

BLACKFRIARS

socialist thinkers are logically forced to tend, the author of the final essay, *The New Society*, shows an astonishing facility in twisting certain Christian truths into line with current views. He succeeds only in compressing even Christ into the narrow limits of a best-seller. Christ becomes a futile prophet of the Ethic which only the Machine could make possible. Religious genius, he explains, was too busy with the spiritual ethic to work out its material implications. "It is part of the limitation of the Gospels that they ignore the technical problem" (p. 266). We are still so near to the industrial revolution and the machine age which it has prepared for us, that it intoxicates us. "Its more profound significance still escapes us. We are not yet aware that because it has ended the long centuries of scarcity it has at last brought within our reach the ethics of the garden, that it has laid the material foundations necessary for the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 270). These ethics, "which cast a moral stigma on worldly care will prove to be a brilliant forecast of the release of man's spirit in the machine age" (p. 279). All of which goes to show that the authors of this book have failed to deal either with Christianity or with Revolution.

CEOLFRIID HERON, O.P.

REORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL ECONOMY. By Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J. English Edition prepared by Bernard W. Dempsey, S.J. (Coldwell; 15s.)

THE CONDITION OF BRITAIN. By G. D. H. and M. I. Cole. (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.)

THE PEOPLE'S FRONT. By G. D. H. Cole. (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.)

Reorganization of Social Economy is a bulky volume, comprising some 450 pages of very useful if somewhat tedious word-for-word commentary on the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. As is the way in word-for-word commentaries, there is a tendency to vain repetition and to much labouring of the obvious, while real problems suggested by, when not contained explicitly in, the letter of the text are apt to be ignored. (An instance is the very superficial treatment of the Encyclical's teaching on property.) The author is an economist rather than a theologian or philosopher, and in his handling of the more specifically economic implications of the Encyclical he is at his best. In general, his interpretations are sound, almost recklessly safe—and quite unimaginative. Nevertheless, the book should be found very useful by all whose task it is to expound the Encyclical. Had it been compressed to about one-third its present

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size and translated by someone with some sense of idiomatic English it would have served its purpose still better.

Having been compiled by Mr. and Mrs. Cole, published by Mr. Gollancz, and sponsored by the Left Book Club, *The Condition of Britain*, published last April, has been ignored with a quiet conscience by nearly everybody who is not politically "Left." Quite coldly (with few exceptions—one cannot be completely unemotional on such matters) and mainly by the mere presentation of comparative statistics, it tells how the masses of Englishmen, Scots and Welshmen live to-day. It is a devastating book. True, the authors confine themselves almost entirely to the *material* living conditions of our people and have little to say about their souls; but they will tell less materialistically-minded readers how these conditions must tend to destroy souls by the million. The Catholic reader will dissent from the rather restricted outlook which the book sometimes displays, and also from some of the "solutions" which it occasionally proposes; but it is as a documentary record that it is to be recommended to *everybody*. To all who like to imagine that the social and economic conditions of the vast majority of people in this country are anything less than a horror, it is almost a *duty* to read this book. They will need plenty of pluck if they will read it honestly and be prepared to face the consequences.

The People's Front is Mr. Cole's own idea of the corollary to *The Condition of Britain*. In a non-party review such as BLACK-FRIARS, little need be said about it except that it is a powerful plea, by a convinced supporter of the Labour Party, for a Popular Front in Britain, and that it not only argues that the formation of such a Front is desirable but also suggests that it is inevitable. If this be so, it will present Catholic workers with a very serious and complicated problem of conscience which should be faced in good time. It will be noted that the People's Front which Mr. Cole advocates and anticipates will be a coalition for the gaining of immediate objectives only, i.e., the removal of present hindrances to the respective objectives of all "non-reactionary" elements and parties, without prejudice to the deep differences of ultimate aims among themselves. It will also be noticed that this People's Front in Britain, if formed in good time, will not be (according to Mr. Cole) predominantly Communist, but on the contrary will incidentally serve to forestall the supplanting of a disintegrating Labour Party by the Communist Party. Mr. Cole makes some important points on "collaboration with Communists" which deserve consideration by pastors of souls and moral theologians who are called upon to decide just what this does and does not imply for Catholics who would be loyal to the Church's directions in the matter.

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