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Catholic Land Federation of England and Wales

The Cross & the Plough

The Organ of the Catholic Land Movement of England and Wales

QUARTERLY TWOPENCE. SAINT'S PETER AND PAUL 1948

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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

WITHOUT THE PRINCE

The Citizens could read every word of the *Economic Survey for 1948* (CMD 7344) and of Sir Stafford Cripps' Budget speech in Parliament, without any real appreciation that the capital problem for this country is a simple unbalance in simple and fundamental arithmetic.

The government (and exponents of doctrine in other parties) are obstinately clinging to an export philosophy which is demonstrably dead.

The real problem is to try to get back to a basis where we can feed, from our own soil, so high a proportion of our people that export and import problems assume only their rightful minor role. Instead of that, the propaganda is dominated by the dying export trade. Already our exports are rotting on foreign wharves, and home traders are being sent goods they have not ordered because they cannot be exported.

While this wrong-headedness persists, there is little point in drawing attention to anything but the high lights of the situation.

TRIPLE BRASS

In lieu of a realist approach, our planners are still relying entirely on the short view. As Sir Stafford Cripps says (Survey, para. 240) *The year will beyond doubt be dominated by the decisions of the United States Congress on the grant of aid to Europe for reconstruction.*

But that aid is limited in time by its very nature. And when it ceases? When it ceases will become obvious even to politicians what we have said seventy times—maximum land production per acre. That is to be achieved only by small intensive mixed farms.

THE STUPIDITY OF PLANNERS

In the meantime, our planners are stupidly wasting much of even the present asset. Owing to the fact that some at least of our people insist on cheese fit to eat, Roquofort, Camembert and Danish Blue are imported. These must be paid for in gold or goods. The whole sum could be saved if Stilton were allowed to be made. But it isn't. Dr. Summerskill has seen to that.

JAM TOMORROW

We are also credibly informed that jam makers are on short time. We do not support commercialism as against this essentially domestic affair, but warehouses are bulging with jam, workers are on short time, and sugar is being exported to Africa so that jam may be made and returned here. This, in case you do not know, is scientific planning.

So it is the savage penal increase on Whisky, Wine, Beer and Tobacco, so that teetotal fanatics in the Labour movement may indulge their hate. Who said *Economic Planning?* Does not even the *London School of Economics* urge the planners to get on with the job instead of indulging their curious hates.

MYSTERIOUS PERSISTENCE

The emergence of *The Land Settlement Association* was always very mysterious. Its methods were criticised very severely in *The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Land Settlement,* published by H.M.S.O. on 9th December, 1939, and analysed in our issue of Lady Day, 1940.

The *Ministry of Agriculture* stated on 23rd March last (M.A.F. 2089) that the L.S.A. was being taken over. It added *"The Association . . . will continue to manage the land as agents on the Minister's behalf."*

So now we know. The Committees, evidently, sit in vain. It is of interest that a debt of £2,000,000, owing by the association to the government, is to be written off. That is, the taxpayers pay it. We wonder what would have been said if the Catholic Land Movement had owed such a sum.

WHO GOES HOME?

Three years ago, (Who Goes Home? S.S. Peter and Paul, 1945) we predicted that the ridiculous government scheme for training ex-servicemen and women for mechanised *employment* on the land would fail.

Official figures are now to hand which prove this beyond all question. The Ministry's Weekly News Service (No. 442) states that in 32 months 2372 men and women had completed satisfactory training, 3439 had given up, and 3149 were still training.

That is, a total of about 3400 had or would come through. That is about a hundred a month. That is, the scheme has failed entirely, as we predicted. It compares in the most disedifying way with the massive figures of people waiting hopelessly for small holdings, which appeared every year from 1918 to 1939, and in whom the Ministry was not interested.

SIR ALBERT HOWARD

Our readers will wish to note that as a result of a meeting held on 23rd March there was founded *The Albert Howard Foundation of Organic Husbandry.*

Lady Howard is President, and the Hon. Secretary is Mrs. Hamilton. Enquiries should be addressed to her at Sharnden Manor, Mayfield, Sussex. We hope that many of our supporters will write to her and ascertain how best they can perpetuate the memory of this great man, and so continue the work he started.

THEIR OWN PETARD

From 3rd to 15th May the citizens were kindly allowed by their totalitarian Minister of Food to change their milkman. Naturally, this was not due to any desire to allow freedom to the citizens.

The truth is, however, of some interest. As a result of the widespread restiveness over the pasteurised and stale muck delivered by the Combines, the said Combines suggested to the Minister a given period for a general post, in the conviction that the citizens would have the illusion of choice, and the individual combines would gain on the swings what they lost on the roundabouts. (Some say the process was started by the Co operative Societies alone—the point is not important).

To the intense astonishment and dismay of the Combines, and no doubt of the Minister, what happened was very different. In very great numbers (which will not be disclosed) the citizens changed over to small milkmen, for the twin reasons that they were tired of imposed Combines, and that they wanted decent milk. Loud cheers! It remains to be seen whether the government as a whole learns the right lesson.

SURRENDER TO FASHION

We are sorry to see, in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society* for 1947, an apparent cession to the short-distance temptations of mechanisation and general specialisation. In particular, Mr. C. S. Orwin has a characteristically unsympathetic reference to small holdings.

Professor J. B. Buxton, in an article on Bovine Tuberculosis, nowhere warns farmers of the notorious danger of forcing the milk yield, although he mentions repeatedly the lower incidence of Tuberculosis in beef cattle. He gives several authorities for the position that tuberculosis can be transmitted from man to animal or from animal to animal, but he gives no evidence, apart from some obscure record in Scotland, that the Bovine type of tuberculosis can be transmitted from animal to man.

In view of the determined and tendencious attempts to convince us of the contrary, endorsed recently by Lord Woolton, this absence of satisfactory proof is of great interest. Professor Buxton would have enlarged on the facts if there were any facts on which to enlarge.

INVERSION

What we have seen is an inverted Czarism
(The Prime Minister on 13th February, 1948)

Imperious Caesar, in the Kremlin fast,
Seeks to be fast and faster,
In futures do his slaves forget the past:
They leave out Caesar's Master.

—H.R.

NOT BEFORE THE CHILDREN

The British Government is making claim against the shippers of snoek found unfit for sale to the public.

The Cape Argus, 27 April, 1948.

THE TRUTH ABOUT WORK

By GEORGE MAXWELL

ANIMALS, machines and natural forces work. But this essay is concerned with the work of men—human beings. Although men possess with the animal and inanimate creation properties in common, and the activities of both resemble each other in so many ways that these resemblances may give rise to an idea that in man there are two natures, a higher and a lower, although these common properties can in man be so developed as to hide his distinguishing character, there is only one nature in man. It is necessary to understand what this nature is in order to distinguish man's work from the work of animate or inanimate creation.

Man's nature is that of a rational animal —spiritual material. These two elements are organically united to form an integral whole. Each element in its own sphere is equally important. Man's spiritual nature, manifested by intellect—the power of reasoning, and free will—the power of choice, raise him above other created things to the dignity of a person; i.e., an intelligent, free and responsible being. The intellect by virtue of advertence to the dictates of reason is able to make a judgment as to the rightness of any action—its conformity with his rational nature, and the will by virtue of its freedom is able to choose to accept or reject this judgment. This is what is meant by responsibility. Praise or blame, encouragement or shame follow from the use of responsibility. The morality of an action means its accord with right reason.

So much for man's nature considered as an individual person. But man is not merely an individual, he is also a social being. Without society his nature would be stultified and lack the means necessary for his development and perfection. Society may be defined as the living together of intelligent beings who co-operate to establish those material and spiritual conditions which will best promote the development and perfection of all who belong to society. This purpose of society is called the Common Good, as distinct from the Public or the Private Good. In the concrete the Common Good is the sum total of advantages which by reason of co-operation concerns all who belong to society. Co-operation means the willing activity of two or more intelligent beings for a common end or purpose. Thus man's activities are not only personal but social.

Considered from the natural aspect alone, the nature of man is different in kind as well as degree from other created beings. Furthermore, the Author of Nature has by Grace raised man to a still higher plane than the natural—the supernatural plane. Raised from a natural to a supernatural destiny man is offered grace, which does not supersede or destroy nature but fulfils and perfects it. It is offered to all who accept the means. Thus the nature of man embraces in one complete unity the life of grace, the life of the spirit and the life of the body—material life. These three united in that order of primacy, and acting accordingly, is the subject of man's life and work. The order is hierarchic and the functions of each knit inseparably with the others. There is a correspondence between what happens on the higher plans with what happens on the lower, and vice versa.

Objectively, i.e., in reality, man's purpose or reason for existence is the Glory of God. Subjectively or incidentally it is man's own happiness. From the moment of his birth until his death man is ever striving after happiness. By Divine Providence the objective and subjective are organically united. Do God's will and happiness follows. That order of action is vital and must be preserved. Should man give precedence to his own happiness before God's will, the unity is destroyed and disorder and disease follow in place of happiness. With the exception of man everything in nature obeys God's law. Man alone is free to disobey, and we know from the doctrine of The Fall somewhat of the chaos and suffering which has resulted from man's rebelling against the law. It is not to my purpose to deal with the doctrine of the Fall except to state that this rebellion did not change the nature of man; that the promised Redeemer did come, by whose merits men might restore the order which was lost; and that while it would be an imbecility or worse to refuse to co-operate in God's Redemption, it is no less so to be complacent about the evils surrounding us to-day, on the assumption that they are the results of

Adam's sin, when in great measure they are the result of our own.

