

OUR LONDON LETTER

British Cautious—Government Bill Allots Only \$10,000,000 for Experimental Uplift Enterprises in the Depressed Areas, Where Industrial Revival is Hopeless.

Allotment of only \$10,000,000 for the rehabilitation of the so-called "depressed areas" in Great Britain is new proof of the unwillingness of the Government to undertake costly social experimentation of the New Deal type. The smallness of the sum provoked an explosion from former Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who praised the lavish spending of the Roosevelt Administration and said Congress would reject with laughter the proposal of such an insignificant sum as had been granted by the Government. The veteran, whose \$250,000,000 public works scheme some years back was rejected by both Conservatives and Labor, is going on the stump in a country-wide campaign to arouse public sentiment for Liberal government spending for social purposes.

The bill dealing with the aid of the depressed areas followed presentation of a report by members of a commission which had been appointed to investigate their plight. The commissioners made various recommendations for permanent alleviation of the conditions found. The measure presented by the Government did not authorize carrying out any of the specific projects suggested but provided for the appointment of two commissioners with broad powers to organize and develop projects for the "economic development and social improvement" of the depressed areas. They are not permitted to make any contribution to any work or other relief project now being carried on, or to any project which any government department has undertaken or contemplates undertaking. They must act entirely on new lines, seeking to develop extraordinary projects of permanent relief. The bill, however, permits them to supplement existing relief work by supplying milk to training centers established for the benefit of the younger out-of-works.

The measures was denounced by the opposition speakers, whose attacks were unusually violent and by a section of the Conservatives, mostly young M. P.'s, which professes advanced opinions on social questions. One of these members declared the

bill a "terrible disappointment" to the younger supporters of the Government. Another Conservative declared that the bill should have dealt constructively with all the depressed industries on the lines of national planning.

The depressed areas are those sections of the country in which, even with the greatest measure of general recovery, the existing industries are not likely ever to be able to support the former working population. They include the principal coal fields. Their market, both domestic and foreign, has fallen off, and, as proximity to the mines has ceased to be the advantage it once was to various lines of manufacturing, there has been a drift of industry southward.

The depressed area on which the commission reported were in West Cumberland and Durham and Tyne-side in the north of England, South Wales and Monmouthshire, and Scotland. All are coal mining centers, although the coal output in West Cumberland is much less than that of the other areas. It is rich, however, in other minerals.

The commissioners, one of whom is a member of the Cabinet, J. C. C. Davidson, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, made separate reports and held varying views of the problem, particularly on the question of national planning. Captain Evan Wallace, who investigated Durham and Tyne-side, stressed the case for national planning. He argued that there was no likelihood that the economic forces which had created the present conditions in the depressed areas could readjust them except at an intolerable cost of human suffering and economic waste, and that there could be no effective measures for the rehabilitation of any one area without references to the country as a whole.

He suggested that a national plan, include some measure of Government check on the shifting of industries from established to new centres. Such re-location of industries, he argued, meant a large scale movement of population which involved an enormous waste of social capital. Other points suggested in a national planning program were limitation of the field of labor of women and children a pen-

sion plan adequate to take the older workers out of the competition of jobs and the five-day week.

A more conservative view was taken by Lieutenant Colonel Sir Arthur Rose, who studied conditions in Scotland. He said that direction of industry by Government had been considered as a remedy, but rejected as involving too drastic an economic change and too much State responsibility.

Various methods of Government action were suggested by the members of the Commission. Chancellor Davidson proposed the formation of a corporation of the type called a development trust to finance small industries requiring from \$25,000 to \$100,000 capital. Sir Wyndham Portal, who examined conditions in Wales, suggested a factory for Government supplies for that region, also a sugar beet factory. The Government was asked to consider granting ten-year contracts to firms bidding on Government supplies provided they did the work in the depressed areas. Another proposal was for a Government contribution to the wages of previously unemployed men who were taken on in a new factory in the depressed district. Appointment of a finance adviser to assist small industries needing more capital was recommended.

Captain Wallace proposed that in letting contracts the Government, while not bandoning the practice of seeking competitive bids, should make the award, other things being equal, to bidders in the depressed areas. The Air Ministry rejected a proposal to consider locating a factory in Durham to do some of the work on its extended air program, on the ground that the county, fronting on the North Sea, was too much exposed to attack, but there was hope that some of the work on the army's motorization plan would be allotted to Durham.

All members of the commission proposed emigration to more prosperous regions of younger workers and settlement on the land of as many of the unemployed as possible. The most detailed proposals for land settlement were made by Mr. Davidson. He planned combined large-scale farming with subsistence holdings. The farms were to be purchased and operated by a development trust and managed by experts familiar with the latest scientific methods. A marketing expert was to seek an outlet for the products; the lines recommended were cultivations of vegetables and soft fruits, and pig and poultry raising. The workers were to live in their own villages, be employed at regular wages

on the big farms and eke out their income with food raised by family labor on subsistence holdings allotted them.

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