to oneself that in these areas a moral stimulus is needed as much as physical aid if these people are to be brought back again to normal life.”

These are significant confessions from members of a Government which ruthlessly set aside its predecessor's policies. What Mr. Chamberlain implies by a “ moral stimulus ” he does not say. But it is strange that he should use such words after having done as much as any living statesman to bring these areas to the verge of economic bankruptcy.

This country, depending as it did on a large export and import trade, committed economic suicide on the day upon which it adopted the Chamberlain policy of tariffs, quotas, and all the other impedimenta of economic nationalism. This is proven by the figures appearing under each section dealing with trade in the Reports under review.

INVESTIGATORS' QUANDARY

During the debate on these Reports in the House of Commons, Mr. Arthur Greenwood stated that the Commissioners, though well-intentioned gentlemen, were appointed by the Government because they were likely to attempt the impossible task of proposing remedial measures which would not in their operation challenge the powers of vested interests. It is no exaggeration to say that the Commissioners with the best will in the world have tacitly confessed that under present circumstances they have little hope of making any recommendations which will bring relief to these Distressed Areas or remove the menace which overhangs them.

Sir Wyndham Portal quite frankly says :

“ Under the existing conditions it seems to be doubtful whether a substantial recovery in the near future can be anticipated.”

Speaking of Wales, he says :

“ One is bound to face up to the fact that there can be no real prospect of coal production in South Wales ever being likely to return to anything like its former figure of production.”

This note of dispondency is again sounded by Captain Euan Wallace in dealing with Durham :

“ In the course of investigation it has been impossible to avoid a strong general impression that the area as a whole is losing hope.

... Although the individuals affected are displaying great courage and remarkable powers of endurance, the whole body has been sapped by depression. . . .

"The unemployed pitman inhabiting a village with a population of a few thousands is within easy reach of open fields, and in the summer at any rate he and his children can spend most of their time in fresh air and country surroundings. The unemployed man who resides in an industrial borough lives in conditions which are both physically and mentally much less healthy and more depressing and most of his time is inevitably spent standing at the corner of streets of closely packed houses, while his children have little better surroundings in which to play. . . .

"The fact that the whole investigation was carried out in the midst of a particularly fine summer cannot be ignored; a series of visits during bad weather or short dark days could not fail to have left a much more painful impression."

MR. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN'S PROFUNDITY

In contrast with the above statements it seems strange that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should lightly state in the House of Commons on November 14th, 1934:

"I think they (the Reports) all show that it would be a misnomer to speak of these areas as derelict."

In the same speech he said:

"I have on many occasions expressed my own view that the notion that the phenomena of unemployment were only a passing phase which can be dealt with satisfactorily by temporary measures must be abandoned, and that even with returning prosperity we should surely find ourselves in the presence of a sufficiently large body of persons still unemployed to warrant us devising some more permanent measures for dealing with them. I do not believe that this view would be seriously challenged anywhere."

With this outlook and in face of the conditions in the Distressed Areas, so graphically described by the Commissioners, is it a misnomer to speak of these areas as derelict?

Mr. Chamberlain says that the burden of local rates is not in his opinion a serious contributory cause to their present difficulties. Although at another part in his speech he admits that drainage works have been held up—and this has led to the flooding of good mining areas—because of the problem of rates.

He suggests that work might be started upon the removal of slag heaps and derelict factories with a view to generally tidying up the Distressed Areas so as to attract some new

industrial enterprises. But as Mr. George Lansbury aptly remarked: "The situation is not likely to be got rid of by soft words saying 'Let us paint this place a bit and make it look a little prettier.' It was not ugly at the beginning. Who made it ugly?"

At this point there is an interesting suggestion which has been thrown out during the discussion of these Reports in the House of Commons to this effect: That even if we did tidy up these areas, the prospective innovators of new industries would still be apprehensive, because of the Socialist and Labour views of the working man in that particular area! Colonel-Lieutenant Headlam, M.P., referring to Durham, which he represents, said, during the debate on November 14th:

"It is true, I think, that if an area gets a reputation of being politically minded to the extent that we in Durham are supposed to be, would-be newcomers are fearful that they may have difficulties with their employees which they would not have elsewhere. It is possible that someone anxious to start an industry in Durham might say, 'No—I will go elsewhere.' . . . They have almost inevitably replied that it is a difficult place, and we do not know what is going to happen there next."

So much for the prospect of a "tidied" area with Socialists still living in it! Apparently it would be necessary to remove agitators, Socialists and trade unionists as well as slag heaps.

Mr. Chamberlain's suggestions for dealing with unemployment are of the makeshift order. He proposes occupational centres with subsistence schemes; they must be centres which are not carried on for profit, but there is an opportunity for an interesting experiment in which the products of agriculture and some other crafts are either retained or exchanged by members of the experiment. Then there is to be the promotion of an agricultural holding scheme to be carried out through the medium of an agricultural corporation. It should be remembered that in 1931 the Labour Government embodied the principle of agricultural holdings for the unemployed in an Act which Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues destroyed on the grounds of economy.

The task of reorganising the Distressed Areas is to be placed in the hands of two Commissioners—one for England and Wales and one for Scotland. These Commissioners, whose appointment is merely temporary, will be voted £2,000,000, to be paid out of the revenues of the current year into a Depressed Areas Fund, issues from which will be under the control of the Treasury. They are to have a free hand in the matter of scheme experimentation and are to work in conjunction with the

Unemployment Assistance Board. Any scheme the Commissioners propose must not duplicate any of the Public Assistance or Public Works Schemes now carried out by the State.

It is well that we should make quite clear what is implied by Mr. Chamberlain's statement regarding this Treasury contribution. This £2,000,000 is the estimate for the current year. But an estimate is to be submitted to Parliament showing the amount of moneys which will be required in a full year. This, if it means anything at all, means that millions more will have to be voted to cope with the urgent necessity of the Distressed Areas. It would seem here as if economic forces are going to direct the champions of the May Economy Report along the road of squandermania!

Before we leave this introduction, it is well to recall the fact that immediately after the War the Government set up the Industrial Reconstruction Inquiries, the reports of which any Member of Parliament can find in the library in the House of Commons. Not merely were reports made upon the state of affairs which would arise as a result of the disbandment of the armed forces in industrial centres, but excellent recommendations were made as to what action the State and Local Authorities should take to meet the distress.

There has been nothing but vacillation since 1919 in Government policy with regard to the problems which were bound to arise after the War. In 1920 a National Appeal was made to "produce more." This led to what the politicians were pleased to term "over-production" and consequent unemployment.

The next move was for Empire Settlement, and the word went out: "Emigrate to the Colonies."

This failed, and the next move was to transfer unemployed workers from congested areas to new industrial development areas. In order to encourage these new industrial developments, the Tories proceeded to de-rate industrial hereditaments and relieve them of 75 per cent. of their rate burdens.

This was followed by the famous combination, set up by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, of Sir Oswald Mosley, the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas and the Rt. Hon. Thomas Johnston, to deal with unemployment.

It will be remembered how, during the activities of Mr. Thomas as Minister for Employment, he told the House of Commons that steel sleepers were to take the place of wood sleepers on the railway lines; this, we were assured, would revive the steel industry; and how we were to build ships to take coal to Canada and bring back cheap wheat.

This triumvirate was succeeded by a group called the Economic Council who were to assist Mr. MacDonald and his responsible Ministers.

Still the unemployment problem persisted, and finally Mr. MacDonald, on the pretext of saving the nation, threw over his old connections and appealed for a "doctor's mandate."

Since 1931 millions have been poured out in subsidies to the farming and landlord interests, all with a view to reviving agriculture.

Economic nationalism and a tariff policy have been put into full motion in order to secure the home market for British producers and industrialists. At Ottawa, Empire statesmen came to agreements on Empire trade, which, they averred, would stimulate Empire trade. These agreements are gradually becoming unworkable because of the tariff policies of each Dominion and Great Britain.

The next panacea advanced was to raise prices by restricting production. The present Chancellor of the Exchequer, backed by Mr. Walter Elliot, was the leading apostle of this policy. Viewing a world in which there was want in the midst of plenty, they restricted plenty.

All this brings us to a review of the latest Government enquiry and Report upon that which has been all too obvious for many years.

WHY THESE ENQUIRIES?

When Governments are faced with difficult and pressing problems they appoint a Commission. This is a sign that they are interested. Commissions of investigation take time and their findings and recommendations need not commit the Government to anything.

