

## TRADE UNION POLICY

THE INTERIM Report on Post-war Reconstruction adopted by the Trade Union Congress at its annual conference, which opened on 16th October, at Blackpool, covers a wide field. The objects of the Trade Union Movement are stated to be: (1) Maintaining and improving wages, hours and conditions of work (including consideration of what wages can buy); (2) Opportunities for the worker to obtain work; (3) Extending the influence of workers over the policies and purposes of industry.

It asserts that these objects can only be achieved under a system of public control, and that the most complete degree of public control would appear to be gained if an industry is nationalized or publicly owned. The Report advocates the nationalization of industries concerned with (a) Fuel and power (including coal, gas and electricity); and (b) Transport (including railways, canals, road transport, coast-wise shipping and internal airways).

This leads to a consideration of the form of public ownership and the price to be paid. It is suggested that publicly owned industries should be vested in a public corporation, the members of which would be appointed by a Minister responsible to Parliament. Thus what is supposed to be the most perfect form of public control can only work with reasonable efficiency if the actual management is removed as far as possible from any public responsibility.

The problem of compensation is as thorny as that of management. The Report proposes that compensation should be based on Reasonable Net Maintainable Revenue. This is an imposing phrase, but it will not be easy to interpret in practice, and all the less so when it is proposed to exclude from the calculation anything due to high profits of war-time operations, monopoly or semi-monopoly activities and subsidies given by the State. It would certainly be interesting to hear these matters argued before an arbitrator, and still more to hear how any arbitrator would give effect to them.

The Report then enumerates those economic matters in which national control should be exercised: (a) The utilization of land, the supply of water, the use of other natural resources; (b) The supply and availability of cash and credit money; (c) The rate of gross investment and the supply of capital for investment; (d) The location of industry and general physical planning; and (e) Foreign trade and foreign lending and investment. Unfortunately there is no discussion whatever of the first of these items, and we are left with no clue to what is meant by national control of utilization of land.

A further series of matters in which public control is asked for are (a) The determination and observance of wages and working conditions; (b) The control of prices, and (c) The control of monopolies. The observation is made that "taxation and fiscal problems obviously require detailed consideration in this connection." This is very

true, and it is a pity that no attempt has been made to develop this, or in particular to relate it to the land question.

The question of prices is related to that of monopoly. The Report says: "Price regulation in war is necessary to prevent the exploitation of scarcity. Under normal conditions the problem will rather be to prevent the artificial creation of scarcity and to restrain efforts to maintain prices by private agreement at levels not justified by costs." Unfortunately the Report makes no serious effort to examine the conditions which lead to the formation of monopolies or the steps which should be taken to prevent this.

If it is the view of the Trades Union Congress that some kind of free functioning of economic life should be maintained in which trade unions can exercise their functions of negotiating wages and conditions of labour, then the question of monopoly is of paramount importance. This would include in the first place consideration of the land question, for land is the foundation of economic life; and it would also include consideration of tariffs, quotas, marketing schemes and all the other devices by which monopolies are maintained and extended. If they are not prepared to consider these questions, then the whole social system must become more and more a totalitarian one (no matter by what name it may be called), and the historical functions of trade unionism will steadily disappear until they become a mere appanage or instrument of the omnipotent State.

## THE RUBICON

The Rubicon River, which, as I reported yesterday, has been crossed by the Eighth Army, was not the Rubicon of Benito Mussolini, but the river which Cæsar crossed some 2,000 years ago. Behind this apparent paradox lies one of the most extraordinary stories of Fascist corruption and deception. A rich landowner at Savignano, three miles north-west of San Arcangelo, who was an intimate friend of the former Duce, persuaded him that the value of his property would be greatly enhanced by tourist trade if the name of the Fiumicino River, which runs through Savignano to the sea, were changed to the Rubicon. The real Rubicon, the scene of Cæsar's historic crossing, which passes San Arcangelo, was to be given another name. Mussolini agreed and decreed that the Rubicon should in future be known as the *Uso*.—From JOHN WALLIS, *Daily Telegraph* Special Correspondent, 19th October.

Printing difficulties and shortage of staff have interfered with the timely production of *Land & Liberty* in recent months. We apologise to readers for resorting, on this and two previous occasions during the year, to the running of two months together, but hope

## WILLIAM TEMPLE

That the passing of William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England, is a tragic loss to the Anglican Church goes without saying. He is mourned not only by members of the Church, of which he was so distinguished a head, but by multitudes of his fellow-citizens who owned no allegiance to his Church. For he placed his high office, his profound learning and amazing capacity for hard work unstintingly at the service of the "common man." He never could have had any sympathy with the pious platitudes about evil social conditions, devoid of any practical proposals for their removal, which have satisfied so many clerics.

We, of the Henry George movement, owe him a special debt of gratitude. For as Archbishop, first of York and then of Conterbury, on many occasions he compelled Committees and Conferences, of which he was chairman or at least a member, to face up to fundamental problems and to propose fundamental remedies. The files of *Land & Liberty* record many of his utterances that have given great encouragement to our movement at home, in the U.S.A., and throughout the Commonwealth. Only a few instances can be given here. The Malvern Conference in 1942 declared that "we must recover reverence for the earth and its resources, treating it no longer as a reservoir of potential wealth to be exploited, but as a storehouse of divine bounty on which we utterly depend." True enough, but what is to be done about it? Dr. Temple quoted this finding in his Penguin booklet, *Christianity and the Social Order*, and showed the Conference what should be done.

"A great deal of what is amiss, alike in rural and in urban areas, could be remedied by the taxation of the value of sites as distinct from the buildings erected upon them. In this field, that inversion of the natural order, which is characteristic of our whole modern life, is especially important. If house property is improved (a social service) the rates are raised and the improvement penalized; if it is allowed to deteriorate (a social injury) the rateable value is reduced and the offending landlord is relieved. Taxation of the value of sites, as distinct from the buildings erected on them, would encourage the full utilization of the land. . . . Land values, therefore, should be taxed and rated; houses might well be de-rated." The same view was put forward in *The Church Looks Forward*, but apparently without making much impression on the Industrial Christian Fellowship which published it. F. V.

that the enlarged double numbers have been some compensation. It is an expedient however which we aim to avoid in the ensuing year, by anticipation grateful to our supporters for the financial help that is so essential—as to which, see page 183.