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FARM LABOUR AND SOCIAL STANDARDS

SECOND OPENING PAPER

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THE composition or structure of the agricultural population varies widely from one country to another, and the term 'farm labour' may be used to cover different groups of the working population. Any precise definition is impossible, but some delimitation is necessary if discussion is to be kept within fruitful boundaries. The first group, that of the wage-earners, may appear to be capable of reasonably precise definition, but any one who has attempted to reconcile national census figures with agricultural statistics will know that there are many pitfalls. There are workers who are more or less regularly employed, those who seek their livelihood in wage-paid work only; there are those who are casually employed or employed for seasonal work only; and there are the migratory workers who form a distinct class in many countries and may cross international frontiers. The wage-earner group is not a homogeneous group in any country, but there is more community of interest in this group than in any other, because of their interest in the social problems which are common to all wage-earners.

This group is larger numerically, and more widespread, than is generally recognized. No reliable statistics are in existence to show the composition of the agricultural population in the various countries, but Lady Louise Howard in her book *Labour in Agriculture* gives a table in which she brings together the available figures up to 1933 for 24 countries, and these show that the percentage of agricultural wage-paid workers to the agricultural occupied population ranged from 10 to 65 per cent.¹ Without claiming complete accuracy for the analysis in any country, the broad fact emerges that the wage-earner is an important member of the agricultural community.

When we leave the wage-earner group and consider the groups which are intermediate between the wage-earners and the operators, we enter on a chequered field. In nearly every country we find

¹ Bulgaria 10, Canada 17, Estonia 19, India 20, Ireland 21, Switzerland 21, Lithuania 22, Germany 22, Sweden 23, Austria 25, United States of America 25, Norway 32, France 35, Australia 35, Finland 36, Denmark 37, Belgium 37, Czechoslovakia 38, New Zealand 45, Italy 43, Hungary 47, Scotland 54, England and Wales 63, Netherlands 65.

examples of some system of sub-contracting; the system of share-cropping is found in many countries, notably in the U.S.A., Hungary, and the southern countries of Europe; share-tenancy is widely spread and may range from little more than a payment in kind to a partnership in providing capital; and we have everywhere the 'dwarf holding' which is not sufficient to enable the holder to maintain himself by its cultivation. Finally, we have the unpaid family labour of the operators' families. These do not exhaust all the groups which farm labour may cover, but they are the principal groups.

Sub-contractors and share-croppers form a relatively simple group. They are essentially wage-earners paid by results. The fact that the earnings are often family earnings rather than wages paid to individuals is a difference in degree only, since family wage contracts are common in agriculture everywhere. Share-tenants are not so easily classified, because they vary from workers, who contribute little more than their labour, to operators, who may own a considerable share of the working capital. A considerable number, however, would fall into the farm labour group. The 'dwarf' holders ought to be included in farm labour. Many of them have to depend upon wage-earning to eke out a living, and many of the migratory labourers are drawn from this class, but, even where they are unable to secure employment for wages, such livelihood as they can squeeze out of their tiny holdings is a return for labour; what they earn does not come from that possession of property which would distinguish them from wage-earners. In general their standard of living is not as good as that of agricultural wage-earners in the same country. The unpaid members of the operators' families may occupy a different status from that of wage-earners, but they ought to be included in the farm labour group in considering the relation of that group to social standards.

The picture then presented by this rapid sketch of farm labour is one of a considerable welter of conditions which is to be found in every country. It is impossible to make even a guess as to the number of people covered by the term 'farm labourer' as delimited, but it is obvious that a very large number of people in every country must be involved.¹ It has been estimated that nearly two-thirds of the existing world population is engaged in agriculture. The impact of social

¹ Some figures given by Professor Nelson, University of Minnesota, in his paper to the Permanent Agricultural Committee of the International Labour Office are interesting. The total number of wage-earners in agriculture in the U.S.A. in 1930 was 2,732,972; the number of migratory labourers on the Pacific Coast is estimated at 150,000 to 200,000; in 1930 share-croppers were operating 716,000 farms, over 10 per cent. of all farms in the U.S.A.; unpaid farm workers in 1930 numbered 1,659,792; and farm operators, both tenants and owners and managers, in 1930 numbered 6,079,234.

standards on farm labour is therefore one of the major social problems, and it is international in its character.

Social standards as they affect labour fall into two groups. There are those which have arisen out of the wage contract and which regulate wages and working conditions and provide against such risks as accidents and unemployment, and there are the social standards which have arisen out of community life and regulate such services as health and housing, education, the use of leisure, and provision for invalidity and old age. No clear-cut division can be made between the two groups, because they overlap at many points, but the two groups are convenient because the approach to the setting up of standards has usually differed. The effort to set up standards arising out of the wage contract has generally proceeded by way of voluntary organization on the part of the wage-earners. After a period of struggle, collective bargaining may result in codes of wages and working conditions, and voluntary insurance against invalidity and unemployment may be organized by the trade unions. After a certain stage is reached, legal sanction may be sought to give greater security to the established codes. Development has, of course, varied in the different countries and in different industries, but the drive for the establishment of such standards has generally come from the workers themselves, and the intervention of the State has come later, but even now, in most countries, the regulation of wages, working hours, and other conditions of employment remains largely a matter of collective agreement, although the tendency everywhere is for such voluntary agreements to be supplemented by definite social standards set up by the state. The regulation of the employment of women and children has become increasingly a matter of legal enactment. In a good many countries state schemes of insurance against accidents and unemployment are in existence; the methods of raising the funds may differ, and the proportions raised from industry or from general taxation may vary, as do the methods of administration, but the responsibility of the state is recognized.

These standards are designed to give the worker a measure of security as a worker in a particular employment. They aim at securing adequate remuneration for his work, protection against excessive hours of employment, and provision against the risks which such employment entails. In general the cost of meeting these standards is a charge upon the undertaking in which the worker is employed, and the standards vary in the different industries, but there is a growing movement to lay down certain minima and to compel all industries to conform to these minima.

Social standards in communal services are a more recent growth and have developed out of the growing interdependence of the citizens in the modern state. They are designed to deal with the citizen rather than the worker in any particular industry. Popular education was the earliest service of this character and has been furthest developed; health and housing services have become increasingly a matter of social provision; schemes for provision against invalidity and old age are to be found at various stages of development in many countries. The methods of organizing these schemes, and the extent of the provision made, vary greatly from one country to another, but they have this in common, that they recognize the responsibility of the state for making provision and the necessity for creating social standards for the well-being of the community.

A considerable impetus was given to the development of social standards by the setting up of the International Labour Office under the Treaty of Versailles, and it is significant that, during a period when international co-operation in other directions has been breaking down, the I.L.O. has continued to function, and on the whole to function successfully. Both in the field of social standards arising out of the wage contract, and in the field of communal social services, a willingness to create international social standards has been shown. Many important international conventions have been agreed to, and ratified in a considerable number of countries, and a series of recommendations has done much to stimulate developments in various countries. The significant fact, however, is that a beginning has been made to develop international social standards. That not only gives an impetus towards further development, but also ensures permanence to the movement.

So far we have been considering the general movement towards the establishment of social standards, but we must now consider how far that movement has affected farm labour. As far as the first group is concerned I would refer those interested to Lady Louise Howard's book *Labour in Agriculture*, the only international survey of the whole problem, and to the publications of the I.L.O. for detailed information as to the position in different countries. Put very briefly the position is that in every country the standard of living of farm labour is very low, both by itself and relatively to the standard of other workers. In many countries there is neither voluntary organization nor any state regulation of wages and working conditions. In some of the European countries and in Australia and New Zealand social standards are emerging, it may be in the form of collective agreements, or by legal enactment, and sometimes by a combination of

both methods, but even where standards are emerging they are always definitely lower than those for other classes of workers in the same country.

The reason for this is to be found in the development of agriculture. A definite class of wage-earners has to emerge before organization can be created, and even then the small-scale units of the industry and the fact that the workers are so widely scattered render organization difficult. Two other factors militate against organization: the large proportion of adolescent workers (about one-third in Great Britain are under 21 years of age) and the effort of the most adventurous and enterprising farm workers everywhere to escape from agriculture. It has to be remembered, too, that in many European countries it was illegal for landworkers to organize until twenty years ago. The important fact, however, is that the demand is now being made for the establishment of standards. The extent of the change may be measured by considering the position in 1921 and again in 1938. When an effort was made to have the hours of labour in agriculture put on the agenda for the Conference of the I.L.O. at Geneva in 1921, it not only failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority, but the question was raised whether agricultural questions were within the competence of the I.L.O. and the question had to be submitted to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague before it was decided that agricultural questions were included. In 1938 the Permanent Agricultural Committee of the I.L.O. at its first session adopted the following resolution:

The Committee is of the opinion that in the general interest of agriculture wage-earners hours of work should be regulated.

It realizes, however, the difficulties which the application of such a regulation would meet with by reason of the essential diversity of agricultural work.

Further study of the question is still necessary before it can be usefully placed on the agenda of the International Labour Conference.

The Committee therefore requests the Governing Body to instruct the International Labour Office to continue its studies of the question with a view to its being placed on the agenda of one of the very next sessions of the Conference after it has been re-submitted to the Permanent Agricultural Committee during the year 1939, which could then make positive proposals to the Governing Body.¹

¹ As showing the stage reached in the development of international social standards for farm labour, the other resolutions adopted unanimously by the Permanent Agricultural Committee, which is representative of governments, employers' associations, and landworkers' unions, with added experts, are given:

(a) The Committee is of the opinion that the question of holidays with pay in

The position of the landworker in respect of communal services is even less favourable. Since these are always state provisions there seems no good reason why landworkers should be treated differently from other citizens, but it is the fact that where such provision is made the standard for landworkers is generally lower than for other workers, and in many countries the landworkers are left out entirely. Even in education, the earliest service and the one which is common to most countries, the educational interest of the child to a greater or less degree is made to subserve the assumed need of the agricultural industry for child labour. In some countries the number of attendances required from the rural child is lower than the number required in industrial districts; in others the age of entry into employment is lower for rural children; and in practically all exemption from school attendance is more easily secured for agricultural work. In the small number of countries in which the social services are the same in law for rural as for urban workers, it is found in practice that organization and administration are always less effective, and the landworkers are less well provided for. The whole position is very well summed up in the phrase that the landworker is everywhere regarded as 'a second-class citizen' in practice, while ideally supposed to be the salt of the earth.

Yet while the actual position is unsatisfactory it is clear that the trends are all in the direction of establishing social standards for landworkers, and certain developments are likely to accelerate the movement. We have to reckon with the effects of popular education and the development of communications. Rural communities are much less isolated than they were. Road transport has tremendously increased the mobility of rural dwellers, while the spread of newspapers and journals and the use of radio have brought

agriculture in favour of agricultural workers in continuous service should be brought before the International Labour Conference.

It requests the Governing Body to place the question on the agenda of one of the very next sessions of the Conference.

The Committee, having in mind the application in detail of holidays with pay in the various countries, points out the interest which attaches to the use of the method of collective agreements or of other similar methods.

(b) The Committee suggests to the Office that it should continue its studies on the question of the protection of children in agriculture, being guided in them by the discussion of the Committee, with a view to presenting a full report for final discussion at the next session of the Permanent Agricultural Committee.

(c) The Permanent Agricultural Committee requests the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to instruct the Office to continue its studies on the question of a system of wage-fixing for agricultural workers and asks the Governing Body to examine the desirability of placing this question on the agenda of one of the next sessions of the International Labour Conference.

the rural community into a wider world of mental activity. For better or for worse, the old division between the rural and the urban communities is breaking down, and the stock of ideas is becoming a common one. There is also the spread of industry. Every country is bent on developing its own industries and is less content to remain an agricultural country, while in the old industrial countries there is a definite trend towards the decentralization of industry. It is significant that it is in the countries where industrialization has been carried furthest that the agricultural trade unions have developed, and the most insistent demands are made for social standards. It is in these countries that standards are being set up. And, finally, we have to reckon with the rapid spread of national 'planning' in agriculture. In democratic countries, at any rate, it is inevitable that any 'planning' of agriculture will be accompanied by a demand for social standards in the interest of the workers.

