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Ninth Heath Memorial Lecture

THE TWO AGRICULTURES

by

J. TRISTRAM BERESFORD

Delivered on 30th May, 1963

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THE HEATH MEMORIAL LECTURE

WILLIAM EDWARD HEATH was born in Leicestershire in 1906 of a large farming family. All the family have been associated with agriculture and some are now farming in Canada and New Zealand.

He was a student at the Midland Agricultural College and graduated as a B.Sc. of the University of London. (The Midland Agricultural College is now the School of Agriculture of the University of Nottingham).

He started work at the Agricultural Economics Department at Sutton Bonington and then moved to the Farm Economics Branch at the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, in due course becoming Head of that Department. During this period he was responsible for an economic survey of marginal Scotland.

In 1947 he was appointed Reader in Agricultural Economics at the University of Nottingham. He played an active part in the School of Agriculture and later was Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture. In 1951 he was selected to visit the United States of America to study research and teaching methods.

He was particularly interested in all the international aspects of agricultural economics and devoted a good deal of time to lecturing and writing articles on the subject of food and people. He was an active member of the International Conference of Agricultural Economists and of the Agricultural Economics Society.

Although handicapped from his youth by an attack of infantile paralysis, he refused to bow to this handicap and shared in full in the whole life of the University. It was a shock to many when he died suddenly in 1951 at the age of 45.

The Heath Memorial Lecture was established in his memory, largely through the initiative and generosity of past and present students (The Old Kingstonian Association) and of the farmers who appreciated his work in the East Midlands province.

THE LECTURER, 1963.

Tristram Beresford, who farms with partners in Wiltshire and has other agricultural interests, has been a student of organisational and marketing problems in agriculture and industry for several years. In 1956 he was a Group Chairman at the Duke of Edinburgh's first study conference on human relations in industry at Oxford; and under the chairmanship of Lord Fleck helped to select U.K. members for the second conference, held in Canada last year. He is a member of the Central Committee of Study Groups arising out of the Oxford Conference, and since 1958 has attended Sir Ronald Edward's seminar on industrial organisation, at the London School of Economics. In this and other capacities he has studied marketing policy in about twenty different industries, several of which, like food processing and retailing, have a bearing on agriculture. He has also studied agricultural organisation in each country of the Six (except Luxembourg) and in Denmark — also in the United States, Canada, India and Pakistan.

He is a member of several co-operatives and has been on the Board of two. As a farmer, he has supported the Fatstock Marketing Corporation from the outset and invested in it, as in other agricultural marketing enterprises. He was a member of the Provisional Pigs Board and of the N.F.U. Development Company and the Farmers' Central Organisation. He was a member of the N.F.U. Council for eight years, and chairman of the Development and Education Committee for four, when he served on the Agricultural Improvement Council for England and Wales. He is a life member of the Somerset N.F.U. and a member of the N.F.U. in three other counties.

Mr. Beresford is a part-time member of the South Western Electricity Board; for the past two and a half years he has been chairman of the B.B.C.'s Central Agricultural Advisory Committee; and he has been Agricultural Correspondent of the Financial Times since 1950.

THE TWO AGRICULTURES

You will sometimes see in the wake of a great procession, after the important personages have passed, a solitary figure of small account bringing up the rear. Nobody knows why he is there. There is nothing to tell you. Somehow or other, he has got into the act - as I have this evening. Honoured as I am by your invitation to give this lecture, I cannot forget that Eric Roll and Roger Savary, and others no less accomplished, have preceded me.

Now first of all, why two agricultures? Why not five or six? Why not, in view of the diversity of our industry, a whole round dozen.