Already the shelves of the House of Commons Library are overloaded with Commission Reports and investigations into the problem of unemployment. In the Chamber of the House of Commons there have been, since 1926, working-men representatives from the industrial areas, who have eloquently described the economic conditions prevalent in their constituencies. There has been no dearth of information on this problem. Successive Governments have known all about the details of the so-called distressed areas and no Commission or investigators could tell them as much about the labour conditions throughout the country as could their own Ministry of Labour. Why keep up this hollow farce of further investigations unless it is to play the old game of showing concern and nothing

more? It is not the harrowing details of an economic problem which lead to its solution; an understanding of its causes and an honest determination to solve it is what is wanted.

No Government can set out to deal with the problem of unemployment without challenging deep-rooted vested interests. The present administration, largely composed of the representatives of these interests, cannot be expected to effect anything in this direction. Since their seizure of office they have wasted but little time on investigations into the claims of landowners and industrialists; and have shown amazing alacrity in passing into law every kind of Act which would buttress monopoly and drain the exchequer for the advantage of these privileged classes.¹

No doubt the Government must feel it a humiliation to have to institute an enquiry into economic distress in the country which has received the blessing of their beneficent administration for more than three years. But the phenomenal rise in the costs of public assistance and unemployment payments are intimidating facts which even the most obdurate or complacent Government cannot ignore. Something had to be done. It is impossible to keep up the pretence of a trade revival if the costs of unemployment show no signs of abating. What, for lack of a policy, is better than that of apparently looking for one? It shows that the intentions are good, even if capacity be wanting. So, to an investigation.

What was it these explorers discovered in these Areas? Unemployed men and women . . . not cripples who could not shift for themselves . . . no, normal human beings willing and ready to use their labour to produce wealth. Were these people living in lands in which nature was niggardly; lands which were poor in mineral wealth and unsuitable for food production and agricultural development? No, the investigators confess that the lands in these areas are rich in mineral wealth, and have all the possibilities to produce food in abundance. The impetuous interrogator might ask why, in the midst of natural wealth, should normal men and women, who are willing to labour, go about unemployed, eking out a wretched existence

¹ In answer to a question in the House of Commons on December 12th, 1934, as to amounts paid by Government in guarantees and subsidies since October 1931, the following information was given:

British (Beet) Sugar Subsidy, £3,300,000, added to the £40,000,000 already paid; under the Cattle Industry (Emergency Provisions) Act, 1934, advances up to £3,000,000; Milk Act, 1934, advances up to £3,050,000; Herring Drifters Subsidy, £25,000; British Shipping (Assistance) Bill provides for a subsidy of £2,000,000; Newfoundland 3 per cent. Guaranteed Loan, £17,646,000; Assistance to Gliding Clubs, £5,000 per annum for five years; International Guaranteed Loan (Austria), £4,514,200.

on state doles? A direct reply to this question would forestall the Government's investigators and might have the embarrassing effect of clearly indicating what are the root causes of the whole problem.

THE COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

The four Commissioners who were appointed by Sir Henry Betterton before he resigned the office of Minister of Labour to become Chairman of the Unemployment Assistance Board, were Mr. J. C. C. Davidson, M.P.; Capt. Euan Wallace; Lt.-Col. Sir Wyndham Portal and Lt.-Col. Sir Arthur Rose. The areas which they examined were W. Cumberland; Durham and Tyneside; South Wales and Monmouthshire; and Scotland. Their reports were published in the form of a blue book (Cmd. 4728).

CUMBERLAND

First in order is the Report of Mr. J. C. C. Davidson, who made his enquiries in West Cumberland.

The Commissioner was much impressed by the sturdy independence of the people, which he attributes to their strong attachment to the land. Speaking of the miners, he says :

“ Efforts have been made to transfer some of these (the unemployed) to Kent and other coalfields, and a substantial number of miners have been sent there at the public expense. In the vast majority of cases, these workers have returned home. . . . It is not surprising that his (the miner's) mode of life in remote valleys often makes him an individual who is independent and reserved . . . indeed the Cumberland coal miner is not an industrial worker in the strict sense ; he has maintained his contact with the land ; he makes an excellent agricultural worker and he shows, in consequence, a strong feeling for his home place . . . the Cumberland miner has been a failure in Kent, partly because of his independence, but also partly because of the deep roots he has struck in his home village. In our enquiries we have encountered the most extraordinary cases which prove this.” (p. 30.)

It is this strong attachment which has made the task of transferring the unemployed from Cumberland to other “ more prosperous ” areas extremely difficult. Out of 10,000 men registered as wholly unemployed only 291 were transferred through the Ministry of Labour offices to work outside West Cumberland, from July 1st, 1932, to May 31st, 1934. The deduction to be drawn from the above quotation is that if the miner had not maintained his contact with the land he would have been more pliable, more easily subjected to the industrial circumstances of Kent or any other area ; in other words, in order to make a worker a successful “ industrial unit ” he must be stripped of any claim to land or other forms of fixed property.

FIGURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The average of the persons registered as wholly unemployed at three selected dates in 1934 is a rough guide to the number that cannot find work.

MEN	WOMEN	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
10,698	545	382	275	11,900

The number of men out of work for more than twelve months :

MARYPORT	CLEATOR MOOR	WORKINGTON
1,025	1,411	952

There are other figures given in the Report showing equally large numbers out of employment for three months and over.

COST OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Public Assistance Officer for the County of Cumberland furnished the following statement showing the increase in the numbers of able-bodied unemployed relieved at the expense of the rates during the year ending March 1934, as compared with previous years :

March 31st, 1931	...	...	£8,222
March 31st, 1932	...	...	£22,203
March 31st, 1933	...	...	£38,000
March 31st, 1934	...	...	£44,327

LOCAL INDUSTRIES

The principal industries in West Cumberland are Iron and Steel manufacture, Coal and Iron Ore mining. It is stated on p. 16 that, "in 1932 there was a surplus in the coal mining industry of at least 2,000 workers—a surplus partly due to the decline in output, partly due to the increase of machinery in coal getting, and partly to the failure of the labour force to shrink with the decreased demand for it." In this last suggestion we have the seed of a great idea—that the labour force should develop india-rubber propensities of shrinking and expanding to accommodate the demand.

The Commissioner assures us that this depression amongst the miners is not due to an absence of coal. Here are his words (p. 16) :

"Coal of an excellent quality and almost unlimited in quantity exists in the Whitehaven to Workington coastal belt. Even in the Maryport, Aspatria, Cockermouth triangle, where unemployment amongst the coal miners is perhaps the most severe, the depression is due to causes other than absence of coal."

Is it to be wondered at that when Mr. Davidson discussed with the Chairman of a parish council in Cumberland the transference of the unemployed, he was met with the prompt retort (p. 34) :

"We are up against transference. We do not want to see our community breaking up. We know that there is abundant wealth (i.e. coal) under our feet and we want to work the coal."

This reply should have turned the Commissioner's attention away from mere artificial Government devices, and towards an examination of the causes which give rise to unemployed human beings in a land abounding with all the natural elements necessary to gratify human desires.

It must not be thought that the Cumberland area is wealthy only in mineral deposits. It has great agricultural possibilities.

"It is mainly an agricultural county," says the Commissioner, "and many of its industrial workers, notably coal miners and iron ore miners, have maintained a contact with the land not found among workers in the more highly industrialised areas. . . . In the main, the population resides in small villages, and farms and farm life are intimately known to a large proportion of the population. It is common for boys on leaving school to go to the farms and take up mining later." (p. 20.)

Here we have in this county men adaptable to two primary forms of wealth production, farming and mining, yet 10,000 of them plus their children over school age, making a total of 11,900, are wholly unemployed.

If the natural opportunities were opened to the people who inhabit the district of West Cumberland, with their adaptability as land workers, there should be no more prosperous community in Great Britain; but under a system where landlordism has laid its tightening grip upon these natural opportunities, potential wealth producers are barred from using their own labour to satisfy their own needs, and are thrown upon the charity of the State.

THE COMMISSIONER'S SOLUTION

Before giving the main lines of the proposals for dealing with the unemployment of this area it would be well to quote what Mr. Davidson says in his introduction:

"To appreciate the problem of West Cumberland, two elementary facts must be recognised; the first that it is a lovely county to which the inhabitants are most deeply attached; and second, that it is geographically remote, hidden from the rest of the country by a high range of hills. The West Cumbrian has preserved the staunch character, good physique, and independence which have enabled him to retain in a high degree the virtues of good citizenship and a sense of responsibility."