If my analysis of the situation is sound, then a number of economic problems emerge. The form these problems will take in any country will depend upon the structure of the agricultural industry in that country. In those countries where there is a considerable body of wage-earners in agriculture, we have to reckon not only with the growing demand for social standards in agriculture, but with the effect of the social standards in industry. The 'rural exodus' is not a new problem, but, as social standards develop, agriculture will be further handicapped in competition for labour if it continues without social standards, or if its standards fall markedly short of the industrial standards. This problem is acute in some countries to-day. It will vary in intensity with the state of industry, but the common experience is that the workers lost to agriculture in boom periods in industry do not return once they have escaped. The loss is not merely quantitative; in some countries that would be a boon; it is always qualitative, and that is the most serious feature.

Unless, therefore, we look forward to a reversal of the trends in those countries having a considerable wage-earner class, we have to consider the effect of the impact of social standards on agriculture in these countries.¹ How far the industry, as at present organized, can meet higher wages, the limitation of working hours, and insurance against unemployment, invalidity and old age, if these are to become a charge on agriculture, will depend on the stage of organization

¹ Professor Nelson (op. cit.): 'Should the trend towards mechanization continue unabated with a concomitant "enclosure" movement and increasing concentration of land ownership, the United States may be confronted in the near future with the existence of an agricultural proletariat of considerable magnitude. This development, which is already under way, will be a relatively new phenomenon in rural America.'

reached in each country. Judging from the experience in those countries where a beginning has been made, there is a considerable amount of 'slack' in the organization of agriculture which can be taken up to meet the first standards laid down without seriously disturbing the structure of the industry. Low wages and unrestricted hours lead, in agriculture as in other enterprises, to the waste of labour and to inefficient and unenterprising management. The first results of enforcing standards have been the raising of the level of management, the introduction of more machinery, and the more efficient use of labour. But so far the standards enforced have been very low, and the limitation of working hours has made little inroad on the long working day. If the standards are to be raised sufficiently to remove the gross disparity between those of industrial and those of land workers, then the productivity of labour will have to be considerably increased. The problem then arises whether that can be done with agriculture conducted with the present small-scale units. It is difficult to see how reasonable social standards can be established under the present structure. Increased productivity involves a high technical standard of management, the increased use of machinery, and the application of scientific methods to crop and stock production. It requires a higher skill on the part of the workers, and that involves specialization and the division of labour. Adequate scope is necessary if these factors are to be efficiently used, and the trend is towards the larger unit of enterprise. If we consider the practical import of any limitation of the working hours for stock-keepers, we can see that the feasible limit is strictly defined by the size of the unit. Where the herd or flock cannot bear the labour cost of more than one worker, that worker is bound to work a minimum of nine hours a day six days a week, with a minimum of five hours on Sunday. The only practicable way of securing to a very large body of farm workers the necessary leisure to conform to modern standards is to enlarge the unit of enterprise to enable enough staff to be economically employed on some system of shifts.

The demand for social standards will be strongest in those countries which have a considerable class of wage-earners, and we can see the first efforts to lay down standards in those countries, but alongside those wage-earners we have the sub-contractors, share-croppers, and the unpaid family workers. We have to consider the effect of the standards for wage-earners on those workers. Where they are found in considerable numbers, the difficulty of applying any standards to them is used as an argument why standards cannot be applied to wage-earners. This is a recognition of the fact that it would be

practically impossible to maintain standards for wage-earners without making similar provision for the unpaid workers who are to be found in the families of sub-contractors and share-croppers as well as on the family farms. We are faced, then, with the question whether we are to accept the general movement towards social standards for all farm labour or to attempt to withstand that movement in agriculture and seek a way out in the family farm, with its associates of share-tenancies, share-croppers, and small-holdings.

Whether it is possible in the modern community, with its trend towards decentralization in industry, its developing means of communication, and its pervasive cultural standards, for agriculture to cut itself off from the rest of the community is a very doubtful proposition. But there are certain forces at work which may render the traditional family farm and small farming unit less attractive in future. The smaller unit has always been defended on the ground that it provides an 'agricultural ladder'. Now, the purpose of a ladder is to enable one to climb from a lower level to a higher. The lower level was the insecurity of the wage-earner's position, and the higher level was the status and security of an independent operator. But as Professor Ashby pointed out in his paper to the Third Conference (*Proceedings*, p. 205), 'Methods of industrial and social insurance, with state support, are removing some of the risks hitherto incurred by those who worked for wages', and he went on to show that in Great Britain, where these methods have been most fully developed, 'economic security now begins to lie with the person employed for wages rather than with the "independent" small-holder or family farmer'. Developments in the intervening years in many countries have shown that the 'independent' position of the small-holder or family farmer has required state propping, and there are no signs yet that the need for such propping has ceased.

The indications are that the upper rungs of the ladder are becoming more difficult to reach. The ladder has shorter steps between the rungs so long as the frontier is being extended and there is a keen demand for labour; the steps are much longer when agriculture becomes intensive and there is not the same premium on labour. With growing mechanization and the need for outlays on fertilizers, the capital requirement of the family farm increases, while the opportunities for earning enough to enable a worker to reach the next rung become more restricted. The lengthening span of life and the lower birth-rate may lead to a good many changes in agriculture; one likely result will be that the unpaid family workers will have to look forward to a longer service before they can hope to succeed to the family farm.

When account is taken of those factors, the 'agricultural ladder' is likely to be less of a lure than it was.

It would appear, therefore, that the impact of social standards on agriculture has to be added to the other forces which are acting on agriculture to force changes to meet the new conditions. Agriculture has had to adjust itself in the past to big changes and to find its own level according to the pull of economic forces, with minor measures to cushion the impact of those forces. To-day the efforts everywhere seem to be directed to insulating agriculture from the forces acting upon it, by various schemes of protected prices or open subsidy. We cannot look forward to these stop-gap measures being permanent, and we ought not to do so. Nor ought we to let things drift. We ought to try to understand and measure the forces at work and consider how we can develop agriculture to meet the present and emerging needs and make its contribution to human welfare.

DISCUSSION

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The two papers of Mr. Duncan and Dr. von Bülow have treated farm labour from various aspects, mainly from the practical side and in the light of questions of the day. In opening the discussion, I would like to put the question: What contribution can science in its various branches make in helping to solve the problems of farm labour? The contribution of science will always be modest, but, if it is applied on all sides, we may nevertheless hope for some success. The papers have already shown us how extremely various and diverging the definitions of farm labour and the farm worker are. For men of different countries and continents it must, therefore, be extremely difficult to reach an understanding in their discussions. Each one of us comes with other conceptions and ideas, but uses the same terms in expressing them. The difficulties are again considerably increased by translation. We should be conscious of the fact that, where we find divergency or even conformity of opinion, this may sometimes be due to mutual misunderstandings. All the same, the conceptions of farm labour and of the farm worker have so much in common—being matters of practically equal importance throughout the world—that agreement on this point should be easy to reach.

In the short time at my disposal I can only try to point out the major aspects and to draw attention to some points which have been

too little noticed by science, but which may be useful. What is primarily needed is the knowledge of the facts and how they have developed. That signifies a geography and history of farm labour. Folk-lore and ethnology have covered some preliminary work in this field, but not usually on the aspects that interest us from the point of view of farm labour, that is, efficiency, labour income, fatigue, hours of work, costs of production, and standards of living. We should seek for records of the greatest possible exactitude of farm labour and labour systems and institutions of many countries.

The social and economic sciences have given us in all countries a closer approach to farm labour as a social phenomenon of national and rural life. This is first a question of agricultural population and its proportion of the whole national population. We desire healthy nations. I think an adequate proportion of rural population, which may vary greatly in nations of different economic types, is necessary to the health of the nation. We must try to determine the optimum and the minimum. It will be the task of sociology, particularly rural sociology, to establish on scientific principles the conditions for a healthy rural population, sound in body, mind, and soul, and also sound as a social body with its component groups of agricultural entrepreneurs, large and small peasant farmers, and farm workers. And here opinions differ widely as to what is sound. To a great extent decisions will always depend on the character of the nation in question and its economic system. We in Germany fully agree with Dr. H. C. Taylor that economics must not be allowed to rule the soul of man. And also from the German point of view we can agree almost entirely with the excellent paper of Mr. M. L. Wilson. The prosperity of the rural population will be the basis of national prosperity. And here a sufficient growth of population as an indication of a healthy nation is a decisive and significant feature. The economic basis of a healthy rural population must be a sound agriculture, which is, to use the expression of Mr. Wilson and the expression which I myself have almost literally used for many years, not a profession but a way of life.

The relations between town and country and the menace of the rural exodus must be studied. The natural advantages of the city and the industries, particularly in highly industrialized countries, must be counterbalanced by preferential treatment of the rural and farm population. As Dr. von Bülow points out, in many countries the state has imposed on itself and on society burdens for the benefit of the rural population. The farm worker must receive not always equal but equivalent wages, taking into account his purchasing

power and his pattern of life. The price relations between farm and industrial products and services must make this possible.

It is not only farm workers who are, as Mr. Duncan says, regarded as second-class citizens. For a long time the rural population as a whole has been in this situation in highly industrialized countries. I have shown that in an essay in the I.A.R. entitled: 'Strengthening the Vitality of the Rural Population.' In many points the city has a natural superiority over the country-side, in health service, in supply services, in transport, in education, in intellectual and artistic life, &c. An equivalent must be found for the country-side, giving farm labour the same purchasing power as urban and industrial labour. All rural inhabitants should receive preferential treatment by the state and public authorities. State and nation owe this to their existence. Farm labour incomes and wages are produced on the land. What has not grown cannot be harvested. The purchasing power of this produce determines the standard of life.

The fixing of wages by collective wage-rates under state control implies a guarantee by the state of certain prices for agricultural products. The wages must be just as compared with those of other groups and professions. This necessitates just prices for agricultural products. I agree with Mr. Booth that without price stability there can be little social stability. The suggestions of Secretary Wallace on the question of the 'ever-normal granary' seem to me to be very significant; they are already of practical importance in German price policy.

Unequal wage-levels in industry and agriculture are only tolerable in times of depression and unemployment. As soon as industry prospers, it draws away the workers from the country-side. In contrast to industry the farmer cannot close down his plant; he must consequently raise wages above fixed wage-rates. These wages are then out of parity with the price-level based on the rate of wages. This means that the farmer incurs debts and lowers his standard of living, or he leaves his farm.

I have come to know share-cropping in various countries, in U.S.A., France, and Russia. In Germany this system gained ground during the inflation, when money ceased to be a means of payment. It disappeared again with the stabilization of the currency. In France, I am told, the trend is moving away from share-cropping (*métayage*) to cash rents; that means towards greater independence and, later, full ownership. The character and customs of the people decide these matters. Certain forms of wages on an efficiency scale are also important, as they allow the worker a share of the production or the increase of production due to his efforts.

The increase of agricultural production by means of agricultural science is one of the most important factors in improving farm labour and the farm workers' position. Education, particularly the vocational training of the whole rural population, the farmer and peasant as well as the simple farm worker, must be universally and energetically promoted. Particularly in education the countryside is enormously inferior to the city.

The increase of the purchasing power of agricultural products largely depends on the decisions of governments and nations. A free economic exchange between the nations would be dependent on the security of permanent peace.

The most important scientific objective is the promotion of a science of farm labour. For a long time, in the fostering of the agricultural sciences, agricultural labour was unhappily forgotten. Apparently it was believed that by the invention and introduction of farm machinery enough had been done in this field. Thus the science of farm labour is far behind all other branches of agricultural science. The science of industrial labour has had far greater attention and can give many impulses to farm-labour science.