In the presence of economists, you have to be discreet about terms. Just as you should never talk about farmers as though they were a conformable species - apart that is from the boots and a tendency to rubescence of the exposed parts - so you should not talk about agriculture without a lot of footnotes. To talk about two agricultures is, I hope, exactly half as indiscreet as talking about one. At least it implies that there are hidden differences, hidden tensions between the smooth surface of a collective noun - as of course there are. It is these differences I wish to explore: not the inexact and much publicised difference between big farmer and small (for the distinction is often overdone) nor the difference between our continental agriculture and our atlantic agriculture, West and East, cow keepers and barley barons (for this I suspect is largely Poujadist propaganda); but a difference that seems to me more significant, one that is no less common abroad than here - the difference, for instance, between M. Lallouet and M. Gourvenec.

Stand on the Pont de la Mulatière in Lyon, you will see below you the creeping waters of the Saône. Cross to the Pont Pasteur two hundred yards away - here it is the Rhône. Both are rivers, with their cargo of silt, vegetation and human litter. Yet one of them, rising in the Vosges, has fallen imperceptibly through ample valleys, and carries in its stream the olive-light of their pastures. The other has travelled more precipitously. Fed by the frozen electricity of Alpine snows, it started as a torrent; by mountain lakes and gorges, it has fallen 6,000 feet when it reaches Lyon. Its power has twice been tapped, at Seyssel and Genissiat; and will be tapped again lower down. But below the Pont Pasteur, it joins

the Saône. Under eighteen more bridges, tamed and navigable, it flows now with the motion of its less adventurous tributary, 250 miles to the sea, no longer one river but two, its clearer current stained by the tribute of fat Burgundian ooze. I have stood on the bridge at Vienne, where the two streams, the limpid and the muddy, are still distinguishable in times of spate; and I have thought, fancifully perhaps, of the two elements that make up the dynamic of our agriculture; the savage and the tame; the free and the corporate; the doctrine of the welfare economy and the doctrine of *laissez faire*.

In Brittany, as you know, one trouble among others has been too many artichokes. Too many artichokes, too many kilometres from Paris! It is a finite situation, classical in its simplicity. The author of *Antigone* would have had a word for it. For when you have too many artichokes, there are two things only that you can do. You can grow less of them or sell more. Of these two alternatives, most farmers prefer to sell more. But how do you sell more of a perishable commodity in an inelastic market? Obviously you need help. Now getting help, in a democratic society, (in which most people are indifferent to most other people, and consumers often the most indifferent of all,) means organisation; means mobilisation; means war. How can your potential helpers be made to understand the plight of the peasantry, unless the peasantry rise as a body and barricade the prefect in the prefecture, using the surplus commodity as ammunition to drive home their grievance?

At Morlaix, the shock tactics worked. Twenty-six year old Alexis Gourvennec - he was twenty-four then - smouldering prophet of horticultural solidarity, president of the S.I.C.A. of St. Pol, became the hero of the hour when released from prison after storming the town-hall. Collective action, under his leadership, had won the day. Far off, in Paris, the government had heard the piteous cries of the besieged sub-prefect; had understood the rage of young Alexis that had driven him and his colleagues to take up artichokes against a sea of troubles; had hurriedly enacted legislation; in a word, had helped. Henceforward, all artichokes in the region would be sold through the S.I.C.A.-operated Dutch auction at S.I.C.A.-set prices. On top of direct-price-support-subsidies to S.I.C.A. members, the State would also pay 70 per cent of freight charges on artichokes sold for export, or to canning plants.

This is how you overcome the indifference of modern democratic societies! This is how you sell more artichokes! But at a price; at the risk of producing even more of them; and at the cost of regimenting a minority of growers!

For, of course, there usually is a minority, ten per cent perhaps, who see in the alternative of growing less the shortest cut to selling more profitably. It is a harder doctrine. It is clear water from the glaciers of economic thought. It is not clouded by the passion of the plains.

But as we have seen, it has to be tamed, nowadays; made corporate, navigable - or so it seems. M. Lallouet, one of the Breton independents, one of the most challenging thinkers among French farming trade unionists, may in the end be compelled to yield to the wishes of the majority, to march with them, and at their slower pace - for of course on his own he is quicker than they are. What he lacks is their political power; the weight of their numbers. To certain Ministers in Paris, he is the archetype of the tragic hero, magnificent but probably expendable. To Alexis on the ground he is a 'pauvre type' who cannot understand.