Mr. Davidson, in common with the other Commissioners, urges a policy of transferring the unemployed, more especially the young, from their native areas to some other area; but in view of the character of the people outlined above, and keeping

in mind the real causes of their unemployed condition, the following quotation makes strange reading :

"Clearly a more intensive campaign of publicity is urgently required in order that the fact that work for all will not be forthcoming in West Cumberland may be brought home to the unemployed men in the area. If a clear and authoritative pronouncement to this effect is widely published, I believe that the result will be that the younger men will be more ready to undertake training at the Government Training Centres . . . which would prepare them for more intensive training in the future at the existing centres outside the area. . . . In the case of West Cumberland men the mental attitude needs changing." (p. 38.)

Speaking of the younger unemployed who have been transferred, he says :

"Unhappily, parents and guardians are, generally speaking, ready to encourage their children to return home if they are not entirely happy in their new surroundings, but it is greatly to be desired that they should, instead, encourage them to overcome their natural feelings of homesickness and, if at all possible, to avoid return to an area in which so few can hope to obtain permanent and progressive work." (p. 44.)

These are sad counsels to be offered to unemployed and distressed people by one of the leading spokesmen of the present National Government. After it is brought home to the unemployed that there is no hope for them in their own area it would have been kindly on the part of the Commissioner to have mentioned the name of any other area where hope could be found.

" POSITIVE PROPOSALS "

The positive proposals take the usual form of training centres, small-holding developments, afforestation, and harbour development. With regard to this last proposal of harbour development, Mr. Davidson thinks that something could be done to improve the dock facilities at Whitehaven.

"At present," he says, "these are not suitable for vessels of 4,000-5,000 tons, and the colliery company state that if they were improved it would mean a considerable expansion in overseas trade."

Sir Wyndham Portal, the Commissioner for South Wales, points out in his Report that despite the excellent docks and first-class coal in that area there has been an enormous curtailment of overseas trade. Curtailment of our export trade is a natural reaction to the Government's protectionist policy, and

no amount of money spent on dock development can lead to its expansion. Discussing dock development, Mr. Davidson says :

“ At Workington, the docks are, of course, of modern construction, and their erection has meant the decline of Maryport docks. The latter are practically derelict and will remain so unless some Government use can be found for them.”

Following on this comes the remark :

“ It was represented to me that the cost of carriage between Whitehaven and Workington is excessive. I was informed that it is 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. per ton for the six mile haul.”

It would appear that some person or company has a monopoly of the six mile haul.

LAND SETTLEMENT

“ Some other means of arresting the decay of a fine people must be sought,” says Mr. Davidson. “ The difficulties involved in any land settlement policy are fully appreciated, but I submit they ought to be faced. It can at any rate be said that, given the right conditions, there is a real prospect of success in West Cumberland.”

What these difficulties are he does not say, but one can well imagine that they are the old difficulties of freeing the land for human use ; for he adds later :

“ Quite apart from the relatively high cost of this form of land settlement (small holdings) and the probability that it could not be made an economic success on any scale, all the information gained as to the type and character of the people lead me to the conclusion that large-scale ‘ business ’ land cultivation is more likely to be suitable.”

He suggests that this form of land cultivation should be carried through by a Development Trust Company.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above is a summary of Mr. Davidson's Report and recommendations. At best his proposals amount to nothing more or less than mere transitory palliatives. The only proposal which might have some lasting effect, namely land development, is, we are told, very costly.

Mr. Davidson's colleagues in the National Government have been insistent upon the necessity of keeping up prices, and have taken steps to restrict supply with that object in view.

The farming and landowning interests, enjoying millions of pounds in the form of subsidies, look with disfavour upon any schemes which would turn unemployed men on to the land, for this would have two effects. It would increase the supply of foodstuffs, threatening their favoured and subsidised price position ; and it would make thousands of working families independent of a rigged market.

Like many other politicians, Mr. Davidson seems to think that the solution of the problem of poverty is to be found by readjusting, in some uncertain way, the producing side of industry ; excluding from his examination the other and fundamental side, namely the distribution of the wealth produced. All the schemes so far advanced will only strengthen the powers of those monopolies which have given rise to the whole problem of the unjust distribution of wealth. As an evidence of this attitude of mind, the Minister of Labour is now placing before Parliament a scheme which aims at establishing uniformity throughout the country in the payment of doles to the unemployed workers, adding to these doles allowances for rent payment which vary according to the rent charges levied by landlordism in different districts. In this piece of Parliamentary machinery we have another evidence of something being done for the poor which in fact redounds to the advantage of monopoly interests.

One cannot escape the impression in reading Mr. Davidson's Report that he feels the hopelessness even of his own proposals. It is not to be expected that he as a henchman of the present Government dare challenge the rights of the landowners, nor must he be critical of its protectionist policy, when he is faced with the problem of a declining export market for coal. Accepting, as he must, the economic results which arise from landlordism and protection, he is forced to formulate schemes which, even on his own showing, cannot make any radical change in the social life of the people. Confronted with a growing army of unemployed, he is like the amateur dramatist who is encumbered by too many characters in his play. He seeks to get rid of them by some form of speedy dispatch ; hence his insistence upon teaching the unemployed of West Cumberland that their only hope is to leave West Cumberland, and seek their fortunes in some happy area as yet undiscovered.

DURHAM AND TYNESIDE

The Commissioner who carried out the investigation in this area was Capt. Euan Wallace, M.P. His Report is the most depressing, and this, no doubt, because of the almost tragic condition of the field of his investigation.

Roughly taken as an economic unit, this area might be said to be bounded on the south by the North Yorkshire Moors, and by the Cheviots at the northern end. It is here that we have the world-famous Northumberland and Durham coalfield, which covers an area of nearly 800 square miles, comprising roughly the triangle contained by a line drawn from Alnmouth to Middleton-in-Teesdale on the west, from Middleton-in-Teesdale to Hartlepool on the south, and the coast line on the east. Actually the eastern boundary extends for some distance seawards, and some of the seams beneath the bed of the ocean are being worked. According to the Coal Commission Report in 1906, approximately 8,952,000,000 tons of coal were then available at workable depth. There are also coal seams in the carboniferous limestone to the west and north of the coalfield proper.

The great lava sheet of the north-east known as the Whin Sill stretches from the north-east corner of Northumberland in a south-westerly direction towards the extremity of County Durham. The whinstone rock which outcrops in a wide band over this area is quarried throughout its region. From these quarries fine building stone and enormous quantities of road metal are extracted.

Lead mining in County Durham has a longer history than coal mining. Lead was found and worked by the Romans in Weardale district, and in later centuries became one of the chief sources of revenue to the bishops, who at one time were practically lords paramount in the county. To-day lead is worked in Upper Weardale, where a flourishing lead industry was established on the Tyne. White lead and red lead are corroded on Tyneside, and zinc and titanium oxides are being manufactured.

Extensive deposits of superficial clay are to be found in parts of Tyne and neighbouring valleys. These deposits contiguous

to the great coalfields make Northumberland and Durham an ideal district for great brick production.

The above facts give some indication of the natural opportunities in the land of Northumberland and Durham. As all wealth is produced by labour applied to land, it is well at the outset of any investigation, particularly dealing with unemployment in any area, to ascertain as far as possible what are the resources in the land which labour could develop. It is not too much to say that it was the rich mineral wealth and the splendid facilities for sea and road transport which attracted to that area the chief operations of the Imperial Chemical Industries. It should be remembered that their factory at Billingham covers an area of 800 acres and is the second largest chemical works in the world. There is also the sea-coast line which is famous for its fishing operations. If we add to these natural qualities the splendid agricultural possibilities in these two counties, it will be readily admitted that so far as the land is concerned the opportunities for labour to produce wealth are unlimited.

THE COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

In Durham and Tyneside, Capt. Euan Wallace discovers that on June 4th, 1934, there were 147,940 persons wholly unemployed. Of this number 83,200 were workers discharged from shipbuilding, ship repairing, marine and general engineering, shipping and coal mining ; this last industry being greatly affected by the decline in shipping.

Capt. Wallace rightly attributes this decline in shipping and coal mining to the decrease in international trade (pp. 72-3), but omits to mention that the tariff policy of the Government has contributed more than any other factor to destroy the staple industry of this area. In this attempt to ignore so obvious an economic fact, Capt. Wallace betrays a political bias which discounts his claim to be an impartial investigator. It would have been a miracle if a nation like England could have maintained its shipping industries and at the same time engaged in the profligate pursuit of tariff mongering. The wreckage of the industrial life of Durham and Tyneside is the price we have to pay for our new economic nationalism.

