

THE SOCIAL CREDITER

FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

Vol. 26. No. 7.

Registered at G.P.O. as a Newspaper.
Postage (home and abroad) 1d.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 1951.

6d. Weekly.

From Week to Week

The initial assertion, "I can understand . . .," is one which we pass over in reading a copy of a letter from an American lady who was recently in England to a reader of this paper. The assertion (to which we by no means assent) is introductory to the suggestion that "the bitterness" of the British engendered by the appointment of Admiral Fechteler is "the age-old resentment of debtors against creditors." We ain't bitter about it ma'am: what gets us is the notion, which the traitors among us foster, that we owe "America" a cent. Leaving "America" out of it as not even an alias, we owe someone, chiefly deluded "American" workmen, and equally deluded European inventors, SHELLS, and lots of them: and if there were ever any question of payment of debts, we ought to have piled up the shores from Maine to Atlantic City with shells until no "American" could see the Atlantic; and if our rulers had had any sense, hoping they wouldn't go off, that is what would have been done. Pay *what* you owe. Anyone who discusses politics, whether national or international (and they're the same) without understanding these words is contributory to all the disasters still to come.

. . .

"It is with very great regret that the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln have felt bound to inform the public" that recently a serious fading of the ink has occurred on parts of the Lincoln Copy of Magna Carta which was sent to the United States in 1939. Waal, waal, waal!

. . .

Perhaps the South Welsh are more expert in unravelling the mysteries of the double-double double-cross than we give them (or any other British 'electorate') credit for; but, in any case we wonder what they made of the *Western Mail's* political cartoon recently. It represented MacArthur as a bucking bronco with Mr. Truman high above the saddle, though still connected to his steed by a taut bridle. The notion of parting company is further reflected in the five-pointed stars leaving the pants of "U.N.O." (the "U" and the "O" adroitly placed lucky horseshoes); but what chiefly intrigues us is the form of the Hebrew letter which represented Mr. Truman's disorderly tie side by side with the star on his manly chest.

. . .

We note the clear suggestion that the scientist who is stated to have raised the drooping spirits of the Argentine President by providing him with a short cut to atomic energy is a blackleg outside the closed shop of the IDUABS (which, if you have forgotten it, is the International [Democratic] Union of Atom Bomb Specialists). However that may be,

the close relationship between the present world rearmament by methods incomparably more "expensive" than those hitherto employed and "full employment" should make it easy to focus attention on what might well become a major concern of the gang in control of our affairs—the unprecedented displacement of labour (technological disemployment with unemployment) which would result in a very short time from the "obsolescence" of virtually all existing production methods on the availability of a genuine and abundant new source of power. There is something panicky about the obvious haste of the world's gangsters at the present moment, the ground of which we frankly do not discern. It could be something not unconnected with an imminent expansion of productive power. Do we need it? No. We can't see anything inherently sinful about a *small* dynamo; but we shall do nothing to impede a demonstration of the prophesy that he who lives by the sword will fall by the sword.

Housewives' Threat to Burn Ration Books

Officers of the British Housewives' League announced last Saturday that they would burn their ration books and identity cards outside the Houses of Parliament on Monday, said the *Liverpool Echo*. The newspaper quoted Mrs. Winifred M. Sykes (vice-chairman) in a statement as follows: "Never before has a sovereign state, which does not claim to be totalitarian, which has won a world war, and is on the eve of a festival of rejoicing in its industrial recovery, kept its people to an outworn and unjust system of food rationing, to a form of registration by identity card, and to a further inquisition by means of the census.

"I take my stand against the present rationing system on the grounds that it is unjust and that under the false cry of equality, it penalises the poor, the old and the sick. It encourages everybody to be crooked, and it is a farce to the new rich.

"Identity cards have become a farce. The census is an unwarrantable interference with the privacy of a Briton's home.

"I can think of no more noble send-off to our Festival of Britain than a bonfire of these three bars to our freedom, and I intend to have such a bonfire in front of the House of Commons on April 9 and to suffer whatever penalties may be imposed upon me."

"Me Too"

Headed "For world rule" at the foot of a column, the *News Chronicle* for March 17, published the following:—

"Mr. Clement Davies, the Liberal leader, has been appointed president of the Parliamentary Association for World Government, it was announced last night."

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: March 12, 1951.

Jet Engines (Export to U.S.S.R.)

Mr. Fitzroy Maclean asked the Minister of Supply how many British jet aircraft engines were sold to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1947; and of what make and design.

Mr. G. R. Strauss: Twenty-five Rolls Royce Nene Mark I and 30 Rolls Royce Derwent Mark V.

Mr. MacLean: Is the Minister aware that the M.I.G.15 jet engines being used against our troops in Korea are simply copies of the Rolls Royce Nene engines supplied to the Russians by his Department, and will he not now agree that the transaction in question was a blunder of the first order?