This rift between the cool, clear-headed minority, the ten per cent of alphas, and the rest, divides into unequal parts agriculture's brave, new, western world. Some would have it represented as a moral difference, especially the followers of Alexis. The betas (for this is what they often are) express the loftiest aims. They are doing what has to be done. They are carrying the burden of the gammas. And the gammas, of course, are doing the same for the deltas and the poor epsilons. But where Alexis sometimes fails in charity is in ascribing pharisaical motives to the alphas. "The alphas" he says "are the opportunists, the egocentrics. 'I'm all right, Jack' is their motto. They should soften their hearts. They should accept the burden. They should come inside and contribute."

It is not understood that the contribution the alphas are capable of making cannot be made from the inside. You cannot have a mass elite.

Some of you will remember the schism that divided milk producers in Britain in the first days of the Marketing Boards. It was the same; or worse - for times were bad. Many were for grasping the lifebelt the government had thrown to them, but would they be numerous enough? For even then there were men who preferred the inconveniences, the dangers, and the

freedom of going it alone; men with a name in the market for doing a good job, and in consequence with a useful corner they had built for themselves, not without toil and thrift. They were against any mass attack by producers on the home market, not only because they were individualists, but because there are no corners in a market that is collectively or - as some say - rationally supplied.

The majority won. In the 'thirties, they were bound to win. They won again and again, and in one instance demonstrated the shallowness of their victory - by failing to make the Pigs Board work. It was thought to be a failure in the scheme itself, but the real flaw was elsewhere. In every beta, in every gamma, there is an alpha waiting to come out. But after the 'thirties came the 'forties. The tables turned. The tide was now running in the farmers' favour, and when times are good, you often find a different coalition of interests. Alphas and betas make hay together; gammas too. Cracks appear lower down the agri-social scale, and if they are sufficiently low down, even the politicians do not notice them. Nevertheless, the ineradicable division at the top end of the scale remains - although it is concealed. Like the ragged rock :

"in the restless waters
Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;
On a halcyon day it is merely a monument,
In navigable weather it is always a seamark
To lay a course by : but in the sombre season
Or the sudden fury, is what it always was."

We are now once again entering a sombre season for farmers. Once again, therefore, the old antagonisms are astir. On the one hand, we hear pleas for a closed shop : on the other, the protests - or the abstentions - of those who are reluctant to be enclosed. Sometimes, the differences are acted out in terms of farce - Harry Wright of the Tomato Board comes on as a nigger minstrel. Sometimes, they appear as a Trojan horse - Alfred Peppercorn is returned to the Egg Board over the head of a former chairman on the block vote of a tiny minority of producers. ("Its the N.F.U.'s fault - they could have put Welford back" - said the new Chairman.) Sometimes, they smoulder away as a delayed action fuse - Antony Fisher releases a train of ideas from an upper flat in Eaton Place. Sometimes the

twittering world of the egalitarians is silenced by a lightning stroke from Colin Clark. There are even times, so it is rumoured, inside the inside councils of the N.F.U. when deviationists do not raise their hands - while others, as we know, have already withdrawn.

There are those who say that the minority is always right, even though, for reasons of grace or expediency, it has to yield to the majority. We will return to this contention later on; for the moment, let us note two points in passing. The first is a curious paradox. It is that agricultural majorities, as they display themselves today, are compelled to behave as if they were the dynamic creative minorities. They appear before us as sheep in wolf's clothing. Their leaders make believe that it is they who are the pacemakers, the innovators, the new frontiersmen. This is something that their followers - or public convention - seems to expect of them. The great men are at their desks. They are brooding. Pray do not disturb.