The first task is the scientific study of the working man, primarily from a physical point of view. The anatomical and physiological bearings on labour performance must be studied in the various kinds of farm work. Assurance of continued health is the goal. The various agricultural professional diseases must be combated. Only the physically best and fittest are good enough for the farm. The negative selection, far advanced by the rural exodus, must be checked. Physical culture, sports, apprenticeship with systematic training, avoiding over-exertion, must all help us to reach this goal.

The health conditions of the rural population, of the peasants and workers, are often worse than those of city dwellers. Even though the contrary is generally assumed, as food is produced on the land, the diet of the rural population is often unsatisfactory, less so in quantity than in quality and preparation. Fresh commodities, fruit and vegetables, are often more easily and cheaply obtained in the cities than in the country.

Mental ability is of increasing importance in farm labour. There is no calling which requires greater diversity of proficiencies than agriculture. Only the man who thoroughly knows his job is a capable man. That signifies that both the farmer and worker must command a rich store of knowledge and the ability to apply it. Much remains to be done. It is not true that the fool is good

enough for farm work. Agricultural labour is not unskilled labour. In Germany we have introduced an agricultural apprenticeship just as in the handicrafts.

Efficiency is also highly dependent on character and spirit. We do not work primarily by the body, but by mind and will. Up to now labour psychology has received little attention in our science. A valuable help in this respect may be expected from ethnological psychology.

According to the observations I made in U.S.A.—a real field of experiment for this question—the attitude of the different races with regard to farm labour is fundamentally different. I had the impression that the Indians had scarcely any farming ability, and that the negroes, too, were inefficient as independent farm workers. Commercial farming is almost exclusively in the hands of the white man, but there are very distinctive differences, due to the origins of the European nations, in the aptitude for the various forms of farming, and also in mobility and ties to the land.

Observations in other countries confirm these findings. The system of farming not only depends on soil, climate, and market, but also very greatly on the nature of the farmers and working men. Only with these considerations in mind may we draw comparisons between different nations. Even within one country like Germany there are very distinctive differences. The spirit of freedom and of independence, the wish to settle on land of one's own, are quite differently developed in various parts.

Even externally one may perceive the differences in farm work between the different races and even small national groups in the way of differing forms of farm tools and implements. There is a significance in this not confined to ethnological interest. One of the great tasks of a special science of farm labour will be to find, by exact studies of the existing tools and implements and the form of their use, the best method for the execution of work. We cannot look for all progress in agriculture and farm labour solely in mechanization and use of machinery. Almost with the words of Mr. M. L. Wilson, I pointed out some years ago that we have precipitated technology on to the rural population, heedless of the social consequences. In order to eliminate the divergencies of labour efficiency and labour income in farming and industry, we must certainly apply all technological progress possible in agriculture. Machines can and must help the small farmer particularly. In Germany we too place great hopes on the small rubber-tired tractor. But at the same time we must take care that the rural population as a whole is not disturbed

and may remain the sound basis of the nation. The philosophical doctrines of rationalism and liberalism in the last century greatly hastened the dissolution of old ties. This was an urgent necessity in the case of feudal bondage and compulsory attachment to the soil (*glebae adscriptio*). But at the same time many beneficial ties were torn apart. Now we have to revive the old spirit of common and mutual aid by co-operative systems. In this way the small and medium farmer may balance the natural advantages of large-scale farming, and the workers may be enabled to gain equal labour efficiency and labour returns.

The outward form of farm labour must, as far as possible, be made similar to industrial work. In agriculture it has been possible, thanks to improvement of working methods and increased efficiency, to shorten the working hours quite considerably. Further progress can facilitate a further shortening of working hours and an increase in labour output. A saving of time going to and from work by means of bicycles, motor-bicycles, and cars; good layout of the fields and of the farm buildings for utilization of labour—all this will help the farmer. The alternatives of village or isolated farm, small or large village, long-street village or clustered village, have in the main already been settled by history in the old civilized countries. But they are important in new countries. What man may gain by easier physical labour or by wages on the isolated farm, he often loses spiritually and intellectually by loneliness.

Paid holidays have spread from the civil servant, who has enjoyed them for a long time, to the industries and then to farming. It is obvious that, in the competition for labour, farming must resort to all measures that can reasonably be borne. The phenomenon is not quite novel. For as long as there have been annual wages in agriculture, paid holidays have often been given to farm servants, for instance, to help their parents. But in seasons of labour stress, in the open seasons, it will be difficult to do without the worker, whereas in winter it will be easy. But will the peasant farmer be able to find holidays for himself and his family? Sufficient labour reserves at wages comparable to industrial wages are here a pre-condition.

Is the greater security which the peasant enjoys, thanks to his ownership, counterbalanced for the worker by social insurance? We have had this insurance for a long time in Germany. The advantages are undeniable, but they do not fully compensate for the feeling of security that lies in ownership. We have also had the experience that insurances can be lost by break-down of the currency.

Much has been done to improve housing, particularly for the

workers through state subsidies. But would it not be better to put farming in a position to enable it economically to provide the necessary funds out of its own resources?

Intensive farming, such as sugar-beet and truck-crop cultivation, brings labour peaks which can only be overcome by supplementary labour. The farm becomes a seasonal enterprise, especially in large-scale farming. This is not so pronounced in small farms, as they are more diversified, owing mainly to their live-stock enterprises. The migratory farm workers, to whom the system gives rise, are an undesirable social phenomenon, especially when they come from foreign countries. They scarcely fit into the peasant farm and the peasant family. When they are cheaper than home labour, they offer an advantage to the large farms where they can be very cheaply lodged and fed. It is, however, an advantage to countries with less highly developed farming since their farm workers and peasants' children, by working in countries with intensified systems of farming, bring back home not only their wage-earnings but also a full measure of knowledge and skill.

As has been proven by the development in many countries, large-scale farming is not *per se* superior to farming in smaller holdings. It may only be the case in extensive types of farming such as live-stock ranching and extensive grain-cropping. The intensive forms of farming, such as market-gardening, offer greater advantages to the smaller holding. But the persistence of this size of farm depends on the sum-total of work—both physical and mental—that is performed on them. The form of labour organization is especially important and must be brought to optimal use by scientific methods.

Even if in many respects the mechanical efficiency may be superior on the large farm, the spiritual achievements are greater on the small farms. The independent peasant who works with his wife and children for himself and his family has a greater impulse in his sense of freedom and independence and a greater joy and satisfaction in his work than the wage-earner. This was also emphasized by Dr. Taylor. Every nation needs these free and highly independent men. In the cities and industries the development has been to render even more men dependent and has made them wage-earners and employees of great corporations or of the State. There is thus a change of mentality and ideals in the nation which finds its expression in the decline of the birth-rate, one of the severest scourges of almost all industrialized countries. A very interesting contrast is to be found in the French-Canadian farmers with their large families.

Thinly populated agrarian countries draw their labour wages mainly from the economic rent of the land—the differential rent of soil quality. They need only till the best land. A high output per day of work is the result. But densely populated agrarian countries can only exist by utilizing poorer land and by a modest standard of living.

Densely populated industrial countries must, in their efforts for self-sufficiency to which the will to survive forces them, also exploit poor soil for utilizing solar energy even at a heavy labour and capital outlay. Low yields per day of work are the consequence. A reasonable standard of living, comparing favourably with that of the urban and industrial population, is only possible with a correspondingly high price-level for agricultural commodities.

The alternative is not small or large farms, but achievement of a healthy rural population by means of the optimal form of economic organization of country-side and city. In this respect the nations can learn from one another. But each must decide for itself as to what must be considered desirable and possible. Countries with large reserves for food production, either at home or in colonies, will make decisions differing from those of nations lacking space and forced to compensate by hard work for the physical and historical handicaps of nature and fortune.

A. H. BROWN, *Northwood Farm, Hayling Island, Hampshire, England.*

I am rather surprised at my own courage in venturing to address this conference of economists, because I am not an economist but solely a practical farmer. I am, however, grateful for the privilege, and I shall talk to you in my own language, and not in the language of economists, on these matters which have been of very deep interest to me.

When I began to think over this subject for the purpose of making a contribution to this discussion, I wondered what there was to say specially about farm labour which did not apply equally to other labour on the one hand or to all those engaged in agriculture on the other. I have been so impressed with the way in which this subject is inextricably related to other questions which have already been discussed or are going to be discussed at this Conference that you will make allowance if I seem to digress too much into those other fields which, although separated for the purpose of discussion at this Conference, are, in fact, difficult to separate in practice.

Farm labour, it seems to me, is or should be in exactly the same

position with regard to social standards as every other form of useful work and more deserving of the highest rewards society can offer than many other forms of activity which are usually held in highest regard, as, for instance, banking and money-lending. Human life never did exist entirely without labour of some sort and without more particularly farm labour. Banking and money-lending, on the other hand, are of comparatively recent growth.

From the point of view of production of goods and services, I suppose in such countries as Great Britain, Germany, and other western European countries there is little real difficulty in raising social standards. The obstacles are the will to do it and the method, and of these I would put the former first.

You may all remember the following extract from the Report of the Nutrition Committee of the League of Nations published a year ago.

'Millions of people in all parts of the world are either suffering from inadequate physical development or from disease due to mal-nutrition, or are living in a state of sub-normal health which could be improved if they consumed more or different foods. That this situation exists in a world in which agricultural resources are so abundant and the arts of agriculture have been so improved that supply tends to outstrip effective demand, remains an outstanding challenge to constructive statesmanship and international co-operation.'

That is a very quiet and mild form of statement, and it is capable of a great deal more emphasis from direct examples on both sides of its claim. One cannot claim that it is a twentieth-century discovery, because one hundred years ago a great Englishman and writer, William Cobbett, denounced the 'fat' rickyards alongside the starving farm labourers. What a man he was and, if others like him would arise now, what vastly greater opportunities they would have for denouncing poverty in the midst of plenty!

The statement from the League Committee's report, while it quietly points out the two sides—the malnutrition on the one hand and the abundant agricultural production which has difficulty in finding a market on the other—does not mention the more glaring aspects of the problem. It does not, for example, mention that on the one side the cream of this tragic joke is that food-producers themselves are among those who are starving—or, to use the proper word, are suffering from malnutrition. On the other side it contents itself with saying that agricultural resources are so abundant and the arts of agriculture so improved that supply *tends* to outstrip effective demand. It does not mention two more glaring aspects: first, that

it is still thought to be necessary in many parts of the world to cultivate remote places, barren heaths, or mountains difficult of access and to try to maintain 'under-privileged'—to use a polite word which I have learned since coming to America—agricultural producers in these parts, when in many countries these places could well be left as parks and pleasure grounds for all; and second, that agricultural supplies have actually had to be diverted from human consumption—in some instances destroyed. I read last month that a percentage of the French wheat crop was to be used for the production of motor spirit. It is difficult to believe that in France every one has enough bread. In the coming world, I am sure, it will be thought a certain indication of social insanity in the twentieth century that crops were destroyed while literally millions of people were underfed.

So far, using the quotation from the League Committee's report as text, I have been dealing only with food. Standard of living, however, includes certain amenities—or rather in the modern world necessities—such as good houses with light, water, and sanitation, roads fit for motor traffic, proper schools and educational facilities, village halls and such like, and certainly adequate medical and dental facilities, the latter preferably as a public responsibility, because if you provide roads and schoolmasters and agricultural economists as a public responsibility and mainly at the public expense, why not doctors and dentists? I would also add that a great necessity which applies to town and country alike is a publicly provided all-in system of compulsory insurance; the present competitive system of insurance is wasteful and expensive. These are all necessities of a good modern standard of living, in western civilization at least. It ought not to be outside the capacity of modern productivity to provide them, and I would add that if for one reason or another it is considered advisable to use remote and unfavourable places for food production or anything else, these necessities of a modern standard of living should be made available for the people who have to live and work there.

