

## REVIEWS

card, has been taken from them. But the difference between England and America is this: there, in practice if not in theory, credit creation has passed into the hands of the government; here, this second phase has yet to come to pass. We still live under a system where money is bought and sold as if it were a commodity, where it is issued only in the form of a debt, and in order to bear interest to certain individuals who issued it. In these circumstances Fr. Drinkwater is probably right to lay most stress upon the question of interest charges and of the private creation of money. His chapter on usury, entitled *The Second Deadly Sin*, is particularly worth reading. Being only half a dozen pages long it cannot aim at any complete solution, but it is by far the best sketch of the problem that the present writer has seen.

Another remarkable chapter deals with the objections of distributists such as Mr. Belloc, who say that we ought to think in terms of property rather than of income. Mere monetary reform, they say, will not abolish the Servile State. We must have redistribution of property if any measure of freedom is to be enjoyed. In this they are right, but Fr. Drinkwater implies, if he does not actually state, the obvious retort. At present both large and small owners are in the hands of High Finance. Before any redistribution is possible it is necessary for the nominal owners of property (and not their creditors) to become the actual owners. This position is fast being reached in America, but it is not so here. It must involve the disestablishment of the money-power, and so in this case, as in so many others, monetary reform is the immediate thing for which to fight. It is not an end in itself but the necessary preliminary of more important and fundamental reforms. "If," as Fr. Drinkwater says, "we blindly follow the behests of the usurers, there will be nothing left for us to plead but the excuse that was offered by Cain—and not accepted."

OXFORD AND ASQUITH.

### THE AGRICULTURAL DILEMMA. (P. S. King & Son; 2/6.)

The one fact above all others which stamps these dreadful years of unemployment through which we pass is surely the fact of technological unemployment, i.e. that it is in the nature of the machine that it displaces human labour. We are over-industrialized as a nation: what wonder that the natural remedy has seemed to many to lie in the direction of de-industrialization, i.e. in a back-to-the-land movement?

To all such the *Report of an Enquiry*, organized by Viscount Astor and Mr. B. Seebohm Rowntree, must come as a salutary invitation to pause and reflect "that the number of workers required to produce a given quantity of goods is being reduced

## BLACKFRIARS

about as rapidly in agriculture as it is in industry" (p. 10); that in fact "Agriculture is but one industry, with various branches, among others, which produces commodities with the aid of machinery on a rapidly growing scale and by methods subject to constant change and discovery and invention" (p. 90).

The recent Farm Mechanization Conference, held in Oxford, has told the same tale, though from another point of view. "British farming," said Prof. R. G. Stapledon, "is probably entering upon the greatest revolution of its long and chequered career. The future lies with the engineer and the implement maker, and the most successful farmer will be he who dispenses as far as may be possible with everybody else."

The authors of *The Agricultural Dilemma* see the only way out in conceiving "land settlement not as a whole-time but as a part-time occupation; not as an alternative to industrial employment, but as a means of supplementing other resources" (p. 83). The crucial point in going-back-to-the-land should be, not to want to produce for a *market*, but for one's own larder. The authors therefore advocate "subsistence holdings, not sufficiently big to enable their occupants to produce for sale to any considerable extent, but which would enable men who are unlikely to be re-employed and who must rely mainly for their livelihood upon some form of unemployment assistance, to find a larger and more varied outlet for their energies than a tiny allotment can supply."

The only objection one feels against this proposition is that it assumes unemployment assistance as a permanent feature of our social system—which thereby stands self-condemned. But is it not possible to accept the idea as a plan to normalize conditions which the perfecting of the machine has completely upset? To do so, it would be necessary to treat industrial employment also as only a part-time employment—as a sort of labour to be rendered for the commonwealth, which would enlist all citizens a few hours per day, or a few days per week, or a few months per year, leaving them for the rest of their time to their "subsistence holdings," which would form their true home and that of their wife and children. The distinction would no longer lie between "industrial" and "agricultural," but between "public" and "private" labour; there would no longer be any "unemployed," for all would be constantly employed, either for the nation and the world at large, or for and with their own family on their own homestead.

The working out of such a plan in all its details would take time. It could only be applied gradually and would have to surmount many and formidable difficulties. In the meantime unemployment assistance also would have to go on: but would the new re-orientation towards such a common-sense and definite

## REVIEWS

objective to be aimed at not take us radically out of that slough of despond into which we are sinking ever deeper, as whole generations grow up to know themselves as mere receivers of doles; unwanted; useless; surplus stock only fit to be dumped on a refuse heap?

Work for all—would such a rational, nation-wide redistribution of work not provide it? And even if for the older people such were not possible, all our energies should at least surely be bent to train the next generation for it.

H. C. E. ZACHARIAS.

### FIVE ON REVOLUTIONARY ART. (Wishart; 1/-.)

This book sponsored by the Artists' International is an attempt to study more closely and to reach some conclusion about the relationship between the social spirit and art. It is made up of five essays, the contributors being Herbert Read, F. D. Klingender, Eric Gill, Al. Lloyd and Alick West.

In the first essay Herbert Read tackles the question of what Revolutionary Art is, and after not a little reasoning concludes that it is "Constructive," "International" and (surprisingly) "Revolutionary." His conclusions are broad enough to be undeniable. It is fairly obvious that revolutionary art should be constructive, international and revolutionary in *some* sense, but such a clear (if mistaken) essay as this seems to warrant more than three conclusions that are vague enough to suit the view of almost any school of thought—whether Communist, as Mr. Read's, or simply "bourgeois."

He is concerned with Abstract art as he considers this to be the one truly contemporary and revolutionary form; in addition to which we are told that all artists of any intellectual force belong to this movement, which, to us at least, is a revelation. Art, we are told, is possessive of two distinct elements: "A formal element appealing to our sensibility *for reasons which cannot be stated with any clarity but which are certainly psychological in origin?*" (italics mine), and "an arbitrary element . . . which is the outer clothing given to these underlying forms." The formal element apparently does not change, and the "changes" in art are simply the changing valuation of this formal element.

Now all this is very reasonable and is, as far as it goes, true. There is most certainly an unchanging formal element that appeals to our sensibility, but is it the function of the theorist to tell us this or to reach for an explanation of it? Mr. Clive Bell is only too willing to tell us that all art is significant form, but he has not yet ventured an explanation telling us of what the form is significant. That is the point. Eric Gill has defined beauty as that quality in things made by which we dis-