The second point is that the real pacemakers do not behave like this. They do not have to. They may have imitators. They may have detractors. But there is no mass audience. Those who have had a good influence on our agriculture in recent times - Harry Ferguson, John Hammond, Malcolm Messer, George Stapledon - often seek cover from the establishment as a means of achieving anonymity. They could not do their work if they didn't. Sometimes in fact they are indistinguishable from the establishment, so completely do they affect its protective colouring. This is true also of individual farmers who, in different fields, in different parts of the country, are unobtrusively revolutionising our practices. They are subscribing members of the club, but they rarely appear on its committees. They are grateful for its privileges, while remaining capable of doing without them. They appear to conform, and the fact gives rise to the claim - often a proud boast of the majority - that the establishment caters for everyone, alphas included. But the alphas do not depend on the establishment. Others do.

Others belong - pay their Union dues, vote for marketing boards, take up shares in cooperatives - because they esteem the advantages the establishment has to offer. It is safer inside. It spreads the load. It increases bargaining power. It is cheap insurance. Collective action has been thrust upon farmers because, as buyers or sellers, they feel increasingly

small alongside other groupings in their sector of the economy. Like the artichoke growers, they join syndicates for self preservation, to promote and protect their common interests against the interests of others. This behaviour is not peculiar to farmers.

Society is full of lobbies, bewildering in the range and variety of their activities. There are the aggregates of the T.U.C., using the collective strength of their membership to negotiate rates and conditions of employment in industry and commerce; professional organisations, whose functions are largely consultative; industrial coalitions, like the B.E.C., who bargain with the Unions; and the F.B.I., with one foot in the Treasury, and the other in the Board of Trade. But if we may generalise for a moment, we might say that these groupings exist to do one or two of three things - to apply political pressure; to stake economic claims; or to develop commercial strength. It is a unique feature of the National Farmers' Union that it aspires to do all three.

The N.F.U. is much more than a mere pressure group. It is the seat of the agricultural establishment. It is a bureaucracy which anticipates, interprets, coordinates and amplifies the inarticulate aspirations of the majority of farmers. It reflects their moods, their fears, their needs, their loyalties, their everyday average competence. It acts for them, speaks for them, improvises for them, prescribes for them. It is, as you might say, Alexis Gourvennec's S.I.C.A. Jumbo-size, sophisticated, stratified, and already subdividing (in obedience to Parkinson's 3rd law) into new cells beyond the motherhouse in Knightsbridge. By other agricultural bodies it is respected, tolerated, resented, but never openly opposed. It is too important to offend. Government consults it. Incumbents touch their cap to it. It has come up from the depths like the men it represents; and into its field of force have been drawn countless supporting aids and agencies, much as the lesser fry of ocean are said to congregate within the safe zone round a surfacing whale.

Two factors, in my opinion, have contributed to the power and influence of the Farmers' Union. The first, which contributed to its power over other agricultural agencies, was the Agriculture Act of 1947. This created the Annual Price Review, and led to the tradition of consultation with "a body representative of the industry". For this role, the N.F.U. was conveniently at hand, primus inter pares among the other farmers' unions of the U.K., and already reputed for its discretion and

serviceability in the recurring food emergencies of war. Thus the N.F.U. became the farmer's negotiator for 80 per cent of all he produced; and since horticulture was not in on the deal, it was a natural step to espouse that interest also.

Fortune favoured the home producer. The country needed food in a hurry and was willing to pay for it. In the struggle for food, in the struggle for national solvency, the N.F.U. (and its robust president) rapidly achieved heroic size. The Union was not merely the farmer's friend. It was an instrument of government policy. Its decisions made news. The Price Review supplied all that was needed for prestige. The Review was top secret - cabinet stuff - giving the various echelons at the centre a finely graded scale of self-importance. The higher you rose, the more you knew; the more you knew, the more enigmatic was your smile. On the outside world, and the agricultural bodies who lived there, the effect was magnetic. For several years, lights burning late in Bedford Square seemed to draw the crowds, and the faces turned up towards them were like the faces of poor children at a Christmas tree. All lesser orders shared in the prosperity that was handed down to them. The N.F.U. was the universal provider.

