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As
I Recall
The 1880's
to
the 1960's
*
Lord
Boyd Orr

92
Or 7
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AS I RECALL

LORD BOYD ORR

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Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation

Lord Boyd Orr

As I Recall

With an Introduction by
Professor Ritchie Calder



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92

Or 7

To
ELIZABETH PEARSON CALLUM M.A.
(my wife)

to whose better judgment and continuous assistance
is mainly due whatever I have accomplished,
and whose unconscious charm
has won us friends in every country
we have visited.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wish to acknowledge the very considerable assistance given by Elizabeth Thomas who revised the manuscript and saw it through the press. To her is due any literary merit this book may have.

LORD BOYD ORR

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE MAN WHO WROTE THIS BOOK

BY RITCHIE CALDER

THIS is the story of 'Popeye'.

In this book, you will find him under many aliases—as a school-teacher; as a distinguished medical student; as a research worker; as soldier (M.C., D.S.O.); as a sailor; as the creator of a world-famous scientific institute; as a Fellow of the Royal Society; as an evangelist for social justice; as a farmer; as a banker; as a Member of Parliament; as the director-general of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation; as the Chancellor of Glasgow University; as a Peer of the Realm; and as a Nobel Laureate for Peace. And if he chose to wear all the academic robes to which he is entitled, he could stage a one-man mannequin parade.

But in the affectionate irreverence of his family circle he is just 'Popeye, the Sailor-man'.

There was the occasion when the V.I.P.s of many nations were present at the premiere of Paul Rotha's *The World is Rich* which 'starred' the director-general of F.A.O. As the close-up of that knife-whittled face and rampant eyebrows came lunging out of the screen, his small grandchild, Ann-Pat, jumped out of her seat shouting, 'That's Popeye! What's Popeye doing up there?'

The public *persona* and the venerability of eminence and age conceal the Boyd Orr that his intimates know so well—the roguish, the pawky, the boon-companion, the man who goes around the world confiding in hotel managers that he and his wife are on their honeymoon. (And it is true; after fifty years of marriage they still are.)

But it is the warmth of this private contentment which has produced his burning resentment of human injustice. I once described him as a Scotch boiler in which the furnace is concealed. My own first experience with him was intimidating. It was in 1932 when, as a young reporter on the *Daily Herald*, I had gone up to Aberdeen on an errand which, to me, was not particularly exciting. I was doing an article on animal nutrition—'menus for pigs', as I

had called it disrespectfully. Dr John Boyd Orr was the director of the Rowett Institute of Animal Nutrition. Nor was my reception particularly encouraging. I encountered a dour, truculent Scot, who made no attempt to dissemble his distrust of me, and of journalists in general. Reluctantly he showed me round the Institute—a curt tour which was singularly unrewarding for a reporter seeking ‘copy’. And then his native hospitality prevailed and he invited me to coffee.

That cup of coffee was a point of departure in my life. I do not know what prompted my question which, on casual acquaintance, was a rude one. Perhaps it was those remarkable eyebrows, which in later years I was to watch as cautiously as an engine driver watches his signals. Perhaps I read the signals then.

‘Dr Orr,’ I said. ‘You seem to have a chip on your shoulder. What’s wrong? What’s biting you?’

He did not bridle at the impertinence. He kindled. And he told me in no uncertain terms what was wrong. As director of the Rowett his job was to discover, demonstrate and convince farmers of the value of nutrition. That was easy (he said) because the scientists could prove to farmers that it paid dividends in terms of their flocks and herds. But there were bigger dividends to be paid in human well-being, yet he could not get people interested in the nutrition of children. He was particularly sore at that moment because he had carried out an experiment with school-children in the seven largest cities in Scotland and in Belfast in Northern Ireland. This was the time of the Great Depression. The results had shown conclusively the remarkable improvement which could be obtained in the health of children getting milk, either whole or skimmed, at school, to supplement their impoverished diets at home. At that time there was a glut of milk (because people could not afford it). Skimmed milk was being poured down the drain. He wanted the government to ‘pour it into children’s bellies’. This was later to be the milk-in-schools programme but at that time he was a frustrated and angry man.

He found a willing listener. Perhaps he was beginning to suspect that a journalist, whose job was to reach the public, might have his uses after all! He invited me out for a walk.

I can still see him on that hill-top, addressing a one-man conventicle, with the fervour of his Covenanting forbears—a prophet,

with his feet squarely on the solid granite of Aberdeenshire, propounding the articles of his scientific faith.

Think of it (he said then, as he was to go on saying until his voice was to be heard the world over). A thousand million people in the world who have never had enough to eat, not only the famine-threatened millions but the multi-millions more who, short of starvation, have never known what real health means. And a thousand million peasants and farmers in poverty because they cannot produce the food the hungry need, or if they could, would face ruin because of something called 'over-production'. The world, through science and common sense, could produce the food. Think of the dividend, not only in farming prosperity, but in human well-being!

Years later—in May 1946—I was Special Adviser to Boyd Orr at the Washington Famine Conference which he had called—a conference which set up international co-operation and averted misery or even death for 75,000,000 people. He made a final speech. The delegates of twenty-three nations were exhausted by endless committees, but he fired them afresh. Afterwards, as a Scotsman who distrusts applause, he asked me what I really thought of his speech.

'John,' I said, 'I have liked it better every time I have heard it since that day at Bucksburn fifteen years ago.'

Of course, it was not the same speech; events had deepened and broadened its content and significance. But it was the same theme . . . Half the population of the world suffer from lack of sufficient food; farmers suffer ruin if they produce 'too much food'. Adjust our economic and political systems to let these two evils cancel each other out.

That constancy to a purpose was his embattled strength—a constancy resisting the expediency of politics and the cynical 'realism' of conventional economists.

In the ordinary way, I would have gone to Bucksburn, written the article, and like the ephemera, it would have blossomed for a day and been forgotten. Instead, that cup of coffee began an association which, in time, was to lead me to every part of the world but also into that inward awareness which Boyd Orr awakens in everyone connected with him.

As a man he fascinated me. As you will gather from this book he

could have been successful in any one of half a dozen careers (and, in corporate eminence, eventually combined the lot). If he had not encountered Darwin's evolution on his way through university, he might have been a fundamentalist preacher in his father's austere kirk. When, after his interlude as a school-teacher, he went back to Glasgow University to study medicine, he finished up with the *prix d'honneur* of the medical faculty and his contemporaries predicted for him a successful and lucrative career in medical practice. But again he had a conscience-crisis when he encountered the medical meaning of poverty, in conditions which would defeat and defy his skill as a doctor, the malnutrition and rickets which made grotesque caricatures of slum children. That led him into a research course in metabolic diseases which added D.Sc. to the M.A. and M.D. after his name.

In this book he tells us how he became a soldier and a sailor but with characteristic reticence he diminishes the courage which brought him the M.C. (and bar) and the D.S.O. It took me a lot of patient research, with no help from him, to discover his citation for the D.S.O. in 1917. It read:

'He worked unceasingly for 48 hours without an aid-post and under almost continuous barrage, attending the wounded of three units of his brigade. He found time to visit the front line twice and attended to numerous cases under machine-gun and shell-fire. Although buried twice and rendered unconscious for three hours, he remained on duty until his brigade was relieved, displaying devotion and personal courage which were worthy of the highest praise . . .'

When, in the 1930s, some of his eminent colleagues were denouncing him for 'bringing politics into science' (although he was in fact bringing science into politics) he was nominated for Fellowship of the Royal Society. His two sponsors, among others, were the Nobel Prize winner, J. J. R. MacLeod, associated with the discovery of insulin, and Gowland Hopkins, the pioneer of vitamins, and his citation read,

'He carried out researches into protein metabolism and respiration, on the energy balance of the body and on the influence of vitamins and mineral constituents on normal metabolism and

diseased conditions. He had produced authoritative work on the agricultural aspects, particularly on the effect of the mineral conditions of the pastures of the herbivorae.'

It mentioned thirty original research-papers which he had produced. Amongst them was his explanation of how ducks duck!

This scientific reinforcement of an F.R.S. came at a time when he was 'asking for trouble'. He had launched his *Food, Health and Income* survey. This produced for the first time scientific, quantitative evidence of the state of nutrition of the British people. It was a startling document which showed that nearly 50 per cent of the population at that time (1933-4) did not have an income which could guarantee them the diet necessary for well-being.

Boyd Orr first produced the figures at the British Association annual meeting in 1935, and I as a journalist was ready to use the ammunition for which I had been patiently waiting. The report was political dynamite. In the 1935 election, every candidate had to be ready to answer questions on nutrition which, until then, had been confined to the text books or the diet-cults.

Embarrassed ministers tried to 'shoot holes' in his findings. Eminent economists and statisticians were engaged to disprove his figures. They ended by confirming them. They could not help themselves because Boyd Orr had so carefully weighted his figures against any charge or exaggeration that any check-test could only prove them to be worse.

The result of the public outcry was 'Committees against Malnutrition' all over the country forcing the adoption of new social programmes like meals-in-schools.

Typically, in the British tradition, the government, which he had so embarrassed, gave him a knighthood.

The *Food, Health and Income* survey had its affect all over the world. Some twenty countries, with greater or lesser efficiency, made similar measurements. Nutrition was now an international social issue. The awakened concern reflected itself in the setting up of the Mixed Commission of the League of Nations. The account of this marriage of 'health and agriculture' is told in this book. That phrase was born at a luncheon in the Royal Societies' Club in London, with Boyd Orr, Frank MacDougall, then the economic adviser to the High Commissioner for Australia, and

Lord De La Warr, then the Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, at which I was present. This one will recognise as the fore-runner of the Food and Agriculture Organisation itself.

But the survey and the public discussion which followed it were responsible for something else; they made possible the adoption of sensible rationing measures during the war because people had got used to the idea of calories, of essential vitamins and protein-requirements. When the war-time Ministry of Food came to apply these measures they had a receptive (and in some cases credulous), audience. I remember contributing to this credulity myself in broadcasts when carrots were plentiful and other foods were short and I did programmes on the night-fighters who developed 'cats-eyes' to see the enemy raiders by eating carrots. In fact, the vitamins in carrots do prevent night-blindness and it was not difficult to persuade people that whenever they ate carrots, which had other food virtues as well, they would be able to see better in the black-out. One thing is certain: Britain emerged from the war, in spite of the unexciting food we had to eat, a better fed and healthier nation than we went into it.

Boyd Orr played a curious role in war-time because, although he himself had been the author of so much which was then put into effect, the Establishment was still distrustful of him and his radical ideas about feeding the people of the world. While they were prepared to listen to him as an adviser, and as a member of commissions, on the practical needs of Britain in war-time, they still regarded him as a visionary. And visionaries complicate the tidy files of government departments! He was invited to go to the United States by some Americans who had been his colleagues in the League of Nations to get a world food policy based on human needs, and the visit was designed to get the Roosevelt administration to revive the League of Nations plan for food and agriculture.

Free-lance diplomacy is not encouraged by the government at any time, but in war-time it could be discouraged very simply—transatlantic transport would just not be available. Yet it was arranged. American friends contrived to invite him to speak to medical conferences, and it was a lot easier to let him go than to explain why he could not. He was able to discuss with the Roose-

velt administration and to lay the first paving-stones to what was to be the Hot Springs Conference.

Roosevelt summoned the Hot Springs Conference of 1943 to give effect to the 'Third Freedom', the 'Freedom from Want'. At the time I was in the Foreign Office and the Hot Springs Conference, being concerned with post-war aims, came within my purview but not my executive responsibility. I, therefore, had the exasperating experience of helplessly seeing the exchange of telegrams in which the American government were asking for the presence of Boyd Orr and the departments at Whitehall were explaining why he couldn't go. His views, said one telegram, were 'unorthodox'. This was absurd. The orthodoxy of Hot Springs had sprung from Boyd Orr's own gospel. Again, he managed to get there, but as a ghost. Paul Rotha's first film on the food situation *The World of Plenty* had been produced and had featured Boyd Orr. Copies were available through the British Information Service in the United States and Boyd Orr's loyal friends innocently asked for it and put on a show for the delegates of the Hot Springs Conference. Boyd Orr's rousing challenge 'What are we fighting for?' and his own answer brought the delegates cheering to their feet.

Out of the Hot Springs Conference came the Interim Commission which planned what eventually became the Quebec Conference to bring the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations into being in 1945. Boyd Orr was then Independent Member of Parliament for the Scottish Universities and the Labour government overlooked him as a member of the delegation until, at the last moment, through the intervention of Philip Noel-Baker (who was to become a fellow Nobel Peace Prize-winner) he was asked to go as an adviser.

You can read his own story of the founding conference at Quebec but I like to think of his tryst with history as a picture of an Old Testament Prophet who speaks in the idiom of twentieth-century science climbing the Heights of Abraham above the Chateau de Frontenac where the conference was meeting and how the Elders of the Congregation followed him up to the heights and led him back to become the first director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organisation. And I also like to remember his pronouncement at that time when recognising how nations, jealous

of their sovereignty, had hedged around the functions of F.A.O. He said 'The people are crying out for bread and we are going to give them statistics'.

As director-general, he never reconciled himself to these limitations. He surrounded himself with like-minded people from all over the world (we called them 'Sir John and the Twelve Apostles') who were, like himself, well-informed enthusiasts. But some of them were not good 'office-wallahs' and presently he was being criticised as a bad administrator. This was a manifest slander on the man who had built up one of the greatest research institutes in the world, largely by his own endeavours, and who is one of the shrewdest business men I know. But he was undoubtedly impatient of office routine and of the pettifoggers. He regarded himself, and rightly, as the torchbearer for the Organisation and his job as the firing of public imagination. He certainly did that.

The first big challenge which he seized upon was the threat of post-war famine. F.A.O. had come into being in October and the first United Nations General Assembly met in London in the following January. The delegates to the U.N. saw clearly with eyes which were not yet blood-shot with renewed animosities that there were two great threats—the Atom Bomb and the imminent famine due to war havoc. They passed two resolutions, one setting up the U.N. Atomic Energy Commission, due to become a fiasco, and the other calling for action on the world food situation. Boyd Orr, his infant organisation still in its diapers, rushed in. I remember some of his best friends telling me (and probably him) that he was crazy. He offered to call an immediate conference and to provide documentation on the world food situation. I shall not anticipate what he himself has to say about the Famine Conference in Washington in May 1946 but I recall what an exhilarating experience it was, because he borrowed my services from the *News Chronicle* on which I was then the Science Editor. Nations who gathered for that conference, producers and consumers alike, accepted self-denying ordinances which enabled the food in short supply to be thoroughly rationed. The International Emergency Food Council which it set up continued to supervise the fair shares and averted disaster by regulating the situation for a period of three years. Then it was wound up.

