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RELIEF AND REHABILITATION IN EUROPE

A MAJOR problem now before the United Nations is the provision of food, clothing, medical supplies and other necessities of life in the newly liberated countries of Europe, so that they may be able to carry on until long-range plans for rehabilitation begin to take effect. The debate in the House of Commons on March 28 on supplies for Europe fairly reflected the growing concern which has been, and still is, felt in Great Britain. The seriousness of this question of relief and rehabilitation as a reconstruction measure has repeatedly been emphasized, in such books as Mr. Bryant's "Unfinished Victory" even five years ago, in Colonel Bonsal's recently published diary of the peace conference following the War of 1914–18 entitled "Unfinished Business", and in such scientific studies as those of the Royal Institute of International Affairs on "Medical Relief in Europe" and "Relief and Reconstruction in Europe : the First Steps". The picture of Berlin and the mind of Germany as they impressed Colonel Bonsal in the early part of 1920 are full of significance in regard to the probable position of Europe in the months immediately ahead.

The speech of Earl Winterton in opening the debate in the House of Commons shows clearly, however, that scientific workers have a special responsibility in this field to enable effective action to be taken. It is not disputed that the economic condition of the Western countries in Europe which have been subjected to the German occupation is serious. Nor can it be disputed that the position means much present human suffering and future political danger. It is clear also that a great responsibility rests upon Great Britain and the United States in the matter, since we command practically all external air and sea transport and, for military reasons, most of the internal transport. The figures quoted by Lord Winterton were not disputed by the Lord President of the Council in his reply, though Mr. Attlee insisted that there has been no discrimination against France, as Lord Winterton implied, and that France has shared in the general pool of shipping. Broadly, we are trying to get supplies from where they are to where they are needed, and at the same time to ensure the greatest economy in shipping, haulage and port facilities.

Mr. Attlee's sober statement was somewhat reassuring, and in particular his announcement that the Ministry of Food was releasing to the liberated areas, which includes some of the Mediterranean areas as well, 900,000 tons of food from British stocks, and that the Ministers of Production and Food had gone to the United States at the invitation of the President to discuss the special food problems of the liberated areas. Mr. Attlee's speech, furthermore, put the proposals with regard to 'food parcels' in their proper context, and his emphasis on the position of Britain as a food-importing country was phrased so as to avoid alike any possibility of international misunderstanding or recrimination, or doubt

as to the Government's realization that it is vital to get as good conditions as we possibly can in the liberated areas, as soon as we can. That, he agreed, is as essential for winning the victory of freedom and democracy as destroying the enemy in the field.

Mr. Attlee's statement should also help to make the position of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in this matter clearer; in this he was supported by Sir Arthur Salter, who pointed out that the activities of the Administration have always been subject to military considerations. Lord Winterton's fourth contention, however, was that the question for decision was whether we and the United States had taken sufficient remedial measures, having regard not merely to the supreme military needs of the moment but also to the fact that hungry people are not discriminating, and that France, Belgium and Holland are democratic countries *par excellence*. If the ordinary people there think that Britain and the United States have mishandled the food situation for military reasons, the war of liberation will cease to be as popular as it should and the liberating powers will not receive the gratitude they deserve.

This point was really met by Sir Edward Grigg in winding up the debate, when he said that in considering measures of military relief, the agreed policy of the United Nations is, and must be, to encourage the liberated peoples to assume responsibility for their own affairs as soon as possible. That is a definite instruction to all civil affairs officers who go into liberated territories. This assurance is welcome, as any other policy would involve the responsibility for future misery in Europe being saddled on Britain instead of firmly and primarily on Germany and the Axis Powers, and secondly on the local authorities responsible for local shortcomings.

Sir Edward Grigg's speech, while claiming that the military authorities, within their limited functions in the matter, have done and will continue to do their utmost to prevent disease and unrest in the immediate wake of the armies, never concealed that we are faced with a problem the gravity of which it is impossible to over-estimate, and neither his speech nor the trend of the debate as a whole left any room for complacency. A sense of urgency permeated the debate, and the suggestion advanced by Sir Arthur Salter that we should establish without delay an authority such as a supreme reconstruction council, comparable with the Supreme Economic Council established in 1919, was welcomed by one speaker after another before Sir Edward Grigg promised that the Government would take note of the matter.

Sir Arthur Salter's suggestion was for an authority which would co-ordinate for the principal victorious powers all their policy and efforts in assisting the reconstruction of Europe. He does not regard it as work for the Social and Economic Council of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, or any organization set up as a result of the San Francisco Conference. He believes it is essentially a part of the peace settlement itself and should be established quickly; if we thus supplement our present system, we have good hope of meeting the greatest challenge to the constructive effort of men that has ever been witnessed in the history of the world; but without it our present system will be completely inadequate.

There was, in fact, not only a large measure of agreement on this proposal running through the debate, but also on other aspects of the situation, and the debate should have done something to educate public opinion still further as to the urgency of the situation, and to bring people to realize how serious is the problem and how grave is the prospect for European civilization if we do not take the right action now. The enlightenment of public opinion is an indispensable condition of success, in Great Britain as in other countries, for only so can we be sure that adequate support will be forthcoming for the measures demanded, and that the personal sacrifices involved in the continuance of rationing and other necessary controls will be cheerfully accepted. Above all, it is only the force of public opinion which can deal effectively with 'black marketing' and other disorders which endanger morale. Mere organization, however superlative, will never win the peace and establish a world order out of the chaos into which it is now clear that the Nazis have been deliberately seeking to engulf the whole of Europe.