With this outline of the nature and purpose of man, the nature and purpose of human work can be examined. Work is that activity applied to other natures in order that man may perfect himself firstly as a person—a free responsible being and under God a creator, and secondly as a member of society. The order is important, but the two are not separate. They are organically united. The one flows from the other, as do the two great commandments of the law, love God and love your neighbour. The spiritual constituent of man, the intellect and the will, being free of matter and independent, is naturally immortal and has the primacy over man's material constituent which is naturally mortal and is the instrument of the soul. Thus before all else, human work must be personal. Work must reflect *in itself* man's love of Reality, Truth, Goodness, etc., and for its perfection, Charity. The love of God. The love of his neighbour is reflected by his work being good in itself and of service to society which is bound by the same law as himself. "Work is not a punishment, a curse, or enslavement, but the co-operation of the labourer with his Creator and Redeemer" says Canon Cardijn It is a human activity and must conform to the laws governing *human* acts, acts which flow from a free will with the knowledge and understanding of the end and purpose, and as such have an eternal value. Man is the only person with a material constituent in his being, and therefore for the full development of his personality—his humanity—he needs material things to which he can apply the full combined powers of mind and body. This is so because his actions as applied to material things are his own actions only when he is free to treat those things as he wishes. Because of his animal nature he needs and therefore has a right to consumptive property. Because of his nature as a human person he has a right to productive property. Human labour and private property are the foundations without which no sound society can exist economically or otherwise. The form of private property may change, but its essence must always be stable—the effective ownership and control of the means to exercise one's responsibilities. On the extent to which these two foundations are buttressed, so will the well-being of man and society flourish. On the extent to which they are neglected, according to that measure will man and society decay.

Until about 400 years ago these principles were accepted by the whole of Christian Europe and even outside Christianity many of them as part and parcel of the Natural Law. For the most part the common man retained them until comparatively recent times either consciously or unconsciously. Man is perfected by virtue and the normal man whose search for The Kingdom of God and His Justice was mainly confined to his work, his family and his fellow workmen, sharers in his work, realised that virtue and his perfection was developed chiefly in his work. "Work is the normal means of serving God," said Cardinal Hinsley in one of his Advent Pastorals. Justice, Temperance, Fortitude were all called for if he was to be a good workman. Any craftsman to-day knows this, and all should be craftsmen. All those virtues which go to "make a man" of him are to be found in any work of which he is not ashamed or which is not beneath the dignity of a responsible being. "He spoke the truth with his lips and two hands," said Piers Plowman. "Actions speak louder than words," is a phrase which was often heard. That speech to-day for a vast and increasing number is the speech of the tongue-tied. That speech which should be louder than words—human acts—is mutilated and frustrated. If we examine the nature of the work which men are called upon to do under the present industrial system, can it honestly be said that it is human activity? Under this system men are deprived of speech of mind and hand and are more and more constrained to behave as gramophones, their animal nature providing the motive power, to turn out the songs and speeches of those who call the tune, wind them up, oil them when they screech, and even provide them with "pious" records occasionally, for God will not be eliminated altogether. As the industrial system develops, with its consequent impersonal labour, so more and more it tends to what is termed mass-production. This in its turn develops from simple sub-division of increasingly irresponsible productive operations to a still greater and greater division, each operation so designed to relieve the workman from the

exercise of anything except animal activity. "Foolproof" is the term used. Human characteristics are not required.

Strangely enough there are those who, so long as they themselves are not the victims, either defend or are complacent about the system on the plea that those working in it are able to serve not only society by providing for its needs, and are thereby doing a good work, but also are able to serve God by offering up this work to Him. This suggests (1) that God's plan for human beings can be set aside for the benefit of society, and that society can be developed by doing so; (2) That God can be honoured by the degradation of human beings; and (3) that it is of secondary or of no importance that the work, so far as the victim is concerned, should be human. Except where man has lost or been robbed of his sense of dignity, such work is repugnant to him. It deprives him of his right to manifest manliness in his work, and where he is of good will throws him back on to disincarnate internal religion, an unsought and undesired manicheism, the soul disunited with or revolting against the body, and vice versa. The work is not his own in any sense other than its being an activity exercising the instinct he shares in common with irrational animals and is not specifically human. Man cannot offer to God what is not his to offer. His work is only his own in so far as his reason and will have freely co-operated in the work. Human work is not merely applied physical or nervous energy.

The "Sunday Times" of 10th August, 1947, contained an article written by the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster in which he emphasised the dignity of the person and went on to say: "It is because he brings to his work not only the faculties of his body but those of his mind and spirit that his labour of whatever sort it may be is endowed with a dignity of its own. This has special significance for those who are engaged in dull and monotonous work. *If behind the work there is a real love of God and a desire to serve others by that work, then it doesn't greatly matter what the work may be. We are all children of God.*"

The italicised words, isolated from their context, have been used by some concerned to defend the modern industrial system, as supporting the contention that the dull and monotonous work entailed in that system, particularly in what is called mass-production, is quite legitimate. That the essential factor is that man should bring to his work the faculties of mind and spirit before it can be human is not considered. The essential factor in mass-production—the elimination of the human element, in favour of the mechanical —is conveniently forgotten.

Mass-production is the prostitution of the man to economic or other material motives and is spiritually contraceptive. To eliminate the person and say it does not greatly matter what the work may be, is degrading and absurd and provides an opening for all manner of injustice and oppression. Human work demands the use of the intellect and free will *in the work itself*, and before it can be in accord with human dignity must of necessity be orientated in accord with God's plan for the man working and for society. Again a half truth has been expressed which runs like this: "There will always be degrees of personalness in man's work. A doctor will always remain closer to his patients than an engine-driver to his passengers," and similar examples. This misses the essential relationship between man and his work. Normally and naturally it is in his work that man is called upon to "seek the Kingdom of God." The grace of Sacraments enlightens his mind and strengthens his will in this search for Reality, Truth and Goodness *in his work*. The difference between the doctor and the docker or engine-driver is only in the material they are called upon to use and the consequent reactions of their material. The doctor's material may manifest more easily a greater social reaction, although this may be more apparent than real. The individual "personalness" demanded is the same from one man as from another, i.e., the whole. Where society demands some of this to be sacrificed, it may do so only in order to enhance the Common Good and so ultimately of the individual's personality. Would any sane person claim that such can be said of the industrial system? No one in his senses would suggest that the industrial system can be changed overnight, but to be complacent about it or to defend it even half-heartedly by "pious" half-truths is a betrayal of God, man and society.

It is of interest to note that recently, when both France and Italy were in grave danger of the Communist "menace," the Catholic Authorities emphasised the need and right of all men to private property. Private property and industrialism cannot exist side by side for any length of time. One or other must go under. In the natural sphere private property is the buttress of man's freedom and an essential if man's spirit is not to be chained. Can we not preach and work towards a restoration of ownership with all the liberty and responsibility that it gives? If we are not doing this, what is our objection to Communism?

WHAT IS QUALITY?

By S. E. NEEDHAM

VISCOUNT Astor and B. Seebohm Rowntree, in the preface to *British Agriculture*, wrote: "Experiments have been conducted at Rothamsted in which wheat was grown on three plots of ground which had organic manure, chemical manure, and no manure respectively. No difference in quality of the grain could be noted . . ."

No argument on humus v artificials is complete without this reputed Rothamsted research being produced as a trump card with inferences to suit the circumstances. Such inferences are in general so misleading that it is high time the truth about this experiment was told.

In the first trial of the kind at Rothamsted, wheat was grown on three small plots for one year only, the soil treatment being as noted in the first paragraph. Tests of the wheat were made by Dr. Harris of the Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, University of Cambridge, and published in the *Journal of Agricultural Science*, Vol. 24 (1934), p. 410. The only tests made were, however, for Vitamin B1 potency by the heart-rate method using rats. There was no appreciable difference in this respect between the grain from the three plots. But are there any grounds for suggesting B1 potency is indicative of *quality*?

Dr. Harris observed that *the Vitamin B1 potency of wheat was not significantly influenced by soil treatment*, a deduction with which no one will cavil. He did not say NPK produces grain of the same quality as farm-yard manure.

Subsequently Dr. Harris' conclusion was confirmed in further experiments made by one of his students, P. C. Leong, recorded in the *Biochemical Journal*, Vol. 33 (1939), p. 1397, from tests on both wheat and barley. The Bradycardia method was again used.

RESULTS

I.U. Vitamin B1 per g. (of whole meal flour)

Treatment	Wheat	Barley	
	1935	1935	1936
Farmyard manure ...	1.2	2.0	1.1
No manure	1.0	1.1	0.8
Complete mineral ...	1.3	1.3	0.8
Complete mineral plus sulphate of ammonia...	1.2	1.1	0.8
Sulph. of ammonia only	1.2	1.1	1.1

If these results show that artificials are as good as farm-yard manure, they equally show that artificials are no better than nothing, since untreated plots gave similar results. Whilst Vitamin B1 potency is *a* quality of grain, as is iron content, that it is no criterion of quality as a whole, or nutritive quality, is evident since it is not affected by soil treatment. No rational person could suggest that the quality of crops is unaffected by soil treatment—that is to say, that fertility merely affects quantity.

The actual tests and observations made by Harris and Leong are so different from the references customarily seen that you may well question if the Harris and Leong experiments can be what is referred to and ask "Isn't there something else?" The writer can confidently state after correspondence with Rothamsted that these are the only experiments which can possibly be meant.

An interesting feature of P. C. Leong's tests is the way in which farm-yard manure runs away from all competitors in the first-year test with barley. As it was not repeated in 1936, it was assumed to be of no signficance. Had there been a 1937 test, in which another good sample of farm-yard manure (containing possibly "ready-made" Vitamin B1) had been used, the whole experiment might have "come unstuck." Is it possible that Rothamsted accidentally got hold of

some farm-yard manure from animals fed on the products of humus-fertilized soil? There must have been a reason for the result

If only that elixir of spring—sulphate of ammonia—could have thrown up such a result! How gleefully should we be told that it was twice as good as farm-yard manure!

That Vitamin B1 potency is not significantly affected by soil treatment is a godsend to anyone who wishes to "prove scientifically" that one soil treatment is as good as another. An "Advisory Chemist" in the controversy which raged for a time in the *Farmer and Stock-Breeder* wrote (20th February, 1945, p. 308): "Rothamsted results show that wheat and barley grown on land receiving farm-yard manure annually showed no superiority in Vitamin B content over that grown on land which had received only artificials for eighty years." Convincing to the uninformed, but meaning precisely nothing.