" SURPLUS "

Enough has been said to prove the natural wealth of the land of this area ; and to any intelligent observer, not utterly blinded by the political conceptions of our time, it would seem

clear that there are infinite opportunities for labour to employ itself to the full. But our investigator, wholly innocent of the relationship between labour and land, and still obsessed with the belief that workers can only be employed in industrial pursuits if their labour can be "profitably" used by some superior persons, speaks of those workers who cannot as yet be absorbed in "profitable" employment as a "Surplus."

If this subordinate and dependent condition of the working class is to be taken for granted, then there is no escape from the self-contradictory deduction that on a land of illimitable wealth there is an unemployable surplus population. Capt. Wallace says that in this area there are 64,000 in the surplus and that it appears to be

"beyond all doubt that in the area under investigation there exists a large body of workpeople who are definitely surplus to (industrial) requirements and for whom provision will have to be made."

And

"It is quite evident that such remedial measures as can be put in hand in the near future are not in the least likely to reduce the surplus to a point at which local demand will ever approximate to local supply." (p. 74.)

GENERAL EFFECT UPON THE AREA

"In the course of the investigation," says Capt. Wallace, "it has been impossible to avoid the strong impression that the area as a whole is losing hope. Although the individuals affected are displaying great courage and remarkable powers of endurance, the vitality of the whole body has been sapped by depression." (p. 74.)

Further on he says:

"Prolonged unemployment is destroying the confidence and self-respect of a large part of the population. Their fitness for work is being steadily lost, and the anxiety of living always upon a bare minimum without any margin of resources or any hope of improvement is slowly sapping their powers of resistance." (p. 76.)

He assures us that the only bulwark against disease in this area of depression and unemployment is the vast expenditure of Transitional Payments and Public Assistance, reaching a total of **£7,500,000** a year, or more than double the amount *per capita* expended in the country as a whole. (p. 75.)

The derelict conditions in many of these areas, and the

depressing, nay, almost soul-destroying environment is described as follows :

" The closing down of a colliery has frequently resulted in the sale at scrap prices of large blocks of houses, the purchasers of which can afford to let them for the very lowest rents and still make a sufficient profit. These houses, no matter how unsatisfactory, offer an undoubted attraction to the most impoverished."

In these derelict areas old mines have become waterlogged and insanitary.

" The cumulative effect of these factors," says Capt. Wallace, " which are the result of prolonged and widespread unemployment, has undoubtedly tended to aggravate the feeling of depression, and to produce an attitude of resignation which must be regarded with grave anxiety."

With this official statement in front of him, Mr. Neville Chamberlain said :

" I think that they (the Reports) all show that it would be a misnomer to speak of these areas as derelict."

Possibly Mr. Chamberlain had some more appropriate appellation for these areas in his mind which politeness and the strict ruling of the House precluded him from expressing!

STATE OF INDUSTRIES

We are told that in any predictable future shipping and its ancillary industries cannot hope to recover the same degree of activity that they enjoyed in the years before 1914. It will be noted that these were the years during which Britain was more or less a free trade country. The War period gave us protection *par excellence*, and the German submarine effectively encouraged shipbuilding for replacement, which in turn necessitated Government subsidies. Now (1935) we have metaphorically torpedoed our shipping trade by protection, and Capt. Wallace, in common with his colleagues in Parliament, is calling again for subsidies to revive shipbuilding.

He reminds us that the prosperity of the industries in this area was established at the time of the industrial revolution and continued over more than one generation, so that it became an article of faith with most of those concerned that nothing could arrest its progress. As a result, when troubles were encountered, money was raised upon the basis of assets rather than earning power, by means of debenture issues which have since hung like millstones round the necks of the various concerns and gradually pressed them into the hands of the banks.

" It is hardly an exaggeration," says Capt. Wallace, " to state that to-day the banks control the position."

He suggests that the only practical step permanently to increase employment in the shipping industry would be for the Government to throw the resources of the State behind ship-building and marine engineering works, without on the one hand nationalising the industry outright, or subordinating private control to Government policy on the other. He makes this significant statement (p. 79) :

“ The problem facing these industries is one of scaling down to meet diminished demand, rather than one of expansion.”

COAL MINING

The outlook here is no more hopeful than in engineering. There has been a contraction in the coal market, with consequent effects upon the coal industry in Durham. In 1929 there were over 39,000,000 tons of coal raised, as against 27,606,000 in 1933. This contracting market, side by side with the greater mechanisation of the mines, has thrown more miners out of employment and we are told that the permanent “ surplus ” is between 20,000 and 25,000 persons. It is admitted that the loss of foreign trade has greatly affected the mining industry.

UNSCIENTIFIC EXPLOITATION

For years the Labour Party has demanded national co-ordination in all mining operations, which would mean the exploitation on scientific principles of the nation's greatest asset—coal. In conjunction with scientific mining, there would be a general National Drainage Scheme. This policy has been endorsed by successive Coal Commissions and has been commended by all leading mining engineers, but, as usual, deep-rooted petty vested interests have barred the way to all progress. Landowners and reactionary County Council authorities have fought against any scheme on the ground that new rate charges would be necessitated. Thousands of acres of excellent agricultural land are to-day under water and many coalfields are flooded. Capt. Euan Wallace tells us in Appendix I to his Report :

“ There are certain pits in West Auckland area—one of the worst areas as regards unemployment—where valuable coal is now submerged, and there seems to be general agreement that the flooding which has put these pits out of action constitutes a real, if remote, danger to pits now working farther to the east.

“ But the multiplicity of ownership of royalties and the lack of real community of interests between the owners of royalties and the lessees of mining rights, has so far put any question of a joint economical scheme of pumping for the whole area outside the question of practical politics.”

Again he says (p. 81) :

“ If any considerable expansion of markets took place, opportunities of providing employment in some of the worst-hit villages in the area would be lost because valuable coal could not be won (owing to flooding) except at a prohibitive cost.”

Such is the heritage which has come to us from a past which trampled upon every community interest in the scramble for private gain. Many of the fairest counties in England and Wales have been churned into areas of indescribable ugliness by the ruthless exploitation of their mineral wealth. It is hard to believe that those who are responsible for this state of affairs can boast of patriotism or love of country. They have used the land and its minerals so far as was serviceable to their ends, leaving a trail of desolation behind. Flooding, derelict villages, subsidising lands, communities left bankrupt and despondent ; these are the legacies they have left to the nation.

The State is now being urged to undertake the cost of draining the flooded areas. In no other way would a national drainage scheme be carried through. But it is to be noted here that the people who would benefit immediately by such a scheme would be the landowners ; surface lands would return to agricultural uses—more rents ; good coal now under water might become an exploitable proposition—more royalties. We shall have more to say about this later.

ROYALTIES

On this subject Capt. Wallace says :

“ Any attempt, however, to estimate the possibility in existing conditions of reorganisation (of the mining industry in Durham) whatever starting point is chosen, leads inevitably and depressingly to the same insuperable barrier—the multiplicity of ownership of royalties, and the fundamental divergence which now exists between the interests of the royalty owners on the one hand and the lessees of mining rights on the other. A scheme for the unification of royalties seems to be an essential preliminary to any concerted action. . . . It is clear that without it nothing effective can be done.”

Be it noted that “ nothing effective can be done ” until we placate the royalty owners. What Capt. Wallace means by unification he does not make quite clear ; but it is certain that no landowner will scale down his royalties to come into line with other royalty owners unless state compensation is paid.

A royalty is a payment per ton of coal made to the landowner who claims that the coal is his property. It has been stated

that the estimates of our coal measures are round about 190,000,000,000 tons. If we deduct about 15 per cent. for waste this would give us 160,000,000,000 tons, or well over 580 times our present annual output. The present annual payment of royalties is £6,000,000 and this multiplied by 580 would give us a total of £3,180,000,000; or, should the State undertake to buy out coal royalties, and we take the annual sum of £6,000,000 as a basis, it would mean that the landowners would be able to claim £120,000,000. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, with his usual clarity, has announced that the Government proposes to "rationalise" royalties. This may mean anything; but let the nation beware of a trap which may be laid to commit the State to the "nationalisation" of these royalties. The figures above indicate the cost.