Mr. Strauss: I cannot personally make any comment about the first part of the question. The hon. Member is no doubt aware that these engines were no longer on the secret list when supplied to the Russians.

Air Commodore Harvey: Has the right hon. Gentleman any knowledge to what use Soviet Russia is putting these jet engines?

Mr. Strauss: I have not myself.

Mr. Henry Strauss: Can the Minister reconcile the policy of selling these jet engines to the Soviet Government with the terms of the note of His Majesty's Government handed to the Soviet Ambassador on 17th February last, in which His Majesty's Government complained that ever since the end of the war the Russian Government had disregarded the terms of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty and engaged in hostile acts?

Mr. Kirkwood: Arising from those supplementary questions how do hon. Gentlemen happen to know that those engines which the Russians have are taken from the engines which we have sent to Russia?

An Hon. Member: It is a good guess.

Short-time Working

Sir H. Williams asked the Minister of National Insurance what unemployment benefit is paid to persons who normally work five days a week and are now only working four days a week owing to shortage of material.

Dr. Summerskill: On the facts stated, two days' benefit would normally be payable provided the claimant does not receive wages for the period in question and is not otherwise disentitled.

Sir H. Williams: Why are people paid two days' benefit for one day's unemployment?

Dr. Summerskill: I should have thought that the hon. Member would have known these rules. This is nothing new. This is a common practice, and has been so for many years. The position is that if a man does a normal working week of five days, is unemployed on the fifth day, registers at an exchange and makes himself available for employment for the rest of the week, he is then entitled to two days' unemployment benefit.

Sir H. Williams: Do I understand, then, that if a firm

works a five-day week with the same number of hours as a firm which works five and a half days, all those who work what they regard as a full five-day week can draw unemployment pay on the Saturday.

Dr. Summerskill: Certainly not. They cannot draw unemployment pay if they have already worked a full week. They can only draw it if they are unemployed on the fifth day of their normal work and are then available for two more days.

Sir H. Williams: Then anyone who works four-fifths of a week is entitled to two days' unemployment benefit? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Of course, that is the interpretation.

Mr. C. S. Taylor: To get the answer correctly, may I ask the right hon. Lady whether a man who works only four days through shortage of material, and so on, is entitled to draw two days' unemployment benefit?

Dr. Summerskill: I have said this three times already. If the man has a normal working week of five days but works only four days, registers at the exchange and then is available for work for the rest of the week but no work is forthcoming, he can then draw unemployment benefit for two days.

House of Commons: March 13, 1951.

National Capital (Loss)

Mr. Osborne asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the estimated total loss of national capital, including overseas investments, during the 1939-45 war; and how much has been regained, excluding the \$7,200,000,000 loans and gifts from Canada and America, since August, 1945.

Mr. Gaitskell: In table 12 of Cmd. 6707, the total loss of national capital during the last war was estimated very approximately at rather more than £7,000 million, or about a quarter of our pre-war national wealth. Figures of domestic investment in this country and of the change in our external capital position since the war are shown in the National Income and the Balance of Payments White Papers. Apart from loans from Canada and U.S.A., which totalled £1,300 million, the external capital position has improved by some £750 million since the war. Gross domestic capital formation less sums allowed for depreciation amounts to about £5,000 million since the war. But no allowance is made for changes in the cost of capital equipment in computing this figure, which therefore cannot be properly compared with the war-time loss of capital.

Mr. Osborne: Allowing for the difference in replacement values, comparing pre-war with today, could the Chancellor say whether we have recaptured the national wealth which was lost during the war?

Mr. Gaitskell: From observations I would say that the total amount of physical capital available is greater than before the war, but it is very difficult to make the calculation on the basis of computation in accordance with changes in capital values.

Mr. Assheton: Does the figure of £7,000 million include war damage?

Mr. Gaitskell: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Assheton: In that case, how is it that the Chancellor told me the other day that he was unable to estimate the amount of war damage still outstanding?

Mr. Gaitskell: I do not quite see the relevance of that question.

Mr. Assheton: May I explain? I wanted the Chancellor of the Exchequer to insert in his financial statement a figure showing how much the Government estimated they still owed on account of war damage payments to be made in the future.

Mr. Gaitskell: I will certainly look in to that, but I cannot see that it is very relevant to the total loss of capital during the war.

SUPPLY

Gambia Poultry Scheme

Mr. Lennox-Boyd (Mid-Bedfordshire): . . . The House will remember that the scheme was originally designed to produce some 20 million eggs a year for the British market, and about one million lb. of dressed poultry for that market. At the moment a negligible quantity of poultry and some 38,000 eggs instead of 20 million have arrived, and we understand now that there are not likely to be further eggs, and that those that are produced will be consumed locally. Thirty-eight thousand eggs could be produced without any difficulty whatever by a few people on English smallholdings. If the £825,000 that has been spent had been spent on British agriculture, in getting feedingstuffs for our own producers, it has been calculated that some 72 million eggs could have been produced here in the United Kingdom. . . .

