

the same right to land. Present titles could remain, but the value would be shared by all. Such as possessed land having any advantage would pay the equivalent of that advantage in the shape of a tax into the common coffer.

"This order of things would bring forth a race of free, independent, self-respecting, generous, high-spirited men, who would advance to new and undreamed-of heights of civilisation. With greater and greater ease they would satisfy the animal wants, and give more and more play to the development of the mental and moral natures.

"This was the great idea that filled the soul of Henry George. It was the redemption of the world from involuntary poverty and from its grim daughters, suffering and sin. He had, he believed, pointed the way of salvation, and he was confident that the world would sooner or later come to believe with him."

To quote finally from JOHN SHERWIN CROSBY:—

"As Paul stood on Mars Hill and proclaimed to the Athenians the Unknown God whom they ignorantly worshipped, so this man for the last quarter of a century has stood aloft proclaiming democracy to democrats. I speak not of any party, but of all men who, with Jefferson and Lincoln, still ask: 'If we cannot trust the people to govern themselves, whom can we trust to govern them?'

"Speaking to such men, Henry George has been saying: 'Jeffersonian democracy, which you ignorantly worship, that I declare unto you.' The political party, be it called Democratic or Republican, or by any other name,

that does not recognise the equal right of every man to a place on earth—the government that fails to secure that right—must eventually go down, as parties, governments and civilisations have gone down in the past.

"Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation was not more essential to an understanding of physical phenomena than is the theory of Henry George to an intelligent comprehension of the principles of political economy and civil government. The single tax, or 'natural taxation,' is in reality not a tax burden, not a taking of private revenue, but simply an appropriation by the public of a revenue which, in its very source and nature, is essentially public, and therefore belongs to the public.

"Long ago in the book of Ecclesiastes was it written: 'The profit of the earth is for all'; long ago in the book of Proverbs: 'In all labour there is profit'; and the problem of all the centuries since has been how to effect a just distribution of these two kinds of profit. It was the mission of Henry George to solve that problem—the problem of poverty, the labour problem, the problem that underlies all other social problems.

"And he has solved it. He has pointed out the way, the only way, in which the profit of the earth may be shared by all, the only way in which the profit of labour can be secured to the labourer."

That way—the remedy of Henry George—is the application as quickly as possible of a full tax on land values, instead of the present many bad taxes which thwart production and impoverish the people.

WHAT AVAILS THE WEST INDIES CUSTOMS UNION?

For the millionaire who spends his days sailing, or lazing on the golden beaches of the fabulous Bahamas, the income-tax-free Mecca of the world's rich, the Caribbean is studded with a cluster of emerald jewels glittering beneath the tropical skies. In vivid contrast is the condition of the less fortunate who toil under a blazing sun in the tobacco and sugar plantations, and at the asphalt lakes, for beggarly wages scarcely sufficient to keep them alive. The homes of these workers are in miserable, over-crowded slum hovels. Illiteracy and malnutrition stalk through the Islands hand in hand with a high mortality and a high birth rate. Periodically there are riots. Not for the ordinary West Indian those benefits from co-operation which might be expected to be found in the most densely populated corner of the world. Unable to take freely a piece of land which would provide them with their needs, they are forced to compete one with the other, thus forcing wages down to a bare subsistence level. Many leave their families to seek work in Britain or in the United States. In such circumstances every new child born threatens their already low standards, and adds fuel to the arguments of those who speak of "over-population."

Against this background, the Conference on the Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies, held in Jamaica, September, 1947, recommended to the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Creech Jones, that steps be taken to examine the possibility of establishing a British Caribbean Customs Union. While the Conference failed to recognise the primary cause of poverty and unemployment in the Islands, it rightly emphasised that "the present position in which, for customs purposes, each colony treats the others as entirely separate territories, seriously restricts British West Indian inter-colonial trade as a whole and injuriously affects both

the export trade in particular and the standard of living in general" of the whole area. Accordingly, a Commission consisting of officials and under the chairmanship of Mr. J. McLagen was appointed. After two years' thorough investigation of this highly technical and complicated matter the Commission published in February this year its Report on the establishment of a Customs Union in the British Caribbean Area.

This Report on a Caribbean Customs Union (H.M.S.O. Colonial No. 268, price 7s. 6d.) is an orderly and imposing document of more than 300 pages, including many detailed appendices. It testifies to the diligence and efficiency with which the members of the Commission discharged their duty. We criticise not the work of the Commission but the terms of reference within which they were obliged to conduct their enquiry. These were "to examine, in consultation with the governments of the British Caribbean area the question of the establishment of a Customs Union and to make recommendations with special regard to ensuring uniformity in administration and customs practise; the selection and training of the necessary staff; the preparation of a suitable tariff, having regard to the fiscal problems of the governments whose revenue would be affected by the introduction of a Customs Union; and the special needs of the British Virgin Islands."

Appointed by a Protectionist minister of the Protection-minded Imperial Government, it was the Commissioner's task to show how internal barriers to trade might be demolished without in any way imperilling the ring fence around the whole area. The definition of "Customs Union" given in the Havana Charter, was accepted, namely: "... the substitution of a single customs territory for two or more customs territories so that (i) duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce ... are eliminated with respect to substantially all the trade

between the constituent territories of the union, or at least with respect to substantially all the trade in products originating in such territories, and (ii) . . . substantially the same duties and other regulations of commerce are applied by each of the members of the union to the trade of territories not included in the union." Observance or consideration of the principles of Free Trade was deliberately debarred.