In this royalty problem we have all the glaring iniquities which arise from the private ownership of land, for it at once shows the power of the "landowner" to control the production of wealth, and the toll he can extract without as much as rendering a service in return. The coal miner risks life and limb for starvation wages; the royalty owner risks nothing, but on a figment bolstered by immoral and unjust law he can exact this infamous tribute.¹

THE BURDEN OF THE RATES

Last, but not least, we come to the effect which all this economic distress has upon the public finances of the area. We have a rating system which by its operation destroys the upward trend of trade, gives rise to unemployment, encourages the withholding of land from use, and strengthens every power of monopoly. And although the effects of this system jump to the eyes of all these investigators, none of them have the courage to challenge it. Here are the words of Capt. Wallace, speaking of the failure of this area to attract new industries:

"Rightly or wrongly, the burden of high rates is most frequently quoted. As already stated, a vicious circle has been established: an area which, by means of its industrial development in one cycle, has become populous, cannot arrest its industrial

¹ "... For the last three years in Great Britain the royalty owners took from this depressed industry no less than £15,000,000. Last year they took £4,642,000, and in South Wales last year they took £1,095,800, which means that the average for Great Britain paid in royalties last year was no less than 5·5d. per ton, and in South Wales, where the industry, generally speaking, is more depressed than in any other part of Great Britain, the average payment for royalties was 8·8d. per ton. This difference means that in South Wales last year there was paid £400,000 more in royalties than would have been paid if the charge had been the same as in the other coalfields."—*Hansard*, Vol. 293, Col. 2267, November 15th, 1934.

decline, by substituting developing industries for those that are contracting, because the very contraction which it seeks to remedy imposes a burden which acts as a strong deterrent to new industrial influx." (p. 83.)

On p. 84 he says again :

" The unequal burden imposed by high rates due to unemployment should be removed. . . . Apart from the fact that the present situation does not appear to be defensible on grounds of equity or logic, its effect upon depressed areas is not constant but cumulative."

Here the vicious circle has become almost apparent. In conformity with the rating law we levy rates upon buildings (houses, factories, etc.) according to their rental value, 75 per cent. relief being given to factories. In other words, the rates are levied according to the use to which the land is put ; the better the use, the higher the rate ; and where the land is vacant, no rate. Rates are thus a penalty upon industry.

When economic distress comes upon an area, more rates are required to meet public assistance and poor law aid, and these increases are again levied upon those who are suffering from the distress. In the County of Durham the rate levied for public assistance alone amounts to 8s. 6½d. in the £. There are seventy-three persons per 1,000 drawing public assistance. This deadweight burden is quite apart from anything received from the Special Distressed Areas Grant. After this process has been in operation for some time, " the burden," to quote Capt. Wallace, " acts as a strong deterrent to any new industrial influx."

For more than twenty years Local Authorities have been petitioning Parliament for powers to remove rates from off the houses of the people and industrial undertakings, and place these charges upon the capital or selling value of land. Parliament has remained deaf to all appeals. Here we have the valuable land of the County of Durham, which must have an enormous market value, contributing nothing in local rates in respect of that value ; whereas struggling industries and the houses of the people, those in employment and those not in employment, are subject to the rate burden. What Capt. Wallace sees in the operation of our present rating law is the inevitable result of its enforcement ; and it is merely playing with the problem to suggest meeting local charges by further subventions from the State. Whatever relief is given in rates is counterbalanced by an increase in taxation. This way no solution lies.

FACING THE UNEMPLOYMENT MENACE

However graphically these investigators may have described the distressing circumstances of the people in the areas they visited, and let it be said that considering their political views they have in some passages spoken with a frankness which must have a salutary effect upon their colleagues in Parliament, they have one and all shown an utter inability to comprehend the causes which give rise to economic distress. This is most clearly seen when they come to face the problem of unemployment. As we have already noticed in the Report of Mr. J. C. C. Davidson, the policy of transferring the unemployed from these distressed areas to some other area is the only height to which their ingenuity can rise. Where the promised land of hope for the unemployed is, they do not know. But still, like Mr. Davidson in West Cumberland, Capt. Wallace in Durham says :

“ Industrial transference appears to be the simplest and most immediately practicable remedy.”

And this despite the fact that between 1921 and 1931 there was a migration from County Durham of 148,000 persons. But after commending it as the most immediately practicable remedy, he says :

“ Unfortunately the extent to which this policy would be effective in reducing unemployment in Durham and Tyneside does not depend solely upon the energy with which it is carried out, nor upon the financial assistance which is made available.” (p. 92.)

What then is the difficulty? Here is the reply in his own words (p. 93) :

“ The Government found it necessary in 1932 to curtail their transference activities on the ground that unemployment had so much increased throughout the country that any attempt to distinguish between the various centres of recruitment would meet with opposition.”

And, despite what he considers to be signs of improvement,

“ the limiting factor must continue to be the capacity of the more fortunate districts to absorb workers from depressed areas without arousing local hostility.”

We are advised that it is difficult to transfer men more than thirty-five years old, and there are 67,000 of them in this area.

“ But,” says Capt. Wallace, “ if the most is to be made of transference opportunities it would be advisable that efforts should be concentrated upon males under that age,”

on the grounds that they are more easily dealt with and that they should be placed in "the main stream of employment" and that, remaining in Durham, "they will, in fact, deprive the older men of their chances of local employment." An objection was raised on the ground that this might handicap an industrial revival by depriving employers of their most adaptable type of labour. In answering this point, Capt. Wallace makes a confession which is inevitable if he is to be truthful. He says:

"The process (towards trade revival) will probably be too slow to affect seriously the local supply of young adult labour for many years to come."

This statement is in contrast with the broadcast optimism of the present Prime Minister and his henchmen, for it means that there is no hope of the men now over thirty-five years of age ever seeing a trade revival.

JUVENILES

With regard to juvenile unemployment, Capt. Wallace follows the same path as Mr. Davidson. Collect the juvenile unemployed, send them to training centres, accustom their minds to the thought that they must break away from their home counties, and then proceed to search for some part of the country in which there are more jobs than men, and carry through the transference thereto.

REMEDIES

Under this section we have the usual recital of the beneficial effects that might accrue from land settlement, with a hint that it is a costly business and might, indeed, involve heavy losses in the initial stages. One interesting point is noted by Capt. Wallace, and that is that where public works are undertaken there would be difficulties with private landowners, and that should the unemployed be set to work to recondition derelict sites an increment land values tax should be levied on the landowners to check them from pocketing the enhanced value due to any clearance.

It is to be regretted that Capt. Wallace and the leaders of his Government fail to see this same process operating on a much larger scale all over the country, where great public works have been undertaken at public expense. A tax levied upon all land values would bring in millions to the State every year, relieving the community of burdens which, on Capt. Wallace's own showing, aggravate, if indeed they do not create, the distress which pervades these industrial areas.

SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE

Lt.-Col. Sir Wyndham Portal investigated no fewer than thirty-four areas in South Wales. According to this Report one of the towns, Blaina, contains a percentage of no less than 71·7 of unemployment amongst men. In the town of Abertillery the percentage of unemployed amongst men is 54·7 and in the town of Crumlin the percentage is 43·6. In the Blaina area the percentage of men who have had no regular work for more than five years is no less than 21·2.

Sir Wyndham Portal estimates the surplus of labour to be about 81,000—we are using “surplus” as it is used by the investigator. In 1931 the estimated surplus for a much wider area than he has surveyed was 40,000. If his figures are authoritative, it only proves that the position is considerably worse than in 1931.

The patchwork and casualty ward charity necessitated by our present economic system receives much praise at the hands of Sir Wyndham. He says that he was much gratified when he visited the school-feeding centre in Abertillery: he found there a large number of children receiving two meals a day, the cost of these meals working out at 1½d. each. But Sir Wyndham forgot to add that the Board of Education proposes that the children should not continue to receive these meals unless they bring with them a medical certificate to show that they are suffering from malnutrition. This is a proposed ordinance to be issued by the Government whose Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, said that on reviewing the pages of these Reports he was “stirred with emotion.”

The same note of despondency which is in the other Reports recurs here like the dirge of a Greek chorus. Sir Wyndham says that there must be large numbers of these unemployed people for whom we can hold out no definite hope. In reviewing the contraction which is taking place in the coal-mining industry, Sir Wyndham says:

“One is bound to face up to the fact that there can be no real prospect of the coal production in South Wales ever being likely to return to anything like its former figure of production.”

