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REPLANNING GREAT BRITAIN

THE satisfaction which was given by Lord Reith in his statement in the House of Lords on February 11, announcing the establishment of the Ministry of Works and Planning, to be endowed with the necessary powers derived in part from the existing Town and Country Planning Acts and in part from forthcoming legislation, including that designed to give effect to the recommendations of the Uthwatt Committee, passed into concern in view of succeeding ministerial changes and the absence of the promised statement from the Government. That concern has been largely dispelled by the statement made by Lord Portal in the House of Lords on April 21. Following on Mr. Bevin's address to the opening session of the Emergency Committee of the International Labour Organisation, and succeeded by Mr. Oliver Lyttelton's broadcast on April 26, it afforded reassuring evidence not only that the policy outlined by Lord Reith is unchanged, but also that the Government is facing the problems of the post-war world, and that some at least of its members fully realize the contribution a reconstruction policy can make to the winning of the War.

Lord Portal said that Lord Reith's statement made in February still stands. The Bill already introduced in the Commons, the second reading of which was moved by Mr. H. Strauss on April 29, was the first step in the creation of a Ministry the objective of which would be to secure the right use of land for all purposes. It would be the duty of the Minister to see that policies in regard to agriculture, transport, etc., are properly co-ordinated. Legislation has been drafted after consultation with Mr. Justice Uthwatt and Lord Justice Scott, whose reports should be available in the near future.

Lord Portal said that he fully agreed with what was said in a previous debate about the excessive number of planning authorities. Considerable reduction has been effected by the voluntary combination of local authorities, and it is the policy of the Government not only to reduce the number by planning over wide areas but also to accelerate the process. Area officers have already been selected to assist by collaboration with the local authorities, whom they will also aid in their planning work, keeping the local authorities informed of the national considerations which must be taken into account, and the Ministry of what is taking place in each area.

Referring to the need for speeding up the working of the Town and Country Planning Act, Lord Portal said that no planning would be complete which does not provide for the preservation of extensive areas of great natural beauty, and especially the coast-line. Protection of national parks and coasts from ill-considered building must be fully examined. He said he is working in the closest collaboration with the Paymaster-General on this and other questions; and with regard to the personnel of planning, directly the War is over, it will be essential to have the building industry organized to cope with the vast amount of work with which it will have to deal. A well-balanced programme for new houses, schools and other buildings and repairs, and for having the men available

quickly to do the work, is already well advanced. Demobilization both from the Services and the munition factories has already received attention, and a long-term programme of training on demobilization is an essential factor which requires to be thought out.

Lord Portal indicated that he appreciates the importance of the location of industry and of co-ordinating the contributions to post-war reconstruction from different Government departments. The services of the advisory panel of experts set up by Lord Reith will still be available, and a Bill will be introduced to take over the powers of the 1932 Planning Act.

This Bill, which received its second reading on April 29, is admittedly only a very small step, and little enthusiasm could be discerned for it in the House of Commons debate. It provides for the transfer to the Minister of Works and Planning of all the existing functions of the Commissioners of Works and the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland and of the Town and Country Planning functions of the Ministry of Health. The exact extent of the transfer of powers, like the precise relations between the Minister of Works and Planning and the Postmaster-General, is not quite clear.

The meagre advance represented by the new Bill is apparent from the valuable report issued by the Reconstruction Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects on "Legislation affecting Town and Country Planning"*. The debate on the Minister of Works and Planning Bill is in fact calculated to arouse rather than dispel misgivings as to the Government's intention, if only from the indications it affords that the delays in the appearance of the reports of the Uthwatt and Scott Committees are due not so much to the Committees as to the diversion of their members to other duties by the Government itself. Yet until these reports have appeared, the essential legislation is deferred, and opportunities are in fact being lost and obstacles being allowed to accumulate through dilatoriness and inaction.

