NATIONALIZATION OF MINERAL RIGHTS

IN July 1944 the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy discussed a paper by Prof. W. R. Jones in which he advocated the acquisition by the State of mineral rights. On that occasion he restricted his proposals to minerals as contrasted with *rocks* and so did not include roadstones, building stones, limestone, brick clays, sands and gravels. In a later paper submitted for discussion in September of this year, he has extended his advocacy of nationalization to this larger group.

It is noted that Great Britain is almost unique in the British Empire in that the mineral rights are not vested in the Crown or in the Government. Two important steps have already been taken towards nationalization. Under the Petroleum Production Act of 1934 the ownership of petroleum occurring in Britain is vested in the Crown; under the Coal Act of 1938 the State purchased the mineral rights in coal by compensating the royalty owners on a basis of a fifteen-year purchase of royalties. In addition, it has long been accepted that the royal metals, gold and silver, and also any minerals lying under tidal or territorial waters, belong to the Crown. Prof. Jones now advocates the acquisition of all mineral rights on the same basis as that used in the case of coal. He is careful to point out that State acquisition of mineral rights has nothing to do with nationalization of mines.

In the earlier paper Prof. Jones deals mainly with lead-zinc, tin and china clay. In the case of lead-zinc, it is urged that low-grade ores remain to be worked, which it is in the national interest to use but which cannot be done except under a large co-ordinated scheme involving drainage and centralized smelting. In the case of tin he deduces from the now well-known phenomena that copper lodes give place in depth to tin lodes with a relatively barren zone separating the two, that rich tin deposits may underly many old abandoned copper mines in the south-west of England; but that the problem is a national one which could be tackled only after the acquisition of the mineral rights.

In the second paper Prof. Jones mentions, though he does not perhaps stress sufficiently, the profligate waste of land now resulting annually from the working of gravel, sand, iron ore and other surface minerals.

The most startling feature of the papers is the relatively small cost involved. The figure for all base-metal minerals is only £421,000; for iron ore less than £4,000,000, and for all the minerals of Britain less than £22,000,000.

If the policy is regarded as right for coal and oil, it seems difficult to resist the conclusion that it is right for other minerals, but it would seem that Prof. Jones has only considered part of the problem. The State acquisition of petroleum rights was made *before*, and in intelligent anticipation of, the discovery of petroleum in quantity; and no land owner could truthfully feel himself unjustly deprived of his rightful possessions since he did not know such existed. Prof. Jones's proposals deal with acquisition by the State of other mineral rights by payment to owners in known mineral-bearing areas. It is here that a link with the general trend of policy regarding land planning suggests itself. If the State were to acquire all development rights in undeveloped land (that is, on land which is at present agricultural or

afforested or open) and thus effectively control surface development, these rights would obviously include any development of minerals. Quite clearly this would solve the pressing problems arising from surface working of coal, iron ore, gravel, sand, limestone and clay, where so much valuable agricultural land is being wasted through absence of adequate provision for restoration. It would permit the control, in the national interests, of the location of mineral workings of all types and open the way for the much-needed balanced planning of the use of the land of Britain.

L. DUDLEY STAMP.

THE ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SECTION

THE Council of the Royal Statistical Society has decided that the Industrial and Agricultural Research Section, the activities of which were suspended at the outbreak of war, shall be reconstituted in the form of two separate sections—a Research Section and an Industrial Application Section.

From its inception in 1933, the Industrial and Agricultural Research Section met the needs of the growing number of workers interested in applying statistical methods to industry and agriculture. It held regular meetings at which papers were read and discussed, and published the Supplement to the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, which not only contained these papers with reports of the discussions, but also provided a medium for the publication of new developments in the field of applied statistics.

During the War, statistical methods were applied on a greatly increased scale; in particular the need became apparent in industry for a common meeting ground where the experiences and difficulties arising in the practical application of statistical techniques could be discussed. On the initiative of Dr. B. P. Dudding, an informal Industrial Applications Group was formed in London to fulfil this need, and it was clear from the success attending the activities of the Group that there existed a considerable body of people who, though not necessarily professional statisticians or scientific workers, were very much interested in the practical aspects of the application of these new techniques to industry.

The Council of the Royal Statistical Society feels that the two distinct needs which are now evident will be catered for more adequately by the reorganization which has been effected. The Research Section will be concerned with the theory of statistics and statistical methods and with the development of new applications, while the Industrial Applications Section covers the practical application of statistical technique to industrial research, development, and manufacture, including inspection.

The Research Section, which will meet in London, proposes to hold four meetings during the coming session. Papers read at these meetings will be published in the Supplement to the Society's *Journal*, together with reports of the discussions. Details of the meetings will be announced in *Nature* and other appropriate journals. Visitors who are not members of the Section will be welcome.

The Industrial Applications Section is organized in local groups. In London, Birmingham and Sheffield,