But out of that conference also came the demand ('the ventri-

loquial voice of Boyd Orr') that the director-general of F.A.O. should prepare a plan to prevent such a situation from arising again. He tells his own story of that and what happened to the plan he produced. When he was sadly contemplating the wreckage of his scheme, I told him that he was 'two jumps ahead of history'. Since then history has made at least one jump. Seventeen years later, his scheme was accepted as practical politics. A Labour government came into power specifically committed to 'revive the concept of the World Food Board for the disposal of agricultural surpluses'. This was historically very interesting because in 1947 the head of the British delegation to the preparatory commission of the World Food Board was a Junior Minister, thirty-one years old, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works. He spent four months in Washington on that commission which had been appointed to examine the possibilities of Boyd Orr's scheme and which discarded his proposals and substituted a wraith, a helpless World Food Council which was no more than the Executive Board of F.A.O. under a different name. The name of that Junior Minister was Harold Wilson.

In his book *War on World Poverty*, written in 1953, he explained why things went wrong: 'The main reason was the sudden reversal of the U.S. attitude to international agencies which at the same period was responsible for the death of U.N.R.R.A. (The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency). The United Kingdom who were anxious to co-operate in international action to stabilise foreign prices, expand food production, and to attack the problem of world hunger, could not, on the eve of the 1947 dollar crisis, contemplate the subscription of hundreds of millions of dollars as her contribution to the International Buffer-Stock Fund.'

The young Minister of 1947 became the Prime Minister of 1964 and remembered the World Food Board which most people had forgotten—the first courageous attempt at supra-nationalism in history. As Mayor La Guardia of New York, then the director-general of U.N.R.R.A., said 'The World Food Board will take food out of politics. It will take human lives off the Chicago ticker-tapes.'

In his concluding months as director-general Boyd Orr kept on reminding people, the heads of states whom he visited, the statesmen, and the public, of the grim portents which we now see

so clearly. When he left the Food and Agriculture Organisation it lapsed into the pedestrian and narrowly functional concern from which he had tried to save it. For years, until the Freedom from Hunger Campaign reminded people of what he had been saying so vigorously, it was clearly concerned more with the commodities than with the people who needed these commodities. He had served notice that failure to carry out measures for the elimination of hunger and poverty would lead to the spread of Communism which could promise production-for-consumption by the people and that the danger of another economic crisis, with wide-spread unemployment, would be held as the predicted failure of capitalism to meet the needs of the masses. 'What is called "communism" in developing countries,' he once said, 'is hunger becoming articulate.'

At the end of his self-restricted term of office he, like Cato the Elder, retreating to his Sabine farm, went back to Newton of Strathcathro, in the foothills of the Grampians, where he had his two sons-in-law in farms nearby so that all his family, daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren lived within hailing distance. It was, as all his friends knew, a self-deception because the fire still burned. Even in his parting from F.A.O. he launched a new crusade—warning the world of the effects of the swarming world population and of the destruction of the soil which had to feed it.

When the Labour government made him a peer someone suggested he should call himself 'Baron Soil' but I suggested he should take the title of 'Lord Either Orr Else'. The *Daily Express* received his ennoblement with derision, 'They have made a peer of the prophet of woe who is always wrong'. On the contrary he had consistently been a prophet who read aright the prognosis of the scientific facts of the situation and, by his own efforts, sought to disprove his prophecies.

He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1949 in recognition of his efforts to ensure and secure peace by applying the truth of science to the removal of the base injustices of hunger and poverty, the playground of insensate politics and blind economics. Typically, he gave away his prize by dividing it among the organisations working for peace. He did not even put aside enough to pay a secretary and for years Bess, now Her Ladyship, continued to type his letters with two fingers. When, in his moment of

generosity, some of us reminded him that he would want to travel and should have saved his money to do so his reply was 'we can always sell a cow!' And travel he did. He would not go anywhere without Bess. 'Anywhere' was 'everywhere'. He went to Russia to try to break through East-West tensions and restore East-West trade. He went to China and tried, when he came back from his visits, to convince people of the truth of what was happening in that great country. He saw the real nature of the Chinese revolution, how it would appeal to the under-privileged people by example, because in its practices it was nearer the realities of the peasant peoples of the world than anything which was expressed in Teutonic, or even Russian, Marxism, and he kept on warning the West that the only answer to Marxism was something better.

I remember when he lost his son, Billy, during the last war, and I was offering my condolences, he said 'Now I have to do the job for his generation'. And since then he has devoted himself to the hopeful world of the young while resenting and resisting the threatening world of the elders. He has identified himself with every peace movement that I can think of.

John, Baron Boyd Orr, of Brechin Mearns, emerges from this book as the embodiment of the social-purpose of science. He emerges as the good physician who put 3,000,000,000 patients on his 'panel'; as the practical farmer who extended the stone-dykes of his Grampian farm to encompass the earth; and as a research scientist who made the whole world his laboratory.

PART V

The
Food and Agriculture Organisation
1943–48

CHAPTER 17

WARTIME VISIT TO AMERICA, THE HOT SPRINGS CONFERENCE AND THE QUEBEC CONFERENCE

IN 1942 I was invited by Dr Frank Boudreau to go to America and join with the scientists there who were trying to get the movement for a World Food Plan going again. He had become the director of the Milbank Foundation which promoted new fields of research in preventive medicine. I decided to go by ship from Liverpool in a convoy which had to zig-zag to avoid German submarines. We landed at Norfolk where we discharged some equipment for a British battleship. The most beautiful sight I saw was the light shining through the blinds of the houses. After more than two years of the blackout in Britain it was a marvellous sight.

At New York I was met by Dr Boudreau who asked me not to take the ten dollars a day I might have had from the British Consul. All my expenses were to be paid so that I would be under the guidance of a group of my American friends and not under the British Embassy. I reported my presence to the British Consul and we went straight on to Washington where I interviewed the late Mr Henry Wallace, the Vice-President. He had brought in the Food Stamp Plan which put the surplus food into the empty bellies of the unemployed and other poor people which was good for agriculture, health, and the shopkeepers. I also saw Mr Sumner Welles, a great man, much in favour of international free trade. He approved of the idea of international co-operation in a world food policy, and asked me to see Mr Dean Acheson the Under Secretary of State. When I had finished telling him about the proposal for a World Food Plan, he replied by giving me in return a succinct account of my remarks. I asked him if he would please dictate to a stenographer what he had said, and send me a copy, because it was the clearest statement I had ever heard. He did so, and it was a help to me in writing about the advantages of a world food policy in more lucid and logical terms.

While in America Dr Boudreau twice took me to a meeting in a

club in Chicago where I made an after-dinner speech. Afterwards I talked with some American business men. One of them wanted to know why America should come into the war to help Britain after what Britain had done to them when they were fighting for their independence. I told them they had got it all wrong. During the War of Independence speeches were being made in the British Parliament in favour of independence for the American States. It was George III, a German, who carried on the war against them, and he found it so difficult to get British troops to fight the Americans that he had to hire Hessian troops from Germany. I said we were now fighting the Germans, and America ought to help Britain to defeat the Nazis.

The American secretaries of departments and other senior staff are more approachable than their counterparts in London. A dinner was arranged at the Cosmos Club whose members, like those in the Athenaeum Club in London, are intellectuals. It was attended by either the secretary or the leading official of the departments concerned with a food policy, including the Treasury. After the dinner I was asked to speak about the suggested World Food Plan. We then had a discussion on its economic value, and its bearing on getting the co-operation of all the nations as a help to the movement for world peace. A suggestion was made that Mrs Roosevelt should be asked to invite me to dinner to meet the President. Though I would have been delighted to meet President Roosevelt I felt that he was so busy with the affairs of his high office that he was unlikely to show any interest in the views of a foreigner whom he had never met. I therefore suggested that the arguments for a world food policy should be put forward by the Vice-President, Mr Henry Wallace, and others to whom the President would listen. Frank MacDougall, who was attached to the Australian Embassy, had been very active in promoting the idea, which had interested Mrs Roosevelt. He was invited to dinner, and when the President was talking about a United Nations Organisation, Frank MacDougall suggested that a good way to get it going on something concrete would be to get Russia to agree to a world food policy based on human needs. I left Washington hopeful that the President would call a conference of the nations to consider a world food policy.

Sir Allan Anderson, Deputy Director of the Bank of England,

who had been appointed chairman of Lord Woolton's advisory committee to draw up a food plan for wartime Britain, was interested in a world food policy from the financial and economic point of view. He was president of the International Chamber of Commerce and wrote to Mr J. T. Watson, the president of International Business Machines, asking him to see me when I was in America. Mr Watson's first reaction to a world food policy was that it was too idealistic and not practical, but after a lengthy discussion, he said he thought there might be something in it from the economic point of view. He asked me to come back and meet a few American big business men. The talk and argument went on for a long time, and at last one of them got up and said, 'Of course it is the right thing to do. It would pull us out of the slough of a recession such as happened after the First World War, but the politicians would never agree to it.' I replied, 'Why don't you business men with your great influence force the American government to take the lead in getting this going to give a great boost to international trade with rapidly expanding markets to keep pace with the rapidly increasing capacity for production?'

I was also taken to see Mr Winthrop William Aldrich, president of the Chase Bank, and later United States ambassador to London in 1953. He was interested in the food plan from the financial point of view, and asked me to come back again to meet a number of his financial friends to consider it. However, as I was hoping that President Roosevelt would announce a conference of the nations to consider the world food policy, I thought that further discussion by me which might get into the press would do more harm than good, so I excused myself from the suggested meeting on the grounds that I was leaving immediately to catch a plane for home. These meetings of business men and financiers convinced me that if the President was able to carry through the idea of a conference to bring about the collaboration of all nations on a food policy, he would have the support of the more intelligent industrialists and financiers in America.

I left New York for home and stayed two nights at Ottawa on the way. The Earl of Athlone, whom I had met when he was Governor General of South Africa, had learned from the press that I was coming to Ottawa, and he invited me to lunch with him. He remembered all about our talk at a luncheon in Cape Town in

1921 and wished the movement for world co-operation all success.

When I arrived back at Prestwick I phoned home and was given the news that our only boy, Billy, who had left Gordonstoun School to join the Royal Air Force, had been shot down and killed. It was a sad home-coming. Millions of other parents in the world were suffering the same grievous loss.

THE HOT SPRINGS CONFERENCE AND THE QUEBEC CONFERENCE

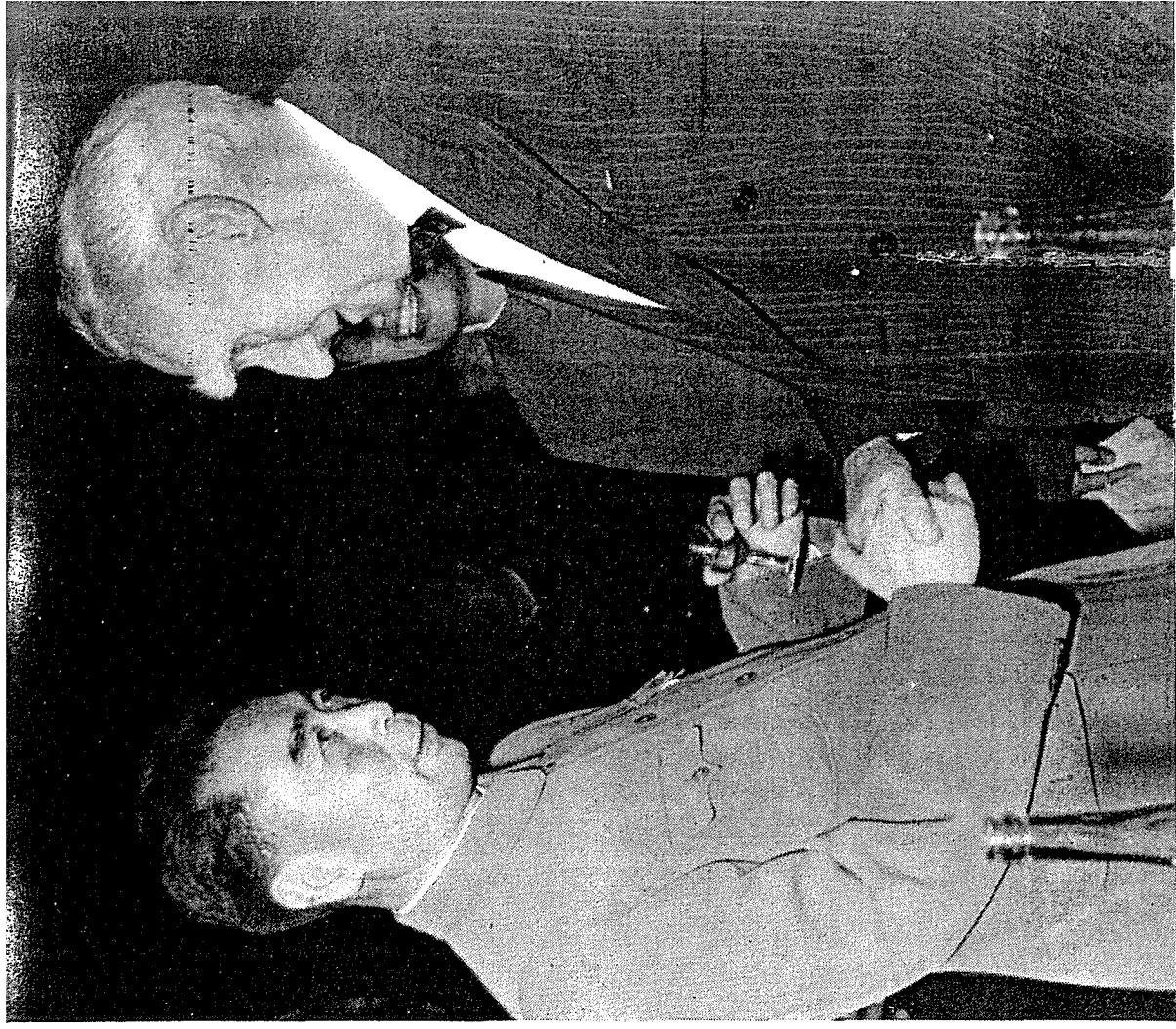
When I left America in early December 1942 I felt pretty sure that President Roosevelt in his Christmas message would call on all nations to co-operate in a world food policy as the beginning of building the 'new and better world'. Alas, my hopes were not realised. The bombing of Pearl Harbour by the Japanese on 7 December 1941 had brought America into the war, and, as in Britain, post-war plans were still overshadowed by the great effort needed to win the war. By the summer of 1943, however, it was evident that America, Britain and Russia would be the victors, and the time had come to consider post-war plans again. In May 1943 President Roosevelt invited all the allied nations to send delegates to a conference on world food problems at Hot Springs in Virginia.