The extent of the decline is even now not fully appreciated. In 1913 the Welsh coalfield produced 57,000,000 tons of coal; last year it produced 36,000,000 tons. The output in 1929 was 48,000,000—showing that last year there was a reduction of over 12,000,000 tons in five years. The shipments of coal, which include Foreign, Coastwise, Bunkers, Coke, etc., in terms of coal were 32,000,000 in 1929. Last year they were 21,000,000—a drop in five years of 10,500,000 tons.

This reduction in coal production and trade is reflected in the decline in wages. The wage total in 1920 for miners in this area was £65,000,000. In 1933 it was £14,000,000.

RATES

When unemployment and distress become aggravated, rates are increased in order to meet clamant local necessities. This in turn adds an increased burden on all householders within the distressed area. The economic effect of this is to create more unemployment necessitating more public assistance, therefore more rates. There can only be one end to a system of this kind, and that is financial disaster accompanying economic depression.

This simple and obvious operation of the rating law we repeat so that what follows may be clearly understood. Here are the facts stated on p. 170 by Sir Wyndham Portal :

“ I think it right to call special attention to the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, as the circumstances relating to S. Wales generally seem to be gathered together and epitomised in this single administrative area. Formerly the iron and steel works of Merthyr, and those of Cyfarthfa and Dowlais which are embraced in this County Borough, were of great importance. The dismantling of the greater part of these works, however, and the more recent stopping of the Dowlais works have left Merthyr to be dependent almost entirely for its industries on the collieries of Treharris. In the result, the population of the County Borough has declined in the last decennial period from 80,116 to 71,108, and the local rates have now reached the almost impossible figure of 27s. 6d. in the £, including 15s. 7d. for public assistance.”

On p. 717 he states as one of his conclusions :

“ The question of rates in this area is a very serious one, and unless dealt with in the very near future may become impossible.”

As a solution to this problem he has nothing to offer except a hint that we might with advantage revive the scheme proposed by the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, under which it was proposed that a uniform rate of 4d. in the £ be levied all over Great Britain, the object being to bring relief to the more heavily burdened districts. This would amount to

taxing the poor to pay for the impoverished, leaving the rent drawers still derated on their lands under the Act of 1926. And this in an area in which the highest royalties are paid!

UNEMPLOYMENT

In addressing his mind to the problem of unemployment, Sir Wyndham Portal speaks of those who are without hope of being absorbed into industry as if they were so many soulless robots. On p. 134 he expresses himself as follows, with regard to the wholly unemployed :

“An appreciable number of men will unquestionably need *reconditioning* before they can hope to regain their full value as *industrial units*. If the men who have been without regular work for as long as three years are to be considered for reconditioning, this amounts to 28,490 men or 35·3 per cent. of the wholly unemployed registered in the area.”

Not only is this investigator wholly incapable of understanding how to solve this problem, but his attitude of mind towards the unfortunate people involved is that of the drill-sergeant in the barrack yard. It is well to note this at the beginning so that we may know what to expect when he comes to advance his employment proposals.

At the outset he indulges in a series of speculations as to the number of men who might be absorbed in industry if a “revival”—oh marvellous and ever evasive vision—in trade should reappear. But after having allowed his imagination full play on this line he is constrained to admit that even if trade improved to the 1927 level there would still be an “intractable residuum” for whom, he suggests, there can be no better fate than that of transference to that “other and more prosperous area.”

To appreciate the magnitude of the unemployment problem here, let us take the official figures (p. 131) :

INDUSTRY (men)		Insured Population	Wholly Unemployed (24.4.34)	Temporarily Stopped (24.4.34)	Percentage of Unemploy- ment
COAL ...	...	153,733	50,437	18,796	45·3
IRON and STEEL and Galvanised sheets ...	...	10,727	2,558	1,754	40·0
TINPLATE ...	...	4,747	656	841	31·3
Other Industries		56,353	27,846	1,147	50·4
TOTALS ...		225,560	81,497	22,538	46·1

The proposals made by Sir Wyndham Portal to deal with this increasing army of unemployed are similar to those put forward by Mr. J. C. C. Davidson and Capt. Euan Wallace : transference, training centres, public works and land settlement. One cannot resist quoting Sir Wyndham's words on the problem of getting the unemployed uprooted from their native places and transplanted elsewhere :

" Local authorities and other outside interests represented to me that, instead of taking away the young men to train them in other parts of the country, Training Centres should be established in South Wales. I understand that the policy of the Ministry of Labour is to establish these Centres in more prosperous areas, where there are opportunities for placing men direct into employment, apart altogether from the fact that leaving home for a distant Training Centre provides a much easier ' break ' with their old surroundings. I am in agreement with this policy."

Two things are to be noted here : his eagerness to break up the family and social relationships of the unemployed, and his agreement to a policy which is opposed by the local authorities. Where the prosperous areas are to be found is not mentioned.

Sir Wyndham's conclusions regarding the coal industry begin with the doleful statement :

" A substantial increase in the present output of the South Wales coalfields cannot be expected. The proposed new Dowlais-Cardiff Works will use about 400,000 tons of coal a year, which would only absorb 1,600 miners. The only prospect of increasing coal production is by finding new uses for coal along scientific lines."

His recommendations are that something should be done about royalties, and that trade agreements with foreign countries should be made advantageous to South Wales coal exports.

It is always amazing to observe the short circuited reasoning of the Tory tariff advocate. His views upon tariffs change with the particular area in which he is interested. If trade is bad in one area it may suit him to say that it is due to foreign imports. In another district he will say that trade is bad because the foreigner is not taking enough of our exports. Sir Wyndham Portal believes in Protection as a national policy ; but visiting an area which has lost a great export market in coal he desires to do something to encourage freer trade. The depression in the coal industry, as in shipping, is the economic effect of protection, and such areas as are dependent upon these industries must suffer as a consequence. If Sir Wyndham wants the foreigners to take more British coal, they will want a *quid*

pro quo which will be disadvantageous to some of our protected industries.

It is significant that he admits that the high royalties paid in Wales are "a serious factor for a depressed industry to bear."

His brevity with regard to the iron and steel industries is remarkable. His conclusion is that Ebbw Vale and Blaenavon are "black spots," and his recommendation, that an expert in the iron and steel trade be sent down to these places to report on their future prospects and to advise the workers whether or not the works are likely to reopen.

LAND SETTLEMENTS

As a last resort, through sheer economic necessity, Sir Wyndham Portal suggests land settlement for the unemployed miners in Wales, and in particular for what he calls the "residuum of unemployment." It is worthy of note that in an area which is distressed, land has an enormous value. He says on p. 161 :

"Glamorgan has taken up smallholdings rather extensively. The total area of the Smallholdings Estate is 7,163 acres, which includes 246 acres let through the Forestry Commission; 3,574 acres are let freehold, purchased at a price of £129,425. . . . They have had some trouble in obtaining the land for smallholdings and in some cases have probably had to pay a great deal too much. . . ."

"The South Wales miner appears to be a most adaptable man and where it is possible for him to get allotments or gardens, he shows himself to be quite an adept. One must remember that in these Welsh valleys there are still quite a number of men who, during recent years, came from agricultural districts as far away as Somerset."

If Sir Wyndham had asked himself why men who, on his own showing, were efficient land workers in Somerset were now to be found unemployed in the derelict mining valleys of South Wales, he might accidentally have come upon the root cause of much of the economic trouble he was investigating. Cheap labour is easily recruited from the country-side because of the operation of private land monopoly. The country worker is denied the right of living upon the soil as a free and independent producer. Every agricultural worker's family sends its quota into the industrial areas, there to compete for employment in an already congested market. This is an everyday occurrence, and not, as some of our so-called economic authorities would have us believe, an historical incident which took place in the seventeenth century. It is this incursion from the countryside

to the industrial centres which, in the language of Karl Marx, "supplies the capitalist with the raw exploitable material—labour power—and keeps wages in a rut." When depression overtakes industry it is but natural that agriculturalists desire to use their labour and knowledge upon the land rather than continue unemployed. But this possibility, as Sir Wyndham says, is denied them because of the cost.

He, like his co-investigators, is not optimistic as to the future of trade. Indeed, he frankly admits that even a revival of any considerable proportions would not absorb such a number of workers as would materially reduce the figures of the wholly unemployed. Therefore, as a mere expedient in the circumstances, he suggests experimental smallholding colonies. Here are the figures for 500 five-acre smallholdings :

Land at £2 per acre (capitalised)	...	£130,000
Housing at £300 per house	... ..	£150,000
Outbuildings at £60	... ..	£30,000
Grant of £50 for stock	... ..	£25,000
Total for 500 men		£335,000

"This works out," he continues, "at £670 per man. At 3½ per cent. the rent would be about £23 10s. and with the addition of local rates would be £30 per man per annum. . . ."