The Reconstruction Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects, after a survey in some detail of present legislation affecting town and country planning, such as the Town and Country Planning Act 1932, the Local Government Act 1933, the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act 1935, the Trunk Roads Act 1936, and Acts affecting private street works and general building control, recommends first the establishment forthwith of one national planning authority with a Minister to lay down the main lines of the national plan, including trunk roads and other means of transport, assisted by expert planners, research and advisory committees as required. The establishment of regional officers of the Ministry to prepare and extend the national plan to meet the needs of the region and a grouping of the local authorities in each region for planning purposes in sub-regions or groups as required for efficient planning are next recommended. In regard to control, the report recommends that planning control

should include all land, including the preservation of land essential for agriculture and public reservations for any purpose, with no exemptions for Government lands, railways or other public utilities or for agricultural buildings.

As recommended by the Uthwatt Committee, the existing control of all development by licence should be extended for a fixed period until the constructive proposals of the national plan are worked out. Such control by licence should include control over the extension of existing industry as well as the location of new industry, and a limit of not more than twenty years should be fixed for the continuation of non-conforming uses. Detailed improvements should be effected in town-planning legislation on lines which have already been recommended, subject to the adjustments necessary to fit in with the national and regional administration and to the employment of a competent architect.

On the financial side, the report recommends simplification of the acquisition of land for public purposes, with the price of acquisition stabilized at a figure not exceeding the value at March 1939, and a similar stabilization of the price of land acquisition between private persons. In each district there should be a local improvement and open spaces fund, provided partly by Government grant, partly by a limited local rate and partly by contributions payable by all developers, thus providing for essential widenings, open-space reservations and proper maintenance. Besides this, the necessary finance should be available on a national basis for the preparation and implementing of the national plan. This must cover the encouragement of agriculture and proper marketing facilities and the provision of rural water supply and electricity; the encouragement of the proper location of industry and the provision of new industrial centres, the building of suitable new towns and trading estates, including the utilization of mineral and natural resources, and the extension of public utility services; the improvement of transport, including road, rail, water and air transport; and the reservation of national and regional spaces for recreation, including national parks and coastal reserves, regional open spaces and playing fields, and the preservation of buildings of national or historic importance.

The arguments and recommendations of this report are well underlined by Mr. Roland Pumphrey in his pamphlet in the Rebuilding Britain Series*. Dealing with the relation of industry to reconstruction and particularly with the tendencies to migration to be found in industry, he gives an admirable indication of the way in which those tendencies can best be turned to account. He focuses attention on the problems which require attention, the questions, such as the probability of the drift of industries and services into the south-east of Great Britain and to the Midlands being resumed after the War, the influence of evacuation on the growth of a more decentralized metropolitan type, and the means of securing a better distribution of town and country life without injury

* Legislation affecting Town and Country Planning. (London: Royal Institute of British Architects.)

* Industry and Town Planning. By Roland Pumphrey. Pp. 36. Rebuilding Britain Series, No. 6. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd.) 1s. net.

to agriculture and amenities, to which answers must be sought before policy is crystallized.

Mr. Pumphrey stresses the importance of preparing now, by wise legislation, by judicious placing of war-factories, war-houses and hutments, by research and by a constant watchfulness over changing conditions, and by uplifting public opinion, for the tasks which lie ahead; there must be a dynamic outlook. Everything must be related to the ever-changing panorama of human and material events. Secondly, he makes the point that British democracy should not attempt to embrace and control the destinies of the people by a comprehensive planning of all social and economic life. Rather should it, by wise governance and by devolving the necessary legislation and control, ensure the ways and means to a free co-operation for the development of the whole nation, in which industry and agriculture, town and countryside, shall find a harmony and identity of interests.

The core of the pamphlet, in fact, lies in Mr. Pumphrey's conclusion that industrial and town and country planning interests should join forces in providing an outline, based not only on the common requirements of industries, towns, transport and communications, but also with equal regard to the richest agricultural lands and scenic amenities. The details of location and environment can be left to sub-regional planning councils, but the striking of a balance between the requirements of the various parts of the country requires the advice and guidance of a central planning authority, exercising powers within a general outline of territorial lay-out and location as affecting the nation at large. Aided by an industrial advisory commission, a national planning Ministry might seek further to prepare public opinion for coming tasks by setting up well-equipped regional information bureaux in all principal centres, providing a tangible link between the Ministry and industry and the community.