. . . I am afraid that closer examination of this scheme reveals that it has all the hall marks, though on a smaller scale, of the Groundnuts scheme. It is an irony that this Government, having failed to produce groundnuts in East Africa, have now gone for their egg project to the Gambia, where groundnuts flourish. In the last two years, side by side with the egg scheme in the Gambia, the producers there actually exported 60,000 tons of groundnuts each year, which is 12 times as much each year as the entire production for three years of the Government's Groundnuts Scheme, not bad for a country of about 250,000 people, and which is only half the size of Wales. Of course the production of groundnuts in the Gambia is in the hands of private enterprise who made what to the planner may be the mistake of going to a country where groundnuts grow and entrusting the growing of them to people who know how to do it.

As I say, this scheme bears all the hall marks of the Groundnuts Scheme. It has many similar features. As in East Africa, so in the Gambia, there was the same failure to have soil tests, the same failure to have rainfall tests, the same failure to have experimental plots, the same failure to experiment and see whether the birds could flourish or whether the crops could grow, the same failure to take any account of the lessons of the Colonial Office in its inquiry into mechanisation in tropical Africa, which was actually produced while this scheme was taking place, and the report of which came out last May, when doubts about this scheme were first becoming public property.

There has also, as the House knows, and as some of my hon. Friends will develop later, been a quite astonishing failure to have any regard to the inquiries of the Medical Research Council who were carrying on precisely the same sort of inquiries into the same sort of problem at the same time in the Gambia. This would really be unbelievable had

we not had our imaginations slightly expanded by the events of the last few years.

We hear precisely the same excuses as in East Africa.

. . . There is growing cynicism and disillusion at home. There is, I am sorry to say, ridicule abroad. I should like to refer the right hon. Gentleman to a passage published recently in an American newspaper which is not always unfriendly to the present Administration of this country. It states:

"Another ambitious British Socialist scheme flapped sadly home to roost last week. Horrified Britons realised each egg and each pound of poultry"—

in the Gambia—

"cost around £8."

Mr. Cocks (Broxtowe): From where is the hon. Gentleman quoting?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: "Time."

If there is disillusion at home and ridicule abroad there is also disillusion in Africa. I hope that when the right hon. Gentleman replies he will not use the argument that this scheme was launched to develop the Gambia, or that having been launched and failed it has done some good to the Gambia. Surely this is not the way to help our Colonies. . . .

. . . I said that there had been an astonishing lack of candour, and I think I must buttress up that general remark with one or two specific illustrations. Take the example of the poultry themselves. The Annual Report of the Corporation for the year ended 1949 was presented to Parliament in July, 1950, and on page 2 it says:

"the health . . . of the flocks"—

in the Gambia—

"is excellent."

Yet a week ago we were told by the Secretary of State that that very summer—and it was in July that the statement was made—30,000 of the birds, three in every eight, died of fowl typhoid. In July we were told, with no hint of trouble to come, that the health of the flocks was excellent.

In the same Report we were told:

"the . . . fertility of the flocks is excellent."

That came to the notice of the House in July, yet we now know that in March of last year Dr. Gordon of the Animal Health Trust had flown out to the Gambia to advise specifically on the failure of the fertility of the flocks. Again, in that same month, when Dr. Gordon was on his way to the Gambia, the Secretary of State said in this House, with no hint of trouble to come, that the scheme was proceeding satisfactorily.

So much for the poultry. I suppose the real, the greater, charge relates to the failure to appreciate the difficulties of growing the feedingstuffs, for on that the scheme has broken down. Now consider for a moment what Parliament has been told about that. In July, 1950, only last year, we were told in the Report:

"There is good reason to expect that at least 50 per cent. of the food required will be locally produced this year"—

that is last year—

"and it is hoped that 75 per cent. will be"

locally produced in 1951. We now know from Parliamentary answers this week that 2,300-odd tons have been imported into the Gambia, and that last year alone, while this statement

(Continued on page 7).

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This journal expresses and supports the policy of the Social Credit Secretariat, which is a non-party, non-class organisation neither connected with nor supporting any political party, Social Credit or otherwise.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: *Home and abroad, post free:*
 One year 30/-; Six months 15/-; Three months 7s. 6d.

Offices: (Business) 7, VICTORIA STREET, LIVERPOOL, 2, Telephone: CENtral 8509; (Editorial) 49, PRINCE ALFRED ROAD, LIVERPOOL, 15, Telephone: SEFton Park 435.

Vol. 26. No. 7. Saturday, April 14, 1951.

Entropy

It seems to be (but we are very far from asserting that it is) fortuitous that Dean Mansel's book on the Gnostic Heresies of the first and second centuries and Mr. Charles Morgan's latest contribution to discussion, quoted on another page, should come into our hands almost at the same time, and that, separated as they are by nearly three-quarters of a century, they should be significantly though subtly connected, not necessarily in agreement or disagreement with each other, but with our interest in what is unmistakably their joint theme.