"There is also the difficulty to be overcome that during that period (of training) and also the first year in their smallholdings, they would require to draw some form of payment. . . . A man must have something to live on during the first two years before he gets really started."

So that over and above the capital cost of establishing these 500 men on smallholdings, there would be the cost to the State of paying an income to these men for the first two years plus £30 per annum to meet his rent and rates. From the above we get some idea of the cost which land monopoly extracts before it is possible to open opportunities to despairing and unemployed men.

SHIPPING

We need not go into the details here. Sufficient to say that there is "depression in the shipping at Newport, Cardiff, Barry, Port Talbot, and Swansea, owing to the great falling off of the export of coal from South Wales."

This appears on p. 165. Further on in the same paragraph we are told: "The docks are all up to date and I cannot see

any revival of shipping in this area unless and until the South Wales export coal trade recovers."

It will be remembered that the investigator in West Cumberland suggested that the unemployed should undertake the building and reconditioning of docks. But his colleague says here of South Wales, and it must also be true of West Cumberland, that despite good docks, shipping is depressed owing to a lack of export trade. Not one word is suggested as to the removal of tariffs.

This Welsh Report is barren of any original ideas. It exposes in all its ghastly nakedness the drab and soul-destroying conditions prevalent in the South Wales coalfields. And as we have already remarked, the investigator speaks of human beings as if they were mere automata condemned by nature and by fate to pass their earthly existence in nothing higher than producing wealth for the benefit of the more privileged sections of society.

SCOTLAND

In the introduction to this Scottish Report, it would be well to set out comparative figures of production and employment so that we may get a fair picture of industrial tendencies.

The output of pig-iron by Scottish furnaces in 1928 was 550,300 tons; the output of steel ingots and castings for the same year, 1,425,100 tons. In 1932, the last year for which figures are available, the output of pig-iron was 144,100; output of steel ingots and castings for the same year was 552,700. The number of persons employed in the iron and steel industries in 1928 was 12,004; in 1933, 7,840.

COAL MINING

The two principal coalfields in the area of enquiry are those of Lanarkshire and Ayrshire. The decline in output and number of persons employed is as follows:

Output, <i>Lanarkshire coalfield</i> , 1927	12,860,511 tons.
1933	8,607,283 tons.
Number of persons employed, 1927	41,963
1933	25,132
Output, <i>Ayrshire coalfield</i> , 1927	3,784,888 tons.
1933	3,283,017 tons.
Number of persons employed, 1927	12,722
1933	10,504

SHIPBUILDING

Total number of insured workers unemployed	May 1928	12,586
	May 1934	24,730
Tonnage of output on Clyde 	1928	604,611 tons.
	1933	56,368 tons.

These figures give a fair summary of the industrial depression that is overtaking Scotland, and the investigator, Lt.-Col. Sir Arthur Rose, endeavouring to sustain a note of hopefulness throughout his Report, is compelled by cold facts to drop occasionally into a most pessimistic mood. Declining figures of

employment and, as he says, the inescapable necessity of rationalisation in industry, tending further to increase the figures of unemployed, and creating what he and his colleagues have come to regard as "surplus labour" (i.e. a volume of labour greater than the immediate needs of industry); all amass before him a problem which he frankly admits he cannot solve, and seems to doubt if it is within the capacity of the present Government to solve. He says (p. 214) :

"During the depression, the number of unemployed persons has ranged from 20 per cent. of the insured population in the more favoured districts, to nearly 60 per cent. in those hardest hit. The average percentage of unemployment for three years, even in the City of Glasgow, has been over 30 per cent. . . . Examination of the basic industries indicates that the normal labour force is undergoing serious contraction, thereby increasing the number of those who may be classed as permanently surplus and unlikely to obtain even a share of the employment available in the normal course."

The total of wholly unemployed claimants is over 124,000.

FISHERIES

In a special appendix, Sir Arthur Rose reviews the economic distress in the Scottish fishing towns; considering the size of their populations, they are carrying a very heavy percentage of unemployed. Peterhead has 46·8 of the live register unemployed, Buckie 48·9, Stornoway 49·2. Local comments on the situation in the industry attribute the difficulty mainly to loss of foreign markets, and owing to economic depression at home there is a falling off of demand in the home market. The only recommendations he can make take the usual form of invoking State aid, and suggesting national campaigns to popularise herring. It is to be regretted that he is so remiss in his analysis as to leave out of his Report the system which obtains whereby the fishermen get low prices for their catches whereas the middlemen exact scandalous prices from city consumers. There is a large market for herring, but these intermediaries inflate prices, with the result that we find in the Report the following statement :

"It is pointed out that already many of the catches are being dumped overboard in absence of buyers. Thus any encouragement given to greater numbers of boats to go fishing can only lead to more serious competition and waste."

"Absence of buyers" here means that those who have control of the fish market are offering such prices that the

fishermen, rather than accept them, prefer to dump their catches back into the sea. In this way do those who rig the internal marketing of fish keep down the supply and keep up the price. It is utterly ridiculous to talk about unemployed fishermen and depression in their villages when, as everybody knows, there is an enormous home market if fish were offered retail at reasonable prices.

JUVENILE UNEMPLOYMENT

In Scotland as in other districts there is a hopeless outlook for boys and girls leaving school.

“It is apparent that the problem of juveniles is extremely serious. The National Advisory Council for Juvenile Employment (Scotland) has estimated that, assuming the continuance of the present conditions of industry, the surplus of juveniles leaving school in Lanarkshire over the absorptive power of industry will be 13,000 in 1937 and not less than 10,000 in 1940.” (p. 217.)

Comment here is unnecessary. These figures speak for themselves ; and if we remember that for 1933 there were, throughout the country, 56,277 boys and 43,839 girls between the ages of sixteen and eighteen without employment, we can appreciate the necessity of some drastic action on the part of the State to save the youth of the country from demoralisation.

TRANSFERENCE

Sir Arthur Rose is also keen on transferring unemployed, more especially youths, from the distressed areas, although he has much to say as to the difficulty of inducing young people to leave their homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Under this heading he follows the usual course of the other investigators, suggests land settlement, land reclamation and improvement. With regard to the heavier industries he is pessimistic because even if there were a considerable revival in trade, resulting in increased employment, there still would be thousands of men and boys on the surplus list.

One of the benefits of protection, we were told, would be the establishment of new industries in Great Britain. Sir Arthur Rose points out that

“In Scotland, in 1933, fourteen new factories opened while twenty-nine closed down, and for Great Britain as a whole, 463 new factories opened while 409 closed.”

One statement which he makes under this heading is peculiar to his Report and is worth quoting (p. 234) :

“ It is perhaps a platitude to say that world conditions are chiefly responsible for the position of affairs in Glasgow, and the long term view is that reduction in tariffs and other hindrances to international trade would go far to remedy matters, and possibly that is the only real solution.”

It is refreshing to find this direct challenge to the protectionist policy of the Government, although we are not inclined to accept the statement that the reduction of tariffs is the only real solution. There are hindrances to the production of wealth as well as to its exchange in international trade ; if these two hindrances taken together are observed and their economic consequences appreciated, we have the key to the solution of the problem of social distress.

LIMITATION OF SURVEY

It is a serious omission in the Scottish Report that an investigation was not made into the conditions prevailing in Glasgow and such places as Dundee. On p. 198 Sir Arthur Rose says that the noticeable feature of the situation is the absence of serious cases of undernourishment, and that the ordinary characteristics of depression and idleness, such as mental deterioration and habits of loafing and disorderliness, were not obvious in the area of his investigation. This statement cannot be accepted. It is notorious that, even in periods of good trade, malnutrition and many of the social evils arising from bad housing are more than evident in Scottish industrial districts.

From what has been stated in this Report as to the depression in Scotland, the conclusion must be drawn that the conditions of the working classes in Glasgow are relatively bad. Being the centre of Scottish industrial life, no true impression of the economic repercussions of depression can be gained if Glasgow is excluded from the survey.

FUTILITY OF PROPOSALS

A summary of these Reports might well be placed under two headings: first, what the investigators considered to be the causes of the depression, and secondly, their recommendations to the Government as to ways and means of mitigating this depression by Governmental action.