In brief, the outcome of the Commission's extensive enquiry is a recommendation now being examined by the Colonial legislatures affected, that a Customs Union should be established as speedily as possible. This would embrace all the British Caribbean territories, with the exception of the Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Caymen Islands. The Report states that "the obstacles to be overcome . . . are so few, and the desires for an early measure of fiscal and economic unity so general" that a transitional period is neither necessary nor expedient.

The proposed Caribbean Customs Union is in some ways analogous to the "free trade area" which exists inside Protectionist Great Britain. In one respect there is an important difference. Even protectionists would condemn as fantastic bureaucracy the recording of the quantity and amount of goods passing between the Isle of Wight and the mainland, or East Anglia and Wales, or England and Scotland for that matter. But the Commissioners appear to consider such information essential for the conduct of their inter-island trade. They suggest that each colony should render daily returns of all goods imported and exported. Special aircraft would fly the forms to some central "clearing house" (which might be situated in Jamaica) for "*mechanised statistication*" (our italics). No doubt this explains the Commissioner's startling assertion that free trade "does not necessarily mean the uncontrolled movement of goods." Customs declaration forms would be used also to secure for the "Colony of consumption" revenue from goods imported from outside the Union. Thus, if goods intended for Trinidad are landed at Jamaica, the Jamaican Customs would collect the duty payable. The goods may then be re-shipped to Trinidad, accompanied with the dual-purpose form to allow them to be recorded for statistical purposes as Jamaican exports and Trinidadian imports, and to enable the Trinidad Government to claim from Jamaica the amount paid in duty.

As we have already insisted, so long as goods from the rest of the world are denied free entry to the British Caribbean area, there can be no general improvement in the economic climate of the islands. Indeed, the Report itself makes this abundantly clear. In the section which deals with the proposed abolition of taxes upon food imported from other Colonies within the Union the Commissioners state that the revenue thus lost "would probably be more than met by the operation of a scientifically balanced common external tariff." It is a policy of charging extra on the roundabouts for what is lost on the swings. To be welcomed are the recommendations to reduce and finally abolish export duties, and to withdraw privileged exemption from paying Customs duty enjoyed by some persons, industries and Government departments. Goods which at present rise in price as they pass through the Customs from island to island would, with few exceptions, be untaxed if they were produced within the Union, or taxed once only if imported from abroad. The proposed unified Customs procedure should reduce costly delays in the transport of goods while, generally speaking,

the "tedious and irritating" examination of inter-Colonial travellers and their baggage is to cease. These appear to be the only benefits which the Customs Union will yield.

In conclusion, we say to the local Colonial legislatures "go ahead, set up your Customs Union; enjoy the limited benefits of a partial liberalisation of trade." But when this fails, as inevitably it must, to effect any substantial improvement in the lot of your workers and unemployed, do not seek to impose further restrictions but read again and reflect upon those passages in the Commissioner's Report which use free trade arguments in favour of building a Customs Union. Do not look about to see whom or what next you may tax. There lies at your feet in the value of the land a source of revenue sufficient to provide for all the necessary functions of government. By demolishing trade barriers between the islands you will release the prisoner from solitary confinement, and give him freedom to pace the prison yard. Breach the gaol walls, allow him the right to satisfy his needs in freedom and equality with his fellows, unfettered by unjust land tenure laws, and the cringing mutinous pauper will stand erect, a free, happy and prosperous man.

P. R. S.

The British Government's Pitiful Performance at Torquay

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A four-page section of the Government's White Paper (*Report on the Torquay Tariff Negotiations, Cmd. 8228, 9d.*) bears the heading "Tariff Concessions." This word, in itself, exemplifies the old-fashioned psychological make-up of the President of the Board of Trade and his colleagues. As if it really is a "concession" to bring down the price of an imported article for the consumer in one's own country! The 1931 atmosphere of "hard bargaining" is wholly out of place in the world of 1951. Certain passages in the document presented to Parliament by Mr. Clement Attlee's President of the Board of Trade are reminiscent of the ideas, though not of the attractive literary style, of Mr. Leo Amery. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to suggest that, for men and women of the "Third Force," there is little to choose between Sir Hartley Shawcross, Mr. Harold Wilson, Mr. Amery, Mr. Walter Elliot and Mr. A. T. Lennox-Boyd.

Here are three such revealing passages:—

"Thus out of imports from the United Kingdom into other member countries of the Commonwealth of £392 millions covering all preferential items in 1949, only £7 millions, or 1.8 per cent., were affected by reduction of preference." (*Paragraph 25.*)

"The United Kingdom agreed to reductions of contractual margins in items which involved only about £57,000 worth of imports into Australia (£8,000 worth of imports into New Zealand) from the United Kingdom in terms of 1949 trade." (*Paragraph 26, b and c.*)

"The United Kingdom agreed in only one case (dried figs) to reduce a margin of preference below the minimum level which had been guaranteed in existing trade agreements with other Commonwealth countries. This concession was offered with the concurrence of the Commonwealth countries concerned. There are scarcely any imports into the United Kingdom of dried figs from the Commonwealth." (*Paragraph 14.*)