Readers of this journal who have absorbed the meaning of our now many references to *entropy* will recognise at least the companionship of our objection to the extension of this principle of physics to human society and Mansel's objection that man, merged in the intelligible universe by the Gnostic of old and "no less by modern 'science falsely so called' . . . in the visible universe; his actions or volitions are moral effects which follow their moral causes 'as certainly and invariably as physical effects follow their physical causes.'"

Mr. Charles Morgan, whose rôle in the modern struggle we have not finally determined, and it might be different from the appearance which it bears, joins the discussion to say that "the purpose of the attack is an old one: to produce chaos. But, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the vulnerability of the human race has been changed. . . . Our peril is that there are great forces operating in the world which would forbid the journey [of Faith or of Reason], and destroy our will to make it . . ." It is true.

Church of England and Freemasonry

Theology, the monthly review published by the S.P.C.K., to which the Rev. Walton Hannah contributed the article on Freemasonry and the Church of England which has evoked controversy, prints in its April issue a reply by a Freemason who claims also to be "a Catholic and a priest," the Rev. J. L. C. Dart. The *Church Times* for March 30 devotes two and a half columns to an article by "a Correspondent who is critical of the pretensions of Freemasonry, and the same issue carries twelve letters on the subject, among them the following from Mr. Hannah:—

"There are three sources of information available to the general public: (i) Masonic rituals, complete with the tracing-board lectures and the catechisms, are on public sale to non-Masons at a great number of bookshops. (ii) There is also a vast literature interpreting the ritual, explaining from various points of view the inner meaning of Masonic symbolism and teachings. (iii) In addition to all this, there are several 'exposures' by such writers as Romaine, Finch, Alleyn, William Morgan and Carlile. There is, therefore, no shortage of authentic information from which a body of impartial theo-

logians could discover the compatibility or otherwise of Freemasonry with the Catholic faith. And if the Church has Christ's sole authority to teach faith and morals, surely she has not only the right but the duty to investigate and to pronounce on the teachings of any other body which claims religious knowledge. No one has yet explained why Freemasonry should occupy a position of privileged exemption.

"Fr. Church raises an interesting point when he says that every year Masons come to his church in a body. If he refers to official Masonic services, the ruling is that all references to our Lord must be completely excluded in such a way that the service is not specifically Christian at all. Dispensation for the name of Christ to be mentioned in Masonic worship in Christian churches can only come from Masonic authorities, and such a dispensation is not readily granted.

"It has been announced that a Masonic service is to be held in Canterbury Cathedral in connexion with the Festival of Britain in July. It would be interesting to know whether Grand Lodge has very kindly given permission for this service in the mother Cathedral of English Christianity to be Christian or whether the Name of Christ must be excluded in order that people who reject Him may without offence be included."

Three photographs of ladies showing in their dress that "The Law of Conspicuous Waste guides consumption in wearing Apparel" may not tell us very much about Thorstein [sic] Veblen, but unless we are greatly mistaken they tell us something about the policy behind new historical journal advertisements which they are used to decorate. Thorstein Veblen was one of the first writers to draw attention to waste as a *necessary* feature of non-integral accounting. To represent it as reflecting the *objective* of individuals composing a social class is not history.

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Gnostic Heresies Dean Mansel's Introductory Chapter

(Conclusion)

The Gnostics in fact regarded the Christian revelation as having a similar relation towards speculative philosophy to that in which the Jewish religion was regarded by Christians as standing towards their own belief. As the institutions of Judaism under type and symbol prefigured in the Christian belief the fuller revelation of Christ, so Christianity itself, in the estimation of the Gnostics, was but a figurative and symbolical exposition of truths, the fuller meaning of which was to be supplied by philosophical speculation. Gnosticism revived the idea, familiar to heathen thought but wholly alien to the spirit of Christianity, of one religion designed for the wise and the initiated, and another for the ignorant and profane vulgar. Faith, the foundation of Christian knowledge was fitted only for the rude mass, the (*psychikoi*) or animal men who were incapable of higher things. Far above these were the privileged natures, the men of intellect, the (*pneumatikoi*) or spiritual men, whose vocation was not to believe but to know. How completely this distinction perverted the language of St. Paul, on which it was nominally founded, will appear in the subsequent course of our inquiry. Such a distinction, as Neander has well observed, was natural in the heathen systems of antiquity, because heathenism was destitute of any independent means, adapted alike to all stages of human enlightenment, for satisfying man's religious needs. Such a means however was supplied in Christianity by a faith in great historical facts, on which the religious convictions of all men alike were to depend. Gnosticism, by a reactionary process, tended to make religion forfeit the freedom gained for it by Christ, and to make it again dependent on human speculations. Christianity had furnished a simple and universally intelligible solution of every enigma which had occupied thinking minds—a practical answer to all the questions which speculation had busied itself in vain to answer. It established a temper of mind by which doubts that could not be resolved by the efforts of speculative reason were to be practically vanquished. But Gnosticism wished to make religion once more dependent on a speculative solution of these questions. Religion was to be founded, not on historical facts, but on ontological ideas through speculations on existence in general and its necessary evolutions, men were to be led to a comprehension of the true meaning of what Christianity represents under a historical veil. The motto of the Gnostic might be exactly given in the words of a distinguished modern philosopher, Men are saved, not by the historical, but by the metaphysical.