In that task of education, however, scientific workers have a special part to play, parallel to that which they played in regard to nutrition in Great Britain, and which, as Lord Woolton has justly said, did so much to secure the acceptance of a food policy which averted disaster. Dr. Haden Guest rightly pointed out that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration has in fact done a great deal of valuable work in surveying world resources of food and materials and, if used as the Civil Service of a supreme economic authority, it could do more still. The chairman of the combined food organizations has said that with the co-operation of Governments, the overall needs of Europe in 1945 could be supplied, not indeed by moving rapidly to a full diet, but by providing a normal calorie programme of rations. Certain items such as meat and fats admittedly are likely to be scarce for five or ten years or more, and Mr. Attlee referred to the danger of world shortages in fats and milk products particularly.

What is required, however, is to translate into terms understood by everyone the meaning of the differences between the accepted standards of an adequate diet based on scientific investigation, such as the agreed minimum daily ration of 2,800 calories, and those actually received in France, Italy, Holland or elsewhere, and the cumulative effect of the policy of starvation or semi-starvation deliberately imposed for four or even five years by Germany on the peoples of occupied Europe. The physical, mental and psychological consequences—the lowering not merely of physical vitality but also of powers of moderation and judgment through loss of vitamins and malnutrition—are matters of scientific fact which men of science are well qualified to interpret to their fellow citizens;

and it is one of their first duties to show convincingly why and how this policy of relief and food and medical supplies is both a humanitarian issue and a matter of the fundamental interests of the United States and Britain. They of all men and women should not need the words of Lord Templewood to remind them that unless we make a swift and united effort, the Nazis, although broken in the military field, may win in the civil by the victory of destruction. It is not, however, the question of food supplies alone, though that is important. As Dr. Haden Guest and Mr. Greenwood reminded us, we have escaped epidemics so far, but the circumstances in which epidemics grow are being spread all over Europe at the present time. Prevention is very urgent indeed, and the displaced populations to which reference was freely made in the debate, whether refugees, prisoners of war or those forcibly deported, only accentuate the difficulties and dangers. Even in Great Britain we do not stand outside the range of large-scale epidemics if they start in Europe.

On this count also, Dr. Guest believes that some further inter-government staff organization is required. Besides this, however, there is the question of getting European agriculture and husbandry started again, as was emphasized by Mr. Greenwood and Sir James Grigg. Food and clothing are not the only necessities. Fertilizers, seeds and agricultural implements will also be required, apart altogether from the question of raw materials to get the factories of Europe started again, though industrial reconstruction is part also of this question of quickening European life. Even from the point of view of food supply, the reconstruction of European agriculture is an urgent task, the successful performance of which implies all the difference between chaos and the return of individuals and nations to peaceful life. How important is this task and how great are the difficulties are well shown in an article by Prof. K. Brandt of the Food Research Institute, Stanford University, California, in a recent number of *Foreign Affairs*, which states that while such reconstruction must be the responsibility of national governments, economic policy should be worked out by international agreement. The major part of the job, however, lies outside agriculture, and Prof. Brandt points out that the recovery of European agriculture depends on the prior recovery of industry in Great Britain and all the Continental countries, and on the volume of post-war international trade, and primarily on decisions taken by the United States, the world's leading industrial power and the greatest creditor among the nations.

Prof. Brandt's article deserves attention, for the urgent problem of relief cannot be separated entirely from the long-term problem of reconstruction. The relation was not always made clear in the House of Commons debate, except perhaps in so far as the fact that Great Britain is herself a food-importing country was rightly stressed: It is essential that such limitations should be as clearly understood as the implications of the continuance of undernourishment and starvation in Europe. It may well be that such a gesture as food parcels may be administratively impracticable or inefficient. It may even be that on the examination which Sir James Grigg promised, Mr. A. P. Herbert's proposal for the assembly and organization of small craft to take food and supplies to the Continent as they once brought back the British army may prove impracticable; though for psychological reasons neither gesture of sympathy, apart from its practical service, should be lightly dismissed. If such proposals are rejected, however, the reasons must be clearly and fully explained, for the widespread public concern to which the debate testified cannot be disregarded. Moreover, if it is important that scientific workers should continue their task of interpreting the findings of the science of nutrition in terms of an adequate diet and a reasonable food policy not only for Britain but also for other countries, and that their attention to agricultural research should be sustained by a high sense of social service, it is equally important that the full facts of the world situation should be fully understood by the general public.

The people of Britain must be brought to recognize the limitations as well as the possibilities of action by their Government alone or in co-operation with those of other countries. The same generous spirit which inspired the idea of food parcels will effectively support the Government in whatever action may be required, and accept with patience and fortitude not merely the continuance of our present ration-scales which, as Sir Edmund Grigg said, are not large, but also, now that the fighting itself has come to an end, whatever further controls may be required to implement the chosen policy. To avoid reaction against such controls and rationing, and the all-important effort of food production on allotments, for example, their purpose must be made plain to all. Their relation must be demonstrated to the larger tasks of defeating the deliberate attempt which Germany has made to render civilization and an ordered life impossible in Europe, and establishing a world order from which disease and want and squalor have been banished, so far as lies within man's power.

SIX DECADES OF AMERICAN BOTANY

John Merle Coulter

Missionary in Science. By Andrew Denny Rodgers, III. Pp. x+321+2 plates. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1944.) 25*s*. net.

THE history of botanical science in the United States is being duly surveyed and conserved. Already from the Princeton University Press there has come an account of the work of John Torrey; a volume on American botany from 1873 until 1892 is promised in the near future; now there is available a considerable work on John Merle Coulter. The method of presentation is biographical, but the work is really as much the history of a period as an account of the life and work of an individual. It is well that such studies should be undertaken before the essential