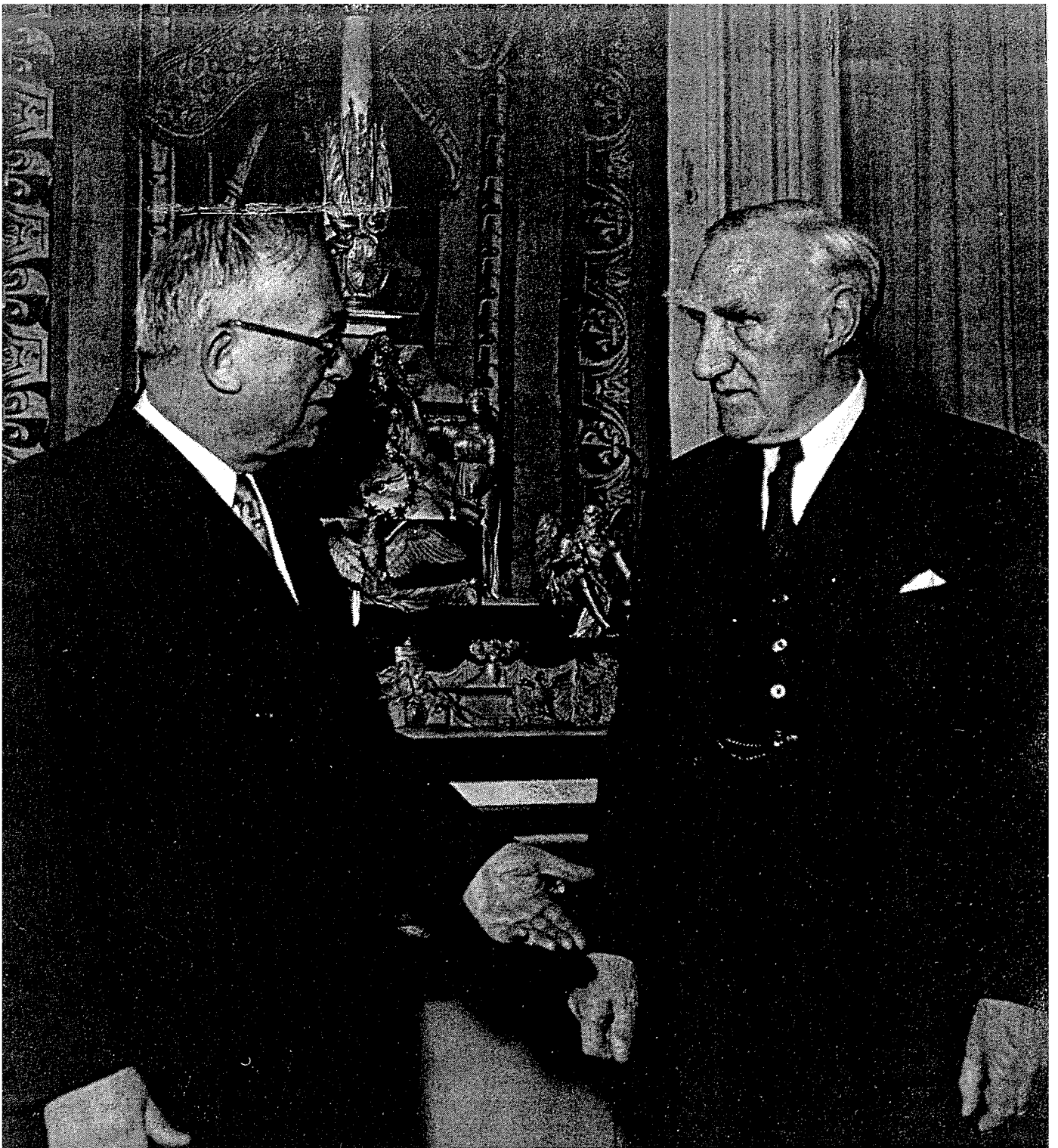
I was told that the Americans had asked Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, to get the British government to send me as a delegate. This request was refused on the grounds that my views on a world food policy were so different from those that the British delegation would be ordered to state, that my presence would cause confusion if it were supposed that I, too, was representing the British view. On that I had no complaint because my views would have been in line with the League of Nations policy whereas the traditional British view was for cheap imported food, with low wages and better profits in industrial exports and in the shipping required to bring in our imported food from the Commonwealth and other countries.

My friend Frank MacDougall kept me informed on how the conference was going. From the start there was a difference of opinion between two groups. One group wanted a strong organisation which could take positive steps to increase world production



*Left: With Sheikh Abdullah, then Prime Minister of Kashmir (photo: Gottlieb, Copenhagen).
Right: With Chou En-lai at a reception in Peking*





With President Vincent Auriol of France during a visit to Paris
in 1949 (*photo: Keystone, Paris*)

with stabilised prices, with an income of ten million dollars—a very modest request compared with the United States Agricultural Department which had 1,000 million dollars for one country alone. The other group wanted to isolate the proposed organisation completely from any positive action and limit it to fact-finding and advisory work with an income of only one and a half million dollars. I wrote urging Frank MacDougall to try and get the conference to give the new organisation executive control of at least the more important, easily storable foods like cereals and sugar. This view was supported by Mr Richard Law, the son of Mr Bonar Law, at that time Under Secretary at the Foreign Office.

The conference, having drawn up a long report, set up an interim commission on the proposed Food and Agriculture Organisation with Mr Lester Pearson, then Canadian Ambassador in Washington, as chairman. It was decided that the organisation would limit its activities to collecting statistics on food production and distribution, promote research, and give technical assistance to food deficit countries. This eclipse of the movement for a World Food Board was a profound disappointment to me. There was obviously no intention of international co-operation to fulfil the promise of 'freedom from want for all men in all lands' as set forth in the now forgotten Atlantic Charter of 1941. The old men had crept back into power determined to resist any economic change which threatened their financial interests. I concluded that the fight for a sane policy for peace and economic prosperity was lost, for the time being at least, and took no further interest in the proposed Quebec conference to set up the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

In November 1945 delegates from the nations united in the war were sent to the conference at Quebec in Canada. The British delegation, which consisted of active or retired civil servants who could be trusted to say what they were told, was led by Philip Noel-Baker, Minister of State in the Labour government. He wrote inviting me to join the delegation as an unofficial member, but I did not want to go. My successor as director of the Rowett Institute, Dr Cuthbertson, had been appointed and was taking over in December. Having got free from the Institute and with a safe seat in the House of Commons as an Independent not liable

to be ordered about by the whip of any party, I was looking forward to an interesting life of relative leisure, with my farm and the prospect of directorships in some companies to augment my income and to enable my wife and me to visit more foreign countries, to find out what was happening in the world. With that pleasant prospect in view, and with the fear that as I had taken such an active part in promoting a world food policy I might be pushed on to some committee of the new organisation which, in my view, was going to be a rather futile one, I decided to decline Mr Noel-Baker's invitation.

But my wife, whose judgments I had learned to respect, and my colleague and son-in-law, David Lubbock, home from a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany, thought it was my duty to go. So, reluctantly, I wrote Mr Noel-Baker agreeing, but booked my passage home before the meeting was due to end. On the voyage to Canada the senior civil servant convened a meeting of the delegation and gave us our instructions which seemed to be to oppose any move to give the new organisation any executive power. The rest of the delegation paid no attention to my comments about the futility of the kind of organisation it was proposed to set up.

I did not spend much time at the committee meetings. I climbed the Heights of Abraham which General Wolfe's Highland soldiers had climbed to the surprise of the French General Montcalm. At the meetings I did attend as a silent observer, I was more interested in renewing acquaintance with research workers and others whom I had not met since before the war. In this way, with no responsibility, the conference so far was an enjoyable holiday. It might have ended that way had I kept my mouth shut. But some of the delegates asked Mr Lester Pearson to invite me to address them. When called on to speak, I referred to the great economic and political benefits which would result from international co-operation in a world food policy based on human needs, then argued that the recommendation of the Hot Springs conference could make no contribution to this great ideal. The hungry people of the world wanted bread, and they were to be given statistics. The food deficient countries were to be told by Western experts how to modernise their agriculture, but there were no means of enabling them to get the industrial equipment

needed to do this. Most futile of all was the recommendation for research. No research was needed to find out that half the people in the world lacked sufficient food for health, or that with modern engineering and agricultural science the world food supply could be easily increased to meet human needs. Besides, all the governments controlling the food-deficient countries had well organised research facilities and would look with contempt on any suggestion from the new organisation, and the organisation itself would never be able to provide the facilities and staff needed for scientific research. I urged the conference, even at that late date, to reverse the recommendations and try to get funds and authority to enable the organisation to promote the production and better distribution of some of the main foodstuffs as the beginning of a world food policy.

Though unprepared and without notes it was one of the only two good speeches I ever made (the other was in Vienna, see page 182). The delegates by their frequent applause evidently agreed with the views I expressed. Had the delegates been all scientists and business men free to exercise their own judgment, my suggestion to adjust the recommendation would have been approved. Unfortunately, like the delegates to the Hot Springs conference, they had been told what to say by politicians who had little interest in alleviating poverty, even in their own countries, and even less in eliminating hunger and poverty in the world.

Next day Frank MacDougall, who was an influential member of the main committee, told me that there was a movement to have me appointed director-general. I asked 'Mac' to inform his committee that I refused to be a candidate and suggested that they should try to get Mr Stanley Bruce of Australia who had originated the movement at the League of Nations. He was in Washington at the time and I believe he would have taken it if he had been asked. I understand that a telegram was sent asking him if he would be a candidate for the post, but he probably regarded the terms of the invitation as an insult and of course he refused. Ex-prime ministers do not apply for posts. I then got 'Mac' to suggest that Lord Woolton be invited to take the job and do for the world what he had done for Britain by his war food policy. That suggestion was not accepted. Either of these men

with their great prestige and recognised ability might have persuaded governments to co-operate in a world food policy. It was unlikely that they would pay much attention to proposals from a comparatively unknown scientist.

I decided not to accept the post if it was offered, but some of my friends urged me to change my mind. Dr Boudreau said, 'You have been fighting for a world food policy for years, and now when you are asked to head an organisation which one day may achieve a world food policy on these lines, you cannot refuse'. To give up the life of leisure, filled with only congenial work, to which I had been looking forward, seemed to me a big sacrifice. However, I decided to have a shot at putting the organisation on the right lines, and if I failed, as seemed to me likely, to retire with honour satisfied. So I accepted, but only for two years which was long enough to get the organisation established with executive powers if governments could be persuaded to agree, and too long if that should prove impossible.

My reluctance to take the post had been strengthened by a cablegram received the day after my arrival in Quebec informing me that I had been elected Rector by the students of Glasgow University. This is a position of great honour, and with opportunities for interesting work if one felt so inclined. It had always been held by a prominent personality, usually one of the leading politicians. As the post was held for only three years, the directorship of the F.A.O., involving residence in America, deprived me of the pleasure of being an active, working Rector. All I was able to do was to make the usual appointment of an assessor to deputise for me in the University Court and deliver a rectorial address. Further, I felt that I would need to give up my seat in the House of Commons, which I did after a short interval. It was in a gloomy and grim mood that I began work as the head of the new organisation.

Mr Lester Pearson, who has a charming sense of humour, when announcing my appointment said it was strange that an Aberdonian had accepted the post without asking what the salary was. The salary was 24,000 dollars a year. When I learned later that it was not subject to British income tax I ordered it to be reduced to 16,000 dollars with a corresponding reduction for all members of the staff who received their salaries free of tax. With the high

cost of living in America it was not excessive. It was only four times the wage of senior typists. There was an addition of 6,000 dollars for expenses which, with the cost of receptions held almost on the scale of an embassy, did not cover the outlay. I paid the expenses of my wife who accompanied me on frequent visits to other countries. All in all, the financial aspect was not attractive.



A matter of life and death

A cartoon by Vicky of the *News Chronicle* which appeared in 1946.

CHAPTER 18

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF F.A.O.: A WORLD FOOD POLICY PROPOSED AND PLANNED

WITH the appointment of the director-general the business of the conference finished. It was followed by a banquet. Next day the director-general left for Washington accompanied by the staff of the Hot Springs conference who were to be retained in the new organisation for at least a few months. At the station there was a crowd waiting to bid us goodbye and a military band which played gay and inspiring music before the train moved off. The only gloomy person present was the director-general, sitting alone in a reserved compartment trying to assess his new position!

The fact that an international organisation had been set up looked like a victorious end to the long struggle for international co-operation in a food policy, but it seemed to me to be a sterile victory because the organisation had neither the authority nor the funds to initiate a policy which would achieve the results hoped for. I decided to try to get governments to give it the necessary power. The question was whether I should take time to travel to try to get this support before calling a conference to consider changing the constitution, or try immediately for this change. In favour of an immediate attempt was the fact that the war in which the victorious allied nations had been united was just finished, and the Soviet Union which had co-operated well in the League of Nations movement had continued to co-operate at the Hot Springs conference and the Quebec conference, and there was always the danger that the nations united in war would now revert to their pre-war nationalist politics. There seemed every reason, therefore, that the attempt should be made to change the F.A.O. constitution while they were still, ostensibly at least, friends and allies. If the attempt succeeded, the office of director-general would be a most important post, and it would be possible to get a man of international reputation in administration to take over from me. On the other hand, if it failed I could resign on the grounds that a director-general whose policy was opposed by the main governments was obviously not suited for the job.

Having reached this all-important decision on the long train journey from Quebec to Washington, I went up, on the morning after my arrival, to the office of the Interim Commission set up at the Hot Springs conference in MacGill Terrace which was retained for the time being, and set about getting the organisation into shape. The staff who had been appointed after the Hot Springs conference were interviewed individually. They seemed a good lot, and nearly all were given five year appointments in which they all did well. After it had been explained to them what I was going to try to do, no one could have had a more enthusiastic and loyal group of colleagues. Frank MacDougall and Dr Louwes were appointed as advisers to the director. Frank MacDougall had taken a leading part in the League of Nations movement for a world food policy based on human needs, and in promoting this project in Washington and at the Hot Springs conference. Dr Louwes had done a good job as Minister for Food in the Netherlands during the war.

The next step, after consultation with the senior staff, was to set up regional offices to facilitate the collection of statistics of production, consumption and prices of food, and to get the co-operation of countries in the area in projects to increase food production and consumption. Dr Louwes was sent to try and get European countries to co-operate with F.A.O. A regional office was set up in Cairo for Africa and the Middle East, and one for Asia was set up at Bangkok. They were not very successful at first, as the British, when asked to co-operate in their territories, said they had their own officials and had no need of assistance from F.A.O. The office for North and South America was established at the headquarters at Washington. It kept in close co-operation with the United States Department of Agriculture.

Frank MacDougall who at that time I hoped would soon succeed me as director-general, was retained at headquarters as assistant director to act as chief executive officer in charge of all the details of administration. The only other important appointment made was my son-in-law, David Lubbock, who had been an officer in the Fleet Air Arm and then in a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany. I persuaded him to come over as my personal assistant. I have already told of the leading part he took in the League of Nations movement for a world food policy and in the campaign for a

national food policy based on human needs in the United Kingdom.

As soon as I had arranged the broad outline of the organisation, I took a look at the decisions of the Quebec conference which I was supposed to carry out. The two hundred odd research projects were soon disposed of. They had obviously been drawn up by people who had little experience of research. The work proposed would have been an inefficient duplication of what was already being done by individual governments. The concentration on research projects at Hot Springs was obviously a way of escape from the more difficult task of outlining measures for increasing the world food supply to abolish hunger. The lot were pushed into the waste-paper basket. Next I arranged with the staff to bring together all the available information of the world food position. In this, great assistance was received from the United States Department of Agriculture. Orris Wells of that department was lent whole-time to F.A.O. and did excellent work. The appraisal, when completed, was alarming. In addition to the half of the world population which before the war lacked sufficient food, Europe—which had the biggest wheat production of any continent—had been so devastated by the war that a serious European shortage was added to the world shortage. There was a post-war world food crisis of huge dimensions. Millions seemed threatened with starvation.