There is no need to discredit these tests by pointing out the small plots, the one or two year duration, or the unreliability of the Bradycardia method. Consider it as good research. It has no bearing on the farm-yard manure v NPK controversy. If the tests were repeated with farm-yard manure, or better Indore compost, provided by someone who knew as much about it as the chemists know about their chemicals, the result might, of course, be different. The 1935 barley test is, I suggest, prophetic.

But if Vitamin B1 content is not *quality*, what is?

Sir John Russell, writing on Broadbalk in the Autumn 1943 *Countryman* said, anent the quality of grain produced by farm-yard manure and artificials, "Many careful tests have been made, but so far no difference has ever been found." (You will observe, of course, that independent research by McCarrison, Rowland and Wilkinson, Pfeiffer, etc., is *overlooked*). This statement has many echoes. In fact, whenever a discussion on the subject takes place in correspondence columns or public meetings, we can be sure that before long some chemist who believes biological questions can be resolved by chemical analysis will pop up and claim he has made careful tests and can find no difference in quality. This, far from being a *coup de grâce*, simply shows the chemist is less gifted in this respect than any old cow which, if turned into a pasture part manured with organics and part with chemicals, will unerringly detect the difference in quality and crop the former preferentially and exclusively.

When we talk of baking quality or malting quality, we mean the degree of fitness for that purpose. Similarly, when we speak of the quality of foodstuffs in general terms, we mean their nutritive value. This can only be determined by the degree of growth, health and fertility induced in successive generations of the stock of human beings to which they are fed. Where the difference is marked, short-term tests may, of course, give valuable indications. But in the light of present knowledge to suggest that laboratory tests without submission to Nature can determine nutritive quality appears more than somewhat conceited.

TESTMONY FOR EXTREMISTS

The temptation in looking at the piled-up horrors is to concentrate on the famous and important victims, whereas the *pogrom* extended to the whole population. In the ruling Party, 1,800,000 members and candidates were expelled, which was more than half the total in these classifications . . . At least eight million more, Consomol members and non-Party people, were liquidated.

In know, moreover, that millions who escaped the purge were maimed in their minds and wounded in their spirits by the fears and the brutalities amidst which they lived. For sheer scale, I know of nothing in all human history to compare with this purposeful and merciless persecution in which tens of millions Russians suffered directly or indirectly. Genghis Khan was an amateur, a muddler, compared to Stalin. The Kremlin clique had carried through a ruthless war on their own country and people.

From *I Chose Freedom by Victor Kravchenko.*

THE LAST OF THE REALISTS

G. K. CHESTERTON AND HIS WORK

By HAROLD ROBBINS

Continued from Vol. 15, No. 1.

Chapter 4

THE MAN'S WORK

Prince, let me place these gyves upon your wrists,
While common Christian people get some fun:
Then go and join your damned Theosophists,
It will not matter when the fight is won.

*—(A Ballade by G.K.C.)**

I

THERE has been much unfruitful speculation about the influence which Hilaire Belloc had on Gilbert Chesterton's development. There seems to have been little about the influence of Chesterton on Belloc. Neither need detain us long. It seems quite clear that the essential line of Chesterton's social thought was drawn and well drawn, in isolation before they met. It may be summarised under these heads—

The existence and the fatherhood of God.
The dominance of man's will over society.
The concept of man as an integral person.
The use of natural things to induce man to reclaim his rightful position.
The likelihood that the common man was right, against the expert.

Dates are irrelevant, as well as unprofitable. The fact that Chesterton was explicit on a point only after meeting Belloc does not mean that he owed it to Belloc, any more than does the converse. But we may assume, perhaps, that Belloc did bring it home to Chesterton that whereas he had evolved a system from his inner consciousness, actually it was the same as that social doctrine of the Church which is implicit, and should be explicit, in all Catholic statement. Which is, moreover, the same as is developed under the clumsy name of Distributism.

Nothing would be more delightful or congenial to the mind of Chesterton than the idea that he had stumbled of himself on the world's most reasoned and permanent conviction, that as he says in Manalive, a man should have walked round the world to find himself at home.†

We shall have to notice, later, a striking example of the fact that these two great minds were so dissimilar in statement as to preclude collaboration. The Chesterbelloc, where Belloc wrote and Chesterton drew, is the only type of collaboration in existence. But that is not to say that these minds did not influence each other. That is as far as we can go with profit. Dates, as I said, are quite irrelevant. Having established this, let us proceed to considering the structure in Chesterton's mind and his conception of what work this imposed upon him.

There will be little understanding of his approach to the fact that man was born free, but is everywhere in chains, unless it is realised that the facts made—and kept—him both angry and contemptuous. Not for him the cool, calm and collected manner which is held or affected in other quarters. No decent man can be calm in the face of such stupendous and sustained injustice as modern man finds all round him. This attitude in him was too sustained and too reasonable to be a mood. We can see it best, perhaps, in his verse, for even on a hostile criticism, it is too immediate to be posed, and too angry to be respectable. Brief indication is given accordingly.

Of the fallacy of modern approach:
The way to love my fellow man
And hate my next-door neighbour.
—(The World State).

. . . . .

If our vain haste has smothered homes in houses,
As our vain creeds have smothered man in men.
—(The Buried City).

Of his own boundless charity for his fellows:
Sunder me from my soul, that I may see
The sins like streaming wounds, the life's brave beat:
Till I shall save myself, as I would save
A stranger in the street.
—(The Sword of Surprise).

Of the modern lack of hope and freedom:
Darkens the world: the world-old fetters rattle;
And these that have no hope behind the sun
May feed like bondsmen and may breed like cattle,
One in the darkness as the dead are one.
—(A Wedding in War-time).

We have seen wherever the wide wind spoke,
Slavery slaying the English folk:
The robbers of land we have seen command,
The rulers of land obey.
—(On the Downs).

And of the new hope:
Had found the place where London ends and England can begin.

. . . . . .

Crying that all men at the last and at the worst and at the last,
Had found the place where England ends and England can begin.
—(The Old Song).

Rending and ending of things gone rotten.
—(On the Downs).

Of the battle ahead:
And all your thoughts be soft and white
As the wood of the white tree
But if they tear the Charter,
Let the tocsin speak for me.
—(The Carpenters).

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* Not republished, so far as I know.

† Compare the striking parallel in Eric Gill's Autobiography (e.g., p. 190).

Paint mighty things, paint paltry things,
Paint silly things or sweet,
But if they break the Charter
You may slay them in the street.
(The Painters).

But if men doubt the Charter, ye shall
Call on the crusade—
Trumpet and torch and catapult cannon
And bow and blade,
Because it was my challenge to all the
Things I made.
—(A Christmas Song).

Faces of men—and Swords.
—(A Song of Swords).

The feast of friends, the candle-fruited tree,
I have not failed to honour, and I say
It would be better for such men as we,
And we be nearer Bethlehem, if we lay
Shot dead on scarlet snows for liberty,
Dead in the daylight upon Christmas Day.
—(Sonnet to a Popular Leader).

Of the attack on the Family:

But mother is happy turning a crank
That increases the balance at somebody's bank;
And I feel satisfaction that mother is free
From the sinister task of attending to me.
. . . .
For mother is dancing up forty-eight floors
For love of the Leeds International Stores.
—(Songs of Education: The Crêche).

For he will learn, if he will try,
The deep interior truths whereby
We rule the Commonwealth.
What is the Food Controller's fee
And whether the Health Ministry
Are in it for their health.
—(Songs of Education: Citizenship).

Of the tragedy following the expulsion from the land:

The people they left the land, the land,
But they went on working hard;
And the village green that had got mislaid,
Turned up in the squire's back-yard,
But twenty men of us all got work
On a bit of his motor-car;
And we all became, with the world's acclaim
The marvellous mugs we are.
. . . .
The marvellous mugs, miraculous mugs,
The mystical mugs we are.
—(Songs of Education: History).

Of the tragedy of mechanisation:

And though the sullen engines swing,
Be you not much afraid, my friend.
This did not end by Nelson's urn
Where an immortal England sits—
Nor where your tall young men in turn
Drank death like wine at Austerlitz.
And when the pedant bade us mark
What cold mechanic happenings
Must come, our souls said in the dark
"Belike; but there are likelier things."
—(To Hillaire Belloc).

All the wheels are thine, master—tell
The wheels to run!
Yea! the wheels are mighty gods—
Set them going then!
We are only men, master, have you heard
Of men?
—(The Song of the Wheels).

Of the pride and oppression called social service:

Because a Doctor Otto Maehr
Spoke of "a segregated few"—
And you sat smiling in your chair—
It shall not be forgiven you.
—(Ballade d'une Grande Dame).

Pride and a little scratching pen
Have dried and split the hearts of men.
—(Ballad of the White Horse).

And finally, to make an end of what could be endless, the deadly warning to the powerful that the English people are indestructible, and that *their* revolution has not yet taken place:

But we are the people of England; and
We have not spoken yet.
Smile at us pay us pass us. But
Do not quite forget.
—(The Secret People).

When death is on your drums, Democracy, and with one rush of slaves the world is free, we shall remember, perhaps, that Chesterton, thank God was not respectable. He was not a mere man of letters. He was a herald indeed, but a Herald of Revolt: he was a poet who sang of reality: a writer, foreseeing the doom that faces us now.

II

A statement based on Chesterton's own words, on the nature and extent of the work to be done, might send us ranging over the whole vast extent of his writing. This would be fascinating for the present writer, but as the whole purpose of this chapter is to urge the reader to study Chesterton's own convictions for himself, more accessible reference is desirable. Fortunately for our purpose, he set down in one of his shorter books, all we need to quote from here. It will be the present writer's great reward if what follows induces readers to study closely *The Outline of Sanity* (Methuen, 1926).

For a correct setting, we must allude to events described more fully in chapter 6.

In September, 1926, the Distributist League was founded. It was clear that one of the immediate needs was a Distributist Manifesto and Programme. The original Executive Committee held that this should be produced in collaboration by Chesterton and Belloc as being the most authoritative living Distributists. Not only did it not occur to the Committee that collaboration between these two great but dissimilar minds was impossible, it did not occur to the minds themselves. During this period Belloc was always saying that he must have a word with Gilbert on the point, and Chesterton was always saying that he must have a word with Hilary. Naturally, the Manifesto and Programme were not forthcoming.