But, in fact, these facilities are not available generally even in quite accessible and favourable parts of western Europe or, I imagine, in U.S.A. and Canada. Is this any more excusable in the presence of 'surplus' men and material than malnutrition when food production is plentiful? In Great Britain we have nearly 2,000,000 unemployed. Yet in my county of Hants water runs wastefully to the sea, while within a mile or two poor people have to buy water by the bucket in dry spells. That is not uncommon. Electricity

may be available in one village while in the next there is none—because it would not *pay*. Men have to be kept on relief instead. In my own district near Portsmouth, a city of 250,000 inhabitants, light and water are available as well as most urban amenities. But housing is a serious question. It is estimated that a million working-class houses are still needed in Great Britain, and, if we think in terms of really up-to-date standards with the provision of three bedrooms, decent living-rooms, and modern amenities, this is almost certainly a gross under-estimate.

As a side-light on this issue it may be interesting that among the people working on our farm at the present time we have the following distribution of size of families. There are 5 married couples with no children; 6 couples with 1 child; 2 couples with 2 children; 3 couples with 3 children; 1 couple with 4 children; and 7 unmarried men over 30 years of age. That means that for 24 men, 17 of them married and the other 7 over 30, there are only 23 children. That cannot be purely a matter of chance, and the reason I would give is the obvious and usual one, that neither the income nor the facilities are adequate for bringing up children. With a wage of 35s. per week plus a house, 4 or 5 children mean that there is 9d. per day per person to provide everything except the house.

The farm worker in my country has obtained some measure of minimum social standards. In addition to the legal enforcement of minimum wages, the recently introduced unemployment insurance scheme gives him, in the event of unemployment, a small income at a cost to himself—while employed—of 4d. per week. Under the compulsory health insurance scheme he gets, if he is sick, about 18s. per week and his widow a pension of 10s. per week with an additional 5s. for each child, with medical attention. Also for 2d. a week there is a fairly wide voluntary hospital scheme which gives free hospital treatment for as long as is necessary.

But a great deal still remains to be done to raise the social standard of farm labour to that obtaining in industry, or to the value of farm output. That is true for the average wage-earner in agriculture, and I would judge that in our country the average small farmer or small holder is not so well off as the wage-earner when account is taken of the hours worked by himself and the family labour. Edgar Thomas, of Reading University, showed in an article in the *Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture*, May 1937, that the average income per person on sixty County Council small-holdings in the counties of Hants and Dorset was £124, i.e. before any interest was allowed on invested capital. The average acreage of these small holdings was

about 50 acres, and the average capital invested about £10 per acre. By deducting interest at 5 per cent. on the average investment of £500, the small holder's income—his return for labour and management—came to less than £2 per week *per family* without regard to hours worked. By contrast, the average legal *minimum* wage as fixed by the Wages Committees for wage-earners in agriculture is about 34s. for 48 hours in winter and 51 hours in summer, where a cottage is provided. Not more than 3s. per week can be deducted from the wages for the cottage so provided. (Some cottages are not worth any more, but I know of cottages worth 12s. or so which are let to workers at 3s.) Bank holidays (i.e. the official public holidays like Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, and so on) must be paid for at extra rates if the man is required to work. Stockmen receive anything from £2 to £3, and it is more and more becoming the rule for dairymen to receive a week's holiday with pay and a half-day per week, but this is not yet statutory.

These conditions which have been obtained for wage-earners in agriculture are not considered extravagant compared with employment in other industries. In fact, in spite of the progress made, farm workers are still being exploited more than other workers. What, then, can be said for the form of exploitation to which the small farmers and small holders and their families are subjected, if Mr. Thomas's figures are a fair representation of their financial position?

The exploitation of agriculture is not, however, confined to the wage-earners and the small farmers, and here I agree with speakers in earlier discussions that the problems of the social and economic condition of the agricultural population are closely bound up with the problems of the general social and economic structure. These contrasts—paradoxes—of malnutrition and over-supply of food, of inadequate modern living conditions and unemployed men and materials, are everywhere evidenced in the whole economic structure. It can, however, be claimed that agriculture has suffered at least as much as any part of the economic field. It may be due in part to the extra difficulties of adjustment to shifts in the economic and social structure and balance, but it is fundamentally due to the lack of will to be sufficiently thorough and drastic in our conceptions of what should be done.

The first charge on any industry should be the welfare, the social standard, of those engaged in it. Agriculture as a whole for more than a hundred years has been exploited and sweated in the interest of industry and finance. It has been done in the sacred name of 'Free Trade' which, reduced to reality, means freedom for the pirate,

the rule of the strong individual or corporation working for profit with no regard for human life.

In Great Britain, a great creditor nation, the people on the land are becoming more conscious of the exploitation of our agriculture in the interests of the bond-holder. We are becoming conscious, too, of the community of interest which we have in this respect with the great agricultural exporting countries, mostly debtor countries, who would also benefit by the reduction or cessation of the flow of bond-holder's tribute. Here I am probably encroaching on the discussion of International Trade which is on the programme later.

Because of the huge amount of foreign indebtedness (about £4,000 million—£520 million in the case of Canada to Great Britain alone), about half the exports of those debtor countries is tribute. Australia, for instance, year by year exports £60 million worth of wheat, wool, meat, fruit, &c., but only gets back £30 million worth of goods and pays £30 million in interest. That is an obvious main cause of a low social standard in the debtor countries, but it should be equally obvious that it is a main cause of similar conditions among the working population of the creditor country, because this flow of goods on interest account is not at the disposal of society as a whole, but is the property of a rentier class which is comparatively small. Since the produce has to be sold for currency, it is literally dumped on the market, breaking prices of those products in creditor and debtor countries alike. Also, to use again the case of Australia, the country which exports £60 million worth of goods can only buy from the creditor country £30 million worth of goods in exchange, and unemployment directly results in the creditor country in the industries producing the export goods. The position was evident many years ago in the case of War Reparations and the British debt to America, but I suppose it is politically and economically too dangerous to see it in the case of commercial long-term debts.

So long as the merry game of re-lending interest and exporting fresh capital went on, world trade continued, creaking at times, it is true, but the large debt-structure remained more or less intact. But as soon as foreign lending ceased the trade structure toppled over like a pack of cards. In essence it was the flood of tribute goods into Great Britain which upset the apple-cart. You in the great agricultural producing countries had people starving and bankrupt; we in the chief agricultural importing countries had the like. Quotas, tariffs, and all kinds of restrictive regulations are among the effects of the root cause I have pointed out.

My own view is that to attain a proper and general social standard, indeed to obtain ordinary justice, farm labour and agriculture generally must insist on an immediate reduction and the ultimate extinction of those parts of the debt structure which have ceased to serve a useful purpose. Just as reparations and war debts were a menace to stability and peace in the world, so, too, are huge debts, made very often on material and equipment long ago worn out. We must, if we are sincere, lose no opportunity of pointing this out. This conflict is with the purely pecuniary interests of certain individuals. It is not merely agriculture which is at stake. It is the uplift of entire peoples. A better social standard can only come for farm workers and the masses of industrial consumers by a better understanding of existing low standards and by a united effort to remove them. The interests of the two groups are identical. A high standard of living in the towns must and will give a high standard of living on the farm. I hope that the work of this International Conference of Agricultural Economists will be towards this end.

LUDWIG LÖHR, *University of Vienna, Austria, Germany.*

I have felt prompted to speak on this subject because it has special significance for my home country, Austria. By reason of the physical conditions in the mountains (these cover three-quarters of Austria), the rural population (one-third of the total population) is mainly engaged in grass-land farming, cattle-raising, and milk production. In spite of low imports of feeds, the demand for cattle, milk, butter, and cheese is met, but foreign imports of grain, especially wheat, are required. Among our 430,000 farms those of peasant type with a large dependence on family labour predominate.

The reunion with the mother country—the outcome of historical and racial development—is a turning-point in the history of Austria which will have profound and manifold effects on rural life. In recent years Austrian farming has suffered under a severe crisis in consequence of under-consumption and diminishing purchasing power of the rest of the population among whom unemployment was continually spreading. Limitation of agricultural production was the dominant note in economic policy. The output of sugar, milk, hogs, and other produce was restricted by production quotas; but with a fully maintained level of fixed costs such as taxes, maintenance of capital, insurances, debt-interest payments, &c., which could only be met by a sufficiently high level of output, the result of this restriction policy was an inevitable decline in the return for

the labour of the rural population. This was made evident by the abandonment of the mountain districts, which had now become sub-marginal regions, by increase of debts, by innumerable foreclosures, and by the greatest possible restriction of home consumption on the part of the farmers. Prematurely aged peasants and peasant wives, underfed children, and birth restriction are the external symptoms of the crisis to which the rural population in the mountains was subject at the period.

Thus, before the reunion with the Reich, Austria was a good proof of the statements made by Mr. Duncan. The standard of living of the workers in urban trades and industries far surpassed that of the farm workers. In so far as the latter were wage-earners, their income per working hour was far higher than that of the peasants themselves. The peasant was continually the object of praise and commendation; his great functions within the life of the nation were always being emphasized, but as a matter of fact he was living at the lowest level in the community.

These economic conditions have, however, been fundamentally changed since March of this year. Instead of restriction of production, we now have the greatest possible promotion of all production with unrestricted marketing in all economic branches. The whole economic system has been stimulated; in farming the restrictive quota system has been abandoned, and industries have opened up employment, thanks to large-scale state orders. To-day unemployment is virtually eliminated in Austria. Indeed, although this may sound surprising, we already find here and there a shortage of skilled workers. In certain branches of economy this fact is determining the pace of production.

Austrian agriculture is not unaffected by this new development, for the now fully employed industries and the public enterprises have not only absorbed all unused labour but are also attracting a great number of farm workers from the country-side because of the higher wage-rates. We are witnessing a rural exodus of unexpected proportions which cannot, as yet, be checked by increased wages, often amounting to 50 per cent. This signifies that anxiety about the marketing of farm produce has been replaced by the anxiety to procure adequate labour. These difficulties are particularly serious because the topography of Austria places very strict limits on the more efficient utilization of labour by increased application of machinery. We have perhaps to fear a development wherein the desired increase of agricultural production fails through lack of workers, as it previously failed through lack of markets.

What will happen when once state orders cease; or when the expansion in industrial centres must be reduced again? We will then have to face the danger that the experience described by Mr. Duncan proves true with us, namely, that the rural worker, once he has gone to industry, prefers unemployment to a return to farming. If our nation is to be and to remain a peasant nation, we must seek a balance between the agricultural section and the other groups of economy. We must strengthen the ethical ties of rural folk to the land by an adequate return for the labour of the peasants and by adequate comparable wages for the farm worker.

This confronts us with problems also common to the U.S.A. and Canada. The fact is that times of industrial prosperity accentuate the social problems, and are a menace to the standard of living of certain groups of workers, notably rural folk. I am gratified to find that at the present time agricultural income conditions are being studied in North America in a manner that gives me valuable incentives for my work at home.

LOWRY NELSON, *University of Minnesota, U.S.A.*

Dr. von Bülow and Mr. Duncan have given us a good general survey of the conditions and recent developments affecting wage labourers in agriculture. I trust it will not seem presumptuous for me to summarize briefly what seem to be the main conclusions of these papers.

In the first place, while he limits his discussion to wage-workers, Mr. Duncan reminds us of the extreme heterogeneity of farm labour including the child worker, the share-cropper, the local and migratory casual worker, the year-round employee, and the operator and his family. In the second place, we are reminded of the fact that farm labourers, in the matter of wages, hours of work, and level of living, compare unfavourably with workers in the industrial world. Nor have they benefited from social legislation enacted for industrial workers. Moreover, due to various factors, organization of farm workers for purposes of collective bargaining has not been conspicuously successful, although some progress has been made in Europe and the British Isles since the War. And finally, it has been made quite clear that the plight of the wage labourer is often no worse and in many cases better than that of the operating farmer, particularly those farmers on small or 'dwarf' farms.