In the debate in the House of Commons on the Planning Bill, both Mr. Strauss and Sir William Jowitt showed in their speeches that the Government's objective is to secure the right use of the land of Britain for all purposes; thus the various aspects outlined by the Reconstruction Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects and in Mr. Roland Pumphrey's pamphlet are evidently under review. What is principally at issue at the moment is the excessive slowness of advance. While no exception can fairly be taken to Sir William Jowitt's contention that we should await the reports of the Scott and Uthwatt Committees before attempting legislation, Mr. Greenwood's suggestion that all members of these committees are being overloaded with other work of less importance is not reassuring. At the least it indicates that the Government does not view the matter with the same sense of urgency and importance that it is viewed by the country at large.

There can be no question that already a vast amount of the necessary knowledge has already been acquired, and that what is now essential is action, particularly legislative action, so that the fuller plans can be worked out in readiness, and power exercised

where necessary to prevent further obstacles developing either during or immediately after the War. Moreover, as Mr. Strauss himself pointed out, we have to think not merely in terms of plans, but also of design and construction, of civic design and of architecture, and finally of men.

In this concluding reference to the crucial importance of the architect, Mr. Strauss touched on a point which is the main theme of a further report of the Reconstruction Committee of the Royal Institute of British Architects, dealing with reconstruction and the architectural profession, and of a pamphlet, "Plan for Living", by Mr. Clough Williams-Ellis*. The report directs attention to the lack of use of the special knowledge of the architect in Great Britain during the War. The Select Committee on National Expenditure has several times pointed to waste of time and materials directly due to neglect of such knowledge and experience in furtherance of the war effort, but the present report from the Royal Institute of British Architects is concerned more particularly with the opportunities in the period of reconstruction after the War.

The failure of town and country planning to achieve the beneficial or significant results desired is attributed partly to neglect of the services of the creative architect, and the report emphasizes the desirability of establishing so far as possible the relations between architectural and planning functions before the end of the War, as well as examining the organization and potential capacity of the profession, and establishing publicly and in good time the extent of contribution it can make to national reconstruction. In regard to the design and external appearance of buildings, the value of a consultative panel of architects to whom reference should be obligatory is discussed in some detail. The importance of the status of the official architect is rightly stressed, whether in regard to Government departments or to local authorities, and in a section on the building industry after the War the functions of the architect and the importance of training are discussed with admirable lucidity and restraint.

Mr. Williams-Ellis contrives to discuss the position of the architect in post-war planning with equal felicity and detachment. His claim for the architect as the key man in the team is advanced with reason and an approach to objectivity. That it is the architect's job and not the engineer's, in the first instance, to replace our towns, is no unreasonable contention. The outlook of the modern architect is intrinsically the more likely to bring that touch of vision and creative insight essential to give us towns and countryside which hold the possibility of a full and happy life for all, and not merely a sanitary existence. It is the architect who has the vision and whose training in civic design includes the sociological, transport, engineering and legal questions that are subsidiary but essential elements in designing the successful and beautiful town.

The possibilities of securing the basic things required for a merely tolerable existence by reason-

* Plan for Living: the Architect's Part. By Clough Williams-Ellis. Pp. 36. Rebuilding Britain Series, No. 5. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd.) 1s. net.

able forethought and planning to exclude inconvenience, ugliness, dirt, overcrowding, traffic delays, lack of sunlight or open-air amenities are ably discussed by Mr. Williams-Ellis. He reminds us of the opportunities which the bold and progressive ideas of to-day offer to constructive statesmanship, and of our comparative freedom from economic limitations if only we refuse to attempt to carry on with the old wasteful and inefficient muddle of unplanned living. If indeed we fail to seize the opportunities now before us, many of them presented by the removal of obstructions by bombing, and fail to develop a nobler community marked by the sanity, order and beauty which, as Mumford has reminded us, is the final test of an economic system, democracy will indeed have shown itself unable to learn from its present enemies.