It has always been clear to me that Chesterton was the first to realise this, although he had not given up hope of such a work by other hands (this point is followed out in chapter 6).

At all events, he produced at the end of 1926 *The Outline of Sanity*, written up largely from articles which had appeared already in *G.K.'s Weekly*. It is a magnificent, a clear and a very practical statement of our aims and objectives. It is quite adequate on what it purports to be—an outline in bold strokes which was to be filled in later. It discounts, heavily and in advance, almost all the objections levelled later at the only Social Sanity. One is left with the impression that few of the critics had troubled to read it.

The note which he prefaced to the book gives both its scope and its hope:

"This book is not arranged with any resemblance to a political programme, being a general controversy with those who dispute the ideals behind such a programme. A table of particular proposals will be set out in pamphlet form in the Basis shortly to be published at 20 and 21 Essex Street, by the League for the Defence of Liberty by the Restoration of Property."

Chesterton lunges straight at the heart of his opponents in his opening sentences. It is characteristic that he does not begin with definitions. They come later.

"I have been asked to republish these notes as a rough sketch of certain aspects of the institution of Private Property now so completely forgotten amid the journalistic jubilations over Private Enterprise.* The very fact that the publicists say so much of the latter and so little of the former is a measure of the moral tone of the times. A pickpocket is obviously a champion of private enterprise. But it would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that a pickpocket is a champion of private property. The point about Capitalism and Commercialism, as conducted of late, is that they have really preached the extension of business rather than the preservation of belongings; and have at best tried to disguise the pickpocket with some of the virtues of the pirate. The point about Communism is that it only reforms the pickpocket by forbidding pockets." (p. 3).

"The practical tendency of all trade and business to-day is towards big commercial combinations, often more imperial, more impersonal, more international than many a communist commonwealth" (p 4).

And how prophetic, as well as just, is that sentence, let recent trials in America reveal.

"Now I am one of those who believe that the cure of centralisation is decentralisation. It has been described as a paradox. There is apparently something elvish and fantastic about saying that when capital has come to be too much in the hand of the few, the right thing is to restore it into the hands of the many. The Socialists would put it in the hands of even fewer people: but those people would be politicians, who (as we know) always administer it in the interests of the many" (pp. 4-5).

Then we get the definitions: Capitalism is "That economic condition in which there is a class of capitalists, roughly recognisable and relatively small, in whose possession so much of the capital is concentrated as to necessitate a very large majority of the citizens serving those capitalists for a wage" (p. 5).

And Socialism in which we must now include Communism, since they are degrees of the same thing:

"Socialism is a system which makes the corporate unity of society responsible for all its economic processes, or all those affecting life and essential living . . . A Socialist Government is one which in its nature does not tolerate any true and real opposition. For there the Government provides everything: and it is absurd to ask a Government to *provide* an opposition" (pp 7-8).

* The expression in general use by Big Business in 1946. I invite my readers to note as they occur many cases of this kind.

And of the essence of Distributism:

"Opposition and rebellion depend on property and liberty. They can only be tolerated where other rights have been allowed to strike root, besides the central right of the ruler. Those rights must be protected by a morality which even the ruler will hesitate to defy. The critic of the State can only exist where a religious sense of right protects his claim to his own bow and spear; or at least, to his own pen or his own printing press" (p. 8).

"About fifteen years ago a few of us began to preach . . . a policy of small distributed property (which has since assumed the awkward but accurate name of Distributism) . . . . the truth is that the conception that small property *evolves* into capitalism is a precise picture of what practically never takes place. . . . Industrial servitude has almost everywhere arisen in those empty spaces where the older civilisation was thin or absent. . . The explanation of the continuity of peasantries (which their opponents are simply forced to leave unexplained) is that, where that independence exists, it is valued exactly as any other dignity is valued when it is regarded as normal to a man" (pp 9-11-15).

Note the very acute point about Industrial servitude *growing up* in the waste places of the world. It has been far too little considered. Even in England it began in the north rather than in the south. To the stated examples we should now have to add Russia.

"I disregard the view that any such 'reaction' cannot be. I hold the old mystical dogma that what Man has done, Man can do . . . If we cannot go back, it hardly seems worth while to go forward. . . . But it is strange that some of us should have seen sanity, if only in a vision, while the rest go forward chained eternally to enlargement without liberty and progress without hope" (p 19).

"Capitalism is contradictory as soon as it is complete; because it is dealing with the mass of men in two opposite ways at once. When most men are wage-earners, it is more and more difficult for most men to be customers" (p 27).

That essential dilemma the modern world has now reached. It is trying, or will try, to escape from it by adopting progressively the principles of Communism. As we can say but Chesterton could not, Communism will also fail because the momentum of the machines cannot be checked without disaster, and cannot continue without resort to war. To this point we shall return.

"They are always telling us that this or that tradition has gone for ever; that this or that creed has gone for ever; but they dare not face the fact that their own vulgar and huckstering commerce has gone for ever" (p 31).

"We are choosing between a peasantry that might succeed and a commerce that has already failed" (p 32).

"I think it not unlikely that in any case a simpler social life will return; even if it returns by the road of ruin" (p 33).

With the groundwork so made good, he proceeds to make it clear that there are two distinct stages in his proposals, and that the distinction must be kept always in mind.* There is the

* "I have repeatedly asked the reader to remember that my general view of our potential future divides itself into two parts. First there is the policy of reversing, or even merely of resisting, the modern tendency to monopoly or the concentration of capital" (p 151).

final stage of the fully propertied, sane and simple society, which we must keep always in mind as the good in which we are to repose. And there is the road to it—what anyone could do there and then in 1926, and even here and now in 1946. The essence of this first stage is to *reverse the trend*. That whereas law and practice have been made to favour the large against the small, we must begin to insist that all law and practice favour the small against the large. As my friend Kenrick said in a brilliant phrase we must begin by "Taxing the Size."

"We believe that if things were released, the world would recover; but we also believe . . . . that if things even *begin* to be released, they will *begin* to recover" (p 38).

"That is why we have so often taken, merely as a working model, the matter of a peasantry" (p 39).

And finally, in a passage which we must quote at some length he sums up this preliminary argument of which no phrase can be denied. It is even more pointed now than it was twenty years ago: it will be our own fault if we fail to make this belated second start.

"It has advanced under leaders who were confident, not to say cocksure. They were quite sure that their economic rules were rigid, that their political theory was right, that their commerce was beneficent, that their parliaments were popular, that their press was enlightened, that their science was humane. In this confidence they committed their people to certain new and enormous experiments; to making their own independent nation an eternal debtor to a few rich men; to piling up private property in heaps on the faith of financiers; to covering their land with iron and stone and stripping it of grass and grain; to driving food out of their own country in the hope of buying it back again from the ends of the earth; to loading up their little island with iron and gold until it was weighted like a sinking ship; to letting the rich grow richer and fewer, and the poor poorer and more numerous; to letting the whole world be cloven in two with a war of mere masters and mere servants; to losing every type of moderate prosperity and candid patriotism till there was no independence without luxury and no labour without ugliness; to leaving the millions of mankind dependent on indirect and distant discipline and indirect and distant sustenance, working themselves to death for they knew not whom and taking the means of life from they knew not where; and hanging on a thread of alien trade which grew thinner and thinner. To the people who have been brought into this position many things may still be said. It will be right to remind them that mere wild revolt will make things worse and not better. It may be true to say that certain complexities must be tolerated for a time because they correspond to other complexities, and the two must be carefully simplified together. But if I may say one word to the princes and rulers of such people, who have led them into such a pass, I would say to them as seriously as anything was ever said by man to man: 'For God's sake, for our sake, but above all for your own sake, do not be in this blind haste to tell them there is *no* way out of the trap into which your folly has led them; that there is *no* road except the road by which you have brought them to ruin; that there is *no* progress except the progress that has ended here. Do not be so eager to prove to your hapless victims that what is hapless is also hopeless. Do not be so anxious to convince them, now that you are at the end of your experiment, that you are also at the end of your resources. Do not be so very eloquent, so very elaborate so very rational and radiantly convincing in proving that your own error is even more irrevocable and irremediable than it is. Do not try to minimise the industrial disease by showing it is an incurable disease. Do not brighten the dark problem of the coal-pit by proving it is a bottomless pit. Do not tell the people there is no way but this; for many even now will not endure this. Do not say to men that this alone is possible; for many already think it impossible to bear. And at some later time, at some eleventh hour, when the fates have grown darker and the ends have grown clearer the mass of men may suddenly understand into what a blind alley your progress has led them. Then they may turn on you in the trap. And if they bore all else, they might not bear the final taunt that you can do nothing; that you will not even try to do anything. 'What art thou, man, and why art thou despairing?' wrote the poet. 'God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.' Man also may forgive you for blundering and may not forgive you for despairing." (pp. 45-46-47).

The rest of his analysis falls into four main heads.

Some Aspects of Big Business.
Some Aspects of the Land.
Some Aspects of Machinery.
A Note on Emigration.

The first section is called *The Bluff of the Big Shops*, and he rightly puts this in the forefront because it is a thing anyone can do to-day, and because the whole thing is a colossal bluff kept going by unscrupulous advertisements. Whatever else is doubtful, it is not doubtful that the Combine shops could be closed this week by a mere act of will of the citizens. They go to big shops through habit, through advertisement, and through a mere delusion that they get things cheaper there. What they actually get is one or two cheap advertising lines, and everything else a trifle dearer. In other words, they depend on the validity of Carlyle's dictum about most people in these islands being fools. If they weren't, they could still close all the Combine shops in a week.

Our unintelligent reliance on advertising was never shown more clearly than during the recent war. Commercial advertisements, ostensibly because of the shortage of paper were cut to a minimum. They were replaced largely by official advertisements paid for handsomely from public funds. These have not been any more honest than the commercial ones. As when the Ministry of Food found itself, by its own fault with a heavy surplus of that objectionable vegetable the carrot. Whilst this surplus lasted, the newspapers were full of the illustrated advice of one Doctor Carrot. When the surplus had gone Doctor Carrot went also.