About their general survey of the situation there can be no controversy. While the field of interest under discussion is one too long neglected by students of social and economic aspects of agriculture,

still the data available are adequate to support the conclusions made. And while much additional research is necessary to give an accurate description of conditions and to ascertain trends, almost inevitably our minds move ahead to consideration of policies which may have an ameliorative influence on what are quite generally conceded to be unwholesome conditions. It does not require painstaking study, when even a superficial ocular survey of conditions in the American south or the sea-boards is sufficient, to convince reasonable men that amelioration is necessary. But the answer to the question, 'How?' is not at all clear.

Mr. Duncan proposes that the difficulty can be met only by enlarging the farm unit. Already in our deliberations we have heard discussed the various aspects of this question of reorganization of agriculture to secure greater efficiency. Indeed, it is evident that in the United States this enlargement of holdings is going forward. But the census figures on size of farms indicate also a steady concomitant increase in the very small farms. In other words, it would appear that commercial agriculture on the one hand and subsistence or peasant farming on the other are becoming more sharply differentiated than ever before, while the family farm which partakes of the characteristics of both subsistence and commercial farming is scarcely holding its own—at least in relative importance to the entire agricultural economy. While it may be true that the enlargement of units may be the only basis on which industrial labour standards can be achieved in agriculture, it would seem to me at least to solve only a small part of the problem, while at the same time it brings new problems in its wake. The 'enclosure' of two or more holdings means the displacement of families. The increased mechanization which accompanies the 'enclosure' movement displaces additional labour. This process incidentally is taking place to-day on a major scale in the cotton area of the United States.

What is to happen to the displaced labourer? This is an old question—as old as the Industrial Revolution at least—but in our expanding economy with available virgin land the problem could be allowed to work itself out. To-day the alternatives open to displaced tenants, share-croppers, and labourers are not as clear, unless we are content with the alternative of 'going on relief'. Somehow these people are destined to find their way either into city industries or on to subsistence farms. As long as the city gates are closed to them, the only alternative seems to be that of wresting a livelihood from the land. I think, therefore, with Dr. Gray and Secretary Wilson that study should be given to the problem of rehabilitating

people where they are and on small farms, perhaps with some supplementary employment off their holdings.

While I agree that there are many difficulties involved and that the developments up to date in combined agricultural-industrial employment are none too encouraging, the fact remains that 30 per cent. or nearly 2,000,000 United States farmers did some work for wages off their farms in 1929. A survey conducted very recently of 3,000 sample farms in forty States by the Census Bureau in co-operation with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (U.S.D.A.) shows that nearly one-third of these farmers did work off their farms in 1937 and, incidentally, reported a surprisingly large non-farm income amounting to \$573 per farm.

It may be appropriate at this point to call attention to another significant aspect of this casual employment of farmers in non-farm occupations, and that is the possibility that many farm operators and labourers alike may, through their industrial employment, qualify for benefits under some of the provisions of the Social Security Act from which at present they are explicitly exempted. This intertwining of agricultural and industrial interests is further evidence of Mr. Duncan's implication that agriculture cannot 'cut itself off from the rest of the community'.

The labour surplus in agriculture so far as the new world is concerned is increasing. The city industries which absorbed over six million people during the decade of the twenties have scarcely taken any at all since 1930. In fact, for a few years there was a slight back-flow to the land. The existence of this labour surplus in the country-side (I realize this phenomenon is not true in western Europe at the present time where the 'menace of the rural exodus' exists) is bound to have a depressing effect upon farm wages, and constitutes a potential threat to the labour standards of city industries. The point is that the enlargement of holdings and increased efficiency through technological progress may, as Mr. Duncan says, make possible the higher labour standards in agriculture such as shorter hours and higher wages, but the benefits will accrue to only a few of the labouring population. The question still remains as to what will happen to the uprooted labourer.

Another way by which it is hoped to better the lot of the labourer is through collective bargaining. This necessitates the organization of labourers for the purpose. Here the whole interesting question of what are 'social standards' comes into the mind. Obviously, Dr. von Bülow and Mr. Duncan assume social standards to mean such things as limitation of hours of work, minimum wages,

vacations with pay, and minimum provision for sickness, accident, old age, and unemployment. These are all familiar achievements for industrial workers.

When, however, we speak of social standards for farm workers, we must realize that we are dealing with traditions and folk-ways that do not recognize as yet such things as vacations with pay, limitation of hours of work, or the various benefits which have been written into law for industrial workers, or which have been achieved by them through collective bargaining. According to tradition, for the farm labourer to be 'worthy of his hire' he must demonstrate his physical and technical superiority. That tradition decrees that an 'honest day's work' can scarcely be squeezed within the limits of an eight- or even a ten-hour day. When the crops are to be gathered, the pressure is on to utilize all the daylight hours in the field, and then do the chores after dark. Even to suggest the limitation of hours of work is sufficient to stir emotions of resentment, or amusement, or both, not only on the part of the employer, but on the part of many labourers as well. It is a 'standard' which may exist on paper, if at all, but has no reality in the culture of farmers.

Similarly, unionization of farm labourers is not recognized by most rural people as practicable, and often not even desirable. As Mr. Duncan pointed out, so many hired men are young men, and, because they do not think of themselves as launching upon a life's career as labourers, they regard their status as labourer as only a stepping-stone to tenancy and ultimate ownership of land. There exists among them no feeling of class interest that must constitute the basis of unionization. Then, too, they are identified closely with the farmer's family with whom they live practically as members, and it is usually the case that they take the interest of the owner to heart. It is something of a shock even to suggest that he become a part of an organization which would set him off against his employer. Moreover, many of these hired men are sons of other farmers in the same community, and to join a union is tantamount to identifying themselves with an organization with which their own families can have no sympathy. And since the man's own ambition is to be a farm operator himself, he can scarcely be interested in the promotion of a union with which in time he may have to bargain in his future capacity as farm operator. Of course, unionization of the 'hired man' in United States agriculture is not yet a reality, and the points indicated are at least a partial explanation of that fact.

Attempts are being made currently by the two large rival labour organizations in the United States to unionize farm labour, and I

have no doubt that considerable progress will be made, particularly among migratory workers. It is too much to expect the movement to be entirely spontaneous with the workers themselves, but ideally that should be the case. An organization superimposed from the top down is not likely to be lasting, and may not take sufficient account of the local attitudes of labourers and employers alike. Unless organization is geared to these attitudes and can be content in its action with evolutionary processes involving considerable time, ruptures and premature social stratification of the local community may result, and little real progress achieved.

Since the rural folk-ways and the emergency character of much farm work do not permit as yet of setting standards on the length of the working day or the working week in my country, it is necessary as well as expedient that much educational work be done to modify the tradition and achieve better management of farm work in general. For it is desirable that some reasonable reduction in hours of work be achieved. For one, I should like to see any benefits in this direction extended to the farm operator's family as well as to the wage labourer. It is undoubtedly true that through wiser management, better planning, and organization of the work on the farm, the necessary work could be accomplished by a much more reasonable length of working day than we have at present. I know of a pious community of farmers who were opposed to Sunday baseball, and who adopted a weekly half-holiday, even in the busy farming season, in order to allow the young people to have their baseball on a weekday and thus prevent what to them was desecration of the Sabbath. I doubt if any one could say that the community was any less prosperous as a result of this innovation. While I suspect that Sunday baseball has triumphed by now in that community, there was at least a demonstration that farmers can enjoy some recess from work if they have the will to do it.

Similarly, it is questionable if increased returns are gained from inordinately long hours of work. Most of us who grew up on farms, I am sure, recall the lowered morale that results from working from dawn until dark in the fields, doing the chores after dark, and sitting down to the evening meal by lamplight. And after that the farm housewife has the dishes to wash and the kitchen to tidy up before her long day is over. Surely the farm women could be interested in shortening the workday to a more reasonable basis.

The third, and perhaps the most important, means of raising social standards for farm labour is legislation. Dr. von Bülow has pointed to the progress which has been made since the War. Many

governments, however, in legislating for agriculture as a whole have not specifically taken into account the interests of the wage-workers. This has been true for the United States, although the Sugar Act of 1937 is an exception. This Act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to set wages which are to be paid for hand labour in the production of sugar-cane and sugar-beets, prohibits child labour under fourteen years of age, and limits to eight hours a day the work of children from fourteen to sixteen years of age. These provisions are mandatory for those farmers who would participate in the benefit payments under the quota provision of the Act. But the fact that in the United States there are more than two million wage-earners in agriculture should be a sufficient reason for giving special consideration to their interests when agricultural policies are being determined.

The conclusions are that social standards now embedded in the rural culture pattern are far below those already accepted for industry; that it is by no means clear that agriculture can afford higher labour standards without government subsidy, which Mr. Duncan decries, but which many who are familiar with the long history of subsidies to other industries may not be so ready to deprecate, so long as social goals are served by those subsidies. It would seem that raising the conception of what constitutes desirable labour standards is a process to be achieved in large measure by education, and by extending those standards to the farm operator and his unpaid family labour. This education must precede effective organization of workers and constructive legislation on their behalf.

MERCER G. EVANS, *Labour Relations Division, Resettlement Administration, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.*

I have noticed that every English-speaking person who has spoken on the question of farm labour has introduced himself with an explanation that he is not an agricultural economist. I shall have to join them. The fact that we have all made apologies for not being agricultural economists may be of some significance in the English-speaking countries, because of the fact that, perhaps, the agricultural economists have felt called upon to study the question of farm labour only as it was incidental to the problems of farm management.

In my associations with agricultural economists I have been quite interested to note that, for the most part, they have considered farm labour only as an item of expense. The farm-labour supply has been, more or less, an assumed factor. In a sense it appears that the labour factor of production has been considered as a reservoir into which

all the problems arising from the other factors of production might be dumped. The flexibility of the labour relationship has caused it to be looked upon as one which would permit adjustments for any difficulties arising from other, more inflexible, relationships.

During the last two years it has been my job to attempt to establish labour standards on a number of farming projects which have been initiated by the Farm Security Administration in the United States. In my dealings with agriculturists, concerning questions of farm-labour standards, I have found the general attitude among them to be that farm-labour relationships were quite different from industrial-labour relationships. It has always been pointed out that special conditions attach to farm-labour relationships; that the element of seasonality, for example, is such as to make it impossible to treat farm labour in the same way that urban labour can be treated. There has always been an assumption, moreover, that farm wage-rates were a direct dependent variable of farm income and that no wage standards could be established because of this functional dependence. Consequently, it has always been assumed that farming was an occupation which could not sustain any labour standards which any one would be willing to set up. I also found in many quarters the point of view that the interests of farmers and their farm labourers were one as against the interests of urban people, including urban labour, and that there was such a conflict of interests between all the farm population and all the urban population that there was no possibility of approaching the question of farm-labour relationships from any experience that we have had in the industrial field.

From my brief experience as a labour economist working in the field of agriculture, I have formed the impression that the differences between farm-labour problems and urban-labour problems are not nearly as great as we have generally assumed. The change in farm organization that is taking place in certain parts of the country is creating a relationship between a single employer and a number of employees, which is very similar to that which has, for a long time, prevailed in urban relationships; and the displacement by mechanical developments, in several parts of the country, of that type of farm labour which is represented by the share-cropper, and the wage hand who becomes a member of the farmer's household, is creating a labour surplus which is resulting in social problems of considerable importance. The number of strikes in agricultural occupations which have occurred in the last few years is evidence of the weight of these problems.

I have recently had two experiences which may be of interest with regard to the assumptions of the peculiarity of farm-labour relationships. The first relates to the assumption that the seasonality of farm labour creates a labour-demand situation which is not amenable to the application of labour standards. I had presented to me some time ago a chart for farming operations on one of our projects in which the peak labour demand was three times the minimum. The persons who had developed the farm plan were asked to rework it because of peculiar reasons which required that there should be a fairly constant demand for labour throughout the year. They came back with a farm plan which was just as economic as the first one, but which showed a difference between the minimum and maximum demands of labour of only about 40 per cent.; that is, the maximum labour demand was only about 40 per cent. above the minimum labour demand.