At the meeting of the United Nations in London early in 1946 a member state drew the attention of the assembly to the world food shortage, and suggested that measures should be considered to deal with it. When I read this in the press I, as director-general of F.A.O., sent a cablegram to the President of the U.N. Conference informing him that F.A.O. *was* dealing with it. An appraisal of the position was being sent to all governments with a request to send delegates to a conference at F.A.O. headquarters at Washington to arrange joint action to increase the world food supply and arrange the distribution of exports to countries according to need. Some thought that F.A.O. was making an unnecessary fuss about the food shortage. Ex-President Hoover of the United States, who had dealt with the European food shortage after the First World War, said it was only a six-month shortage which would end with the next harvest. When he saw the F.A.O. statement, however,

he changed his mind and came to the conference to help as one of the main speakers.

All governments agreed to send delegates except Britain. I flew to London to see the British Minister of Agriculture, Mr Tom Williams. To my astonishment, he, with the Permanent Secretary, argued that the conference was premature and should be delayed till the autumn to see if it was still necessary. I demanded to see Mr Attlee, the Prime Minister. He, as might be expected, with so many other things to occupy his mind, knew little about the world food position or the F.A.O. proposal for a conference. However, when I told him how grave the position was and that all other governments were sending delegates—including the United States—he assured me that Britain would be represented. A few days later we were all delighted to read in *The Times* that Mr Herbert Morrison, who was Lord President of the Council, was coming to the conference. When Mr Morrison arrived in Washington, a few days before the conference opening, I met him at a reception at the British Embassy and told him how pleased we all were that he was going to represent Britain; I said that I had arranged a dinner before the conference for him, for the American Secretary of Agriculture, and for the Minister of Agriculture for Canada, with myself as director-general of F.A.O., to consider how the work of the war-time Combined Food Board of the three countries could be dovetailed into F.A.O., the new post-war organisation. To my astonishment Morrison said he knew nothing about the conference and was not coming to it or to the dinner I had arranged. He said he was going to Canada to arrange for the export of wheat to Britain. Unfortunately, I lost my temper and told him what I thought of the 'Socialist' Labour government of Britain which, when other governments were willing to collaborate to deal with the post-war food crisis, was only interested in hogging the surplus wheat of Canada with no regard for the millions in other countries liable to die of starvation. Years later, when we were both in the House of Lords, I asked Lord Morrison—who, by the way, I admired as a brilliant parliamentarian who would have made a good leader of the Labour Party—if he remembered the event, and if so, what kind of brief he had got from the officials of the Ministry of Agriculture. He said he had no recollection of getting any brief.

The conference was a great success, apart from the attitude of the British delegation which was led by a retired civil servant who in his speech said that their delegation would be led by Dr Edith Summerskill who he said was a fine doctor and an able politician and who would appear later. By the time she arrived the conference was practically finished, and I was told she had said she was sent over with little or no information of what it was all about. If she had been properly briefed, she would certainly have given full support to the proposals for alleviating poverty and hunger. That, however, was of little importance. The delegates from other countries were so well informed that after speeches by Mr Herbert Hoover, the American Secretary of Agriculture, the Canadian Minister of Agriculture, and delegates from other governments, it was decided that as F.A.O. by its constitution had no powers to deal with the food position, an International Emergency Food Council (I.E.F.C.) should be set up, staffed and paid for by F.A.O., to promote increased production in all countries and to deal with all food exports, directing them to different countries in accordance with need, and to fix prices to prevent any rise due to a world food shortage. The I.E.F.C. with thirty-four nations as members, including the chief exporters and importers, was a sort of subsidiary of F.A.O. Mr Fitzgerald, an able administrator from the American Department of Agriculture, was appointed its secretary by the director-general of F.A.O. It carried on for about three years, by which time the post-war food crisis was over.

Recommendations were issued to all governments to increase food production with suggestions of how it should be done. The United States, which already had a surplus of food, carried out the recommendations and increased its production, as did Canada and other food exporting countries. The I.E.F.C. became the only body through which food for export could be purchased. The United States, for example, was given power to purchase and hold all sugar being exported. Then the foods controlled by I.E.F.C. were distributed, not according to the purchasing power of nations, but to their need. The work of this interim commission saved millions of lives from death by starvation.

At the last meeting of the Washington conference the French delegation proposed that as F.A.O. had dealt so successfully with the post-war food shortage it should submit to all governments

proposals for dealing with the long-term problem of food and agriculture—which was exactly what we were planning to do.

★ ★ ★

The establishment of I.E.F.C. gave the new organisation some much needed prestige, and encouraged us in our efforts to get governments to agree to change the constitution of F.A.O. to give it authority and funds to initiate a world food policy. The hastily drawn up appraisal of the world food position was revised and extended. To enable us to estimate the amount of food which would be required in the near future, we asked population experts to estimate the increase in the number of mouths to be filled in the next twenty years. We were astounded to learn that the world population was increasing at about 22,000,000 a year. In the nineteenth century it had increased on an average by about 7,000,000 a year. Taking account of this fantastic increase, it was estimated that in the next twenty years the world food supply would need to be increased 100 per cent to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. A few years later, Dr Milton Eisenhower, a brother of President Eisenhower, estimated that production would need to be increased by 108 per cent in the next twenty years. In the interval between the two estimates, population had increased that much faster than the food supply.

The revised appraisal of the world food position was issued in May 1946 to all member governments of F.A.O. together with a proposal to set up a World Food Board, with an invitation to send delegates to a conference in Copenhagen in September of that year to consider the suggested plan for F.A.O., either alone or allied with other organisations, to be given authority and funds to increase food production and organise distribution to eliminate hunger and malnutrition from the world.

The main functions of the proposed international authority were set out as follows:

- (1) To provide, on request by any food deficient country, long-term loans to enable them to purchase surplus foods from food exporting countries and industrial products needed to modernise their agriculture to increase food production:

the loans to be given for approved projects and their use supervised by an international authority.

- (2) The loans to be given on business lines but free of interest or repayment of capital until hunger and abysmal poverty had been eliminated, after which payment of interest or repayment of capital would begin.
- (3) The country receiving the loans to be free to use them to purchase the industrial products needed for agriculture from whichever country it could get them cheapest and most suitable to its needs.
- (4) The international authority to consist of business men representing all areas of the world under the general supervision of the United Nations.
- (5) It would have authority to buy and hold stocks in countries with an exportable surplus of storable foods not immediately marketable after a bumper harvest, and release from the store after a bad world harvest. This would enable the prices for some of the main foodstuffs to be stabilised within reasonable limits. It would also have power to promote the increase of the agricultural products needed to double production in twenty years. It was argued that the resulting increase in the world's wealth, beginning with food and later industrial products, would bring about a great expansion in world trade with increased prosperity for all countries.
- (6) The co-operation of all nations on a world-wide project of developing the vast potential resources of the earth for the benefit of the wealthy as well as the poor nations would make co-operation easier in political spheres and be an important step to the evolution of the United Nations Organisation as a *World Government without which there is little hope of permanent world peace.*

The first opposition came from Mr Will Clayton of the American government, who was trying to organise an International Trade Organisation (I.T.O.) for the lowering of tariffs and better regulation of world trade. He urged me to withdraw the proposal for a World Food Board and cancel the conference. I argued that the board need not conflict with I.T.O. On the contrary it would

lead to a great increase in world trade. But food, a primary necessity of life, had to be treated differently from other goods like motor cars which were not vital. Food for the world should be considered like a clean and adequate water supply for a town, paid for by the whole community in proportion to income. Mr Clayton wanted food brought under the I.T.O. which regarded trade as an end in itself. I wanted trade in food to be an exception to other forms of trade, being directed to providing an adequate supply for the people. In the end, I absolutely refused to consider withdrawing the proposal and cancelling the Copenhagen Conference.

An attempt was made to get support from the press for F.A.O. proposals beginning with the American press. The American papers, especially after the success of the Washington conference on the post-war food crisis, had been sympathetic to F.A.O. The *New York Times* in reports and leading articles had given it favourable publicity, as had the *Herald Tribune* which invited me to one of its famous forum talks to speak about F.A.O. on the same day as General Smuts of South Africa spoke about world political affairs.

Invitations were sent to the leading newspapers to send representatives to a lunch in Washington to hear statements on F.A.O. plans for dealing with the long-term problem of food and agriculture. The statement about the proposal for a World Food Board was received with enthusiasm, especially by the younger journalists. Sir Willmott Lewis, *The Times* Washington correspondent, a very competent man as one might expect as the representative of Britain's leading newspaper, was asked for his views. He said that in a sane world with benevolent governments, the proposal would be approved: but we were not living in a sane world with benevolent governments. The proposal would probably be approved by the lesser powers but not by the great powers. After a lifetime spent in reporting international affairs, he had reached the sombre conclusion that no great power would ever do any good it was not forced to do, nor refrain from any evil it was not afraid to do. He predicted that the great powers would all agree 'in principle' but would block any attempt to have the proposal carried through.

The representative of the *Daily Herald*—a very decent fellow I got to know later—said his paper was not interested in the F.A.O.

proposal. The Labour Party knew little and cared less about any world movement to promote the welfare of the common people of the world, which one could well believe after Herbert Morrison, the Lord President of the Council, had refused to have anything to do with the conference to consider the post-war world food crisis.

Having got the promised support of the American press I went to London and interviewed the editor of *The Times*. He was superficially sympathetic, but I left with the feeling that I had got a courteous 'brush off'. He, I am sure, regarded me as a simple-minded idealist trying to promote an impracticable project. The editor of the *Economist*, Mr Geoffrey Crowther, while civil enough was less courteous than the editor of *The Times*. He seemed to think that a scientist venturing to submit suggestions dealing with world economic affairs was out of his depth and hardly worth listening to. Looking at it from his rather narrow point of view he was probably right. Keynes, had I known him and had the opportunity of discussing the plan with him, would, I am sure, have been more interested. However that may be, the *Economist* had an article hostile to the whole idea of the World Food Board.

Later, in August 1946 when Parliament had just risen for the summer recess, I thought it might be worth while seeing Mr Attlee, the Prime Minister, who had responded favourably when I asked him to ensure that Britain sent a delegate to the Washington conference to deal with the post-war food crisis. When I met him at 10 Downing Street he seemed to me to be very tired, as might be expected at the end of the session. After some talk about the general idea of international collaboration in eliminating hunger from the world, with which he agreed, I began to speak of the proposal for a World Food Board. It became evident to me that he still knew nothing about F.A.O., and without that background, he would only be bored by further talk about the proposal coming up for discussion at Copenhagen in the following month. So I thanked him for the interview but left with the feeling that Britain would use all its influence to prevent the proposal being approved at the impending conference.

My attempt to persuade Mr Attlee to become interested in this project was rather foolish. He was doing a magnificent job as Prime Minister of a Labour government with many inexperienced

ministers, reorganising Britain after the war and putting through so many much needed social measures that he could not be expected to be well informed on what he must have considered side issues of the foreign policy. All this he left to Mr Ernest Bevin, in whom he seemed to have full confidence.

THE COPENHAGEN CONFERENCE,
A WORLD FOOD POLICY—PLANNED

The Danish government did everything possible to make the Copenhagen conference of September 1946 a success. The King and Queen attended the opening session and welcomed the delegates, wishing them a successful conclusion to the deliberations on a subject of such great importance affecting all nations. Other meetings, apart from the main conference, were arranged, some presided over by the Danish Prime Minister, and there were social events for the entertainment of the delegates, with lavish hospitality. Ministers of State and members of the Royal Family attended these events, to talk freely to the delegates and their wives. The wife of one of the senior officials of F.A.O., an American, was telling her friends about the most interesting and entertaining partner she had had at one of the dinners, and was completely flabbergasted when she was told that this was the Crown Prince, heir to the throne. Good weather during the whole conference helped to give delegates a happy, lasting memory of 'wonderful Copenhagen'.

At the conference, the director-general outlined the proposal for a World Food Board, and suggested that if the proposal were approved, a commission should be set up to work it out in greater detail. The delegates of the poverty-stricken food-deficient countries strongly supported the proposal which, if carried, would have made them participants as political equals in a project which seemed to promise a rapid rise in the standard of their people, and the beginning of progressive economic prosperity. The food exporting countries were equally strongly in favour of the proposal which seemed to provide a rapidly expanding world market at a guaranteed remunerative price for as much as they could produce. The three most important speeches came from Mr John Strachey, the British Minister of Food, Mr La Guardia, the Director

General of U.N.R.R.A., previously Mayor of New York and Mr Norris Dodd, the American Under Secretary for Agriculture.

Mr Strachey, who had inherited some of the literary abilities of his distinguished father, made a fine literary speech, even going to the length of quoting poetry. He thought, however, that there were grave dangers, the nature of which he did not disclose, in adopting the proposed World Food Board. He suggested that the conference should resolve to pass the proposal for a World Food Board to the I.T.O. (International Trade Organisation, Mr Clayton's organisation) or failing that, to the Social and Economic Division of the United Nations. To remit it to I.T.O. would have suited the British government as the I.T.O. never got organised and the idea would have been abandoned. If sent to the U.N. the proposal for the World Food Board would have been put in a pigeonhole and forgotten.

Mr La Guardia had come straight to the conference from Moscow. I had written to Stalin outlining the proposal and asking for an interview to discuss it with him. I was informed that Mr Stalin was at that time resting somewhere near the Black Sea and would not be available for interview until just before the Copenhagen conference when it was impossible for me to go to meet him. As F.A.O. was taking over the work of U.N.R.R.A. and Mr La Guardia and I were working together, I got him to go to Moscow. Russia had co-operated in the League of Nations movement for a world food policy, in the Hot Springs conference and at Quebec when F.A.O. was established, so the Kremlin was fully informed about it. When Mr La Guardia arrived in Copenhagen he told me that he had discussed the proposal with Stalin and later with the whole Politburo. He was assured that the Soviet Union would co-operate wholeheartedly with the World Food Board provided that the United States and the United Kingdom did so, but they thought that neither the United States nor the United Kingdom would agree to co-operate in such a revolutionary movement for the promotion of the welfare of the people of the world. This was not disclosed to the conference. It was thought that the fact that the Soviet Union were in favour of the proposal might influence Britain and America against it.

La Guardia, invited as the representative of U.N.R.R.A., was the only non-governmental delegate. He was, therefore,

probably the only delegate free to express his own view instead of what he had been told to say. 'I am not a diplomat,' he declared. 'I have always told the truth.' He made a passionate appeal for the Food Board which could bring about a beneficent revolution promoting the welfare of the common people of the world. 'The Food and Agricultural Organisation,' he said, 'is the hope of the world.' He urged the conference to give the proposal unanimous recommendation, and instead of wasting time by calling a commission to outline the plan in greater detail as the director-general had suggested, to appoint immediately a small committee to get the board established with authority and funds to carry on the grand scheme of international collaboration to abolish hunger and poverty. It was a most dramatic speech, with an emotional appeal, from someone who spoke on behalf of the poor people in the world. The world press gave a very meagre report of it.