"Capitalism is breaking up; and in one sense we do not pretend to be sorry it is breaking up. Indeed we might put our own point pretty correctly by saying that we would help to break it up; but we do not want it merely to break down. But the first fact to realise is precisely that; that it is a choice between its breaking up and its breaking down. It is a choice between its being voluntarily resolved into its real component parts and its merely collapsing on our heads in a crash or confusion of all its component parts, which some call Communism and some call chaos" (p 76).

"I began by enunciating the paradox that one way of supporting small shops would be to support them" (p 96).

"By all means let people say that they do not think the ideal of the Distributive State is worth the risk or even worth the trouble. But do not let them say that no human being in the past has even taken any risk; or that no children of Adam are capable of taking any trouble. If they chose to take half as much risk to achieve justice as they have already taken to achieve degradation, if they toiled half as laboriously to make anything beautiful as they toiled to make everything ugly, if they had served their God as they have served their Pork King and their Petrol King, the success of our whole Distributive democracy would stare at the world like one of their flaming sky-signs and scrape the sky like one of their crazy towers" (pp 102-3).

THE LAND

It is desirable here to repeat with some heat, as Chesterton was always saying with heat, that none of us had ever suggested that *everybody* go on the land. He tended to use the land-holding in argument for two reasons: one is that it is basic, for no opponent is so lacking in sense as not to see that unless we eat we cannot live, and England in particular has neglected this simple basic truth. The other is that it is simple and conclusive as an illustration. Everybody knows what is meant by a peasantry and most people know that if you don't *start* with a peasantry, you do not start at all.

But Kenrick demonstrated, once and for all, that the most *complete* kind of Distributive State would mean that one family in three was actually on the land.

Chesterton begins with a truth as surprising as it is neglected.

"The real peculiarity of England is that it is the only country on earth that has not got a conservative class. . . . Whatever else an aristocracy is, an aristocracy is never conservative. By its very nature it goes by fashion rather than by tradition. Men living a life of leisure and luxury are always eager for new things; we might fairly say they would be fools if they weren't. And the English aristocrats are by no means fools. They can proudly claim to have played a great part in every stage of the intellectual progress that has brought us to our present ruin" (p 109).

That needed saying, and needed saying very badly. As he goes on to point out at some length, peasants are the only class which tends of its nature to look all round a change before accepting it. The alleged degradation of the life is demolished in the passage:

"All experience is against the assertion that peasants are dreary and degraded savages, crawling about on all fours, and eating grass like the beasts of the field. All over the world, for instance, there are peasant dances: and the dances of peasants are like dances of kings and queens. The popular dance is much more stately and ceremonial and full of human dignity than is the aristocratic dance. In many a modern countryside the country folk may still be found on high festivals wearing caps like crowns and using gestures like a religious ritual, while the castle or chateau of the lords and ladies is already full of people waddling about like monkeys to the noises made by negroes" (pp 112-113).

The critics who say what a hard thing a Land Movement is, will be depressed to find that Chesterton said it in the beginning (as indeed we all did).

"We have got to say to our friends 'You are in for a rough time if you start new farms on your own; but it is the right thing to do. . . .' there is no way out of the danger except the dangerous way" (pp 115-116).

And those who say we haven't got men in towns with the right attitude should ponder this passage. Parallels from almost every town might be adduced:

"Now the whole of our modern problem is very difficult, and though in one way the agricultural part of it is much the simplest, in another way it is by no means the least difficult. But this Limehouse affair is a vivid example of how we make the difficulty more difficult. We are told again and again that the slum-dwellers of the big towns cannot merely be turned loose on the land, and that they do not want to go on the land, that they have no tastes or turn of thought that could make them by any process into a people interested in the land, that they cannot be conceived as having any pleasures except town pleasures, or even any discontents except the Bolshevism of the towns. And then, when a whole crowd of them want to keep chickens, we force them to live in flats. When a whole crowd of them want to have fences, we laugh and order them off into communal barracks. When a whole population wishes to insist on palings and enclosures and the traditions of private property, the authorities act as if they were suppressing a Red riot. When these very hopeless slum-dwellers do actually set all their hopes on a rural occupation, which they can still practise even in the slums, we tear them away from that occupation and call it improving their condition. You pick a man up who has his head in a hen-coop, forcibly set him on giant stilts a hundred feet high where he cannot reach the ground, and then you say you have saved him from misery. And you add that a man like that can only live on stilts and would never be interested in hens" (p 121).

"Nowhere in these notes have I suggested that there is the faintest possibility of its being done, if we do not choose to try" (p 123).

And he goes to the heart of the unscrupulous type of modern criticism when he says:

"When we speak of people leaving the countryside and flocking to the towns, we are not judging the case fairly. Something may be allowed for a social type that would always prefer cinemas and picture post cards even to property and liberty. But there is nothing conclusive in the fact that people prefer to go without property and liberty, with a cinema, to going without property and liberty without a cinema" (p 126).

And more portentously still:

"And it would surely modify the modern enormity of unemployment, if any large number of people were really living on the land, not merely in the sense of sleeping on the land but of feeding on the land. There will be many who maintain that this would mean a very dull life compared with the excitements of dying in a workhouse in Liverpool; just as there are many who insist that the average woman is made to drudge in the home, without asking whether the average man exults in having to drudge in the office" (p 130).

Finally and conclusively:

"It seems to me a very good thing, in theory as well as practice, that there should be a body of citizens primarily concerned in producing and consuming and not in exchanging. It seems to me a part of our ideal, and not merely a part of our compromise, that there should be in the community a sort of core not only of simplicity but of completeness. Exchange and variation can then be given their reasonable place; as they were in the old days of fairs and markets. But there would be somewhere in the centre of civilisation a type that was truly independent; in the sense of producing and consuming within its own social circle. I do not say that such a complete human life stands for a complete humanity. I do not say that the State needs only the man who needs nothing from the State. But I do say that this man who supplies his own needs is very much needed. I say it largely because of his absence from modern civilisation, that modern civilisation has lost unity" (pp 136-137).

MACHINERY

Chesterton devoted over forty pages of his book to discussing *Some Aspects of Machinery*. We may conclude perhaps, that he did not think the question as it concerns the Distributive State either irrelevant or unimportant. Many critics are ignorant of both Distributism and Machinery. They are not debarred thereby from assuming a conclusion. Two things are quite clear to Chesterton as to every other Distributist. In the Distributive State men will dominate the machine, and not *vice versa*. And by consequence of putting human quality and happiness first, machinery will take a very much smaller part in the Distributive State than in any other. It is overlooked too often, also, how much of modern mechanisation serves merely to maintain mechanisation in being—a fruitful thought that need not detain us now.

It follows naturally that prior agreement on the precise degree of smallness will never be perfect. As he pointed out in *G.K.'s Weekly*, the Fallacy of the Accumulating Heap does not enable us to ascertain at what precise moment a heap becomes a hill. It does enable us to insist that there is an observable difference between a heap and a hill, and that we want one and not the other.

"The evil we are seeking to destroy," he begins, "clings about in corners, especially in the form of catch-phrases by which even the intelligent can easily be caught. One phrase, which we may hear from anybody at any moment, is the phrase that such and such a modern institution has 'come to stay.' It is these half-metaphors that tend to make us all half-witted" (p 141).

He then develops the famous parable of "Uncle Humphrey has come to stay," one of the best and jolliest that ever came from his pen. Even stripped of its cloth of gold, it needs very close study especially by the half-witted. He points out that "stay" in the sense of afflicting a household permanently, would not flatter the ingenuity of its members even if Uncle Humphrey were a real person. If, however, "Uncle Humphrey" were actually made artificially out of a water-butt a pair of stuffed trousers, and so on, and had been put together by the members of the household themselves, we should be rather astonished if that household claimed to be utterly unable to terminate his stay.

"Before we begin any talk of the practical problem of machinery, it is necessary to leave off thinking like machines. It is necessary to begin at the beginning and consider the end. Now we do not necessarily wish to destroy every sort of machinery. But we do desire to destroy a certain sort of mentality. And that is precisely the sort of mentality that begins by telling us that nobody *can* destroy machinery. Those who begin by saying that we *cannot* abolish the machine, that we must use the machine, are themselves refusing to use the mind. The aim of human polity is human happiness" (p 144).

"If machinery does prevent happiness, then it is as futile to tell a man trying to make men happy that he is neglecting the talents of Arkwright, as to tell a man trying to make men humane that he is neglecting the tastes of Nero" (p 147).

"I am not a fanatic" he adds drily, "and I think that machines may be of considerable use in destroying machinery" (p 171). "There is no doubt at all that such dependence for essential power on a central plant is a real dependence, and is therefore a defect in any complete scheme of independence" (p 172).

"Above all, I think it is vital to create the experience of small property, the psychology of small property, the sort of man who is a small proprietor. When once men of that sort exist, they will decide, in a manner very different from any modern mob, how far the central power-house is to dominate their own private house, or whether it need dominate at all" (p 172).

No selection from any part of this book, and especially from these forty pages, could do justice to the long series of closely knitted arguments. But I hope that enough has been quoted to indicate the general line, and send the reader to the original.

EMIGRATION

We must pass briefly to the realistic treatment of the resources of these islands and in particular to his anticipation of half-witted critics.

"Nobody supposes that the whole English population could live on the English land. But everybody ought to realise that immeasurably more people could live on it than do live on it" (p 187).

"But it must also be said that many rush to the expedient of emigration just as many rush to the expedient of Birth Control, for the perfectly simple reason that it is the easiest way in which the capitalists can escape from their own blunder of capitalism. They lured men into the town with the promise of greater pleasures; they ruined them there and left them with only one pleasure; they found the increase it produced at first convenient for labour and then inconvenient for supply; and now they are ready to round off their experiment in a highly appropriate manner, by telling them that they must have no families, or that their families must go to the modern equivalent of Botany Bay. It is not in that spirit that we envisage an element of colonization; and so long as it is treated in that spirit we refuse to consider it" (p 189).