Two metaphysical problems may be particularly specified as those which Gnosticism borrowed from heathen philosophy, and to the solution of which the Christian revelation was made subordinate—the problem of Absolute Existence and the problem of the Origin of Evil. The two indeed, as we shall see hereafter, were by the Gnostics generalised into one; and this union may explain the language of Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, all of whom speak of the origin of evil as the great object of heretical inquiry; but in themselves and in their historical relations, the two problems may be regarded as distinct, and each contributes its own ingredient to form the anti-Christian side of the Gnostic speculation. The search after an absolute first principle, the inquiry how the absolute and unconditioned can give rise to the relative and

conditioned, is one which, when pursued as a theological inquiry, almost inevitably leads to a denial of the personality of God. Philosophy striving after a first principle which shall be one and simple and unconditioned, and incapable of all further analysis in thought, is naturally tempted to soar above that complex combination of attributes which is implied in our conception of personality, and in endeavouring to simplify and purify our representation of the Divine nature, ends by depriving it of every attribute which can make God the object of any religious feeling or the source of any moral obligation. Instead of a religious relation between God and man, the relation of a person to a person, this philosophy substitutes a metaphysical relation between God and the world, as absolute and relative, cause and effect, principle and consequence—happy if it stops short at this error only, and does not find itself compelled by the inexorable laws of its own logic to identify God with the world. And when the standpoint of philosophy is thus removed from a moral to a metaphysical aspect of God, the other great problem, the Origin of Evil, naturally assumes a similar character. Evil no longer appears in the form of *sin*, as a transgression on the part of a moral agent against the laws and will of a moral Governor. The personality of God having disappeared, the personality of man naturally disappears along with it. Man is no longer the special subject of relations towards God peculiar to himself by virtue of that personal and moral nature in which he alone of God's earthly creatures bears the image of his Maker: he is viewed but as a portion of the universe, an atom in that vast system of derived existence which emanates from the one First Principle. The course of the world is his course as a part of the world; the laws of the world are his laws also, and the one pre-eminence of man among creatures, the one attribute which constitutes him a person and not a thing—the attribute of Free-Will—is swallowed up in the depths and carried along with the stream of the necessary evolution of being. Contemplated from this point of view, evil is no longer a moral but a natural phenomenon; it becomes identical with the imperfect, the relative, the finite; all nature being governed by the same law and developed from the same principle, no one portion of its phenomena can itself be more evil, more contrary to the law, than another; all alike are evil only so far as they are imperfect; all alike are imperfect, so far as they are a falling off from the perfection of the absolute. Thus contemplated, the problem of the origin of evil is identified with that of the origin of finite and relative existence; the question how can the good give birth to the evil, is only another mode of asking how can the absolute give birth to the relative; the two great enquiries of philosophy are merged into one, and religion and morality become nothing more than curious questions of metaphysics.

And such, as we shall see, was the actual course of the Gnostic speculations; and this circumstance will serve to explain the earnest abhorrence, the strong feeling of irreconcilable hostility, with which this teaching was regarded by the Apostles and Fathers of the Church. It was not merely an erroneous opinion on certain points of belief that they were combating; it was a principle which destroyed the possibility of any religion at all; which, in setting aside the personality of God and the personality of man, struck at the root and basis of all natural religion; which, by virtually denying the existence of sin and consequently of redemption from sin, took away the whole significance of the revelation

of Christ. With this view of the spirit of the Gnostic teaching, we may the more readily believe the tradition of the vehement language of St. John, 'Let us fly, lest the bath fall in, while Cerinthus the enemy of the truth is in it'—language which yet is hardly stronger than his own recorded words, 'Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antiChrist that denieth the Father and the Son.' We may understand the zealous horror with which St. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, addressed the Gnostic Marcion, 'I know thee the firstborn of Satan.' This very charge of destroying the free will of man and subverting the distinction between right and wrong is made in express terms by Clement of Alexandria against the doctrines of Basilides and the Valentinians; and his argument may be extended beyond the point of view in which he has stated it, to the whole sphere of man's moral and religious action. 'Faith,' he says, 'if it be a natural privilege, is no longer a voluntary right action; nor can the unbeliever be justly punished, not being the cause of his own unbelief, as the believer is not the cause of his own belief. Moreover, if we rightly consider the whole distinctive character of belief and unbelief cannot be liable to praise or blame, being preceded by a natural necessity sprung from Him who is all-powerful.'

