



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

### **BRITISH AGRICULTURE BILL.**

This measure seeks to give full effect to the British Government's Agricultural Policy. It is a comprehensive Bill of 110 clauses and 12 schedules and comprises five parts, viz:—

Part I—Guaranteed Prices and Assured Markets.

Part II—Good Estate Management and Good Husbandry.

Part III—Agricultural Holdings.

Part IV—Small holdings.

Part V—Administrative and General.

The application of the Bill will be as follows:—

Part I and Clause 94 (continuation of Lime Subsidy) extend to the whole of the United Kingdom.

Clauses 74-78 (Agricultural Statistics) extend to Great Britain. The whole of the remainder applies to England and Wales only.

An explanatory memorandum, issued as a White Paper by the British Government, states that the objective is to promote a stable and efficient agricultural industry, capable of producing such part of the Nation's food as in the national interest it is desirable to produce in the United Kingdom, of producing it at minimum prices consistent with proper remuneration and living conditions for farmers and workers in agriculture and of ensuring an adequate return on capital invested.

The value of the production of British agriculture before the war was some £290,000,000 per annum; during the war years the figure increased to nearly £580,000,000.

Part I of the Bill provides the machinery to enable the Minister to carry out periodical reviews of the general economic position and prospects of the industry, to fix prices to enable farmers to plan well ahead and, in conjunction with the Minister of Food, to promote measures to provide assured markets.

In the Government's view, efficiency in agriculture is promoted when farmers have available the benefits of modern agricultural research and knowledge of the most up-to-date farming methods.

The establishment of the National Agricultural Advisory Service on 1st October, 1946, provided a medium for the continuation and intensification of the steps developed during the war to supply farmers with up-to-date technical advice on their various problems.

Whilst the Government is confident that much can be done by technical advice to raise the standard of efficiency, it feels that there is likely to be a minority, both of farmers and land-owners, who will not respond sufficiently.

As a corollary to the provision of stability, therefore, the Government is seeking power to exercise control measures to ensure that agricultural land shall be managed and farmed efficiently.

Part II of the Bill lays down general standards of good estate management and good husbandry and the Minister is empowered, where these standards are not complied with, to issue directions and, if necessary, to dispossess the land-owner or farmer concerned.

It is part of the Government's policy also to see that good agricultural land shall not be unnecessarily diverted to some non-agricultural purpose if other poorer land could equally well be used. To this end the Ministry of Agriculture is co-operating with the Ministry of Town and Country Planning and other Government Departments and with the Forestry Commission.

There are certain areas of land which cannot be properly developed and used for agricultural purposes without involving expenditure which could not reasonably be expected of any private individual. Power is being taken to bring such land under State ownership for development.

Substantial amendments to the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1923, are contemplated in connection with Part III of the Bill in the effort to develop satisfactory relationships between landlord and tenant. Important new provisions relating in particular to security of tenure for the tenant farmer are included.

Provision is being made for the setting up on a permanent basis of County Agricultural Executive Committees, appointed by the Minister, but including a number of members drawn from panels nominated by the farmers, agricultural workers and land-owners.

Independent Agricultural Land Tribunals are also to be set up to hear appeals on the more important issues arising under the Bill, as for instance in the case of dispossession of owners and farmers and the operation of notices to quit.

An Agricultural Land Commission will be set up to manage land acquired by the Minister. A comprehensive code is laid down of compensation from a landlord to a tenant for improvements and tenant right and for compensation from a tenant to a landlord for dilapidations and any other deterioration of the holding during the period of tenancy.

If agriculture is to be prosperous and efficient, men must be attracted to the land. To achieve this objective the Government considers three things to be essential:—Firstly, a satisfactory

wages policy; secondly, satisfactory living conditions such as rural housing, electricity and water supply; and thirdly, the provision of a satisfactory career on the land. In this latter connection, Part IV of the Bill deals with the Government's Policy in respect of smallholdings, as a medium by which experienced and otherwise suitable agricultural workers may rise from the ranks and become farmers on their own account. It becomes the duty of county and county borough councils to provide smallholdings, the acquisition of land, lay-out, and equipment and other matters. The Minister is empowered to acquire land by compulsory purchase or hiring for providing smallholdings for letting to persons with previous agricultural experience.

Certain clauses of the Bill (Part V) provide for the continuation of grants for field drainage, the supply of water to agricultural land and liming for a period of not more than seven years. According to a summary of the provisions of the Bill which appeared in the London "Times," grants from the Exchequer to meet not more than half the cost of approved schemes for field drainage, improvement of ditches, and the supply of water, will be continued for five years at an estimated cost of £6,000,000. Grants to meet not more than three-quarters of the cost of liming will be continued for five years. The average annual cost of the subsidy during the last three years amounted to approximately £3,000,000 and it is expected that annual expenditure during the extended period will gradually increase. The period in which these grants may be made may be extended for two years. Schemes for providing goods and services to farmers, the cost of which has been at a rate of £14,000,000 a year, will continue with certain modifications, but the cost is expected to decline.

The second reading debates on the Bill were set down on the business paper of the House of Commons for January 27 and 28 last.

R. N. SMITH.

---