Fortunately technical ability and taste in architecture and town planning stand high in Great Britain to-day, and that ability and taste will have unprecedented opportunities. Both Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Lyttelton in their recent broadcasts, moreover, have indicated a new attitude in the Government which reflects the popular demand for something different and better. We are already entitled to assume that private ownership and vested interests will not be allowed to hold up or hinder changes needed in the public interest. Further, agreement has been reached on some such points as the optimum size for towns according to their location, siting and character, the sense of citizenship and civic pride and the provision of public amenities and cultural activities. True economy consists in efficiency, which includes not only right planning for traffic, public services, utilities, industries, commerce, health and education, but also for those no less vital needs known as amenities.

There is one point on which Mr. Williams-Ellis rightly insists. The success or failure of planning and reconstruction will finally depend on the character and ability of the men who do the job. Whether they are professional men such as architects or engineers, or administrative officials, or councillors, local or national Government servants, they must hold their posts in respect of ability, zeal and probity, and no other consideration whatsoever. On that condition the job is already half done. Without it, inefficiency, indifference and corruption will yet sabotage and bring to naught any programme or plan however brilliantly conceived.

The right note of moral conviction has been struck by Mr. Bevin, by Sir Stafford Cripps and by Mr. Lyttelton in their recent speeches. They go some way to remove the uneasiness suggested by Lord Portal's and by Mr. Strauss's speeches that progress has of late been retarded rather than accelerated. The urgent need remains for the Government to give the most explicit assurance of its earnestness and of its determination to produce the measures and policies in readiness for the testing time of armistice and the advance to a new peace economy. Nothing short of a Government declaration of its clear intention to retain control of industrial organization for so long as is necessary to bridge the hazardous period of transition, and simultaneously to secure the full

adaptation of the production machine to the needs of reconstruction at home and overseas and the full employment of the working population for this purpose, will suffice to secure the maintenance of the national unity which is our safeguard from disaster. If the speeches to which we refer should check any undue pessimism, they should also stimulate unceasing pressure on the Government until there is forthcoming unmistakable evidence of the driving force and conviction of urgency which will ensure to the Minister of Works and Planning the powers and the legislation to enable him to formulate, and in due course to execute, a policy which will define and implement that outlined last February by Lord Reith and Mr. Greenwood and reiterated by Sir Kingsley Wood in his Budget speech. With nothing less will the country be content and without something more its war effort may well suffer. The Government should take the earliest opportunity of removing these doubts as to its continued determination to find "practical solutions for the immediate problems of a transition from war to peace", and to outline and amplify "a policy for the years following the War which will command the support of the nation as a whole and enable united action to proceed in peace as in war".

FALLACIES OF RACIALISM

Racialism against Civilization

By Dr. I. Zollschan. Pp. 64. (London: New Europe Publishing Co., Ltd., 1942.) 1s. 6d. net.

FOR many years Dr. Zollschan has been trying to rouse public opinion to a greater awareness of the ugly aspects of the racial theories concocted by Nazi propaganda, and its predecessors, to justify the aggressions by means of which a pathological group seeks to over-compensate for its deep sense of intellectual inferiority. The German disease is an old one, as the author shows. It was raging in Bismarck's time, and, whether voluntarily or not, Wagner increased the morbid tendency by his popularization of Teutonic heathendom in the "Ring of the Nibelungs". The Christian tradition was sick almost unto death in German universities; and theological writers, there as in Great Britain, were too often content to spin webs of sophistry to hide a void.

If we study human society objectively we cannot but realize that, whereas in the early and lowly stages of its evolution the individual is governed mainly by custom, the better equipped peoples show more tendency to value personality. Custom is apt to harden into a restrictive routine that sooner or later finds itself out of touch with ever-changing life, and the closed systems that have existed in the past have thus been led on through persecution of their best children to bankruptcy of ideas and collapse. This is the main argument for philosophic liberalism, which, in its turn, needs to guard against forgetfulness of the fact that man is a social being and has been such from the very outset of his story. To combine social order with the cherishing of personality as an agent of necessary adaptation is a chief task of mankind; and its difficulty is seen only too clearly when we realize that most 'blue prints' of a better world envisage a static condition, a sort of millennium that cannot exist. How to change