This feature of the controversy is not without interest to us in this present day; for, however different may be the premises of the popular philosophy of our own time, it conducts us to precisely the same conclusion. In this common error the most opposite extremes meet together; the transcendental metaphysics of the Gnostic philosophy and the grovelling materialism of our own day join hands together in subjecting man's actions to a natural necessity, in declaring that he is the slave of the circumstances in which he is placed; his course of action being certainly determined by them as effect by cause and consequent by antecedent. Merged in the intelligible universe by the Gnostic of old, man is no less by modern 'science so called' merged in the visible universe; his actions or volitions are moral effects which follow their moral causes 'as certainly and invariably as physical effects follow their physical causes.' Under this assumption the distinction between moral evil and physical entirely vanishes. A man, however inconvenient his actions may be to his neighbour, is no more to blame for committing them than is a fire for consuming his neighbour's house or a sickness for destroying his life. Man cannot offend against any law of God; for his actions are the direct consequence of the laws which God (if there be a God) has established in the world; he is subject, to repeat the words of Clement, to a natural necessity derived from Him who is all-powerful. The consciousness of freedom is a delusion; the consciousness of sin is a delusion; the personality of man disappears under the all-absorbing vortex of matter and its laws. How long, we may ask, will it be before the personality of God disappears also, and the vortex of matter becomes all in all?

On Planning The Earth

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Mr. Morgan's Visitant

Mr. Charles Morgan's latest work, *Liberties of the Mind*, referred elsewhere in this issue contains the following:—

" . . . An unexpected visit to my house by an American physicist . . . was the occasion of [the essays] being gathered together. His conversation forced me to understand that power over the mind was being developed farther, and was assuming a more concrete form, than I had supposed. . . . "Great progress had already been made in 'the psychological field.' With what object? Well, in the first place, it might become possible to cut short the educational process. Instead of putting a child down to learn things for years and years, you'd recondition selected areas ('areas' was not the word) of his brain, so's he'd learn quicker what he wanted to learn.

"Or what others wanted him to learn? I asked.

"My visitor agreed briefly without taking my point. . . ."

In a footnote, Mr. Charles Morgan says he submitted his sentences about psychiatry to "a practising master of the Subject," who wrote, at the end of a statement of some length (which is cited) the following, which the novelist italicises:—

"*'But the other fact, to my mind a more alarming one, is that we are all being conditioned to accept a limitation of freedom, even of some of our mental freedom. Some are aware of it and try, consciously, to resist. But I fear that, unconsciously, even we are ready to accept this new infection which could not have harmed us before 1939. There is no such immunity in the great mass of our people and no consciousness of danger. They lap up the virus as though it were milk. One can think of many ways in which the population as a whole is being conditioned or prepared for this mental change, this loss of individuality and identity.'* I have italicized this passage because it is a re-statement by a man of science of the theme of this book."

Further report concerning the young American reads:—

"A French scientist, he said, was reported to have made an extremely interesting experiment with a frog's egg. . . . A frog's egg had outside it five areas or fields of energy which were electrically distinguishable and measurable. . . . These fields had been found to correspond with the head and the four legs of the ultimately resulting frog. The Frenchman had found a means of neutralizing (this is the word my friend used but he was probably making things easy for me)—of neutralizing one of these fields. The egg was hatched. The tadpole appeared to be normal, but the resulting frog had but three legs.

"If, my visitor argued, you could neutralize a leg before hatching, why not afterwards? If a leg, why not the head? If the head, why not the brain? If the brain, why not a part of the brain?"

"And if, I asked, it is possible by electrical process to neutralize a selected part of the brain, to empty it of what it would otherwise have contained and to sweep and garnish it and, should it not also be possible to enter into it and, so to speak, recondition it?"

"Why, yes, that was the whole point. It was a long way off. To put the mind 'out' was one thing. Drugs and electric shock could do that. To put 'out' a selected part of the mind would be a great advance, but might well be within reach. To put a mind 'in' was an altogether different story and might be far away. But yes—that was the point ultra-

mately. It was what he'd been thinking of when he spoke of education. A great deal might be done, for example, to correct mental deficiency, to counteract faults of heredity, or to 'effect a worth-while substitution for criminal trends.'

"'What it all boils down to,' he added, 'is a long hope of turning bad citizens into good.'

"Interpreting my silence as doubt of the power of nuclear physics, he looked out across the room and said: 'Ultimately, of course, I don't suppose I shall live to see it.'

"I said I feared that he might.

"'Fear?' he exclaimed. 'Why do you fear it?'

"'Because,' I answered, 'I don't want to put it into anyone's power to turn a child into a hyena.'

"'Oh,' he said, with a smile, 'they're mostly that already,' but added: 'Of course I agree: any progress is open to abuse. But you can't bar progress for that reason. If you do, you don't get any place.'"