Good things never last. Times changed, and the hungry 'forties gave way to the greedy 'fifties. But the pecking order laid down in those years, when the N.F.U. was recognised as the mouthpiece of the industry, and became its go-between with government, has survived, and has not so far been seriously challenged. In all matters economic and political, the N.F.U. takes, and claims, precedence. And since matters economic and political are central and capable, over time, of indefinite elasticity, the prerogative of the Union is extended also. Latterly, it has spread into the commercial field, in circumstances which have greatly increased the Union's power over its members. We have seen the apotheosis of the average farmer in the politico-economic sphere; we are now witnessing his efforts, through corporate action, to dominate his market. It is as though a proletariat, having achieved power by majority vote, were attempting to take over the business life of an industry through the intervention of its own bureaucracy.

Thus, the second event that increased the power and influence of the N.F.U. - this time over its own members - was the disappearance of food shortages after the Korean war. De-control was a watershed. For farmers, a period of practical idealism ended; a new period began. When food is scarce, your problem is production. When it is plentiful, the problem

is selling it. Long used to policies of expansion, farmers gradually awoke to the importance of marketing; and the gradualness of their awakening was itself a consequence of the Union's skill in horse-trading with government. For several years after 1954, it looked as though the blend of statesmanship and opportunism, which had been so successful in the past, might be enough to safeguard the future - and especially did it seem so after Sir James Turner's grand coup in 1956. But slowly it became plain that the economics department and the parliamentary department of the Union were not enough. There had to be a commercial effort also. A marketing division was overdue.

But it was in 1954, or thereabouts, that the leaders of the Union sensed the change of wind. Having succeeded unopposed to the position of first consul, they decided that the moment was opportune to assume the imperial crown. The question of legitimacy never arose. If a people is frightened, it will follow; if a people is satisfied with things as they are, it will support most measures to keep them so, on condition that special exertions are not demanded of them. Frightened or complacent, the mass of farmers were prepared on most occasions to vote for marketing boards, if the Union told them to - and the Union did, repeatedly, often providing from its own establishment the political talent to lead and staff them, and by the further ingenious device of sharing other services - public relations or accountancy or legal advice - binding them to the centre with invisible strings. There was the Fatstock Marketing Corporation also, but this was something new.

Marketing Boards, you will agree, are not strictly speaking commercial animals at all. They are cooperatives, with special functions. Their commercial effectiveness is secondary, and depends on two things: their statutory powers, and their ability to establish an independent tradition. Most of the postwar boards lack marketing powers, or if they have them, lack independence. The parent political body likes to keep its offspring browsing obediently by its side.

But, the F.M.C. was a leap in the dark. It had no monopoly powers. It would not compel farmers to conform. It had to attract them by its business ability. In the long run, it could not do this until it had achieved freedom as a public company - until it substituted risk capital for political patronage. The N.F.U. has done its utmost to retain control on its own and on its members' behalf, first by back-seat driving and latterly through a trustee interest; but the F.M.C.

stands or falls as a business, not as a movement within a movement. Thus the argument between bureaucracy and enterprise is continued in a novel form - with bureaucracy as a substantial shareholder. Lallouet has taken over, but Gourvennec holds a trump card. It remains to be seen which, in this struggle, is Antaeus and which is Hercules.

It is, as you would expect, in the commercial field that the differences between the organised majority and the dynamic minority are at their sharpest. I will come to the minority later; for the moment, I hope I have made it plain that the N.F.U. doctrine on marketing is dogmatic and consistent. In the words of the Tavistock Institute Report, commissioned by the Union : (I quote)

"The N.F.U. is the only organisation qualified to provide the leadership for these (broadly marketing) developments ... the means of doing this appear ... to be the building up of a variety of mediating institutions standing between agriculture and the powerful interests that supply and buy from it. These bodies may be either competitive or cooperative with outside interests ..."

