



YOUNG BRITAIN IS RADICAL

THIS is a condensation of the first of two articles written for "Foreign Affairs" by Barbara Ward, foreign editor of the "Economist," and a well-known radio broadcaster. Both articles should be read in conjunction with the cable message from London last week announcing the introduction in the House of Commons of a Reinstatement in Civil Employment Bill which provides for compensation for servicemen who cannot be reinstated in their old jobs. For our illustrations we have used British Official Photographs issued by the Ministry of Information.

A GREAT majority of the young people in Britain are in the armed forces. They are discouraged from writing to the newspapers and from speechmaking. They cannot vote in by-elections. They cannot take part in organised political work, except to stand as candidates for election. They are cut off from ordinary contacts and ordinary responsibilities by a life of strong discipline, much hard and usually unfamiliar work, interspersed with periods of very great boredom. The regular surveys of public opinion—official and private—are concentrated on the civilians. All these factors would make it difficult to be definite about youthful British opinion in the forces—which is the majority of youthful British opinion—were it not for certain changes in army education introduced in this war, changes which are designed to encourage free discussion and the formation of opinion among the soldiers.

The experience of ABCA (Army Bureau of Current Affairs), makes it possible to speak with some certainty of young opinion in the Army. Unfortunately, this experiment has not so far been extended to the R.A.F. Nor has it reached the Navy. Here, the chief guide to opinion is the unco-ordinated experience of various Service lecturers. This obviously is more unsatisfactory, since it is the lecturers, not the men, who do most of the talking. Nevertheless, the experience of these lecturers does not differ very much from that of

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MEN and women in the forces are to get their old jobs at the old rates of pay, or else receive compensation. This is one of the provisions of the Government's Reinstatement in Civil Employment Bill, the text of which has just been issued.

Other provisions are:—(1) Applications to employers to be made by the fifth Monday after demobilisation; (2) if the old job is not available on reasonable grounds, there must be reinstatement in the most favourable alternative job practicable; (3) there must be employment for at least 26 weeks; (4) long-service employees must not be dismissed to make a member of the forces' reinstatement possible; (5) if there are two applicants for reinstatement, the one with the longest service with the firm has preference; (6) committees are to be set up to handle disputes.

London newspapers give a general welcome to the plan, but many point out that some of Britain's largest industries have been concentrated, many businesses have changed character, and some have disappeared altogether. In addition, some of those who went to war as little more than boys, will come back as men wanting men's jobs.

—Cable from London.

ABCA, save for their report that the highest percentage of boredom and frustration—called "browned-off-ness"—in all three Services is found among the R.A.F. ground staffs, where the inevitable gulf fixed between the flying and non-flying personnel is a permanent source of dissatisfaction; and that the standard of intelligence in the Navy is remarkably high, particularly among the technicians.

The young people working outside the Forces are covered by a number of opinion-sampling operations. The British Institute of Public Opinion uses the same methods as those of the Gallup Survey. Mass Observation undertakes specialised research.

Some Other Tests

Apart from the direct evidence of those whose job it is to collect information about public opinion, any intelli-

gent observer can pick up a great deal of suggestive material simply by listening and looking and reading and talking. Changes of policy in newspapers obviously dictated by popular opinion are a good guide. So are changes of outlook in public men—both politicians and soldiers—which are traceable to changed opinion among the people with whom they are in contact. The kind of books that get written and published; the questions put to the BBC "Brains Trust," the answers given, and the relative success of different "Brains Trust" performers; the most popular talks over the radio; the most popular films of the documentary type—all these indicate the movements and shifts in public opinion.

Obviously there are gaps and inadequacies in all the ways of collecting evidence on the state of young opinion in Britain. The remarkable fact is the unanimity revealed in all the reports, coming from whatever source. Young opinion in Britain is radical. Young people in Britain want change. They see that the times are revolutionary. They think Britain has fallen behind. They want reform and progress. They want things to be different. They are frightened at the idea of another 20 years of appeasement, and when they think it may be inevitable, they grow cynical and violent. They are in the same measure eager and responsive if something—the Beveridge Report, the victories in Libya—suggests that there are after all, new and exciting horizons ahead. There is no mistaking the mood; radicalism is the only word for it.

Not Ideological Radicals

I use the word, "radical" deliberately. "Left" and "Leftism" in Britain suggest an ideological approach connected with the popular Marxism of the London School of Economics and the great publishing house of Gollancz. It is true that the dominant trends of young radical opinion are to the Left, but it is all very unideological. Most ABCA officials are emphatic that the men are not Communist. Only a very small minority have active faith in any political party, and probably a considerable percentage of these (Mass Observation puts it as high as 50 per cent), are Communists. But in spite of the great advantages for propaganda which Communists enjoy due to Russia's resistance and the universal desire for a Second Front, the number of Communists has increased very little, and their influence is still over-shadowed by the memory of