

## A FIFTY YEARS PLAN

WE all know that Great Britain is suffering from some ill. We are all becoming rather tired of all the examinations of this fact and of all the cures. Generally we find that the "doctors" are only concerned with bolstering up present economic order by removing the more glaring evils. We find Communists and Fascists all opposing capitalism with another form of capitalism in which they will be the capitalists.

Very rarely do we find anyone questioning the fundamental issues on which Great Britain and the Empire have been built.

We know we have lost a great proportion of our export trade, but we hope to recover it. Few of us ask if this is possible.

Now we have a distributist<sup>1</sup> examining the sick—Great Britain, and wisely pointing out the fallacies of the treatment prescribed by other doctors. In the first part of this booklet we find all the causes; "Small minority possessing property and the vast proletarianised majority . . . " "The deadly effect of urbanization possesses a profound biological significance." "Only a minute fraction of the population is engaged in work on the land . . . " "England's industrial monopoly is on the wane . . . " "The beginning of a process which will end in England possessing but a fraction of its present population; and of that fraction, half will be mentally deficient . . . "

Having found the disease Fr. Witcutt removes two of the false remedies from his path: Communism and Fordism. He rejects Communism for many reasons, because it would replace Capitalism with an undesirable society, because its change would be too sudden, and because it does not meet the particular ills that Fr. Witcutt finds, such as excessive urbanization. Quoting Ford and Chase he shows that super-capitalism is working towards a society in which photo-electric cells will replace workers.

Then comes the cure. It proposes setting up in Great

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<sup>1</sup> *Dying Lands*, by W. P. Witcutt. (Distributist League; 6d.)

## BLACKFRIARS

Britain an "economic dualism." Under this, which is based on a "50-year plan," the South of England and the Birmingham area would continue as at present. Wales, Scotland and the North of England would be new economic units. Such units would be organized to support their population by (a) developing unused land by means of intensive agriculture, and (b) by what export trade remains, and (c) a decentralization of industry and the diffusion of its ownership.

There is obviously a lot of truth in the cure. England must be prepared to cease exporting on the scale she has for the past hundred years. She must expect to cease drawing a large rentier income from the rest of the world. She must realize that with electricity the large manufacturing plant is not the only means of production in most industries.

But why separate the prosperous south from the derelict north? Why allow the south to rid itself of its responsibilities for the poverty-ridden north?

Surely it is as easy to persuade the Parliament of Great Britain to agree to the cultivation of our unused land, the promotion of smaller industries and the spreading of ownership, as to persuade Parliament to agree to a decentralization that will involve these points? By adding decentralization into self-contained economic units to various good and useful reforms the task is made all the more difficult.

There seems to be one fundamental difficulty that has been overlooked. At present Great Britain is in the grip of the big business man, and this man would hate to lose any part of the home market. He is not going to smile sweetly and agree to such radical changes. How are the changes to be effected if this man and his friends are left undisturbed in the South.

There is a great deal of truth in the Marxist view. You can effect many many small changes, but suddenly there comes the point when the "change" is so violent that a new thing exists. Capitalism, as we have it to-day, will stand many changes, but never the changes advocated in this booklet. Great Britain must be treated as a whole, we must refuse to segregate parts. The whole must be indoctrinated with various changes until it is ready for such a sharp change that it is no longer Capitalism.

Why not advocate on a national scale the use of unculti-

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vated land for the production of food, forbidding the "preservation" of large tracts of useful land for the pleasure of grouse shooting? Why not advocate a law forbidding any more industries to concentrate in London and Birmingham? Why not work for the spreading of industry throughout the country? Why not work for the building of small towns (and the subsequent destruction of much of our monster cities) with a small number of factories in the immediate vicinity? Why not make the agricultural labourers' life much better than it is so that the country is not the soul-depressing and health-killing area that it is, from the workers point of view?

Probably very many Catholics will object to Fr. Witcutt's ideas, but it would be well worth their while to study the booklet, and if they do disagree to formulate exactly their objections. *Dying Lands* is the sanest book the present writer has read from the distributist angle. In fact he began it with a strong bias against all things distributist, and ended by thinking that there is a lot in what Fr. Witcutt says.

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