Mr Norris Dodd, Under Secretary for Agriculture in the United States was the leader of the American delegation. The decision of America was all-important, so everyone was eager to learn what America had decided. After referring briefly to the benefit a World Food Board could bring to both producers and consumers Mr Dodd continued: 'We are in favour of the general objectives laid down by Sir John Orr. In order to work out a plan for the achievement of these objectives we recommend the establishment of an F.A.O. commission for which he asks, to work out in more detail an international programme for the stabilisation of agricultural prices at levels which will be fair to producers and consumers and which will bring about the improvement of nutrition throughout the world. We believe that the commission should be established by this conference and that it should make its report to the director-general of F.A.O. at the earliest possible date so that it may be called to the attention of each of the member nations and international organisations concerned in preparation for its final consideration by F.A.O. at the earliest opportunity. We are living in a time of great need and in a period when changes come rapidly. I cannot emphasise too strongly the importance of preparing now to meet food and farm problems of the future. We all know how difficult and complicated this task may be. But the objectives towards which we are working are of the utmost importance both for the immediate and for the long-term future.'

Furthermore, these objectives can only be achieved through international collaboration.' The declaration that America approved of the world food plan and urged the immediate setting up of the commission which I had asked for, to work it out in more detail, created enthusiasm and excitement. Reporters rushed to phone the news to the world.

The speeches of the two Americans, La Guardia and Dodd, had decided the issue so far as the conference was concerned. The World Food Plan was unanimously approved in principle and the director-general instructed to arrange for a commission of experts, appointed and approved by member governments, to meet as early as possible and to appoint a chairman. The F.A.O. staff at the conference were delighted with the result and were sanguine that the Food Board would be established. I warned them, however, that we were only through the first barbed wire and must be prepared for more deeply entrenched opposition, but we hoped for the best.

On the way back to Washington I saw Mr Stanley Bruce who had been the leader of the League of Nations movement for international collaboration in a World Food Plan, and persuaded him to agree to become chairman of the commission to work out the plan in greater detail.

CHAPTER 19

VISITS TO EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA FOR F.A.O.

THE interval between the Copenhagen conference in September, 1946 and the Bruce commission in Washington in May 1947 was devoted to trying to get more support for F.A.O. from member countries, and I spent a great deal of time travelling all over the world to urge our plans. There was no need to go to countries like France and Denmark which were vigorous in their support of a world food policy. It would be a very good thing for France with 40 per cent of its population on the land. A guaranteed world price for agricultural products would have helped its peasants. The same applied to Denmark, a big exporter of animal products, and other food exporting countries.

One of the difficulties I found in other countries was that as the Copenhagen conference—with the exception of Britain—had unanimously approved of the F.A.O. food plan it was thought it was, if not already in operation, at least coming into being almost immediately and able to give the help which some of the countries so urgently needed. In one country where I was welcomed by the Prime Minister and another minister, I explained that although the food policy had been approved in principle in Copenhagen, F.A.O. would have no power to do anything until after the Bruce commission had reported, and indeed there was no absolute certainty that the commission would get the support of all the countries needed to carry through the policy. 'Ah,' said the Prime Minister, 'I see you are not Jesus Christ—you are only John the Baptist.' They assured me I had their support for the policy.

In Rome, after useful talks with government ministers, I was invited to meet the Pope in private audience, probably due to some manoeuvres by the F.A.O. official who was accompanying me as secretary and who was a Roman Catholic. I had half an hour with him trying to induce him to make a strong statement in favour of the collaboration of all nations for the development of the resources of the earth to eliminate poverty, beginning with an attack to abolish hunger. He listened with patience to what I

had to say and then expressed complete approval. I ventured to suggest to him that he might find occasion to recommend that all good Catholics should do their utmost to help F.A.O. to achieve its great objectives. I met him a second time when I again urged this and he arranged for me to interview the Vatican official in charge of foreign affairs. I could not get this official, a very shrewd politician, to promise to persuade His Holiness to make the kind of statement which would have rallied to our side all Roman Catholics throughout the world. However he promised to send a Vatican representative to the F.A.O. conference.

When my audience with the Pope was ended, he wanted to give me his blessing. 'As a Protestant,' I told him, 'I could not conscientiously kneel before you.' 'Never mind,' he replied, 'I will still give you a blessing,' which he did and presented me with a special little medallion. I left with the impression that the Church might not be quite so evil as I had thought, and might ultimately change to bring it more into line with other branches of the Christian religion—which indeed is happening.

When it was announced over the wireless that I had had an audience with the Pope, my sister, who was still in the Calvinistic Presbyterian Church, was alarmed. She met several people who suggested that her brother must be about to join the Catholic Church. But she had no cause to worry.

The Vatican observer who was later sent to our conference was Monsignor Ligutti whom I had met at a conference at Des Moines, Iowa. He was doing excellent work in rural districts, particularly in Latin America, in raising the living standards among Roman Catholics, especially by promoting projects for eliminating hunger and malnutrition. He came several times to F.A.O. headquarters and we became friends as we were both agreed as to what was needed in the world. Once when I was discussing his plans with him which were all in line with what the F.A.O. wanted to do, he remarked to me: 'If ever I have the good fortune to be elected Pope, I will make you a cardinal even though you don't at present adhere to the Mother Church!' I met Ligutti again in Rome many years later, in 1962 when Pope John, a man I thought of wonderfully fine character, came to greet the delegates gathered in the city for a conference on world peace. Before speaking to the

delegates the Pope came over to shake hands with Lord Attlee and myself.

AUSTRIA

We went north from Rome, spent the night at Venice, and then proceeded by car over the hills to Austria by snow-covered roads through beautiful scenery. At the frontier we were stopped by Russian guards. On learning who we were and what we were doing, they became friendly and took us into their hut to have a drink of coffee and get warmed.

On reaching Vienna we found a devastated city full of half-starved people. I had been looking around at the ruins and was going in for afternoon tea to a hotel reserved for British troops when I met the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Austrian government, walking with his wife and their child of about five years of age. As I had arranged to meet him shortly after to accompany me to the Foreign Office, I invited him and his wife and child in for tea. They said they wouldn't be allowed in, but I assured them it would be all right and led them into the hotel. The sergeant in charge stopped us and said that while I could go in, the Austrians were not permitted to enter. I asked permission to phone British headquarters in Vienna on which he finally allowed us all to go in. At the tea table it was pathetic to see the countess, wife of the Under Secretary, and her child wolfing the food. During the meal I said to her, 'You will find it difficult to get sugar?' and she replied, 'We cannot get sugar at all'. I took one of the paper napkins, emptied the bowl of lump sugar into it and said, 'Take this'. Again when I said, 'You won't be able to get any of these cakes?' she replied, 'Oh no, it is impossible', so I emptied the plate into another napkin and, after a furtive look round, the countess pushed the cakes into her bag in a way that would have aroused the admiration of the most accomplished shop-lifter! When we were leaving for our appointment at the Foreign Office the child was still busy eating a big sandwich. The mother tried to take it from her but I said it was all right and let the child finish the sandwich. I walked out, holding the child's hand, and the sergeant in charge—a decent fellow—just smiled at us.

There was no difficulty in getting the support of the Austrian government for a world food policy though at that time it was an

occupied country, with no power. To my surprise they gave an official luncheon for me at which all the Austrian ministers were present. Not having spoken German since before the First World War, I had great difficulty in following what the minister was saying when proposing a toast to me. I was sitting next to the British Ambassador who very kindly translated parts of it for me. I was wondering what on earth to say in reply and at the same time I was listening to the lovely Strauss music played by the band. The Austrian minister sitting on my other side told me that the beautiful and valuable violins they were playing had been buried in waterproof coverings when the Nazi armies invaded Austria, and had been dug up again when the Nazis were driven out. The Strauss music, of which I am very fond, gave me the idea for my reply. I said how sad it was to come to Vienna which had once been a great centre of culture, with one of the leading medical schools in the world, where modern clinical psychology—now one of the most important branches of therapeutic medicine—had originated; and I talked about the other gifts Vienna had given to the world, including the beautiful music to which we had been listening and which is heard nearly every day by thousands of people in every part of the civilised world. I finished up by asking who could compare, in American dollars, the value of these great gifts which Vienna had given to the world for nothing with the few tons of wheat which were needed to save its people from starvation. It was, in my opinion one of the only two good speeches I ever made because I was deeply touched by the hunger and poverty of the people. I could not get out of my mind the picture of that hungry child wolfing food, and I could not forget the faces of the people I met in the streets which carried the obvious signs of hunger and malnutrition.

After the sumptuous meal we retired for coffee and liqueurs to the beautiful salon in which were many valuable works of art. I suggested to one of the ministers that they might raise a little money by having an exhibition of these in some American cities, but he replied, 'If we let them away there would be pressure brought to bear on us to sell them and we would never get them back again'. As we were leaving about three o'clock in the afternoon I was told that one of the ministers who had been at the luncheon, whose weight had fallen from about twelve stone to eight stone, had

died after the meal. The rich food had been too much for his weakened digestive system. I realised then the reason for the lunch. It was not so much to honour me as to provide a decent meal for the Austrian ministers and senior officials.

POLAND

Vienna was the saddest city I had ever seen, until I came to Warsaw. There I was very much embarrassed, because the Poles were under the impression that a World Food Board had already been established. When we got off the train we were met by a deputation of ministers lined up alongside a red carpet laid on the platform. We found the people were sure that food was being made available to them at once whereas I had nothing to offer. Warsaw was a mass of ruins. The only buildings left standing were those which had been the headquarters and offices of the Nazi army during their occupation. I was informed that after blowing up all the other buildings they had not sufficient explosives left to blow up these offices before they retired in front of the advancing Russians.

I was astonished to see in that city of ruins that the first building to be repaired was a Roman Catholic cathedral, while people were living in all kinds of shacks amidst the rubble; even in these conditions it was amazing to see how many of them had little patches of flowers around their temporary homes. We drove out into the country and saw the ill-clad peasants working in the fields in their bare feet. Poland was a sad sight.

I went to Poland twice again—once in 1948 after I had left F.A.O. and was entertained to dinner by a group of Polish ministers. It was after the disastrous harvest of 1947. Most of the ministers could speak English, and after a long discussion, one of them said to me, 'We hate and fear the Germans, and in our past history we have suffered at the hands of the Russians. We wanted to join with the West and could have arranged that with the Americans, but Britain wouldn't have us.' I found later that the Poles had wanted to make English their second language, but the British Foreign Office had prohibited the export of English books to Poland. Later I was able to get some British men going to Warsaw to carry in a few pre-war scientific books, because the

Nazis, before leaving, had destroyed their scientific libraries and the equipment in the laboratories, breaking glassware and the arms of balances, thus delaying the redevelopment of their higher education and scientific research.

Greece and Poland had asked F.A.O. to send a group of experts to advise on the development of their agriculture. The delegations to both countries were given a good welcome and there was full co-operation with the officials. The report on Greece stated that a grant or loan of two hundred million dollars would be sufficient to finance the development plans agreed with the Greek officials and bring about a rapid increase in food production. Instead of this grant which might have made for peace in Greece, Britain sent in troops to support the reactionary government and the Royal Family and hundreds of Greeks who had been fighting on our side against the Nazis were thrown into prison. The mission to Poland did some small amount of good although we were never able to follow it up by supplying the fertilisers and industrial products needed to increase production.



In furtherance of the plans for international co-operation I arranged for F.A.O. to co-operate closely with the Economic European Commission which had Gunnar Myrdal as its head. With them we worked in the closest association through various committees for both Eastern and Western countries and arranged successful trade deals—for example coal from Poland to Sweden in exchange for timber, and the exchange of timber for Western products which Eastern countries urgently needed. At one of these committees dealing mainly with food, Western delegates were so impressed with the speeches made by the Rumanian delegate that they insisted on him being given the honour of being the president of the final plenary session.

When General Marshall, Secretary of State 1947-49, announced the Marshall Aid Plan for Europe I went down to the State Department and met Mr Thorpe, the expert on European affairs. I urged him to get the Marshall Aid put through the United Nations via F.A.O. and Gunnar Myrdal's E.E.C. I said that America could lay down any conditions it liked, so that it would not lose any power, and that the joint collaboration of East and

West in the U.N. agencies would bring in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Russia, at that time short of food and devastated by war, might have been eager to join in. In any case, it was in no shape to prevent the other Iron Curtain countries co-operating with the West. After a few interviews, Mr Thorpe agreed that it seemed a sound policy and advised me to put the case before General Marshall. I did so in a memorandum and had a most courteous reply from him saying that he appreciated the potentialities of my suggestion but that whether or not this could be done would depend upon the Western allies of the United States. I knew France was all right so did not trouble to write to Paris. I wrote to the British Foreign Office but got no reply. In the end the aid was limited to the Western countries and most of it poured into Western Germany which enabled it to reconstruct and develop faster than Britain and become the most prosperous European country with the biggest gold and dollar reserve.

This limiting of American aid to the West broke up the collaboration between the Eastern and Western countries begun by Gunnar Myrdal, one of the most far-sighted men I have ever worked with, and F.A.O.'s influence in Europe rapidly declined. In my opinion, a great opportunity for getting East and West to collaborate was lost; it would have been an important step towards world peace. Later, Mr Truman said that if we could get our Russian friends to agree with us on an agricultural food policy it would be easier than getting agreement on the political issues which divided us. Russia could not be blamed entirely for its failure to co-operate in what Mr Truman rightly saw to be a wise course.

LATIN AMERICA

Early in 1947 I visited several Latin American countries, some of which had not yet joined F.A.O. while those who had joined had been a little absent-minded about paying their contributions.

My wife and I were accompanied by Roberto Arellano Bonilla, a Latin American graduate of Santiago and later a graduate of an American university. He was a highly entertaining and well-informed travelling companion who gave us snapshots of the history of the countries we visited, and recounted for us the conquest of Latin America by the Spaniards which, according to his account,

must have been a brutal business but highly successful from the religious point of view; the Roman Catholic religion was imposed everywhere except in the outlying districts where the natives still retained much of their primitive religious practices. He also gave us an idea of the current political situation, with the left-minded people, including university students, seeming to be in simmering revolt against the governments which were supported by the United States.

At Lima, in Peru, after meeting with ministers, we visited the University where we were impressed by the fact that there was obviously no colour bar. We watched groups of girls coming out of the classes arm in arm, with all gradations of skin colour from the pale European to Indian and Negro types. Skin colour seemed to be regarded as of no more importance than the colour of people's hair is in this country.

From Santiago we set out for Buenos Aires by plane with oxygen masks as the Andes are about 15,000 feet high. There was beautiful sunshine with no wind, and instead of going right over the top the plane wended its way through the peaks giving us a gorgeous view of mountains and valleys. At Buenos Aires we met a number of the ministers including the Minister for Foreign Trade who, we were told, had begun life selling goods from a barrow on the streets. When we asked him about the possibility of getting grain and meat at a lower price, he replied that he was following the excellent custom of the successful Western countries by selling at the highest price the market would carry. He added that, knowing Britain was short of cash after the war, he was prepared to make a loan at 8 per cent interest, which he claimed was what Britain had charged the Argentine, provided he got a lien over the coal mines, railways, or other assets similar to what Britain had held in the Argentine when it had advanced money for its development.