CAUSES

- (A) Increasing unemployment in all areas owing to :
 - (a) Contraction of world markets through economic nationalism.
 - (b) Displacement of labour by machinery and rationalisation.
 - (c) Internal slump since 1930.
 - (d) Immobility of labour.
- (B) Steadily increasing and disastrous effect of high rates. The derelict condition of exhausted mines, unused factories and shipyards, and flooding of surface land and coal seams; general dereliction which makes the establishment of new industries impossible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transference of unemployed to more prosperous areas.
Training of youths and reconditioning of adult labourers in training centres at Government expense.
Public Works. Land Settlement. Subsidies to fishing industry.
Public Assistance to be made a national charge.
Unification of royalties.
A new rating system (undefined).

Not one of these proposals will so much as touch the fringe of the problem. This is self-evident if we question each of the proposals before us. If we transfer the unemployed from the distressed areas to some other area, will not the same economic distress reappear in their new-found homes? If it is true that

contraction in world trade has its reflex action upon the trade of the nation as a whole, will transference remedy this supposed cause? If we turn all the unemployed on to public works, would unemployment return when the works were completed? In passing, one thing would be certain: huge debts would be incurred by the State and Local Authorities to carry out these works, and their execution would undeniably enhance the value of land. Again, if the State and Local Authorities enter the market to get land for the settlement of the unemployed, would the market value of land rise, and if so who would benefit?

We have already referred to the detrimental effect of subsidies. The disastrous results of the £43,000,000 beet-sugar subsidy are well known. Almost £30,000,000 a year is paid in direct subsidies to agriculture, plus the indirect subsidy of £35,000,000 in respect of the derating of agricultural land. Can it be denied that these tributes are passing into rent and increasing value of land, thereby making land settlement and town planning more expensive to the community?

If we subject any of these recommendations to a simple examination it becomes clear that they do not lead even to a partial solution of the problem of economic distress. This is the more evident because of the attitude of mind adopted by these investigators. They seem to hold tenaciously to the belief that this depression is a passing phase to be followed at some future date by a definite trade revival, and this despite the evidence to the contrary which they were compelled to set out in their respective Reports.

Science has solved the problem of wealth production. Poverty, depression and all the other ills which gave rise to this enquiry are the outcome of the unjust distribution of wealth. It is, therefore, futile to waste any time or consideration on making adjustments on the productive side. The problem does not lie there. This is vaguely appreciated by those who advocate some fanciful distribution of wealth by showering liberal doles upon public work schemes and the like; but this, as we have attempted to show, is a policy of feeding the dog with its own tail. Taxation and rates, which are a burden upon the actual wealth producers of the community, are increased to meet the loans necessitated by these schemes, which upon completion leave upon the State and Local Authorities a legacy of debt, while the figures of unemployment rise again. As an evidence that this is true we have only to cite Roosevelt's New Deal, which is creating enormous debts to finance schemes which at the most can only give temporary work to the unemployed, the problem remaining while debt has increased.

Mr. Chamberlain said in the House of Commons, on February 16th, 1933 :

" I have tried to make a rough calculation of the sum that has been spent in State-assisted works for the purpose of providing employment and for the development of various activities of Local Authorities, and I find that from April 1924 down to September 1931—that is, about seven and a half years—the capital value of works of this kind, including housing, was about £700,000,000. . . . Nearly £100,000,000 a year has been spent, and what effect has it had in reducing unemployment? . . . At the beginning of the period the unemployed were 1,250,000 and at the end of it they were 2,800,000."

THE DIVISION OF WEALTH

Wealth produced is roughly divided into rent, interest and wages. If we examine the relative amounts thus distributed, it becomes clear that rent takes by far the largest portion ; and what is of primary importance in any such examination is the fact that when depression comes upon trade and industry, money seeks what it terms " safer " investment in ground rents or " real property," so that we have the disastrous economic result—a tendency for the price of land to rise, owing to speculation in its value, at the very time when it is most essential that land should more easily be opened up to relieve the distress of unemployment. No better evidence could be adduced than the following announcement, under the heading of the Estate Market, which appeared in *Country Life* of January 12th, 1935 :

" The high price and low yield of gilt-edged stocks is causing investors to turn more and more to English land, in which they recognise a security of a high order, yielding a satisfactory return, with the added advantage of possessing every prospect of steady capital appreciation."

This is one illustration, taken at random. Almost daily, throughout the past few years, the Press have been pointing out the distinct advantages of this form of investment, its security, and its added advantage of giving to the investor a lien on future increasing values, specially advising investment in ground rents in view of the doubtful returns of " industrials " owing to depression. They might also have pointed out the enhanced prospects of this kind of investment in view of the public work schemes advocated by the various political parties.

No just distribution of wealth is possible until this gambling in the value of land has been checked. Nor is it possible to open up fresh fields of employment to labour if the tendency is for these values to rise, and rise the more because of the urgent necessities of the moment.

FREE TRADE AND PROTECTION

This is not the place to dilate on the question of free trade, but it is essential to point out that free trade by itself is no solution to the problem of unemployment. It is a necessary and natural condition under which trade can develop and expand ; but it is little use advocating free exchange of goods and services, and leaving in abeyance the whole question of freedom to produce. Free traders are in a large measure responsible for the tariff madness of our time, and for this reason : they extolled the virtues of free exchange or free trade, but seemed not to concern themselves with the causes which gave rise to unemployment in a so-called free trade country. The unemployed man is the easy victim of the protectionist and tariff-monger. We have to remove the barrier between labour and land within the country if we are to remove the problem of unemployment.

REMOVING THE BARRIER

There are three methods of removing the barrier to free production of wealth from the land. There is State confiscation of the land, which is an impossible policy for this country ; or resumption of the land by the State on a compensation basis, which would mean the payment of enormous indemnities to landlords, and heavy taxation on the community ; and there is the last and only practical method of taking the communally created value of land, either through a national tax collection, or a local rate collection, or both. This would have the effect of checking speculation in future values, and lowering the market price of land, thus making it more accessible to labour and to schemes of national improvement ; and in proportion as these taxes and rates were levied upon the value of land, taxes and rates now levied upon industry and houses would be abolished, thus reserving more consuming power in the hands of the working class, and freeing industry from the burden of taxation which is crippling it to-day.

SOCIAL JUSTICE OR PLANNED SERVITUDE ?

The solution of the problem demands an immediate challenge to whatever vested interest stands in the way of the rights of the community ; we cannot hope to establish justice if there exist in the midst of society privileges and monopolies which encroach upon the just rewards of labour. No monopoly or privilege is a sacred thing, for all of them are based upon man-made laws, which in every case were dictated by selfish interests.

As we write, there comes to hand an impeachment of the modern economic system written by leading clerics of the Church of England. They point out that hunger in the midst of plenty, unemployment and slumdom co-existent with the great conquests of science, destruction of wealth to maintain prices, and ever greater sums being distributed by the State in the form of doles, are the negation of all that is implied in the Christian doctrine. But the remedies they suggest are not unlike those proposed by the Commissioners in the Distressed Areas. It would seem as if even the Church lacks the courage to call for that action which would bring the economic life of the nation into harmony with the teachings of the Founder of Christianity.

Institutional charity and political expedients are no substitute for justice. Justice proclaims the right of all men to the free use of those gifts provided by nature and essential to human existence. There is a solution to this problem of poverty and economic uncertainty which is overshadowing the nation. That solution is in removing the private monopoly of land, the abolition of all taxation upon industry and the products of industry, and the extinction of all artificial barriers to trade between ourselves and other nations. The value of the land should be ascertained and collected by the State to meet the costs of social services, and all those industries and services which by their nature and operation preclude competition and therefore tend to become monopolies, should be brought under the control of the State.

The adoption of such a policy would be but the beginning of the liberation of the people from economic servitude. We have either to take this road towards liberty, or pursue the other course of maintaining the impoverished by State doles through the machinery of expensive and powerful bureaucracies. There is no middle course.

“The poverty which in the midst of abundance pinches and embrates men, and all the manifold evils which flow from it, spring from a denial of justice. In permitting the monopolisation of the opportunities which nature freely offers to all, we have ignored the fundamental law of justice—for so far as we can see, when we view things upon a large scale, justice seems to be the supreme law of the universe. But by sweeping away this injustice and asserting the rights of all men to natural opportunities, we shall conform ourselves to the law—we shall remove the great cause of unnatural inequality in the distribution of wealth and power . . . give new vigour to invention and a fresh impulse to discovery; substitute political strength for political weakness; and make tyranny and anarchy impossible.”—HENRY GEORGE, *Progress and Poverty*.

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