First role, therefore, is to initiate. But we may go further - I quote from a memorandum on Commercial Development : "It should be clearly understood that the Union is, of course, not bound in any way to accept the recommendations of (a) market research unit since there are often other issues, such as political considerations, to be taken into account by the Union ... which could not be evaluated by a research organisation".

Second role, then - an arbiter.

Thirdly, dealing with procedure in developing commercial organisations other than marketing boards, the Union has this to add (I quote from the same memorandum) :

"The democratic procedures of the Union are a most imperfect mechanism for engaging in commercial developments, but if, on the other hand, the Union is the most appropriate body able to act in this way, on behalf of farmers, a compromise has to be reached, and this compromise has to take the form of a free hand to the office-holders to act on behalf of the membership." Third role then - as circumstances require - benevolent despot. From the initial premise of legitimacy through suffrage, all three roles follow inevitably. Since anyone can be a member of the Union, ergo that Union represents

everyone. Since the Union is democratic, ergo it knows best. Since the Union knows best, ergo it must be sovereign. Since the Union is sovereign, it must on occasion exercise sovereign power.

Bearing in mind that Union membership is limited to little more than half the farmers in the United Kingdom, and that of this half, ten per cent or less are active as opposed to passive members; remembering also that the Unions have no money of their own, and that efforts to raise fighting or reserve funds for unspecified purposes have met with small success - this is a remarkable position to have achieved. It is at once a dominating position and a secure one. It is dominating in the sense that it occupies the commanding heights, or most of them; consequently it is difficult for other agencies to operate constructively within its sphere of influence. It is secure in the sense that as long as there are subsidies and price reviews and protection for farmers, or so long as farmers do not revolt (as they have in America) against controls, the N.F.U. will continue to speak as though it spoke for all.

Now few will dispute its acquired skill in the political and the politico-economic field, but in the commercial field, it is otherwise. However many there may be who believe, like Gourvennec, that agricultural progress is possible only by corporate action, there are others who see it differently. They are those who think - and it is curious how the old ideas persist - that the objective in public or private enterprise should be to raise efficiency to the highest level; and that the doctrine of corporate action, espoused by political organisations like the Farmers' Union, inevitably conflicts with this objective. When, in the familiar phrase, it considers the interests of its members, a Union can aim no higher than the majority can reach, and that, by definition, is not high. It must seek to make commercial life 'safe' for its members, whether it does it by promoting statutory marketing schemes with government assistance or floating corporations that are producer-controlled. Instead of the economic principle of strength through excellence, you have the sociological concept of security through unity. To achieve it, you must slow down the tempo of the individual to the pace of the mass, just as the Rhône is tamed when it joins the Saône. Your common denominator is compromise and when it comes to quality you tend to pasteurise all your products.

To the minority it seems indisputable that to be

commercially effective and durable in a competitive society you must be efficient. This does not mean going it alone; it means combination on the basis of comparable ability. You do not exclude anybody by combining; you merely insist that if others wish to join you, they must be efficient too. They must come up to your level. For many, this is too high an entrance fee to pay; but for the few, it has proved a key to commercial success.

As you would expect, these successes are mainly to be found in areas where the welfare policies of the Union are less influential - or, more simply, in less protected corners of the 'walled garden'. Broiler growers have no subsidies, and we have seen how rapidly a new industry like this will grow if it is free to manoeuvre without political inhibitions. In horticulture too, there have been notable instances of independent initiative - like East Kent Packers who started grading apples and pears at a time when you could sell them ungraded, and have now joined other businesses of the same calibre to form Home Grown Fruits Ltd. In Holland (Lincs.), S.E. Marshall, himself a grower, is building up a considerable reputation as a contracting packer and grader of washed vegetables for Marks and Spencer, while in the same county Ted Gray and fifty other substantial growers are on the verge of going into the same business as a private group.