The other incident which I would mention involved a strike of farm labourers on a large farm employing approximately 1,000 workers. I was asked to investigate the strike. The strike had occurred presumably as a protest against a reduction in wage-rates. After much discussion with the employees, I was very much impressed to discover that none of them mentioned the reduction in wage-rates as a matter of importance. The strike, which had come about in the absence of any labour organization, had occurred apparently because of an accumulation of things which had stirred up unrest among the workers; the reduction in wage-rates was merely an excuse on the basis of which the strike could be called. Matters of housing, of sanitation, of water-supply, of hours of work, of discipline, and other minor things were the real cause of the strike. This circumstance called to my mind the fact that in industry it is very generally the minor grievances which create difficult labour problems, and it seemed to indicate that it is just as important for agricultural employers to give consideration to employee relationships and to organize those relationships, as it is for industrial employers to stabilize their employment relationships and to establish machinery for handling their labour problems.

Regardless, however, of the size of the farm or of the development of mechanization, I do not see that there is any fundamental difference between the nature of urban-labour problems and of farm-labour problems, or of the approaches to them. In urban employments, regardless of their size, there is always a desire on the part of the employer to have his labour relationships as flexible as he can make them. He would like, also, to have his capital relationships

and his rent relationships on a flexible basis. The organization of the capital markets, however, has tended to create inflexible relationships with regard to the hiring of capital. *Rentiers*, whether they control factory or office sites, patents, mineral rights, copyrights, trade names, goodwill, or other vested interests or monopolistic rights, have succeeded, to a very large extent, in establishing an inflexible control over their payments for hire.

Through the organization of labour and labour legislation, urban workers have succeeded, to a considerable degree, in establishing inflexible controls over the hire of labour. It is the fact that this is the last of the flexible areas to be removed that causes such intense hostility on the part of urban employers towards labour organizations and labour legislation. In the face of all of these inflexibilities, the urban employer, when faced with a change in his market conditions, finds it necessary to meet the situation primarily with a change in his schedule of production, and, in the last analysis, makes partial accommodation for other inflexibilities through the curtailment of employment; so that urban labour, despite its organization and legislative protection, continues to be one of the first factors of production to make concessions to meet changing market conditions.

In agriculture, farm labour has not received the protection of established standards, and changing market conditions are immediately reflected in changing labour relationships. The absence of labour standards makes it possible for employing farmers to adjust their labour relationships without curtailment of employment. Whereas in urban employment wage-rates tend to be maintained and the total wage payments are paid to a much smaller number of workers, in rural employment farm incomes fall, and the total payments are spread over approximately the same number of hired and self-employed workers.

This type of analysis may be applicable to the problems discussed earlier in this Conference. There was much talk concerning the surplus of rural population, and various proposals were offered for the accommodation of the surplus. Mr. Wilson proposed that the surplus be accommodated by means of subsistence farming and rural industrial communities. Mr. Taylor proposed that the surplus be accommodated through migration to the fringes of urban employment. Other Americans, in interesting contrast to the Europeans, have suggested the migration of the rural surplus population to the cities. As Mr. Bean pointed out, however, under conditions as they now exist in the cities, little accommodation could be provided

for additional workers from rural areas. Even the suggestion of migration to urban occupations in villages and small towns, as made by Mr. Taylor, would be of limited availability and of temporary significance; for, either the newly trained craftsmen would be enticed to seek the higher standards offered by city employment, or they would operate as poorly qualified craftsmen and, in a sense, as outlaws in the urban economy.

In the final analysis I suspect that, while production is geared to a low scale of operations, the essential problem is one of a surplus rural population and a surplus urban population. In the cities, through unemployment, the surplus is made to appear as a surplus, and various means are found to care for the people in some sort of fashion. In the country the surplus is not made apparent, and we talk about marginal producers and subsistence farming, while an effort is made to scatter the whole farm production over the total rural population.

This condition probably cannot long continue, for the displacement of farm workers, whether share-croppers, wage hands, or working farmers, induced by crop curtailment programmes and mechanization, and accompanied by employment conditions on large-scale farms which are not dissimilar to urban conditions, will shortly bring the rural surplus of population so prominently to our attention that we will have to look for specific methods of meeting the problem. A reorientation of our thinking will inevitably occur. When we have reached this point we will undoubtedly find ourselves ready to acknowledge the similarity of rural and urban employment problems, and willing to give consideration to the establishment of labour standards for farm employment in the same way that we have established labour standards for urban employment.

In the meantime, may I add, I do not believe that any proposals for spreading the current farm production among all the rural population are fundamentally significant; or that the proposal of widespread migration to or from the city is economically sound at the present time. If, as Mr. Ezekiel suggested, we can get our scale of production geared up to the point where it can sustain on acceptable standards nearly all of our people, migratory adjustments will occur, without the necessity of much encouragement from our social institutions, and with the minimum of economic friction. Judged by present trends, there will be increasing inflexibilities in both our urban and our rural economic organizations. The efforts to establish unique forms of economic organization in our rural areas will

probably prove to be generally significant only as they increase the physical efficiency of farming operations, or as they provide adaptation of farm organization to the patterns that will be demanded by economic trends.

G. STOCKMANN, *University of Tübingen, Germany.*

I wish only to make a few remarks which will supplement what has been said by Professor Seedorf and perhaps by other speakers. The point with which I would like to deal is the selective effects of migration from rural life, which result from the social conditions of the rural population in Europe, particularly central Europe and Germany. These countries have been densely populated for a very long time; the peasant holdings are usually small, one main reason for which is that formerly these farms functioned as self-sufficient domestic units and did not need much land for the purpose. The layout of these peasant farms, particularly the layout of the fields and of the farmstead, is very often inefficient. Formerly this unfavourable layout was not such a great problem as it is now. It was formerly necessary and customary in all vocations to work long hours from early morning to late in the evening, and even then the labour return was low in all economic activities.

That has all changed in the course of the last two or three generations to the disadvantage of farming. In other trades and professions, and particularly in industry, there were far greater possibilities for mechanization and organization of the enterprise, and therefore in these other branches productivity of labour was more powerfully stimulated than in agriculture. Thus it became possible to depart from the 12- or 15-hour day and to introduce the 8-hour day in industry, and it was further possible virtually to eliminate child-labour, and partly also women working in industry. Apart from the lesser opportunities of mechanization and of organization in agriculture, there are numerous other reasons why the productivity of peasant labour was retarded in these old European countries.

As it is, even to-day in central Europe not only must the peasant toil from early morning until late in the evening, but the peasant's wife must be not only housewife and mother but also the main assistant of the peasant in his work, especially on the smaller farms.

These conditions have had very harmful consequences, especially in the post-War period, on the hereditary force of our rural population and for the retention of our rural folk in the country-side and in their traditional vocation. The peasant himself has to work harder than the industrial worker, although he finds some compensation in

the fact that he enjoys the higher social status and the slightly greater degree of independence which goes with the ownership and management of a peasant farm. The peasant wife, however, is usually more burdened with work; she is indeed completely overburdened on many peasant farms, and certainly far more burdened than the wives of artisans or industrial workers. We are, therefore, now confronted with the situation, and it is a very dangerous and serious one, that the best and most capable daughters of peasants usually have no inclination to become peasants' wives. I was told in a peasant village of south Germany that there were about fifteen to twenty young sons of peasants all willing to take over their farms, but who were looking in vain for capable peasant girls whom they might marry. It is especially the case that the most capable and most talented daughters of peasants leave the land to take up professions in the cities, or they marry civil servants, tradesmen, or skilled workers in order to find an easier life. Migration from the land is nowhere so apparent as among those peasant daughters, particularly among the more talented.

We find that the rural exodus is more general among the more talented and capable of the young generation of the rural population. That is not based on mere supposition, but is a fact well supported by evidence from recent village studies that have been carried out in various parts of Germany. In these studies the attempt was made to distinguish the later professions of the talented children and of the less-talented children. We found the evidence as to their capacity in the reports of the village schools, and it was found that these school records were a sound basis for estimating the capabilities of these children in later life. The main question was to find out what became of the more valuable part of rural youth.

The result of the studies was to establish the fact that the more efficient and talented mainly migrate from their country homes to the town, and from peasant vocation to urban and industrial professions. There is evidence of this for a number of communities in Germany both in the north and in the south. It is interesting to discover that this migration of the more talented youth varies in volume according to the land tenure of the villages. The greatest migration, for example, is from villages composed almost solely of labourers and where those farm workers have no land of their own. Conditions are better in this respect in west, south, and central Germany, where the farm workers mostly own or rent land. Migration is also slightly less in the villages where it is the custom of the peasants to divide their land among the heirs, although here

it is still difficult and very laborious to build up a farm by purchase or tenancy of land. It is more easily possible where the farm is given undivided to one son. In such places a comparatively greater number of the talented youth stay on the land and remain peasants, as the social prospects for the son of a peasant are relatively high. It is especially the case that many of the more talented remain on the land where there is an established system of succession, according to which either the eldest or youngest son takes over the farm. But even from such villages usually the talented migrate more readily than the less talented and the less active.

In these studies it was found that the migration of the cleverer children became particularly marked after the growth of industrialization and after working conditions were improved more in the other professions than in farming. The migration of the cleverer children—and that means negative selection from the rural population—has already been going on in part for two or three generations, especially in districts where there are industries to absorb the talented rural youth from the peasant farm.

There is every reason, as we are well aware, to combat this menace. A great proportion of our agricultural measures are at present, and will be in the future, directed to this problem. The problem is to raise the standard of living, that is, the real income of the peasant family, and above all to relieve the peasant family of overwork, and especially to free the wife from work on the fields and in the stables so that she can return to her true sphere and be the housewife and mother of the family. This is no easy task. We have a high degree of intensity in German agriculture, and the productivity of labour is low. We cannot consolidate our peasant farms by twos or threes into larger units for the reason that we wish to maintain a populous, vigorous, peasant section as the biological basis of our nation. We will have to follow the path of co-operative mechanization in order to rationalize field operations. We must above all continue to eliminate strip farming. We have very many farms whose lands are split into a great number of parcels, and this in itself excludes the use of machinery and causes much loss of time and energy by the great distances between farmstead and fields.

The problem of ways and means of solving the difficulty are so intricate that I cannot enumerate them all. Let it suffice to mention two: Great significance must be given to the professional training of peasant youth, which has been promoted strongly since 1933 and should in future receive even more attention. We hope that we will succeed, not only through this professional training but also by

general education and by a general improvement of conditions of life in the country-side, in retaining the more valuable portion of our rural youth on the land, and thus ensure the future of our nation. The law of hereditary farms (*Reichserbhofgesetz*) will contribute to these ends because it protects the peasantry against excessive debt-encumbrance and excessive interest-payments, and thus provides to the peasants and their families the opportunity of improving their social standards.

F. WINDIRSCH, *German Division, Agricultural Council, Czechoslovakia.*

Mr. Duncan's paper was extremely interesting, but his suggestions can only in very few cases be adopted in central Europe. He mainly deals with the position of the farm labourer. When he points out that it is necessary to raise the social position of the farm worker by granting higher wages, then we must, at least with respect to the conditions in our country, say that higher wages are mainly a question of higher prices for farm products. Under our conditions this price problem is not always easy to solve, for the development of grain prices has always been the object of political conflict, as I know only too well.

Mr. Duncan also mentioned the length of the working day. I would point out that with respect to the small and medium-sized farms in our country there are no limitations. The farmer and especially his wife work all day long and have no time to lay their hands in their laps, for, if they did so, they would lose their means of existence.