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was being made, 1,417 tons were actually imported. On what possible basis could the assumption have been made, and the virtual undertaking given, that this year 75 per cent. of all the feedingstuffs would be produced in the Gambia.

Even more astonishing statements can be found if we turn to some of the statements made by the Minister of State for the Colonies, and in particular in some of the airy assurances he gave in this House in April, 1950. He then repeated the old argument that there would be 20 million eggs in due course. He was quite rightly questioned from the Liberal benches with a whole series of very pertinent questions. At this time Dr. Gordon was already there, or had gone out and, as far as I know, was there. But no hint of the difficulty was allowed to creep into the Minister of State's answers. He was asked from the Liberal benches: What about soil erosion? What about vitamin deficiencies?—which must have been deeply agitating the Colonial Office at the time. Finally, in a very excellent question by the Liberal Whip he was asked whether the Gambia could not be helped in a more sensible way than this, in a better way. What did the right hon. Gentleman reply? When asked whether the Gambia could not be helped better in another way he replied:

"No, Sir"—

as if this really was the way to help the Gambia. Then he added:

"I think that this scheme is starting off very successfully."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 26th April, 1950; Vol. 474, c. 950.]

It is our contention that by that time anyhow there must have been the gravest doubts in the Colonial Office and the Overseas Food Corporation.

One or two organs of the Press took up this assurance, and the right hon. Gentleman was challenged on what he had said. Deep resentment of Press criticism has hitherto been marked by statements by the Corporation, in this case in a paper, "The Colonial Development Magazine," which is paid for by the taxpayer. The charges of one newspaper were catalogued, and the Corporation gave what they called "facts in answer" and this is a typical fact:

"The farm is overcoming all its difficulties and is likely to achieve its target within the next 18 months."

That was only last summer. On the same day as that upon which the right hon. Gentleman made the other observation to which I have drawn attention, 26th April, he was asked specifically whether he was satisfied that there would be adequate feedingstuffs available, and he answered:

"As far as I know."

Well, it is our contention that he would have known more than that. . . .

. . . The last of my quotations from HANSARD is even more recent. On 23rd October of last year the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food told the House:

"we expect to receive about a quarter of a million eggs by the end of this year, 1950."—[OFFICIAL REPORT, 23rd October, 1950; Vol. 478, c. 303.]

Now, we regard it as inconceivable that by that time consideration had not been given to closing the scheme down altogether, or drastically curtailing it.

We shall await the reply of the Secretary of State with the very greatest interest. I think I know some of the arguments he may use. I hope he will not use, for example, arguments like this: "In all great pioneering ventures you must take risks." After all, it is indisputable, I think, that these risks need never have been taken, and that a little patient work—humbler, but patient work—would have made them unnecessary. Unnecessary and unjustified risks were taken which small scale experiments would have saved. . . .

Mr. Hurd (Newbury): . . . The statement which the Secretary of State for the Colonies had to make to the House on 28th February came as a great shock to the country. But Ministers cannot pretend that they did not have due and repeated warnings of what some shrewd people thought was happening in the Gambia. I looked through HANSARD last night and I was appalled at the number of questions I had addressed on this scheme. For more than a year we have been expressing doubts about the soundness of this project, but on each occasion Ministers have blandly misled this House. I will give one or two examples which my hon. Friend did not mention.

On 26th April last year the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs assured us that this scheme was starting off very successfully. On 12th May last year the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that he had authorised the expenditure of 262,000 dollars on the purchase of American equipment and hatching eggs. So he also, at that time, was well sold on this scheme. On 21st June last year the Minister of State assured us that this poultry farm would very soon be on a self-supporting basis, growing good crops to feed the hens.

On 23rd October the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food told us that he hoped to receive a quarter of million eggs by the end of last year. On 31st January this year the Minister of Food admitted that he had received 38,500 eggs but hoped for increased quantities this year. In addition, imports of dead poultry amounted to 4,360 tons. Then, on 28th February, came the confession of the Secretary of State for the Colonies that the scheme would have to be modified considerably, that we should lose most of our money, and that no more shipments would be made beyond an additional 7,000 tons of dead poultry.

Dead and dying poultry seem to be the main features of this scheme. Some 30,000 died of Typhoid last summer. If I ran my poultry like that, I should have been prosecuted long ago by the R.S.P.C.A. Incidentally, I am glad to

reflect that my hens produced more than 38,500 eggs last month, let alone last year.

No doubt this Gambia scheme looked very fine on paper to someone who knew nothing about the tropics and nothing about keeping hens. Clear 10,000 acres of bush, grow sorghum at the rate of 800 lbs. to the acre which would feed 200,000 hens who would produce 20 million eggs and one million lb. of table poultry a year. With the sorghum grown at 4d. a lb., eggs could be put on board ship at 2s. 9d. a dozen, and dressed poultry at 2s. a lb. That is a perfect theoretical calculation. It can be worked out from American text books. We should all make a fortune and we should have eggs and poultry galore.

