

more moral than the man living in the town, but the opportunity is not there, nor are the temptations so great. The farmer toils hard from morning till nightfall, but he sees the results of his work—he has freedom, he is not driven by the machine, he is not just a cog in a wheel. So with the farm worker, who is in most cases more like a partner than a hired man. There is no foreman standing over a farm-worker to supervise his work. If he is a good man he takes a pride in his work and works because he enjoys it.

I thought a man's feelings towards the soil were well expressed by someone I met the other day — he was a returned soldier of this war, and was working in a paddock near the road. I stopped and said to him, "Well, how goes it, Bill?" expecting a rather unsettled and perhaps discontented reply. But he answered: "Well, there's the green grass, the trees, and the sheep. It's all very beautiful, and I'm glad to be home."

What of the Future?

What then of the future of rural life? It is absolutely essential that we have a vigorous rural community, not only because it will give us a well-balanced community life but also for economic reasons.

The question is: how are we to keep up our rural population? Education will be one of the most important steps—education and propaganda to foster



THE COUNTRY STORE: One of the places where rural life should be centred

understanding of town and country problems. We must advertise the advantages of living in the country and smaller centres—dissipate the idea that as high a quality of life is not possible in a village as in a city. We must show that it is happiness that counts, not money. But we must of course have houses to live in. Perhaps you will say, "But that's a universal problem." It is, but the shortage of housing in the country has existed for a great many years. Many landowners do not appreciate the necessity of providing suitable quarters for married men. So housing schemes must be encouraged in the smaller centres so that the farm worker may live in a community with schools and other facilities, and go out daily to work on nearby farms.

I said earlier that a young man showing particular promise is encouraged to make his livelihood in the town. Some of these boys would like to take up farming, but have not the capital to make a start. There is still land in both islands which has yet to be developed, and there young men should be given assistance by schemes such as those outlined by Professor Hudson in his pamphlet on Land Tenure. But if we entice the farmer into the country for economic reasons, how are we going to enable him to enjoy to the full his

economic, gregarious, intellectual and spiritual needs?

We must bring up our small centres, replacing and renewing the old-time blacksmith-shop, saddler, dressmaker, bakery and hotel by a small flourishing industry. There is nothing to stop this being done but the conservative outlook of many who serve on the directorates of large companies, and of those in Government circles who continue with a policy of centralisation. Does this mean imitating the characters of *Erewhon*, who found that the machine has got so far beyond their control that they had to scrap the machine in order to save their very existence? No. I do not suggest that we go back. It is useless sighing for the past. But we must learn from the past, and make use of the present to ensure a better future.

Many Children Mean Many Friends

If the country-man is to enjoy a full, intellectual and spiritual life, if he is to become a good citizen, we must encourage the community spirit all through our rural life. They found it in the past in the family, which was much larger in those days and the pivot of community life. Many children meant many friends. So one of the first tasks is to build up the family, and we shall never do this until we educate ourselves to honour and respect the mother of a large family, until some form of universal family allowance scheme is introduced, and until school boarding-allowances are sufficient to make a full education possible for all who can benefit from it.

In the past, too, the church played an important part in community life. It was a general meeting place for the district, the place where people met for choir practice during the week and for worship on Sunday. But the church no longer plays such a prominent part in our life.

Neither do Mechanics' Institutes, which provided library facilities, debates, dances, and so on. They, too, have gone, and nothing has completely filled the gap.

I say that education and propaganda must restore the balance. The local newspaper, the church, and the family must be encouraged and assisted. I suggest, too, that community centres should be encouraged in all districts and small towns — the school teacher, particularly in the smaller centres, can guide and direct the community life, not only of the children but of the older people, too. He can also foster and encourage an interest in local history and tradition—because tradition is essential to democracy and good citizenship. We do things, not because we are compelled to, but rather because we have a standard to live up to. If, however, we are going to have tradition, we must have a knowledge of our own local history—not only a history of the towns and of large estates, dates and figures, but knowledge of our folk lore, stories of our forefathers—stories of the miners, the bullock-drivers, the shepherds. These if they are not gathered shortly, will be lost for ever.

I believe that through a healthy, happy life in the country, made fuller by community life, we shall build a citizen worthy of a better future, and worthy of the sacrifice made by those who have served overseas. With the help of education we must teach our people that happiness comes not only with monetary gain; that a way of life is as important as a standard of living; and that these are most surely attained in our rural communities.

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