Mr. Duncan also said that there is much in farm-labour conditions—he was no doubt referring to England, America, and Canada—that awakens in women an antagonism against farm work. In our country we can confirm this, but it would be a dangerous development if this feeling were to gain ground, for the woman is one of the most important factors in agriculture under our conditions.

I would like now to make some general remarks on this subject. My observations do not refer to the farmer but to the peasant, in the European sense of the word, who one generation after another does his work on the same soil, even under sometimes unfavourable conditions, and whose work is calculated not merely to gain monetary profit but to retain that same soil for his family under all conditions as their home. To gain that end the real peasant must exercise the strictest economy, which has become his second nature. He will restrict all expense for his own living as far as he can, so as to be able to put something by for lean years, for unforeseen

events, and for investments on his farm. Then he must put money by for the second and third sons who have to leave the farm to find other means of earning their living. He must also think of the years when he has handed over his farm to his son and he and his wife have retired. The extent of these voluntary restrictions is influenced by custom and tradition which may be those of his family only or of all the peasants of the same village or district.

His standard of life finds its expression in his clothes, his food, his habits, to whatever extent he has a part in the inventions and institutions of our civilization, and it is influenced by the size of his farm and his surroundings. Under normal conditions the standard of life must be influenced by the size of his farm, but even a rich farmer will be very modest in his ways of living. The more so the small farmer whose farm renders only small profits, hardly enough to defray the costs of living for him and his family in good years. It is worse if bad times cause a dwindling of his profits and if a succession of bad years swallows up all savings and even plunges him into debt.

In this respect agricultural life in Czechoslovakia varies greatly according to the varying conditions of the country, consisting of plains, hilly districts, and mountains, and extending over 13 degrees of longitude from west to east. In the western part of the country the standard of life is quite high, so that the standard of the peasant is influenced thereby, although the altitude, the transport facilities, the type of farming, the nearness of markets, and the size of the farm cause certain differences. The quality of the soil is, of course, of the greatest importance. In the eastern part we find very primitive conditions: the mountains, the smallness of the farms, the bad conditions of traffic, the difficulty of bringing the agricultural products to market, the character and stolidity of the people, incredibly modest in their ways of living, the lack of interest in matters of culture and civilization which in many places is shown by the fact that there are no higher schools. All these conditions unite to produce a very low standard of living which is shown in the prevailing poverty.

If these peasants can retain their homesteads at all, it is not only on account of their incredibly small demands on life, but also through the assistance that the agricultural population of these parts has frequently been granted by the State; for instance, by distribution among them of seed grain, seed potatoes, forage for their cattle, and so on. It is certainly to be doubted whether a repetition of this assistance will put the agricultural population of eastern Czechoslovakia in a position to guarantee the fulfilment of their political

and economic duties, because in this case we cannot speak any longer of independent landowners but only of an agricultural proletariat. These people are only of value for their numbers in the politics of the State. How to make them really independent and how to raise their standard of life is an important problem in itself.

For the comparison of standards in agricultural life all countries ought to institute research into the various conditions of living. It would not be easy; for in agricultural life many things used cannot be expressed in money values, whereas the statistics on the standards of living for workmen and employees can express everything in dollars or shillings and pence because they form part of a financial system expressed in wages and salaries; even in the case of payment in kind the values are fixed in all districts.

But in spite of all these difficulties we should try to find means and ways to express the values in the standards of agricultural living statistically, even if these statistics can only be approximate in view of the fact that conditions of production and markets vary from year to year and with them the standard of living for the peasant.

S. HIGGINBOTTOM, *University of Allahabad, India.*

Indian farm labour is a very great problem for a number of reasons. First of all, there is the system of caste which precludes certain people from working as farm labourers. In many parts of India the Brahman and other high-caste people may not touch the plough. At the other end of the social scale, if you send a sweeper, that is the man who cleans up the human excreta in the village, or if you send a *dom*, that is the man who removes the dead bodies, or if you send certain other low castes into the fields to work, the caste people will promptly leave and say, 'We cannot work with that man—caste prevents it.' Then again there are in India a great many casual landless labourers living in the villages. At the Institute farm at Allahabad we are close to the city. There is a large glass factory and a sugar factory, lots of work on the railways, so that there is in our immediate neighbourhood competition for casual landless labour. When the time comes for work to be done in the fields, either at sowing time or harvest, this casual landless labourer is compelled to work for the landlord. These men may be earning in the city or with us 6 annas a day, i.e. 12 cents, but they are compelled to work for the landlord in the village for a wage seldom exceeding 4 cents, i.e. 2 annas, a day.

One of the greatest difficulties we have with this labour at the bottom is to get it to stand up for its rights. I have seen men with

broken arms, broken collar-bones, severely bruised, because they said to the landlord, 'Why should we work for you for 2 annas when we can get 6 annas somewhere else?' The landlord says: 'You belong to this land and you must work here.' Seeing a man with a broken arm, I said to him, 'If you will speak the truth in the court, I will secure you a lawyer.' He said, 'For God's sake don't, sahib. You know you are only here for a little while, the landlord is here all the time. It isn't that I would suffer alone, but my family would suffer.' Unfortunately, in India a great many of these people are little better than serfs. Apart from the handicap of caste, they are not free to sell their labour in the best markets, and so the whole problem is made exceedingly difficult. If we could only get some of these people to bear witness in the courts, then, I think, the position of the labourer would be improved, but he is too afraid that the Government will not be able to protect him, and I fear that his fears are well founded. The Indian people have ways of doing things which the Government is not able to combat. There are ways of squeezing the poor people, and these people suffer very much from that.

In the Ganges valley, where we have, I think, the densest agricultural population, averaging anywhere from 500 to 1,500 per square mile, we find that farmers seldom work more than 80 days in the year. A great many of them do not work more than 60 days. Their oxen seldom have more than 60 days' work. Where the farmer does most of the work and only needs outside labour at special times, the labourer seldom gets more than from 30 to 50 days, and these are the people that suffer terribly. They are the ones that eat raw millet and think that life is all right if they can only get enough of it. In our part of India, of course, the hog follows the human because of this millet diet of the poor people, which takes the place of the hog following the corn-fed steers of the west. It is difficult to see how you are going to make progress with the villager—this casual labourer—so in terror of the landlord and the employer above him. He will not stand up for his rights. It is exceedingly difficult to help a man in that condition. Various people who have studied the matter say that, in spite of all that the British Government has done (and I think the British Government is always on the side of the poor man), it has not been able yet to get his courage up to the sticking-point where he will stand up and bear witness in a court of law against his oppressor.

Because of the low standard of these people, of course, the whole of India is kept back. My observations in India have led me to believe

that poverty is in direct proportion to the amount of hand labour used. The reason is that the hand labourer, with the inefficient tools that he has, produces so little more than will support himself. Hand labour produces the minimum of surplus without which, of course, we can have no rise in the standard of living. I would like to take 30 per cent. of India's population off the land and put it into industry, and I would like to introduce farm machinery, because that is the only way, as I see it, to raise the standard of living. I am familiar with much that is said against the introduction of farm machinery because it takes jobs away from these poor people. They put up railway embankments, millions of cubic feet of earth, in India without any modern earth machinery. This is how it is done. The man takes his *pharwah*—a sort of large hoe—and fills a basket which is lifted on to the head of a woman. The great Victoria dock at Calcutta was dug that way. I cannot conceive of any worse form of drudgery than the present hand labour of India. It is degrading and debasing, most of it, to the people. It is not the kind of labour that earns respect for the man who does it. We have got to create some sort of a consciousness of his own worthwhileness, and that is what he does not now have. My remarks, I am afraid, are turning back to the discussion earlier this week on the social implications of economic progress, but one cannot escape it in India. You think you are dealing with an economic problem, but, lo and behold, it turns out to be caste or some religious belief or doctrine, and it is the social customs growing out of these religious beliefs that put the barrier in the way of any economic progress.

The subject is really so big that all I have been able to tell you is that it is difficult. There are many people in India who are alive to the present position, and who realize that no country can rise economically when there is as large a proportion of its people at the bottom as India has to-day. I would not like to leave the subject on a note of pessimism. There is a sense of awareness in India to-day among the caste peoples—an awareness that something must be done for those at the bottom—that fills me with hope.

C. Y. SHEPHERD, *Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, Trinidad, British West Indies.*

I have been invited to say something to you about farm labour and social standards in the British West Indies. These tropical islands comprise Jamaica, where the bananas come from, Trinidad, famous for its pitch lake, the Barbados, and the Leeward and Wind-

ward groups of islands. These islands have very little in common except their differences, and it is extraordinarily difficult to generalize. The majority of the islands are dependent almost entirely on agriculture. For 250 years sugar was the only crop of importance. During the past fifty years or so numerous equally unprofitable export crops have been developed. Examples are cocoa, bananas, coconuts, cotton, lime, grape-fruit, and many others. It is customary for each estate to be devoted to the production of a single commodity. Most of the crops require some cultural attention throughout the entire year, but there is appreciable seasonal variation in the demand for labour.

In most islands the great majority of the labourers are the descendants of negro slaves imported for the good of their souls from West Africa. In Trinidad and British Guiana indentured immigrants were imported from the congested districts of India to remedy the shortage of labour caused by the abolition of slavery. Individuals of both races were torn away from the social anchorage to which they had been accustomed and deposited in countries of alien traditions and customs. The predominantly male character of the slave trade and indentured immigration engendered a laxity in moral codes and family ties which still persists. The abundant supply of labour and the ease with which slaves, or later indentured immigrants, could be obtained prevented any pressure on employers for improvements in working conditions. Indentured immigration, it is true, was conducted under Government supervision, but the minimum requirements of the immigration ordinance were very low and tended to become the standard for all other labourers. The labourers of both Indian and African origin were, and still are, provided with free accommodation in long wooden barracks partitioned into small rooms each 10 by 12 feet. Each estate, or group of estates, employing indentured labour was required to maintain a hospital with the necessary staff and equipment. Labourers under indenture were entitled to free treatment and maintenance while in hospital, and this privilege was usually extended to all other labourers. Wages were extremely low. Men and women received only 25 cents, or a shilling and a halfpenny, for each day actually worked during their five-year period of indenture. Indentured labourers could not leave the estate for employment elsewhere without the consent of the Protector of Immigrants. They could be compelled to work as and when required by the employer and at any kind of work he cared to choose. Other employees found it necessary to conform to these conditions in order to retain employment.

With such abundant cheap labour there has never been any recognized obligation for the employer to provide, or for a labourer to accept, regular employment. The work is still allocated almost entirely by the task or the day. The annual earnings still remain very low. The records of several hundred men showed an average of only a hundred dollars per annum. You cannot hit many high social spots with an income of only £20 a year.

About 90 per cent. of the food consumed is imported from Great Britain, Canada, or the United States, and, since it has to bear heavy freight charges and is subject to import duties, you will realize that diets are deplorably deficient and defective. According to accepted nutritional standards, the majority of the agricultural labourers should have been dead long ago. There is a very close relation between the earnings and physical incapacity, and more than 90 per cent. of the field labourers are infected by hookworm. Malaria and other debilitating diseases are widespread. Now these diseases are primarily economic in their origin. Europeans very rarely suffer from hookworm for the simple reasons that they wear shoes and usually have daily recourse to certain sanitary conveniences which I need not specify. Malaria is readily prevented by the elimination of the anopheline mosquito's breeding-grounds and the use of mosquito nets. But the cost of these elementary precautions is beyond the means of both employers and employees, and so the labourer is involved in a vicious circle of disease, low earning power, and a deficient and defective diet.