But as you get into the territory of the cooperatives, you are already entering the penumbra of the N.F.U. When the history of postwar agriculture comes to be written, it will be seen how unerringly the Union detected in the cooperative movement a potential rival on the marketing side. For years, the cooperatives were kept at arm's length; and when reconciliation was finally brought about under pressure of opinion, it was on terms which left the Union in supreme command. In spite of this, there are cooperatives large and small who have pursued commercial policies for their members without seeking approval from the centre, and often in ways which accept the logic of the proposition that if you are to be commercially effective, cooperation is not enough, there has to be discipline as well. As an example of this, there are the Venus egg groups launched by North Western Farmers Ltd., where membership is limited to those with 2,500 birds and over. Another example is that of Stonegate Farmers which recently ceased trading as a cooperative; shed 2,000 members; and went into business as a private company. This transformation aroused a storm of protest in the political wing of the movement; ideologically, it

was unforgivable. But the directors felt they would sell eggs better if they were answerable to a risk-bearing body of producer shareholders; and producers agreed with them. When the mud settled, shares were two and a quarter times oversubscribed.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion, looking at the position in the round, that it might be better for the country in general, and for the agricultural industry in particular, if our minorities had more power and the majority had less. As things now are, they can have very little, so long as the majority has so much. There is a growing risk of single-party government. There is a growing risk that the pressures on the individual to conform and adjust will accentuate the drift towards collectivism and authoritarian democracy, that the farmer will become an object, a vote, a levy-payer, a name in a register. This applies not only to the average farmer, but to the best, of whom we have too few. Not that individuals are always right. They are not. They make mistakes. But this is something that mass movements cannot do. It is for this reason they are ultimately sterile.

"Corporate officialdom" says W. E. Hocking "are helpless and barren - the parties, bureaux, departments, cabinets, commissions - barren because of the inner cancellation of each other's certitudes. The composite programme, prudentially polished, has every virtue in it but life. Where there is no personal vision, the people perish." "Creative ideas do not spring from groups, they spring from individuals. The spark leaps from the finger of God to the finger of Adam."

In thus placing emphasis upon the individual, are we not, it may be said, denying the vital role of leadership in human affairs? Most surely we are not. Rather we recognise a fact, written large in history, that leadership in radically new or fast-changing situations is rarely the prerogative of those then at the top. On the contrary, it wells up from below through persons unknown, for leadership is the result of the response of individuals to the pressures of a new condition as it comes upon them; and such a response is often most pure and most powerful in people in positions of obscurity - those, in short, who, being out of the limelight, are neither hampered nor overborne by the supposed necessity of keeping things as they are.

In a healthy society, or a healthy industry, there will always be differences, tensions, contradictions between creative

minorities and the conservative mass. It is the burden of my argument that we have reached a point in our agricultural history where we are all in danger of regimentation by our bureaucracy. My propositions are these.

Firstly, that as things are today in this overcrowded island, as in Germany, as increasingly in France, it is desirable in the agricultural interest, as well as the government's, that there be some representative body to argue the farmer's case on political and economic issues.

Secondly, by its very nature such a body is bound to represent the highest common factor of agreement - the middle course, the half measure, the acceptable compromise, to which, at both extremes, the worst farmer and the best, must submit in the common cause.

Thirdly, that because of the Price Review, and other privileges deriving from the Agriculture Acts, the N.F.U. has achieved a position of dominance. However welcome this may be to the mass of its members, and however tolerable to the rest, it has a paralysing effect on commercial development - in the very sphere where the future of the industry is likely to be decided. Nothing grows in the shadow of a great oak. Almost without exception, it is in the unprotected corners of the garden that growth points are to be found.

Fourthly, that for reasons of expediency, or convenience, or because of fears that are exaggerated or exploited, the creative minority in agriculture is becoming submerged in the dominant majority. When this happens, a society or an industry stagnates. It loses its capacity for self-determination. Without contraries, there is no progression.

