

CHAPTER VI
SCOTLAND AS IT MIGHT BE

BY SIR JOHN ORR

THE SCOTLAND of the future which Mr. MacLehose sees is a country in which every Scottish family will have a house in which a family can live in decency, and have sufficient of the right kind of food to rear children, so that they will attain their full inherited capacity for health and physical fitness. He wants to reverse the nineteenth century flow of the population from the country to the towns. He wants to see a much larger proportion of our people living in economic freedom, with a high standard of living in our country districts, in the lowlands and in our Highland glens. He wants those who are left in the cities to have the high standard of living he

THE FULL LIFE

demands for those on the land. If that were done the lives of the poorer half of the population of Scotland would be transformed. Environmental conditions would be such that our inherited capacity for physique would get full scope. We would become a race as vigorous as the Scandinavians. Our infant mortality rate in Glasgow, which is now about 100, would come down to the level of Oslo, where it is below 30. Give us those conditions, and in physical and intellectual vigour no race in the world would surpass us.

Can this be done? Not only can it be done, but if it is not done the present economic system will collapse. The application of science to industry has enabled us to produce real wealth in such abundance that our trade system cannot dispose of it. The so-called glut even of foodstuffs is so great that the Government has had to resort to measures of restriction of production and imports. The way to relieve the congestion and prevent a collapse is not to limit production, but to

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increase consumption and raise the standard of living. We could consume all the present production of food and far more. To bring the national diet up to the level recommended by the Government Advisory Committee on Nutrition, Mr. George a statistician, estimates that we would 'require an increase of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. in our dairy herds and the complete elimination of all manufacturing processes'. This means increased production on the land in this country and increased imports of butter and cheese. In the case of eggs he says 'we must either increase our poultry population by 50 per cent. or double our imports.' We need also a greatly increased consumption of fish and fruit. Our Scottish farmers are unsurpassed in skill, and our land could produce all the milk, eggs and fruit required, and our fishing industry all the fish required to bring the diet of the poorer half of the population of Scotland up to the standard recommended by the Government Committee.

THE WILL TO DO IT

But in addition to food we need houses. We can get the material to build houses and our workmen have the craftsmanship. The men who build luxury liners like the *Queen Mary* to carry foreigners could surely build decent houses for our Scottish families.

For food and housing, the two primary necessities for rearing a vigorous race, we do not lack resources of either men or material; what we lack is the will to do it. But the will to do it can only come through a great spiritual revival, which will bring about a new assessment of values. It could all be done in one decade if our industrial magnates instead of concentrating their attention entirely on money-making would take a pride in the number of men the industry can support, and boast of the high standard of living enjoyed by the men in their industry; if our landlords took a pride in the number of people living on their lands and in their standard of living; if they would boast not about the number of salmon and grouse they have killed,

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but of the health and physique and intellectual vigour of the children in their domains; if our sentimental Scots instead of boasting about the rather mythical glories of the past would direct their patriotic fervour to the improvement of conditions for the future; if those who claim to be the leaders of our Highland clans would regard it as a shame and disgrace to their clan for any member to be living under the sordid conditions of a city slum, while the lands of the clansmen are desolate and empty.

But we cannot hope to do this without a revolution. We have had evolution and the 'process of gradualness' for the last fifty years, a process in which all progress was estimated in terms of money, wage levels, salaries and dividends, and we have still a desolate industrial belt, an empty countryside and the slums with their poverty and misery. We need a revolution which would give us a different index of prosperity. We could get no better index than the standard of living of the poorest.

REVOLUTIONS IN SCOTLAND

You cannot raise that without raising the whole structure of society.

We need not be afraid of a revolution. Scotland has had revolutions in the past and been a great deal the better of them. We had a religious and political revolution in the sixteenth century, when the soul of Scotland was shaken to its depths and peers and peasants signed the National Covenant, some of them with their blood. That revolution gave Scotland its religious and political freedom. We had a revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. About 1750 the agriculture of Scotland was more backward than that of any country in Western Europe. The nation then got a new assessment of values. The energy which had been dissipated in religious and political fighting was directed towards the land. Landlords, farmers and peasants and even clergymen worked with enthusiasm in creating a new Scottish agriculture. Within fifty years the old mediaeval system of agriculture which had continued until the

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eighteenth century was revolutionised, and in the early years of the nineteenth century our methods of agriculture were probably the best in Europe, and English landlords were taking Scottish farm workers south to introduce the Scottish system of agriculture to England. During the Great War the industries of Scotland were reorganised to provide ships, guns, munitions and other war material, and our manhood organised into fighting units. In Scotland we do things thorough. So thorough was the revolution of our industries for the purpose of war, that when the war ceased the bottom fell out of our industries. That is probably the main reason why the post-war depression was so much more acute in Scotland than in England. If a national movement with the enthusiasm and discipline and the organisation of men and material such as we had in the war were brought into being, and directed towards raising the standard of living of the great masses of the people of our country, beginning with the poorest, then

A BLOODLESS REVOLUTION

within a decade we could have a new Scotland with no slums and none of the misery and degradation of the depressed areas. We might have done this any time in the last fifty years if we had had the will to do it.