There have been many changes during the past twenty years, some for the better and some for the worse, but mainly for the worse. Indentured immigration ceased in 1917, and with it went the necessity for the provision of medical practitioners, medicines, and hospitals by the estates. The Government medical service is inadequate to remedy this deficiency, and many diseases which readily yield to treatment are allowed to reach an acute and dangerous stage. The barracks and dwelling-houses have fallen into a disreputable state, and, although some companies have inaugurated rehousing programmes, their financial resources preclude any rapid or adequate rate of improvement. Emigration to the United States, Cuba, Panama, Venezuela, &c., which provided a safety-valve for the more thickly populated islands, has ceased, and many West Indians are being repatriated. These individuals and those who served overseas during the War became accustomed to a standard of living which they abandoned with reluctance on their return home. Labourers are no longer tied to one particular estate, and the motor-bus has

given them greater mobility. Educational facilities are now widespread, and here, as I am in Canada, I should like to pay high tribute to the excellent and selfless work done by the Canadian mission schools for the education of eastern Indian children in particular.

The education has branded discontent with the deplorable conditions of the working class. Unfortunately there has been no recognized and constitutional channel through which groups of labourers could obtain redress of their grievances. The rapid expansion of the oil industry in Trinidad has provided employment for thousands of labourers at wages double and treble those obtained on nearby estates. Housing, sanitation, and facilities for amusement and recreation are greatly superior on the oil-fields to those available in the agricultural areas. Nevertheless, it was the oil-workers and not the less fortunate agricultural labourers who resorted to violence last year in order to secure a rise in wages commensurate with the increased cost of imported food. Both the sugar and cocoa industries have received assistance from the Government, but this has been possible only because of the industrial and commercial development of Trinidad. In Barbados, which has a population of a thousand to the square mile, dependent almost entirely upon the sugar industry, and in most of the other islands, it is impossible to subsidize agriculture at the expense of another industry because there is no other industry.

The Government is adopting a policy of more active intervention in matters affecting the welfare of the agricultural labourer. Labour advisers have been appointed to bridge the gulf between employer and employee. The formation of trade unions is receiving encouragement. Employers recognize the desirability of improving the social standard of the labourer, but can do little so long as agricultural enterprise is conducted at a loss. Unfortunately, there appears little prospect of improvement in the prosperity of the sugar industry. Since the War highly industrialized countries have been faced with problems of rural unemployment and distress, and they have turned with almost one accord to the industry which provides the least employment at the highest possible cost, namely, sugar. The door to the natural market of the West Indies, namely, the United States, was banged, barred, and bolted many years ago. England, the mother country, has now developed a substantial beet-sugar industry; Australia and South Africa have heavily protected cane-sugar industries. Every year has witnessed a contraction in the market for West Indian sugar and increasing pressure on the social standards of the West Indian labourer. Every time you jump up to present

your farmers with a sugar-beet on a silver salver you unwittingly press the head of the West Indian labourer further into the mire.

At the first of these International Conferences I stated that if the British West Indies had received the same financial assistance as the beet-sugar industry of Great Britain they could have afforded to give away their sugar and still declare a dividend of 100 per cent. per annum on the invested capital. Cost of production has since been reduced as the result of scientific investigation, cost accountancy, mechanical devices, and sacrifices of labour, but sugar prices have fallen even more rapidly. Two centuries ago the British West Indies were the most favoured possessions of the British Empire; in fact, with the Treaty of Paris in 1763, it was seriously debated whether Great Britain should retain Canada or the microscopic French Island of Guadeloupe. They kept Canada. Of course they did not know all that we know to-day. The voice of the British West Indies is now seldom heard in the councils of Empire, and the social standards of labour are dictated by the politicians of the industrial countries of the world.

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In Bulgaria, much more than in any other European country, the social standard of life of the whole country depends on farm labour. Of a population of 6,000,000, 80 per cent. are on farms. Less than 10 per cent. of the total population are employed in industry and handicrafts. The characteristic feature of the 885,000 Bulgarian farms is that they are small in size and typical family farms. Of 2,500,000 people occupied in agricultural production only 50,000, or 2 per cent., are permanently hired workmen, and around 150,000, or 6 per cent., are hired for a short time, mainly at the harvest time.

These figures give an idea of the extent to which the welfare of the Bulgarian people depends on the results of farm labour. We cannot say that the social standard of the Bulgarian farmers is as high as those in western Europe and particularly in the Scandinavian countries.

In modern civilization the general standard of living is measured principally in physical terms; a low or a high social standard of any nation or some groups of one nation is a consequence of its economic development. Four hundred years of dependence on Turkey and two wars during the past sixty years of national freedom are the basic reasons for Bulgaria's very slow development. Until the last decade 74 per cent. of the cultivated land in Bulgaria was under

cereals—principally wheat and maize. As a result we had inefficient use of farm labour and very low income per man.

With the depression of 1929 and the severe fall in the prices of cereals on the one hand and on the other the yearly population increase of more than 80,000 persons after the World War, necessity for improvement in economic conditions arose in very acute form. What were the possibilities of the country improving these conditions? The insufficient and unsuccessful attempts to discover raw industrial materials prevented, and continue to prevent, the development of our industry. The scarcity of land convenient for utilization does not permit the extension of agricultural production on the basis which we had a few years ago. Only one factor of production—farm labour—is abundant. Even at present more than 30 per cent. of the farm labour is surplus to our requirements. This surplus can neither be used in industry nor go abroad. Our deep conviction is that there is only one means which may reasonably be expected to help us to increase the economic welfare of Bulgarian farmers and to improve their social standard. Reorganization of the farms on the basis of a better and fuller utilization of the farm labour is now the principal task of Bulgarian agricultural policy. Introduction into our agriculture of more labour-intensive crops like fruit, grapes, vegetables, cotton, sugar and feed beets; increase of poultry, swine, dairy, and cattle production; these are questions which the Bulgarian farmers must solve with the help of their close advisers—the agricultural agencies.

In our mind not a compulsory reorganization of the farms but one accepted voluntarily by the farmers themselves is the best way to reach our goal. To this end more than 500 farm advisers are working in the country now, and 200 agricultural winter schools for the farmers' children have been established during the last eight to ten years. We are glad to say that the results of mutual co-operation between the farmers on the one hand and their advisers—the Ministry of Agriculture with a large number of organizations—on the other become more evident from year to year. A slow but sure rise of the social standards of Bulgarian farmers through a better and fuller utilization of their labour has been noticeable during the last few years. We hope that this standard will be raised still more in a not far-distant future.

J. F. DUNCAN (*in reply*).

The temptation is very great to open my note-book and go over a good many of the points which have been made in the discussion.

But that would mean inflicting another speech upon you, and you have given my paper so kindly a reception that I do not want to damage that impression.

The discussion we have had has ranged very widely over the world. I am particularly glad that we had the contributions from the West Indies and from India, because, however depressing the conditions are in India and in the West Indies, these happen to be the two places which have shown that there is among the coloured populations a human movement developing very much on the lines that have been followed in the white populations. Unrest in India and strikes in Trinidad are merely indications of the kind of movement to which we have become accustomed and to which, in the more advanced democratic nations, we are now attempting to adjust our social standards. I want to impress that point upon you because, however much we may talk about these social standards and about what has got to be done and so on, we have got to take account of this fact, that we are dealing with the most fundamental urge in the whole human race. These submerged peoples will not be content to be submerged. We know it within our own states, within the white races. It is becoming quite clear now that the coloured races, whom we have dominated and exploited much worse than the industrialists have exploited our working people, are not going to continue to be exploited and will insist on having some human consideration also. You have got to remember that fact.

But for this feature the discussion to-day would have depressed me very much. We have all been so completely in agreement. Whenever that happens, it means that we are all quite willing to recognize the evils and the difficulties, but—but—but . . . Now whenever people begin 'butting', it gets my goat. It reminds me of Tolstoy's phrase: 'We are all willing to do anything for the peasant except get off his back.' We are all anxious to do something for agriculture. We are all anxious to have standards, but for heaven's sake do not let us upset things as they are to-day! And how are we going to get these standards if we do not upset things as they are to-day? Let me use the old illustration. We have got to break the egg before we get the omelette, and we are all very anxious to see the omelette there, but none of us is anxious to break the egg. The general drift has been: 'Yes, we must have all of these things for agriculture. We must have changed standards for agriculture as for other people, but agriculture is not able to afford them. What are the possibilities that some other body can afford them? If some other body will pay

the price we are quite willing to do something.' The point is: What are we prepared to do ourselves? Mr. Ezekiel put the point, and I agree with him, that we are not going to solve this question as a purely agricultural question. That was the point referred to in Mr. Evans's contribution too. It is a big problem, and the agricultural problem is simply one phase of it. We have got to solve it by attacking along the whole line, but I am not going into that to-day. What I am going to say is that it does not relieve us of the responsibility of doing our job in our own field, whatever we may be doing elsewhere.

Now as to these standards, obviously we have the two lines: It is necessary to have either some reconstruction of our whole method of agriculture so that we can afford to bear these, or some attempt to secure these standards with the present organization of agriculture. To those of you who are inclined to think you can apply social standards to independent small operators, whether peasants or farmers, I would suggest that you consider the problem—as economists. I am asking you, not as politicians, not as sociologists, but as members of the economic conference, how practically you can apply standards of that kind to independent owners or tenants. You have had some experience in the United States of relief work. I believe part of the relief has gone to farmers. We have had some experience of unemployment insurance going to the small holders and their families, and I can see extreme difficulty. This method of security has been formulated to suit wage-earning, which is based on employment, and to which you can apply the test of an offer of employment. It is far from easy to apply it to independent operators who are paid on the basis of profits and private enterprise. In one part of Scotland 'farming the dole' is very much more successful than farming the land at the present time. We discover the danger of easy money when we are handing it out in small sums. It is very demoralizing to hand out a few dollars, or a few shillings, to an unemployed man or to a person needing relief. It is extremely exhilarating when this easy money comes in millions with no more effort than in drawing the dole. You will find these difficulties if you try to take social standards which have been designed and built up on the basis of wage-earning employment and apply them to independent operators in agriculture.

I am going to sum up in this way. We are all agreed that we must raise the social standards in agriculture. We are agreed that these standards, however they are framed, must apply not only to

the wage-earners in agriculture, but to all those who are of a labour standard, whether they are independent operators or tenants, and so on. We may be agreed—here I think the agreement may bring doubt to some of us—that it is possible to improve the position within the present structure. I think that any study of wage-rates within the last thirty years in any of the European countries will show that it has been possible to increase simultaneously both the standard of living of the workers and the productivity of the industry. You will find a direct connexion between the two things, and I am still convinced that there is very considerable room for improvement even within the present structure of the industry. Low wages and long working hours are a continual incitement to slackness in management and to easy-going methods of labour. Labour is only economically used when it is costly. Time is only economically used when you have not too much of it. But as long as you continue with too much time and too cheap labour, they will be wastefully employed. In that respect there is a considerable amount of slack to be taken up at the present time.

I submit, however, that within our present structure we cannot make very drastic improvements, and drastic improvements are certainly required in many parts of the agricultural field. The problem I wish to put to you as economists is: If the analysis is correct that we have these trends in our society at the present time; if these trends have behind them a human demand, which, as far as we can trace over the course of the centuries, is a growing demand, a strengthening demand; if there is a growing conscientiousness in the minds of all the people that we must, as part of the machinery of a great state, provide for these social standards; if society decides that there are certain ends to which it wants to move; the job set to the economist is to outline the best way in which we can develop agriculture so as to secure the most economic use of the resources *within* the circumstances and towards the ends to which we want to move. You will not solve it, and we do not ask you to solve it. The sociologist will come in and say that the economist and the economic sanctions are not the only ones or the most important ones. The politicians will come in, and they will have all sorts of aims. They will say that, irrespective of what the cost is going to be, we must maintain a certain number of people on the land. The sentimentalists will come into it, and all other kinds of people will have a say. But the job of the economist is to advise on the economics of operations within the given framework and for the specific purpose. Give us your advice as economists and let us see

what it is worth and what it is likely to mean. Your advice as sociologists and your advice as politicians is worth just as much as that of other people, and you are quite as much entitled to give it—not as economists, but as citizens. When you are asked (here I am just repeating what I said at St. Andrews) for your advice as economists, do not give us your advice as politicians and refuse to face the economic issues.