



## Some Opinions on Post-war Planning

their antics in 1940 when, during Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain, they were for "a People's Peace" with Hitler.

### Wartime Efficiency in Peace

Given these two strong points of interest, it is easy to see why the war has had such a radical effect on young people's minds. The standard of living of thousands of families is better, in spite of restrictions and blackout and harder work. The boys going home on leave find better food and brighter faces in their fully employed family circle. The young workers in the war industries have better wages and steadier work than many of them could have hoped for without a war. Steadiness and universality of employment, everybody with jobs, shipyards busy after years of decay, every productive unit producing more than ever before, new factories going up—all this can be done in war. Why can't it be done in peace? The ordinary citizen knows that a good steady job is the best guarantee of his living standard. If the Government can see he has one in wartime by spending so much money on guns, what is wrong with spending some of it in peacetime, too? The better wartime standard is due, too, to rationing, cheap food, controlled prices, utility goods. It seems just common sense to carry on with the milk schemes and guaranteed prices after the war. The Ministry of Food is unquestionably the most popular Ministry. People have seen that better sharing can be brought about by the State. Why not in the future, too?

When the future of Britain and of the world can be saved by a group of lads in Spitfires, and when people's homes are blown up in the night and little Johnnie next door turns out to be a hero and gets the George Cross for unexampled bravery, it is not ideology at work. It is experience. And it all points in one direction. The conditions of the 1920's and the 1930's were not inevitable. They were a bad mistake. We can do better, and any interests, vested or otherwise, that try to stand in the way, have got to go.

### Not Eager to be "Planned" Himself

There are a great many things the soldier wants to get back to as well as away from. He does not mind the idea of a planned economy, but this emphatically does not include the idea that they will plan *him*. The idea that the cure of unemployment will entail some sort of "direction" to new kinds of work is worrying a lot of workers. Again,

in the sphere of education, he wants his children to have a fair start, but is very strongly against having them sent off to State boarding schools. A majority of women war workers want to get back to their own homes. Opinions about communal feeding are very mixed. A lot are against it because "it might break up the family." There is, indeed, a lively and, among the soldiers, nostalgic desire for family life. In a recent survey of housing needs, a vast majority were emphatically against flats, and wanted detached houses and cottages with a bit of garden. Extreme Conservatives (who have recently set up two new propaganda organisations, "The Society of Individualists" and "The National League of Freedom") are using the average citizen's distrust of bureaucracy and control in order to make the post-war world safe for their own kind of control. The point is that there exists a feeling against interference which they can hope to exploit. We must take it into account in assessing Britain's radicalism.

### Problems in Priority

One of the remarkable facts about the mood of the younger generation inside and outside the Forces is the similarity of the reforms they want and the degree to which their programme seems to be that of the country as a whole. It is a very long time since Britain was so much of one mind. Discussions, reports, letters, articles, all tell the same story. Ask any moderately progressive Briton, young or old, to list the reforms he would like to see incorporated in the Four Year Peace Plan (or Five or Ten), and the list would, in the main, be interchangeable. Even Mr. Churchill has been drawn into the nation's most popular pursuit—peace planning—in spite of his vigorous preference for concentrating entirely on the war. The young people's list is longer than Mr. Churchill's, but it covers all his ground. A large part of it is concerned, as I said before, with living standards. As a term in general use, Social Security was almost unknown before the war. Now it is the accepted way of describing the first priority of reconstruction. This priority point is important. Everybody in Britain has been made very conscious of priorities during the war.

This kind of thinking in terms of choice and priorities is gradually being extended to cover post-war economics. Are there priorities for peace? Is a decent standard of living for everyone further up the list of national priorities than luxuries for a small group

of people? If so, what techniques of control or allocation or rationing are needed to secure a decent standard, a "National Minimum," for all? It is this priority point that the Government missed completely in the Beveridge debate. People—particularly young people—did not want to be told whether or not they could afford it. They were not impressed when the Chancellor listed all the other future

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