In other words, let us do first things first. No one knows, because no one has tried, how many families can be nourished on the soil of these islands. It will be found, I have always thought, ultimately to be much higher than interested parties have deemed possible. But when we have started with this, and finished with this, it will be time to devise an overflow meeting. The need for the first part of the process has been increasing steadily in urgency ever since Chesterton wrote. It is now critical.

He concludes in a general summary:

"If we proceed as at present in a proper orderly fashion, the very idea of property will vanish. It is not revolutionary violence that will destroy it. It is rather the desperate and reckless habit of not having a revolution. The world will be occupied, by two powers who are now one power. I speak, of course, of that part of the world that is covered by our system, and that part of the history of the world which will last very much longer than our time. Sooner or later, no doubt, men will rediscover so natural a pleasure as property. But it might be discovered after ages, like those ages filled with pagan slavery. It might be discovered after a long decline of our whole civilisation. Barbarians might rediscover it and imagine it was a new thing" (p 215).

"One of these powers is State Socialism and the other is Big Business. They are already one spirit. They will soon be one body" (p 216).

"If anything can be inferred from history and human nature, it is absolutely certain that the despotism will grow more and more despotic, and that the article will grow more and more inferior. There is no conceivable argument from psychology, by which it can be pretended that people preserving such power, generation after generation would not abuse it more and more, or neglect everything else more and more. We know what far less rigid rule has become, even when founded by spirited and intelligent rulers. We can darkly guess the effect of larger powers in the hands of lesser men. And if the name of Caesar came at last to stand for all that we call Byzantine, exactly what degree of dullness are we to anticipate when the name of Harrod shall sound even duller than it does? If China passed into a proverb at last for stiffness and monotony after being nourished for centuries by Confucius, what will be the condition of the brains that have been nourished for centuries by Callisthenes?

"I leave out here the particular case of my own country, where we are threatened, not with a long decline, but rather with an unpleasantly rapid collapse. But taking monopolist capitalism in a country where it is still in a vulgar sense successful, as in the United States, we only see more clearly, and on a more colossal scale, the long and descending perspectives that point down to Byzantium or Pekin. It is perfectly obvious that the whole business is a machine for manufacturing tenth-rate things and keeping people ignorant of first-rate things" (pp 217-218).

And finally, in words which leave us in no doubt of where Chesterton knew his work lay:

"And indeed I do believe that when they lose the pride of personal ownership they will lose something that belongs to their erect posture and to their footing and poise upon the planet. Meanwhile I sit amid droves of overdriven clerks and underpaid workmen in a tube or a tram; I read of the great conception of Men like Gods and I wonder when men will be like men" (p 230).

Chapter 5

THE FOUNDATION DISTRIBUTISTS

"I'll cross it though it blast me—Stay, illusion!"—(Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 1)

I

THE substantial and even great achievements of Distributism cannot be understood unless we first understand the quality and temper of the chief Foundation Distributists. And what would be a malign fate—if there were any malign fate—but was actually the malice of the few and the indifference of the many, must also be understood if we are to realise why so little of the achievement is visible to-day.

Let it be said here that much of the work was invisible of its nature. It has been what we used to call in the artillery of the first World War, *counter-battery work*. In this range the highest achievement is when you have stopped the enemy from doing something. It is a success even if he has been delayed or hampered. No one can say what fresh depths of political morass would have been plumbed if there had been no Marconi Case. No one can say what infamies the eugenists would have achieved by now, if they had not been brought to a standstill in campaigns extending over twenty years. No one can say what greater invasions of the family would have followed any failure on our part to counter-attack. And finally, wherever there is any live tradition of liberty, it is likely to be either a tradition from a now distant past, or it may be traced, surprisingly often, to the work of the Distributist Papers and Leagues.

Such of the work as would have shown positive results—a revival of craftsmanship, a land movement—has been smashed by authority or masked by superior command of advertisement. This I shall show in its place. But it is vital to any just appraisal of Chesterton and his peers that one fact should be realised.

The secret directors of the industrial invasion knew very well, and from the start, that their real enemy had appeared with *The New Witness*. Socialists could be absorbed and used. The Squires could be absorbed and used. The new fancy idealisms could be absorbed and used. Distributism was David and could not be absorbed and used. Only in this case he was not fighting Goliath alone. He was fighting his own followers who would not be saved from the Philistines: and the Philistines were not gentlemen enough to abide by their champion. They piled in at David's back. The mark left by Distributism on the first half of the twentieth century, in view of all his, must be adjudged remarkable.

Cecil Chesterton was the first paladin. He died by practising what he preached. His story has been told by a mouth much better entitled and equipped to tell it than mine, and he comes into this record only by way of salute. His death in the army, soon after the Armistice of 1918, was a grievous blow not only to Distributism but to England. It is an interesting if fruitless speculation to wonder what would have happened to political and social affairs in the next quarter of a century if he and another had survived. I cannot refrain here from joining his name to that of Sir Mark Sykes, who also died about the same time in the service of his country. There is no reason to suppose that Sykes was ever an unconscious Distributist. But he was of increasing importance in the Conservative Party, and

he was a man of high integrity and intelligence. Had he lived, not even those qualities could have prevented his being Prime Minister in England in due course—instead of Stanley Baldwin. Sykes and Cecil Chesterton might even have fought—but it would have been about realities, and with clean steel.

It was in the earlier history of *The New Witness*, the period ending about 1916, that the principles and philosophy of Distributism were first made explicit to English readers. In a sense, it was a weakness of *The Eye Witness* and the earlier *New Witness* that they attracted so many men who were interested in the matter of clean government, but were not prepared to be interested in the rest of the philosophy. I suppose E. S. P. Haynes was a model of this type. It was never appreciated by many supporters that you cannot have and keep clean government with a rapidly expanding commercial and industrial background. Graft is too much in the very bones of both.

A principle stressed first, I think, in *The New Age*, was pertinent here, but was not generally accepted. *This was that economic power must precede political power.**

This was a weakness which was never overcome entirely. The speculation that we might have done better to run two movements, one for Clean Government, and one for Distributism, is attractive but would take us too far afield. Unless, however, there was substantial agreement over the whole field, the two great objects could not be achieved. These were respectively—sufficient numbers, and substantial and obvious action. Our counter-battery work, necessary and useful though it was, was not enough. As Hewart (L.C.J.) said: *Justice must not only be done: it must be seen to be done.*

II

Gilbert Chesterton took over the Editorship of *The New Witness* in 1916; when, as Titterton puts it, some fool of a doctor had passed Cecil with his Bright's Disease into the army. We must consider who were the chief Distributists of the first rank to stay the Course over our crucial period. These were:—

Father Vincent McNabb, O.P., S.T.M., whose matured studies of dogmatic Theology and the Scriptures had brought him to Distributism by the highest road. His influence was incalculable, and continued to grow until his death in 1943. I had a talk with him at the end of May in that year, when his body was a skeleton, but his mind was working at its highest pressure.

I remember with what glee he reported a recent conversation with one of the chief aides of Sir William Beveridge. "I talked to him on the point of freedom. I told him that there were only two kinds of society—the free and the unfree. The free society was so in virtue of its highly distributed property. The unfree could be either capitalist or communist—all men worked for wages at the dictation of others, and were therefore unfree. Names were irrelevant: the only test was freedom and property."

Gilbert Chesterton once told me he considered Father Vincent one of the greatest men living. Few who knew him will contest the epithet.

Hilaire Belloc invented the awkward but necessary word *Distributism*. It was necessary, he said, in an abnormal society to describe a perfectly normal thing.

I shall not be expected here to give any brief picture of that truly great mind, which, to use a word of which he was fond, *nourished* the youth of so many of us. I shall always think that all he said in those days is to be found in little in that great sonnet he published in *Everyman* before the first World War. It is difficult not to think that he had the line of modern development, including the atomic bomb, fully in his mind.

ON THE POOR OF LONDON

Almighty God, whose justice like a sun
  Shall coruscate along the floors of Heaven,
Raising what's low: perfecting what's undone:
  Breaking the Rich, and making Odd things Even—
The Poor of Jesus Christ along the Street
  In your rain sodden, in your snows unshod,
They have not hearth, not sword, or daily meat,
  Nor eve the Bread of Men: Almighty God!

The Poor of Jesus Christ whom no man hears,
  Have waited on your vengeance much too long.
Wipe out not tears, but blood. Our eyes bleed tears!
  Come: smite our damnéd sophistries so strong
That Thy rude Hammer, battering this rude wrong,
  Ring down the abyss of twice ten thousand years.

In those early years he propounded a full analysis of correct order in life for which we must remain ever grateful. But later on his time was taken up more and more by history and by pure politics. To the regret of many of his friends, he ended his active career as an advocate of the aristocracy he had criticised so frequently in his youth. He must remain a figure of the greatest stature in the history of Distributism.

Eric Gill, in his Autobiography, shows a curious parallel in approaching Distributism to that which has been analysed in the case of Chesterton himself. As a unique worker in stone and wood he approached Distributism, alone of the four, from the needs imposed by human work. He had already at this period taken a chief part in establishing the famous, and happily still flourishing group of craftsmen on Ditchling Common. His example and writing were of supreme importance during the next generation.

All these men, with Gilbert himself, saw Distributism steadily and saw it whole.

But perhaps it is not entirely fanciful to see projecting facets in each case. Father Vincent stood for dogmatic Theology. Belloc for Order. Gill for Work. And if so, surely Gilbert Chesterton stood chiefly for Justice and Charity.

* The New Age, from a Distributist point of view, was more than a little of a tragedy. Orage was a great editor. Had he possessed a stable philosophy he would not have abandoned that great man Arthur Penty, in favour of the book-keeping expedients of Major Douglas. Whatever is wrong with our age, it will be agreed generally to be more than a mere matter of book-keeping. Penty was sound on almost everything except the central importance of diffused property. For this reason he cannot be included with the Foundation Distributists. But he was a great man who has shared the privilege of being rejected by a wicked and adulterous generation.