We learned something about British history we had not known before. Across from the hotel where we stayed was a huge monument. I went over one morning after breakfast to look at it and could make out that it was to commemorate a great victory the Argentine had had over the 'Ingles'. Roberto informed us that after the Napoleonic War the British army had been sent to conquer the Argentine but had been defeated. We could not

verify this in British history books. The ministers were favourably disposed towards F.A.O. probably because we had met and made friends with the Argentine Ambassador in Washington who was a surgeon and had commended us favourably to them. A meeting was arranged with General Peron but the date fixed for it coincided with the date we had arranged to visit Uruguay. The meeting was postponed for a few days but we could not get back to Buenos Aires on the later date as dense fog prevented the plane flying, and as Peron was going to the country we missed the opportunity of meeting him.

In Uruguay our first visit was to the President where we were ushered in by two naval officers in full uniform. The President told me he was a farmer, and when I answered that I also was a farmer, he would talk of nothing but farming and was most disappointed when I could not agree to spend a couple of days on his farm to which he was longing to get back as soon as he could get free from the presidency. Uruguay had an excellent medical school and social services, including old age pensions which were more advanced than in Britain. The government was able to find the money for these benefits because, being a small country, it did not think it was worth while keeping up a large army or navy. The navy consisted of two ships, one anchored in the harbour and unfit to go to sea, and the other one beached on the shore where it was useful to the women who dried their washing over its rails!

When we found that we could not get back to Buenos Aires for our appointment with General Peron, we set out for Brazil. With the possible exception of Sydney, Rio de Janeiro has the most beautiful harbour in the world, but there we saw the biggest contrast between the wealthy and the poor people who lived in ramshackle shelters on the outskirts of the city and the hills surrounding it. We were invited to dine with the ministers at eight o'clock in the hotel where we were staying. When it came to eight o'clock we were anxious to go down to the dining-room to meet our hosts, but our good philosopher and friend Roberto said there was no need to move yet because none of them would turn up till well after nine o'clock. As a matter of fact it was ten o'clock before they had all arrived and we could sit down to dinner. This lack of punctuality, we felt, involved a waste of time but we were told that their view was that 'Life was short while time was endless', and it

was therefore foolish to waste the pleasures of life merely to save time—which seems to me to be an excellent philosophy. Roberto told us that when there was some urgent meeting which had to be held on time they put after the time stated ‘English time’ which meant that the meeting would begin at or about that time. We met there Professor de Castro who was the Brazilian representative to F.A.O. and a strong supporter of a world food policy. He wrote a book about the appalling hunger of the poor people of the world and got me to write an introduction to it. The book was a bit of a shocker but it sold well and helped to arouse interest in the hunger and poverty in the world. He was later elected chairman of the council of F.A.O.

From there, we went north to visit some of the smaller republics. My most vivid recollection is of Caracas in Venezuela where great developments were going on, new buildings and public restaurants where anyone, rich or poor, could get a very cheap meal. When I inquired how the government had been able to get the finance for these developments Roberto had a very interesting story to tell us. He said that when a new bargain had to be made about the oil royalties, the oil companies approached an eminent lawyer in Caracas to put forward their case. He agreed and said his fee would be a thousand dollars; the representatives of the oil companies said that this was far too small a fee and they had something much larger in mind. The lawyer replied, ‘A thousand dollars is an honest fee and I will state an honest case’. Whether due to this lawyer or not, Venezuela got a much better deal with the oil companies, including back payments of royalties which had never reached the government coffers. This new wealth, he said, had provided the funds for the new developments.

In all the other Latin American countries we visited we found no difficulty in meeting the ministers who were all in favour of a world food policy which they rightly thought would be of great advantage to them by giving them a decent price for their food exports and financial aid for much needed developments. In some of the countries we visited, we got the impression from people Roberto introduced us to that there were left-wing pressure groups especially among university students who felt that the United States dominated Latin American countries in its own economic and political interests. This may have been true; the

powerful European nations, when they had colonies always negotiated from strength in business deals and if this failed, they sent in their troops to maintain law and order—not the order that the people in the colony wanted but the order that preserved the privileged position of the ruling nation. On the other hand, in Latin America there was great respect for Britain where the Labour Government was carrying out its free National Health Service and other social measures. One Prime Minister was so loud in his praise of Britain that I suggested to him that he might write direct to Mr Attlee, the British Prime Minister, saying some of the nice things about my country which he had been saying to me. He was very hesitant to do this because he had never met Mr Attlee who, he was sure, would never have heard of him. I suggested that the fact he had never met Mr Attlee would make his letter congratulating him on what Britain had done and wishing him all success, of even more value to the Prime Minister of Britain than if he had been a personal friend. I learned afterwards from Mr Attlee that he had received this letter and that it was much appreciated.

The last country we visited was Cuba. Due to the efforts of Roberto we had held a press conference in every country we visited which gave us a great deal of publicity. When we arrived at Havana and opened the morning paper the first thing we saw was a photograph of my wife and myself going into the hotel, with the caption: 'They have arrived!' I was astonished at the number of ministers in Cuba who belonged to the medical profession. The President was a professor of physiology, and many other ministers and chief officials were medical men. Roberto told us that the number of medicals in the government had been brought about by a recent general election. Former elections had been greatly influenced by the American fruit, sugar, and other companies which largely controlled the press. At the last election, however, the American Ambassador had called in the representatives of these companies and told them that this time they were not to interfere. They laughed at him and said that the State Department would soon put him in his place. He replied, 'My instructions are from the President and if they are not carried out, a full statement of the activities of the American companies will be prepared for the President and released for the press'. As the doctors, next to the Roman Catholic clergy, were the class for

which the people had the greatest respect and confidence, they were persuaded to stand as candidates with the result that about 20 per cent of the members of both government houses were medical men. One of the ministers I interviewed was doing a first-class job in food and agriculture and in education in nutrition. 'Now that you are doing such valuable work for Cuba,' I said to him, 'you will never go back to the university again.' He replied, 'I have not given up my post at the university. I asked for leave of absence to enable me to take up this job but I expect to go back to the university some day, because Roosevelt will not live for ever.'

I would have liked to go back to make a more leisurely visit to some of these most interesting countries, but the only one I was ever able to visit again was Cuba in 1962 (see page 277), and it was very different from the Cuba of 1947.

CHAPTER 20

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE: A WORLD FOOD POLICY—BLASTED!

It was impossible to get the member governments of F.A.O. to send delegates to Washington to work out the plan for a World Food Board in greater detail before April 1947, seven months after the Copenhagen conference where it had been approved. At the opening meeting, the first speaker, as at the conference in Copenhagen, was the United States delegate. In a short speech he said the great powers were not prepared to give any authority or funds to any international organisation for the purpose set out in the proposal for a World Food Board. By the great powers he meant America and Britain. France fought for a World Food Board to the last ditch, as did all other countries, especially the food exporting countries who saw the prospect of a stable world market at profitable prices, and the hungry countries who hoped for an end to their hunger and poverty. Russia, surely one of the great powers, sent a message to Mr La Guardia, head of U.N.R.R.A., that it would join if the United States and the United Kingdom joined. Russian officials whom I had been courting to get the Soviet Union to join, told me afterwards that they knew the United States and Britain would never agree to such a plan which embraced the welfare of all the people of the world; they maintained there was no hope of such a plan, until a world Socialist state had come into existence which would put the interests of the common people before the profits of big business.

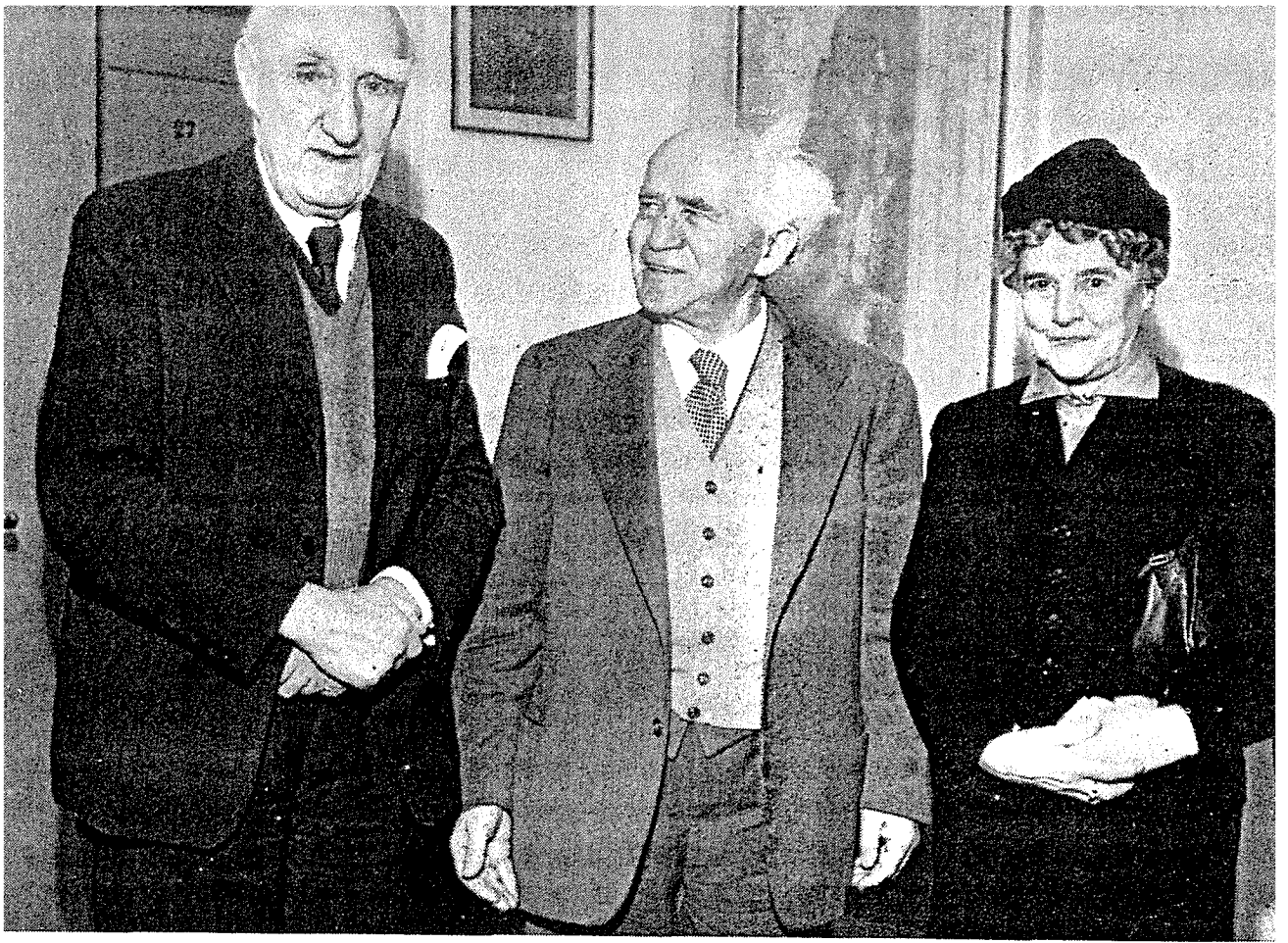
The delegates were so stunned by this reversal of policy by the United States that no other delegate wanted to speak and the meeting broke up in confusion. Some of the younger American reporters came to me and offered all the help they could give if I would continue the fight for the World Food Plan. I was grateful but I knew they could not control the policy of the big newspapers to support big business which seemed to be against this idea of international co-operation. Since America and Britain, the two most powerful Western nations, were determined to squash the plan, any further effort to promote it seemed to me hopeless. I

decided there and then to leave F.A.O. so soon as a successor could be appointed.

Though America and Britain had joined to kill the plan it was decided that Stanley Bruce, ennobled that year as Viscount Bruce of Melbourne, should carry on with the commission in the hope of salvaging something from the wreckage. I took little interest and attended only one meeting. The time was more profitably spent in trying to strengthen the organisation and get support for it in other countries to enable F.A.O. to do useful work within the limits of its authority and funds and so manage to survive until some future happier time when the great powers would realise that co-operation for mutual benefit was the only alternative to mutual suicide in a third world war. The Bruce commission made its recommendations, the main one being the setting up of a World Food Council to keep the world food position under review and try to get whatever co-operation was found possible, in promoting approved recommendations from F.A.O.

To complete the story of the suggested World Food Plan we will move on to the annual F.A.O. Conference six months later at the Palais des Nations at Geneva. Here the British delegation, all civil servants, excelled themselves in opposing everything that involved any international co-operation or giving any authority to F.A.O. even in minor activities. Mr Harold Wilson, who was then Secretary for Overseas Trade and had been on the Bruce commission, was in Geneva at the time. I told him how the British delegation was behaving and asked him to restrain them. He said that as they were not in his department he had no control over them but he would speak to them. He called them to his hotel and argued with them for hours, but made no impression on them. At one of the meetings of the commission of which Lord Bruce was chairman they carried on their obstructive objections to every item, moving amendments which held up the business, though no one ever seconded their amendments. At last Bruce lost his temper and told them what he thought of them. One delegate, a vice-chairman of the commission, said to him, 'Brutal, but they deserved it', which seemed to accord with the views of the other delegates.

I had a head-on clash with these British civil servants at another commission presided over by Mr Mackechnie, the Ambassador for



Top: A visit to Ben-Gurion, then Prime Minister of Israel (photo: F. Schlesinger, Jerusalem). Below: With Lord Attlee at a world government conference





Cartoon from a Norwegian paper depicting Lord Boyd Orr, Director-General of F.A.O. and Mr La Guardia, as Director-General of U.N.R.R.A. *Below*: Vicky's cabinet of eggheads with Lord Boyd Orr as Minister of Agriculture: from the *New Statesman*



Uruguay. I was lunching with Gunnar Myrdal, the head of the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe with which F.A.O. was co-operating. An F.A.O. official came in and told me that the British delegation was arranging to wreck the work of the commission. I hurried to the Palais des Nations before the meeting began and told the chairman I wanted to speak before he introduced the first item on the agenda. I then told the delegates that the British delegation had arranged to make a counter-motion to everything that was proposed and so wreck the work of the commission. I made no secret of what I thought of the British delegates! I heard later that someone present had said 'The director-general rose with a face white with anger. He had the fire of God in his belly, and he belched.' I asked the British delegation to come out into the corridor where I informed them that unless they stopped these obstructive measures I would go to Westminster immediately after the conference and get Mr Robert Hudson, Mr Walter Elliot and other M.P.s in the Conservative Party to get the subversive, ungentlemanly conduct of the British delegation raised in a debate in the House of Commons.

The British delegates felt they could be arrogant and stamp their feet on F.A.O. because they had behind them the British Foreign Office which was opposed to any kind of international co-operation, and America which had repudiated its support for a World Food Plan. They might have stated honestly that their instructions were to oppose any movement for international co-operation through F.A.O. to eliminate hunger from the world. Instead of that their underhand subversive measures and their arrogant behaviour alienated the other delegates who lost a great deal of their respect for Britain.