Shades of Whitaker Wright, Jabez Balfour and Horatio Bottomley. They knew how to sell a bright idea but, in the end, they had to answer to the courts. What they missed in their generation! What a time they could have had with the Overseas Food Corporation or the Colonial Development Corporation and with the taxpayers' money flowing like water. The basic trouble with this scheme in Gambia, as with the groundnut scheme in Tanganyika, is that no one paused to make proper investigations of the practical problems which had to be solved. Any commercial firm or person would, first of all, find out something about the soil. Would it grow enough crops of the right kind at a reasonable cost to feed the hens?

In the Gambia there was already an object lesson at hand in the shifting patch cultivation which the Gambian native has to adopt. He cannot grow enough to feed his family properly, and year by year what is called the "hungry season" has been growing longer and longer. Indeed, so serious had this problem become that the Medical Research Council sent a research team out to the Gambia and, very properly, we have been spending £52,000 in trying to find out what is wrong with the soil, and seeing if we can help the native to grow better crops and to maintain a more satisfactory level of nutrition for himself and his family.

Mr. Phillips, the bulldozing American who was selected by Lord Trefgarne to run this scheme, had, of course, no use for the Medical Research Council and what they were doing. Indeed, it was not until 9th February this year that the Council sent a memorandum to the manager of the poultry farm in the Gambia passing on the results of their cropping and fertiliser trials.

Thanks to the co-operation of the Foreign Secretary we have had an opportunity of looking at this memorandum in the Library. It is signed by Dr. R. A. Webb, who is one of the team engaged on human nutritional research for the Medical Research Council. It is a most interesting document. Dr. Webb is, of course, looking at this problem of the soil and the cropping in the Gambia from the point of view of human nutrition, but it is absolutely the same problem into which the Colonial Development Corporation have run headlong.

What happens in the Gambia is that the native clears a bit of bush and crops it for about five years. Each year after the first he gets poorer crops and, finally, he has to abandon it and let nature take charge in restoring some fertility. It may be that nature takes charge for 40 years, a long rotation, until natural fertility has been restored again to that soil. What Dr. Webb was concerned about—as,

indeed, the Colonial Development Corporation must be concerned—is whether it is possible to maintain a decent level of fertility by developing a crop rotation. Here in this country the success of our cropping depends on having a well-developed rotation and that, in turn, depends on growing crops in the rotation which will restore some of the fertility, particularly legume crops.

The trouble in the Gambia is that the groundnut grown there is deficient in the root nodules that will take nitrogen from the air, and the groundnut is a poor agent for restoring soil fertility. So, as Dr. Webb points out in his memorandum, the soil of the Gambia is markedly deficient in nitrogen and also in various other elements necessary to full crop growth. The soil is deep sand and the rainfall intense, reaching two inches in an hour. That rules out the economic application of fertilisers such as we use in this country, because their virtue is quickly washed out of the top-soil. So Dr. Webb, in the memorandum prepared on behalf of the Medical Council, sent to the Colonial Development Corporation, points out clearly the fundamental trouble in the Gambia, whether we are trying to grow crops for human beings or hens. He says:

"The population of the Gambia is reaching, if it has not already reached, a level above which the land is unable adequately to supply the food required for reasonable living standards. Attempts to increase food production by more extensive cultivation, particularly if produce is exported, will wreck the efficiency of the shifting system and precipitate a rapid decline in fertility."

That is the warning which the scientific worker employed by the Medical Research Council has had to give to the Colonial Development Corporation. What a pity such considerations were not in the minds of the Corporation before they started this scheme. Of course, the troubles that affect the Gambian's patch of cultivation are much aggravated in the 10,000 acre block we have cleared from the bush. This has created a sandy desert where erosion by wind and rain quickly destroys any natural fertility. No wonder we have not been able to feed our poultry properly; no wonder that they have been dying left and right.

Some people may say "It is all unfortunate, but what a fine thing we have done for Gambia." Dr. Webb and the Medical Research Council do not think so. It looks as if we have merely helped the people of Gambia to starve themselves quicker than they would otherwise have done; the hungry season becomes longer and longer, and nothing we have done has shown the Gambian how he can grow better crops for himself and raise his standard of nutrition. Virtually no benefit has so far accrued to the Gambian.

Men and women from the Bahamas were brought in to run this scheme. They have been working on a similar scheme under the direction of Mr. Phillips before. He brought them over to the Gambia. It was the intention that the work should be handed over to the natives of the Gambia, but no—Mr. Phillips did not trust the Gambians with his precious hatching eggs and his precious poultry.

Now we have to learn something from this costly fiasco. The Colonial Development Corporation, and any other Government corporation that are prowling around for likely projects that will benefit mankind, must apply the elementary rules that guide commercial enterprises. . . .