This group of great men was supported and reinforced in those days by men and women, many of whose names will now never be on record. When I returned from Active Service at the end of 1918, prominent among them were Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, Agnes Mott and W. R. Titterton in London; Father Austin Barker, O.P.*, K. L. Kenrick and Brian Harley in Birmingham; Dr. John McQuillan and Dr. J. P. Flood and others in Glasgow.

III

Practically all these were, or became later, Catholics. And this is as good a time as any to make a point that must be made. Distributism is an application, proper to our time and race, of the social teaching of the Catholic Church. But the social teaching of the Church reposes on the Natural Law, which has God for its Author. And everyone who believes in God can and ought to follow the Natural Law. Therefore Distributism is not so much a function of Catholicism as of Christian Culture in its broadest sense. And it is quite clear that a number of such cultures—Holland, Denmark, Norway, and even such cultures as China outside the body of Christendom—have thrown themselves into a Distributist form. Any group of Englishmen or Americans are entitled, without in any way compromising their religious position, to adopt Distributism as a natural conclusion from their own premisses. That position is still valid, and it must be insisted on if our culture is to be saved and restored. We tried, and tried hard, to insist on it in the Leagues.

But it is regrettably true that the curious distrust and prejudice which survive in England and America have embarrassed the progress of Distributism very greatly. We tended to attract Catholics. And I am sure this was not our fault. We were all very keen on being a social and not a religious body. That is still true. But the average non-Catholic seems to have been much more afraid of being grouped with Catholics than of having his own institutions disappear before his eyes. I can do no more, here, than insist that we all tried honestly to make it possible for non-Catholics to join with us, and that we claimed no other privilege than that of being Englishmen who wanted to save their country.

I shall have occasion later on to give instances of this curious preference. Here, I may be allowed to mention an equally curious fact of another sort. It must be very rare for any religious group to have the allegiance, in one single age, of four such first-class minds as those of McNabb, Belloc, Chesterton and Gill.

We may ignore the greater mass of other minds sharing both their conviction and their allegiance.

The Catholic authorities in England have never shown any other sentiment than embarrassment to have their own principles stated so uniquely. This also will emerge in its place. Here I may instance one example.

The Catholic Social Guild was founded in 1908 to apply Catholic social teaching. It was, and is, approved by the Hierarchy. Its most famous Secretary was Father Charles Plater, S.J.

On one occasion in 1919, Father Plater was lunching at my house, and asked me what was, in the circumstances, a somewhat embarrassing question. What was my own explanation of the failure of the C.S.G. to attract members within the Catholic Body? I replied that, if he would not mind my saying so, it was because the Catholic Social Guild did not, and never had, put over the Catholic Social Teaching. He demanded proof.

"Would you agree," I said, "that the central Catholic social expedient is that of diffused private property?" He did so agree, as he was bound to do. "Well then," I continued, "why is it that the C.S.G., which has now been in existence for nearly eleven years, has never issued any work or pamphlet on how Private Property may be restored to England?" He said he supposed that a really authoritative statement on the point had not been available. I drew his attention to the series of twelve articles on *The Reconstruction of Private Property* by Hilaire Belloc, which had appeared in *The New Witness* from January to April, 1919. I said that while I had no authority to say that Mr. Belloc would agree to their republication, as they had not been republished elsewhere there would be no harm in trying, if his Executive Committee approved. He promised to ascertain, and I gave him (or sent by that post) the twelve issues of *The New Witness* concerned. Soon after that he was seized with the lamentable illness from which he ultimately died. In February, 1920, I mentioned the matter to Mr. Henry Somerville, M.A., who was acting for him. In a letter dated 2nd March, 1920, Mr. Somerville informed me that "there is no prospect of the Guild undertaking to publish them as a book."

In conversation with him a little later, I asked Mr. Somerville whether his Executive Committee had given any reason for the refusal. He replied that they thought Mr. Belloc took too long to come to the point! It may be added that no other statement *ad hoc* on Property has ever been published by that body until 1945, when it reprinted in a pamphlet two slight articles from *The Tablet*.

There it is. In 1920, nearly twelve years after foundation, the Catholic Social Guild thought Mr. Belloc took too long to come to the point!

IV

Immediately after the Armistice of 1918, when there was time to do a little reading again, I devoured the recent issues of *The New Witness*. It appeared from Notes and Articles there that a medico-eugenist ramp was in progress. As happens always during a war, interested parties try to put over their pet ramps during the absence of the fighting men. They had done so in this case. (It is of great interest that the next great step, to do what it had failed to get away with in 1919, was taken by the Ministry of Health in exactly similar circumstances after the end of the fighting in 1945).

Articles were appearing, written by Margaret Hamilton and Agnes Mott, to the effect that a new attack on the family, backed by a new Ministry, was to be launched. There is reason to suppose that Margaret Hamilton was one of the pen names of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. In particular, a Bill was to be put forward by the Government to establish a Ministry of Health.

* Fr. Austin died suddenly on 8th February, 1947. The voluminous notebooks which he kept would have been of the utmost use to the Biographer. I understand, however, that he left instructions for their destruction, in terms which could not be disregarded. So passes at least one primary source.

The very name is a joke which few, even now, have seen through.

Associated with the ends which this Ministry was intended to secure, was a very nasty attack on the lives of the poor. It had long been brewing in London, but now intensified, and spread quickly to other urban centres. The direction of both attacks was eugenist in its origin and nature, and the purpose was to confront the returning fathers with a complete system of State-managed homes and families in which there would be no room for personal vagaries, or any dysgenic practice. The whole group of us was convinced that this was the intention; and we were, and still are, of the opinion that the attack offered a unique chance of pointing out that the survival of the free family rested ultimately on the independence conferred by free property.

In this operation we were supported fully by Chesterton, in terms which may be gathered from his *Eugenics and Other Evils* (Cassell), published in 1922. It would be well if space permitted long quotation from his articles (unusually forceful even for him) which appeared in *The New Witness* during 1919 and 1920. I may allude to two of the strongest, in the issues of 3rd and 10th December, 1920. The following passage from the last-named gives little impression of his fire, but sums up his own position and ours.

"Two types of reformers are fighting in the world to-day; those who strive to correct abnormal realities in conformity with a normal ideal, and those who wish to twist normal realities into conformity with an abnormal ideal. The first is in revolt because the common people are now deprived of the common things. The second is also in revolt because it is hoped that they may learn to like uncommon things, and to become uncommon people. It is enough to say of this difference here that the first is the only kind that can have the smallest claim to be called a democratic revolt. In any case, we have long taken up our own position, as to that one of the two criticisms most needed by the corruptions of the age. . . . But the deep and aching void in the modern world is its lack of democracy; in the true sense of a control by common sense."

The two immediate results of this position were the agitation against the Ministry of Health Bill and Act, and *The Mothers' Defence League*. Neither would have been possible but for the existence of a free weekly in *The New Witness*. They must be discussed separately.

It is to be pointed out here that even in 1926 and later, and certainly in 1919 and later, the public were suffering from reaction and boredom, and were reluctant to be at any trouble to defend rights for which, as they correctly thought, they had just been fighting. The same is true to day, and both circumstances throw a very ugly light on the motives of the official world.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

It is to be feared that at this time those of us who were Catholics were still under the impression that everybody would use in reaction the means most normal and congenial to him. So far as I was concerned, it seemed that the independence of the family, as taught by the Church and emphasised constantly by the Holy See, could not fail to appeal to the Catholic Body. So far as selected people, and the rank and file, were concerned, I proved quite right. I got into touch with the late Mr. Thomas Burns, of the Salford Catholic Federation, and by March, 1919, we had succeeded in convening at Birmingham a Conference of Catholic Societies. No fewer than nine such societies agreed to set up a quasi-permanent *Conference of Catholic Organisations, For Purposes of Ministry of Health*. Mr. Wilfred Rigby, of the *Group of Catholic Approved Societies*, agreed to act as its Hon. Secretary.

There is little point now in trying to detail our operations, but the high spots can be indicated briefly. The Ministry of Health Bill was introduced into Parliament on 17th February, 1919, and became law on 3rd June, 1919. Thereupon Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer to both the Board of Education and the new Ministry of Health, issued the famous book *The Practive of Preventive Medicine*, which become known as the *Memorandum*. It was published officially through the Ministry of Health by the Stationery Office, about June, 1919, and ran to over a hundred pages. Its importance lay in the implications of its title, indicating that the State was taking control of the health of its industrial population, and in the list of ten objects of policy in the forefront, which began with the uncompromising words:

1. Eugenics and the Principles of Sound Breeding.

We had a good press in both Catholic and secular papers,* and many lectures were given in many parts of the country. In these Miss Mott, who was a forceful and informed speaker, was invaluable. In August, 1920, we had a section allotted by the Catholic Congress held that year at Liverpool. It was notable for an address by Mr. Hilaire Belloc—*The Horror Called Eugenics*.

When the Committee thought that a sufficient body of feeling had been aroused by the various means of publicity, the approval of the Catholic Hierarchy for the continuance of the Conference was sought. A letter to the Hon. Secretary, dated 30th June, 1920, contained the following passage:—

"The Cardinal Archbishop desires me to say that the Bishops wish success to the efforts of *The Conference of Catholic Organisations for Purposes of Ministry of Health*, but make a condition of their approval that no resolution be published or public action be taken without the consent of the Bishops, to be obtained through the Archbishop of Westminster. The Conference are requested to collect documents and literature bearing on the questions involved . . . Three experts, whose names are to be approved by His Eminence, should be appointed as a Committee from the bodies forming the Conference, to gather information for the Bishops on the work of the Ministry and its dangers."

This, after all our efforts at publicity, was rather a facer. But nothing daunted, the Conference nominated the three "experts" to draw up a full report. Presumably by subsequent correspondence, but I am not clear on this point, the three were to be a priest, a doctor and a layman. The Rev. J. B. McLaughlin, O.S.B., was appointed the first, and I was appointed the third. A difficulty arose about the doctor. None of the societies had one on tap, for that profession, if I may say so, woke up rather tardily. However, the late Mr. J. P. Mara, of the Westminster Catholic Federation, who had shown himself very keen on our lines of approach, offered to find one.