The British opposition to a world food policy can be understood. England's wealth had been created by the import of cheap food and raw materials produced by natives with wages so low that they lived in abysmal poverty, and paid for by expensive industrial products. The suggestion of a 'new deal' for the native producers, beginning with a fair price for the food Britain imported, seemed to threaten English economic prosperity.

If the Conservatives had won the 1945 election there would have been a good chance of Britain supporting the proposal for a world food policy. Walter Elliot who, as Minister of Agriculture,

had done a good job in saving the British agricultural industry from bankruptcy, had promoted a policy of increased consumption of food and expansion of markets as the long-term measure for agriculture, and had sent his Under Secretary, Earl De La Warr, to support Mr Stanley Bruce at the League of Nations in 1935 in his campaign for a World Food Plan based on human needs. And Mr Hudson who had co-operated efficiently with Lord Woolton in his war food policy based on nutrition needs, was so much in favour of a world policy on similar lines that when he learned that I was going to America to assist in reviving the League of Nations movement, he offered to go with me if my visit could be delayed for a month, which, unfortunately, was impossible. Mr John Strachey, the Labour government's Minister of Food, though doubtless an able man in other respects, could not be expected to have the same knowledge of agriculture or its implications in the economic field as Mr Elliot and Mr Hudson.

The American view is also easily understandable. President Roosevelt and his associates, who had taken a statesmanlike view of the future and promised a new deal for the poor countries in a 'new and better world', were gone. The American government under President Truman had swung to the right and come under the influence of big business which had always been opposed to Roosevelt's 'New Deal' ideas. Further, as America was by far the richest country in the world, in any international plan for a world food policy it would be called on to provide about half the cost. It was, therefore, tempting to use American wealth to promote their own prestige, power, and economic interests in implementing any food schemes for the food deficient countries.

I managed to arrange an interview with President Truman, before the Bruce commission met, to try to get his support for the world food policy, but when I got to the White House I found someone from the British Embassy was there and went in with me. He so completely monopolised the conversation that there was no chance of speaking about F.A.O. I had the pleasure of lunching and dining with Mr Truman many years afterwards and discussing international affairs with him. I am certain that if all the facts had been put before him he would have supported the F.A.O. plan. I admire President Truman for his courage. He was not afraid to take decisive action on what, with the facts available to him, he

believed to be right. In the Korean War he realised General MacArthur, the military idol of the American people, would have started another world war if he had carried out his threat to bomb China. In 1948, when on 13 May, the day before the British gave up their mandate in Palestine and withdrew their troops, and Assam Pasha, Secretary of the Arab League, declared war on Israel and said it would be 'a war of extermination and momentous massacre', President Truman, eleven minutes after the Jewish National Council had proclaimed the independence of Israel, recognised the new state, to the astonishment of the U.N. General Assembly and the United States representatives. Four days later the Soviet Union followed the example of the United States and recognised the independent state of Israel. Though war between the Arabs and the Jews continued, President Truman gave financial aid which enabled the new state to survive and prevented what would have been a massacre and the start of another world war.

In our sitting-room we have autographed photos of many leading men in the world. In one group are the men to be admired for their courage, whether or not one believes in their politics. Harry Truman might be astonished and not too pleased to find his autographed photo in the group between President Tito of Yugoslavia, who so successfully fought the Nazis and later refused to let his country be a satellite of the Soviet Union, and Premier Chou En-lai of China.

CHAPTER 21

THE CAIRO CONFERENCE

AFTER the collapse of the plan for a world food policy I spent the time of waiting for my successor to be appointed in organising F.A.O. for statistical work and technical assistance which seemed to be the most useful thing it might accomplish with its limited authority. Having organised the staff as well as I could, I devoted the rest of my time trying to strengthen the regional offices. The Middle East one centred at Cairo under Hefnawi Pasha was one of the most interesting. He was a former Minister of Agriculture in Egypt, a well-informed man and a congenial colleague. We got on very well with him and indeed with all the other Egyptian ministers. He told my wife that I was the only Englishman who had ever spoken to him as an equal.

I had sent technicians to the Middle East countries to find out, by investigating the natural resources and by consulting the native staffs, what kind of measures were possible. Before the conference met in Cairo in 1948 we looked at all the national plans and worked out a rough regional plan taking advantage of the rivers which ran through the different countries as sources of irrigation to recondition land which had lost its fertility. When this preparatory work was done we were ready for the Cairo conference. Egypt and the other Middle East countries regarded it as of considerable importance. The flags of all the Middle East countries were flying in front of the conference building, and the Prime Minister of Egypt, as chairman of the conference, welcomed all the delegates on behalf of King Farouk.

In my opening speech I thought it wise to boost the ego of the delegates by referring to the great contribution the Middle East had made to modern civilisation. It was there that modern science began. Astronomy was studied to enable the Egyptians to predict the time of the flooding of the Nile so that they could prepare the ground for sowing and get ready the seed. Euclid of Alexandria, 300 B.C., the greatest mathematician of antiquity, had laid the basis of modern mathematics. The Alexandria school of medicine was as far advanced in therapeutics as Western Europe was up to

the middle of the nineteenth century. The Egyptians, long before the Christian era, were able to measure the circumference of the Earth. It was in the Middle East that the three great religions—Jewish, Mohammedan and Christian—had originated, and Western civilisation had made no advance on the ethics of these religions to which, today, about half the people of the world adhere. The excellent government of the Sumerians and the Chaldaeans divided the year into fifty-two weeks and originated the Christian Sabbath by making one day of the week free from labour for meditation for 'the peace of the soul'.

I turned from the glories of the past to the present and spoke of the desperate poverty of the common people. I referred to the broad plans for developing the area and showed that, with the great wealth from oil, part of which might be used to finance the development plans, and the potential fertility of much of the soil, the Middle East, if there was co-operation between the different countries, could achieve great prosperity and restore its former greatness. The speech was well received and the conference then divided into commissions to deal with the different aspects of the plan which F.A.O. had outlined in general terms.

The British had a technical commission in the Middle East and I invited them to attend the conference much to the annoyance of delegates from some of the Arab countries who regarded them as acting only in the interests of Britain and likely to oppose any plan for collaboration in a food and agricultural policy in the Middle East countries. I did not realise how resentful the native ministers were against their former European rulers and their fear of an attempt to re-conquer them. In spite of that, I thought it would be helpful if we could get the goodwill of Britain for the proposed developments. I had several talks with Assam Pasha, Secretary of the Arab League. He was in favour of the development plans and took me to a meeting of the League which had been convened while the conference was in session. I stressed to the ministers of the different countries the rapid progress which could be made if they united their forces for the development of agriculture in a regional plan. They seemed to be impressed and gave general agreement to the plan. The Foreign Minister for Iran came to me afterwards and said that if I would come and carry through the plan he would

send a plane to whatever part of the world I happened to be in to bring me to the Middle East.

At the end of the conference, the participating countries all offered to contribute to the support of the plan; Egypt offered to provide fully equipped offices, the assistance of the staff of the universities and veterinary services which were highly efficient, and some funds. Syria offered to provide a fully equipped agricultural farm for practical experimental work on the application of modern agriculture to the conditions of the Middle East. It was obvious to me that there would be great difficulty in carrying through the ambitious projects which the conference had approved, and I considered that the best way was to begin with one or two modest plans which might be carried through successfully and from small beginnings collaboration between the various nations would evolve. It was suggested, and agreed, that we might begin immediately with the elimination of rinderpest from Cape Colony to Pakistan, and with a bigger co-operative plan for the more efficient control of locusts. It was agreed that a conference on the elimination of rinderpest should be held at Nairobi in Kenya where there were first-class laboratories and veterinary staff dealing with the disease. I later got Dr du Toit, the head of the famous veterinary station in South Africa, to be chairman of the proposed Nairobi conference, and left Egypt with considerable confidence that the regional plan might succeed.

Before leaving I had a final talk with Assam Pasha when I ventured to speak about the conflict between Arabs and Jews. I pointed out that the Jews and Arabs were both Semitics—blood cousins so to speak—and it was unrealistic for the Arabs to talk about massacring more than a million Jews; the great powers would never stand for it. I also mentioned that the Jews, with far more technicians than they had any need for, could help to make up the deficiency of technicians in the Arab countries. He seemed half persuaded that an end to the conflict and agreement with the Jews might have beneficial results for all concerned, but he said collaboration with them was hopeless because the democratic system practised by the Jews would have meant the end of the absolute powers of the rulers who were rich with the oil royalties which they seemed to regard more as personal perquisites than national assets.

King Farouk was so much interested in the conference that I was invited to call and see him at a private interview. I was told about the full evening dress I would need to wear, but I said I had no evening dress with me and that shortly before coming to Egypt I had stayed at Balmoral Castle as a guest of the King of Britain, and having no evening clothes with me I was given permission to wear an ordinary lounge suit. I thought that what was good enough for King George was good enough for King Farouk. This was agreed to. I thought King Farouk highly intelligent but debased from evil living. He was pessimistic about the future and said to me, 'The whole world is in revolt. Soon there will be only five Kings left—the King of England, the King of Spades, the King of Clubs, the King of Hearts and the King of Diamonds.' I pointed out to him that unless something was done to relieve the abysmal poverty of the fellahin (the peasants) there would be a revolt in Egypt, as part of the world-wide revolt which he anticipated. I reminded him what one of the Pharaohs had done in bringing about irrigation and improving the agriculture in Egypt, and what his father had done in what was a desert area where now there was a high output of tropical and agricultural products; I suggested that rapid development in Egypt on these lines, which was part of the plan the conference was considering, would make for the stability of his position as king. I also suggested that, in addition to what the conference was doing, he might have a film made showing the evolution of agriculture in which Egypt had played such an important role from the beginning of civilisation up to the present day. By that film, Egypt could create goodwill for itself in other countries. He agreed to do this, but after I left he must have thought it not worth while.

When I got back to Washington I saw Mr Alec "Jim" Duckham, the British agricultural attaché who, by the way, had been trained at the Rowett Institute, and is now Professor of Agriculture at Reading University, to give him a full account of the conference. I suggested that he might write to the Ministry of Agriculture in Britain pointing out that if the plan succeeded there would be a greatly increased market for British agricultural equipment and other industrial products. He did write, but informed me later that he got no reply.

I then went to London to try to get the Colonial Office to agree

to join with F.A.O. in the invitations to experts to the suggested rinderpest conference at Nairobi, but when I saw the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, a very decent fellow but with little knowledge of agriculture, I found that he was engrossed with the British groundnuts scheme in Kenya and did not think it would be advisable for Britain to adjust its own plans to fit in with the plan outlined by the conference. He spoke for nearly twenty minutes about the groundnuts scheme which he regarded as of far greater importance to Britain than any collaboration in the Middle East. Unfortunately, I at last lost my temper and said to him, 'Mr Minister, there is no need to tell me about the groundnuts scheme. I have spent my life in agricultural research and am a farmer. I once controlled 4,000 acres in the East African area doing experimental work in agriculture, and I can tell you here and now that the groundnuts scheme is ill-advised and will end in disaster.' The head of the Duthie experimental farm, possibly the ablest practical agriculturist I know, cabled me in Washington saying he had been offered a post in the groundnuts scheme and asking whether he should accept it. I told the Minister I had cabled back telling him on no account to have anything to do with the scheme. After that little explosion, I said that what I wanted to know was whether Britain was prepared to co-operate in the rinderpest investigation, and if the Minister refused to consider it, I intended to go across to the House and get some of the Conservative members who knew about agriculture to put down questions on the order paper about the refusal of the Colonial Office to co-operate in the conference at Nairobi and I said I would supply them with information about the futility of the groundnuts scheme. He turned then to the civil servant who was in attendance at the interview and said, 'Perhaps we had better reconsider the question of collaborating in the rinderpest work'. The civil servant rose, with an angry gesture picked up his brief-case and announced, 'I am not in favour of international co-operation', and walked out of the room. The Minister took it like a rabbit, and that was the end of my attempt to get Britain's co-operation in a plan which, if it had been carried out, would have brought prosperity to the Middle East and avoided the tragedies which followed—including the disastrous Suez attack a few years later. As I was shortly handing over to my successor there was nothing more I could do.

That was the end of one of the most ambitious attempts to get the nations to collaborate in increasing the food supply of the world for the abolition of hunger and the raising of the standard of living of the people in the underdeveloped countries—the purpose for which F.A.O. had been established.

CHAPTER 22

LAST THOUGHTS ON AMERICA

I HAD thought for some time that the headquarters in Washington might be too much under the influence of the United States and we would be freer if we moved to one of the European countries. I considered various countries and would have liked to have seen F.A.O. settled in Copenhagen. One day when I was lunching with the Italian Ambassador, we discussed the advisability of moving F.A.O. from America. He offered to ascertain whether the Italian government would make a gift of a great modern block of offices which Mussolini in his hey-day had built as the Italian Colonial Office. This would solve the difficulties of providing funds for a new headquarters building in Europe. Later the Ambassador informed me that the Italian government would give the building, fully equipped and free of cost, if F.A.O. moved to Rome. After a good deal of lobbying I had little difficulty in persuading the F.A.O. council that the move would be beneficial. It would save the rental of the premises we had on the top floors of a Washington building and resolve the difficulty of the colour bar in Washington which prevented the coloured members of the staff from eating in the ground-floor restaurant. They had been promised that they would be allowed to do so before we took over the top floors of the building, but the promise was not kept.

I left for home in 1948 before the move began; I realised that as the director-general I had failed to carry through the great scheme which had originated in the League of Nations and been approved by Roosevelt and his ministers when they called the Hot Springs conference. I was profoundly disappointed in America, a country for which I had such a great admiration and where I had made so many friends, among scientists and others. Going up the gangway of the ship taking us home I took out my handkerchief, wiped the dust of America from the soles of my shoes with it and threw it into the harbour. America, I thought, had missed a great opportunity for taking up the leadership of a prosperous and peaceful world. I felt I was finished with America which had gone back on

its own great plan which the Hot Springs conference had been called to consider, as it had done when President Wilson had formed the League of Nations to put an end to war, and work for international co-operation to eliminate other world-wide evils. If America had followed through either of these decisions after the two world wars it would have had the support of the great majority of the people of the world.

But this disgruntled feeling did not last long. Since then I have been back to America many times and on all of my visits I made friends with many scientists some of whom were working on the same lines as the Rowett Institute, for example, Dr Hazel Stiebeling, whose dietary surveys ran parallel with the ones the Institute had been doing in Britain. I was given awards in America for the most important work in nutrition in the international field. I had the honour of being selected, with Professor E. V. McCollum of Baltimore, the doyen of American nutrition research workers, by a panel of American scientists, to receive the Borden Gold Medal with a gift of 1,500 dollars to enable me to stay in America for a week or two to visit my many friends there. Also the travelling expenses of my wife and myself were paid as part of the gift. This was the only honour I ever received, apart from the Nobel Peace Prize, with money attached to it. I received another award jointly with Lord Woolton, British Minister of Food, Professor Jack Drummond and Sir Wilson Jameson, from the American Medical Association for the British war-time food policy based on the nutritional needs of different sections of the community.