He sent to Mr. Rigby the name of the late Dr. Morgan J. Finucane. All the names were then approved by Cardinal Bourne.

In the conviction that the Doctor would be at least in general agreement, I suggested to Mr. Rigby that to avoid lengthy journeys and prolonged meetings by three busy men, we should try in the first place to secure an agreed report by means of a draft to be submitted by me, and any subsequent correspondence. This was put to, and agreed by, the other two, and on 18th December, 1920, I submitted my draft of a hundred pages, with supporting evidence. Dr. Finucane's disagreement, it transpired, was total. He rejected my draft entirely, and in a memorandum of 21st February, 1921, he said: "I have found it so impossible, for my part, to reach any common standard of agreement in the terms, that it seems futile to pursue it." Failing a much fuller quotation from both documents than is desirable here, I am not entitled to say that only one party was in fault. The reader, if interested, must form his own conclusion of the point from the later history of Dr. Finucane in the pages of *The Catholic Medical Guardian*. For two reasons I was well content to let the matter drop at this stage, but Fr. McLaughlin (whom I was sorry to see put to the trouble, and who certainly was in substantial agreement with me) thought it his duty to try to secure an agreed statement. The correspondence dragged on into 1922, with no better results than two opposed if shortened statements. These were sent to Cardinol Bourne, and were no doubt pigeon-holed in the absence of agreement.

The main result, however, was very striking indeed. The Ministry, more than a little astonished, no doubt, at both the actual and the potential achievements of the Conference, refrained pointedly from trying to do anything in the matter of Eugenics and the Principles of Sound Breeding. In saying this, I do not wish to minimise the very solid work of *The Mothers' Defence League*, and of certain other critical bodies. But there seems no doubt that the Ministry said to itself: "If there has been so great and so loud a bother over the mere expressed intention, what would it be like if we *did* anything?" This is not to say that evil results failed to follow the general line of development, but at least we saved the country from the worst.

THE MOTHERS' DEFENCE LEAGUE

This organisation is not mentioned, I think, by Mrs. Sheed.

It was formed on 13th September, 1918, chiefly by the efforts of Miss Agnes Mott. Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, Miss Nina Boyle, Miss Anna Martin were early members. A large number of Foundation Distributists gave their strong support, and later in the same month Chesterton himself became President of the League.

It was formed:

1. To defend the rights of motherhood.
2. To secure justice in the treatment of the working mothers (including legal aid in individual cases when necessary).
3. To oppose measures which introduced State control of the family, or which interfered unduly with the natural rights of parents.
4. To ascertain and represent the views of working mothers in regard to social measures affecting them.

A feature of the League from the start was was the inclusion of real working-class women on the Committee. Another one, less suprising perhaps to the sponsors than to the public, was the eager response of working women to the news of the new League. Besides the Headquarters, no fewer than four flourishing Branches were active in the poorer districts of London, and provincial Branches were set up quickly at Glasgow, Birmigham, Dumbarton and elsewhere.

There is no doubt that the League met a real need, as was evidenced by the eager reception of the flood of various leaflets which were all it could afford by way of advertisment. Unfortunately it consisted entirely of poor women with no assets beyond their status as mothers (which was precisely in question) and others with plenty of the philosophy but no money either. The very solid work it did under Mrs. Cecil Chesterton (Chairman), and Miss Agnes Mott (Hon. Secretary) was hampered throughout by lack of funds. A number of poor women in the slums of London were rescued from various types of official oppressor, and similar work was done in the provinces. There can be no point in giving details now. But the total of 34 actual cases mentioned at the General Meeting of November, 1920, was significant. No doubt there had been 34 various oppressors too. And no doubt the rest were suitably encouraged.

A great deal of sympathy, but little in the way of funds, was forthcoming for the League's tremendous opposition to the Bastardy Bill of 1920. Like many others, it would be considered very mild today.

In April, 1920, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children began proceedings for libel against Miss Mott and Printer* in respect of one of the League's series of leaflets, entitled *The Cruelty Man*. Both the League and *The New Witness* had been very emphatic about the activities of several London Inspectors of the Society, and this action was the result. The League had no money, and Chesterton in a personal visit to the defending solicitors generously guaranteed the costs of the action.

Proceedings dragged on for nearly a year, with effects on the officers most affected that may readily be imagined. The case was heard before Mr. Justice Darling and a special jury on 11th March 1921. After a long hearing and a great deal of hard hitting on both sides, Counsel for the Prosecution (Mr. Barrington-Ward K.C.) suggested that a settlement might be reached. The judge retired, and it was agreed finally that a juror be withdrawn on the defendants agreeing to withdraw the leaflet, and pay costs of the action. (The last item, I believe, was never pressed.)

Mr. Justice Darling, on his return, concurred, and in the course of his closing remarks, said the *Times*, said that he was satisfied that Miss Mott might have done some good in calling to the attention of the heads of the Society one case certainly in which there appeared to have been little consideration shown.†

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* It may be indicated here for the guidance of any reader minded to pursue the matter, that my own contributions to the Press were fairly extensive, but may be regarded as summarised in two articles in *The Month* for July, 1919, and February, 1920.

* The League was not incorporated.

† The Times, 12th March, 1921.

The Morning Post of the same day adds to its report of the Judge's remarks: He was perfectly satisfied that more care than ever would now be taken to see that none of the agents or inspectors would act in any way which could be considered harsh or inconsiderate toward the parents of the children.*

While the initiative of Counsel for the N.S.P.C.C. cannot be said to be without significance, and while many supporters of the League would have liked to see the case pressed to a conclusion, there were solid reasons against this step. No one was very happy that Chesterton should shoulder the whole responsibility (actually it cost him no more than about £200) but he was the only person in the outfit who had any money at all. No less than £50 was collected spontaneously towards the expenses of the trial by the mothers of the London slums. In the circumstances an enormous and very gratifying contribution. He was absent in America when the case was heard, and his view could not be sought. It was all the more important that he should not be involved in his absence. Not only so, but the health of Miss Mott was precarious by this time. Further strain would have been unreasonable.

The League survived until February, 1922, when the prolonged and serious illness of Miss Mott brought it to an end. No one else was in a position to take over the extraordinary volume and complexity of work involved by the Secretary ship. The League, however, had survived, and been active throughout the most critical period of those times. As a piece of counter-battery work, it was well worth while.

We have always been rather good in England at overdriving the willing horse. This is one case out of many where hard work was beaten by the general lassitude.

THE MOND LIBEL CASE

I think this chapter may end fitly with a Libel Case which was heard in December, 1919.

Two gentlemen named Fraser and Beamish had displayed in a window near Essex Street a placard accusing the late Sir Alfred Moritz Mond of treachery, trading with the enemy, and other things. One of them, I think, held the rank of Commander in the Royal Navy, and he, and possibly both, had served in the first World War.

I think Mrs. Sheed might have re-worded the passage on page 368 of her Life, when she refers to these two brave men as "a pair of cranks." That, certainly, was not their most obvious quality.

She does not add, as she should have done in justice, that Chesterton, in several leading articles, did his best to draw the Mond fire on himself. In the vicissitudes of twentyseven years, I have mislaid the copies of *The New Witness* in which he did so, but I am quite clear that he was both actionable, and suitably offensive, in his studied attempt to draw the enemy fire to his larger person. It is a measure of the courage of Mond, and of the astonishing power of a refusal of publicity, that this challenge was declined. It was declined with complete impunity. Times had changed already since the Marconi case. There was no free secular press left in London except *The New Witness*.

Mond had declined a definitely proffered battle. He declined many another challenge later. He was lampooned depeatedly in *The New Witness* and *G.K's. Weekly*, in terms which it seemed impossible to ignore. It pleases me to remember that I added my squib to Chesterton's fifteen-inch stuff in that heavy but fruitless barrage, from which the English public allowed Imperial Chemical Industries to emerge.

TESTIMONY FOR COMPROMISES

From the report of the debate on supply on May 13th 1948 on the motion that an additional grant (nominal) to the Central Office of Information be included in Civil Estimates, 1948-49. Mr Harold Macmillan (Bromley) speaking—criticising Government propagandists at considerable length he goes on (Hansard, para.2309):

"..... Sometimes these propagandists hit on a good thing, something that has a sound human appeal. But it is nearly always withdrawn as being 'contrary to the party line.' I will give two examples. In July, 1946, a Savings advertisement was issued headed, "A bit of land of your own". It depicted a countryman leaning on a fence, and underneath a pleasing picture were the words: "Lucky chap with a little place of his own in the country. It must be grand to own a few acres right away from the smoke and bustle of the town." Harmless enough, one might say, and rather appealing. Not at all. We did not know the depth of the partisan rancour. A capitalist, a landowner—and worst of all bought out of his own savings. What are we coming to? Of course, objection was taken, and, as they say in America, objection sustained. On 30th July, the Private Secretary to the Minister of Town and Country Planing wrote to someone who had objected: "The Minister does agree that the National Savings Campaign advertisement is inappropriate, and you will no doubt be glad to hear that steps are being taken to have it withdrawn."

In answer to one of my hon. Friends in October 1946, it was stated that the Minister had written: 'I did not consider that the advertisment was having undesirable results and had better not be repeated.' (Official Report, 28th October, 1946; Vol. 428, c. 414). The subsequent history of the artist and caption writer is not known. No doubt they were duly liquidated.

I will give another example. In September 1947, a few weeks after the announcement of the abolition of basic petrol, at a time when all the small garage proprietors in the country were faced with closing down, the War Office—note the significance, the date was September, 1947—issued a recruiting advertisement. After talking about the chance a recruit had to learn a trade, it remarked on one of them: 'He aims to own a garage .....'. Of course, it had to go. It was as well that it did. For a few weeks later there arrived at the War Office as Secretary of State the Minister of Fuel and Power himself."

NOTE. A long and detailed response by the Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison contained no reference to these examples.

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*The Morning Post, 12th March, 1921.