I also had the honour, along with Lord Horder, of being made an honorary member of the New York Academy of Medicine, and of the Public Health Association of America which gave me the Grocer's Award for the most outstanding work in the promotion of health in the international field. The American National Farmers' Union, of which Mr James G. Patton was president, awarded me the gold medal which is given once every three years to the one who has done most to promote the welfare of American agriculture. These, with an honorary degree of Princeton University and honorary fellowships of some medical and scientific societies, make me most grateful to America which, since my first visit forty years ago, I had always regarded as my second home. In spite of my temporary irritation in 1948, I have a warm

affection for the country and its people some of whom I count among my very good friends.

One of the finest characters I ever met was John Winant, American Ambassador to Britain during the war, whom I got to know very well. I invited him to come and give the main speech at one of the Strathcona dinners. He visited me in America when I was with the F.A.O. and we had a long talk about the state of the world. He was extremely distressed by the way things were going. It would have been a good move to try and get him to take over as my successor at the F.A.O. and I always regret I did not do this. Winant was in complete sympathy with any effort to abolish hunger and poverty in the world.

When I was at Princeton at an international conference, I spent part of a day with Professor Einstein and talked about the world and the future. Einstein held very progressive views and he stated in simple language, while sitting smoking his pipe, what needed to be done to save us from war and to build a better world. In spite of his enormous ability, he had a childlike mind and hated giving displeasure to anybody. I was told by a friend of his that his wife had found he had given an order for a lift in his house—of two floors only—which was absolutely unnecessary. When asked why he said that the man who called was so desperately anxious and in need of an order that he could not refuse him.

At a conference in Chicago to consider means of lessening political tensions I met Mr Cyrus Eaton, and with Sir Norman Angel, a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, accepted an invitation to visit his home in Cleveland, Ohio. Over dinner Sir Norman and Mr Eaton reminisced about their youth when they had both been cowboys—a fascinating conversation for the rest of us to listen to. Cyrus Eaton had a most interesting house, with the best private library I have ever come across, full of books on philosophy and politics. There were two guest houses where visitors wishing to have solitude could stay and have all their meals without going into the main house. This, we thought, was the highest level of hospitality. My wife and I had always preferred to stay in a hotel rather than in the houses of friends. On this occasion we had decided to leave on the Monday morning but when Monday came I would fain have altered my plans and stayed longer, as indeed we

were urged to do. When we were going to Ohio in 1961, Mr Eaton who was in Brussels at the time, cabled his secretary to get in touch with us and ask us to stay in New York till he and his wife would return from Brussels in his private plane to take us for another visit to their home. We went for a short weekend and stayed till Tuesday.

I have had the honour of meeting every President from the time of President Coolidge, with the exception of President Roosevelt, though after his death I several times met and corresponded with Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt and enjoyed her hospitality at her home in Poughkeepsie. I did two radio talks with her, one in London and one at Poughkeepsie. President Eisenhower had an obsession about Communism, like so many other Americans, I fear. Nothing could be done until Communism had been destroyed. As he declared that he was also against war, I wondered how he thought this was going to be achieved.

Even after the collapse of the food policy plan, the idea of international co-operation in a world development project, beginning with food for the mutual benefit of all nations, was not altogether forgotten. President Kennedy, with whom I had the great honour of a long interview, in which we talked about international affairs and the ways to attain world peace, stated at a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly that America would support a food policy which would give every child in the world an adequate diet.

After I returned from America in 1948, one of the leading Russian Foreign Office officials wanted me to go to Moscow with him to interview Field Marshal Stalin who he assured me would take the initiative in inviting all nations to join in a world food policy. I was reluctant to go, however, because I thought at that time that if the Soviet Union took the lead, Britain and America would refuse to co-operate. Under Mr Khrushchev, there is no doubt that Russia would have been glad to join in some sort of food policy. We must wait and see what happens under the new leaders. The Labour Party had in their 1964 election programme the promotion of a World Food Board. Now they form the government with Harold Wilson as Prime Minister. If only they would take the lead, and America under President Johnson would follow

the line taken by President Kennedy, there should be no difficulty in getting the support of the Soviet Union. Then the great plans envisaged by the two great Presidents, Roosevelt and Kennedy, will be realised and justify the efforts so many scientists have made to bring about international co-operation for the benefit of the whole human family.

CHAPTER 23

LAST THOUGHTS ON F.A.O.

THE movement for international co-operation did not stand still when the plans for a world food policy were squashed by Britain and America. In 1949, President Truman brought out his Point IV plan: 'A bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of undeveloped areas'. And in 1950 the United Nations held a Technical Assistance Conference at which about fifty nations agreed to contribute about 20,000,000 dollars, of which F.A.O. got 29 per cent, the largest share. Other recipients were the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and other international organisations. Britain, not to be left behind in the good work, set up the Colombo Plan in 1951 for co-operative development in South and South-East Asia.

It would have been better if all the technical advisers had been controlled by one organisation, preferably F.A.O., which, with its regional offices, had the best idea of what each country needed. But they all seemed to act independently, which caused confusion and overlapping. When I was in Pakistan in 1951 as chairman of a committee advising the government on modernising agriculture, I found three technical advisers each from different organisations drawing up recommendations for the poultry industry. None of them knew that there were another two on the same job.

The need for technical assistance in the underdeveloped countries was exaggerated. It was not recognised that in some countries like India and Pakistan there were agricultural research stations and agricultural departments in the universities with efficient staff, many of whom had been educated in European or American universities. They knew more about the principles of agriculture than most of the advisers sent from America or Britain—often by no means the best men in the field. Further, the native experts had a knowledge of soil and climatic conditions and of administration and social affairs which had to be taken into account when considering what measures were feasible. When visiting Pakistan

and India after I left F.A.O. I went into villages with an interpreter to find out what the peasants were capable of doing. I found that they knew what was needed to increase production but were too poor to buy the fertilisers, modern implements, pumps for irrigation and other industrial products needed. I repeat: what the food deficient countries need is not so much technical assistance as foreign credits to import the essential industrial products and set up those industries which would enable them to produce them themselves.

The foreign technical advisers were not always very discreet, for example some of the super-patriotic Americans disregarded the susceptibilities of the natives. One, a very nice man whom I got to know well, walked into the Agriculture Department in Pakistan where the head was a graduate of Edinburgh University and had an assistant who held a doctorate from Cambridge University, and told them that all they needed was the American 'know how' and he was here to give it them. Such an attitude did not endear the agricultural technical assistant to the native-born experts, but they had to restrain themselves, because India and Pakistan were looking for financial aid from America. I read in a leading article in one of the two main Indian newspapers published in English that 'these foreign experts must be tolerated with patience'. On their report might depend the financial aid the country so urgently needed.

Since 1949 the United States, in addition to being the biggest contributor to F.A.O. and other U.N. agencies, has spent enormous sums in foreign aid. In 1963 it was four to five thousand million dollars. Several times in public speeches in America I said that the American people would never get any thanks for this aid, because the receiving countries knew that the aid was given, not so much in their interest as to stop the march of Communism in the interest of America, and a considerable part consisted of arms and other military aids. If instead of listening to the old men like Chiang Kai-shek and Syngman Rhee who were on the way out, they had listened to the students in the universities and other young people on the way in, they would have learned that the people in those countries which were having military aid pushed on them, were not prepared to shed a drop of blood to stop the march of Communism—nor, on the other hand, would they make

any move to bring about the collapse of the capitalist West, in the interests of Russia. The young people thought that the attempts to force their country to be anti-Communist or anti-capitalist were insulting to their newly won freedom of which they were intensely proud. The Russians, more subtle than the Americans, gave aid with no obvious political strings; their technicians live with and like the common people and gain their friendship.

I have ventured to criticise some unfortunate features in the aid programme but in many respects the technical assistance, especially in industrialisation, and the financial aid have been of great benefit to the poor countries. The service rendered by non-governmental organisations, for example the Rockefeller and the Ford Foundations and the Friends Service organisation in small projects undoubtedly have done much to alleviate poverty in local areas.

The latest organisation in this field is the F.A.O. Campaign against Hunger. It is hoped to raise a hundred million dollars from governments as a special fund, to syphon off food from countries with a surplus and give it to the food deficient countries. The main value of this Campaign can be to rouse the conscience of the people, and pinpoint the failure of the United Nations to deal with poverty in the midst of abundance, the failure to get governments to realise the danger of the growing gap between the poor and the wealthy nations. The explanation of this growing gap was given by Dag Hammarskjold, late Secretary General of the United Nations. He pointed out that a fall of 5 per cent in the average of their export prices for the poorer countries is approximately equal to the entire flow of capital which they receive, not only from International Bank loans but from all other public and private loans and government grants. The prices of some of the staple primary products have dropped not 5 per cent but from 10 per cent to 47 per cent to the benefit of the wealthy countries importing them, but to the detriment of poor countries exporting them. That, together with populations increasing at a rate which in some countries will double the number of people in less than thirty years, accounts for the growing gap between the under-developed and the industrialised countries.

As both Russia and China have shown, it is possible for a country with adequate natural resources and a totalitarian

government, able to plan ahead and to mobilise all the people to carry out the plans, to bring about rapid industrialisation with an increase in wealth and a rise in the standard of living, without any aid from wealthy countries. It would be an interesting exercise for economists to try to figure out what would happen to the Western economic system if the primary producing countries were able to join forces and insist on getting a high enough price for their primary products to enable their workers to get a wage equal to that of workers in the wealthier countries to which they sell their products. In this rapidly changing world stranger things have happened in the last fifty years.

In 1962 an international league of agricultural producers reported that food production would need to be increased by 103 per cent by 1980 and by more than 260 per cent by the year 2000 simply to eliminate hunger and provide the medical improvement needed in the diet of children and mothers. It is becoming increasingly evident that all that has been done and is being done is insufficient to eliminate hunger and poverty from the world, which is getting worse. In 1963 the increase in world population exceeded the increase in world food production. It has been estimated that to make a sizeable dent in the hunger and poverty of half the population of the world something like the equivalent of ten thousand million dollars a year would be needed. That is about 10 per cent of the total military budget which the world spends on armaments and the space race. Since leaving F.A.O., I have tried to promote a policy which would bring about a situation where the two greatest evils in the world today—a nuclear war and the revolt of the poverty-stricken coloured half of the population against the domination of the white man—would cancel each other out. If Russia and America, the two dominant powers, would agree to cut their military budgets by, say, 10 per cent and devote half of the saving (five thousand million dollars in the first year) to an international development fund, beginning with increased production of food to abolish hunger, and the other half to lessen the intolerable burden of taxation, the world might be on the way to economic prosperity with full employment; any such co-operation for the mutual advantage of all nations would be an important step towards world unity and permanent peace. Another 10 per cent

reduction in mass expenditure in the second year would provide the funds needed for bringing about a great expansion of world markets to keep pace with the increasing capacity for production.

The snag about this policy is that it would need to be carried out by business men; but the politicians who control foreign policy will be reluctant to hand over their powers to business men. As the policy of Louis XIV of France led to the collapse of the governing class in the French Revolution, so the lack of vision of the politicians concerned with international affairs may bring about a similar collapse on a world scale today. The people of the world must unite in a demand for disarmament and insist that the money saved should be devoted to the abolition of hunger and poverty. If all nations could be persuaded to co-operate in this aim it would be the first step to world unity, economic prosperity, and permanent peace.



PROBLEM OF OUR TIME: FROM LAND TO MOUTH

A cartoon by David Low.

CHAPTER 24

VISIT TO THE ROYAL FAMILY

WHILE director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, I had many opportunities of meeting both political and economic leaders in different countries, scientists and business men. One of my most interesting meetings was with the British Royal Family.

Once, on my way to an international conference in 1947 at Geneva, I came home for a couple of days. There was a telephone message from Balmoral where King George VI and the Queen were staying, asking me to come and stay for a weekend. I replied that I was on my way to an important meeting in Geneva and was sure that His Majesty would not wish me to neglect this duty. Further, as I was travelling light, with no clothes except what I was wearing, I was not fit to visit Royalty. After a short while another message came through saying that the King would like me to come up and stay for a night and he would excuse me not being suitably dressed; I accepted the invitation. I was allowed the use of a sitting-room where one could smoke. In Queen Victoria's time visitors could only smoke with their head near the chimney so as to prevent the smell of smoke percolating into any of the rooms. In talking with the Honourable David Bowes-Lyon, the Queen's brother, before the Royal Family came down to dinner, I said how uncomfortable I felt not being properly dressed, and he replied, 'Oh, don't worry. Here am I with an unfashionable American tuxedo on.' When the Royal Family came in everybody stood to attention. They were accompanied by Prince Philip, and I told my wife when I got home that I was sure there would be a marriage between Prince Philip and one of the two charming Princesses. I sat at the Queen's right hand at dinner. I told her I had been in Canada when she was there. In Quebec she had given a speech in French which I could follow and which was greatly appreciated by the French-Canadians; with a Scots accent she spoke not in Parisian French but in the old French which was like that spoken by the French-Canadians.

When the ladies retired I was asked to go and sit beside King

George, with whom I got on very well. He asked me to come and see him next morning. After talking a little about the world food situation he asked me if I was in favour of nationalisation of the land. I replied that I was not. I owned a farm and thought I could manage it just as well as any civil servant. I was tenant of another farm and I could at any time go up and demand to see the proprietor, but if the land were nationalised I would never be able to talk over anything with the civil servants. At this he seemed greatly pleased and began to discuss farming, telling me about the farm he had at Sandringham and the improvements he was making for the good of the farm and his workers. He was well informed on farming. I left with an increased admiration for an honest, highly intelligent man who, I believe, would have been happier as a country squire than in the more harassing job of being a King. I also had the greatest admiration for the Queen, now the Queen Mother, a woman of great charm and common sense, probably the most popular Queen Britain has ever had. Many would have liked her to be made Queen when her congenial husband, George VI, died. In 1947 when I was in Washington I was proud to be asked to make the final speech before the King spoke in the traditional Christmas Day broadcast.

Several times after this, I have had talks with the Duke of Edinburgh. He had been educated at Gordonstoun where he was taught all the manly virtues and the art of leadership. When he was president of the British Association he gave a presidential address which he wrote himself. It showed a wider vision of the changes being brought about by the great advances in science than many scientists seem to have. I went to Oxford University to hear him speak at a meeting which had been convened by him to consider relationships between management and workers. He was equally brilliant on this subject. He is obviously a man with a capacity for original thought, with a vision of things to come, a splendid speaker, and with a very pleasant personality. It is a great pity that he was not given a big job for which he is well fitted. I once suggested to a Cabinet Minister that as education was needing to be re-examined in the light of the vastly changed conditions from those of the nineteenth century, the Duke, as Chancellor of Edinburgh University, should be appointed chairman of the chancellors and principals of other universities in Scotland to

consider the present position and put forward new proposals. Scotland would have been big enough to handle, but the conclusions arrived at by such a committee, with the Duke of Edinburgh as chairman, could have been applied to the whole of Great Britain. If that had been done ten years ago, education in Britain would not have suffered from the hurriedly drawn up plans and changes, the results from some of which may not prove to be as beneficial as their supporters assumed.