Let us assume that Mr. MacLehose's plea will be listened to, and that we will have a revolution; one without bloodshed and without bitterness; one in which we will pull down nothing which should be conserved nor lessen the material prosperity of any class. This can be done, because if we think in terms not of money but of real wealth, we have or can produce in abundance everything we need to raise the standard of living of the poorest without depriving the more fortunate of any of their material possessions.

If we are going to have a revolution to carry out a Scottish national plan, we must have a definite objective. Let us have a modest, simple objective that all classes will understand, and let us set down in our plan only what we know we can accomplish. Let us

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limit it to food and housing. For food we will set out to get nothing extravagant, no luxuries, merely a diet on the standard which the Government Committee has said is necessary for health. And for housing, a standard which would allow a comfortable house so that not more than two people sleep in a bedroom, and a separate sanitary convenience for every family.

To bring the diet of Scotland up to this level would involve an increased production of from 20 to 50 per cent. of milk, eggs, fruit, vegetables and fish. This means the re-organisation of Scottish agriculture for increased production. This can be fitted in to a policy of increasing the number of people on the land. Scotland must increase its rural population if it is to retain its national character. No nation which has not got a large section of the population rooted on the land is safe.

But even if we had a scheme for establishing more families on the land we would need

WHY PEOPLE LEFT THE LAND

to find means to induce them to stay there. People left the land in the past because the standard of living was higher in the cities. They trekked down from the poverty of the Highlands in the hope of a higher standard of living in the towns of the south, and the ablest of them trekked further south to seek their fortunes where there was more money to be made. There is more money to be made in buying and selling things than in producing them. There is more money to be made in finance than in ordinary trade. If the people are to be kept on the land this must be reversed. As good a living must be made on the land as in the towns.

But the mechanisation of farming is driving people off the land. More and more is being produced with less and less labour. Another difficulty about the settlement of people on the land is that the best farming land has been taken up by the big farmers. It was too often the inferior land that the small man got, and consequently the old crofts did not pay. The

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land was generally poor and the economic unit was too small, and consequently the crofter had to accept a standard of living below that of the workman in the town with the result that the family migrated to the town, and the homes of the crofters which reared healthy families though they had to work hard, crumbled to ruins and the fields got merged into larger holdings.

We have schemes for land settlement, but the numbers being put on the land do not compensate for the numbers of crofters and farm servants leaving the land to add to the congestion of the cities. If we wish a larger proportion of our families reared in the country we must have much more ambitious schemes for land settlement. We must experiment along new lines and the nation must be prepared to pay. Fortunately, the additional food we need, *e.g.* milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables, to bring our national diet up to the standard required for health is the kind of produce best suited for small farms. But

FARMS AND SETTLEMENTS

until the nation has decided to embark on a national scheme for attaining the double objective of producing the additional food needed for health reasons, and of getting a much larger proportion of the population on the land, it is hardly worth while considering new schemes. The following suggestions are merely examples of methods which might be investigated to see if they are worth trying.

We might have large farms fully mechanised with the minimum of continuous labour, and a small village settlement beside the farm, the people in the settlement getting seasonal labour, *e.g.* a large farm with five or six whole-time workers, engineers rather than farm servants, and about forty or fifty other people getting three to four months' work on the farm during the year, and the rest of the time working in their own small holdings on which they produce the most of their own foodstuffs and have a surplus of eggs, tomatoes, honey and handicraft material, which might be marketed through the large farm organisation.

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These settlements might provide a reservoir of labour for our industries. When labour in the towns was scarce some of the men might move into the towns. Facilities for travel are now so good that some might work in the towns and live in these villages. In times of depression and unemployment these men would be living in healthy surroundings with something to do and an interest in life instead of living huddled together in the slums of the cities.

If small independent units are to be made to yield a standard of living high enough to induce people to stay on them, then they would need to get their raw material, feeding stuffs, manures, etc., at the same price as the large units, and they might need to get a better price for their produce than the large units. The Marketing Boards might be organised to do this. For example, they might give x pence per dozen for, say, the first 500 dozen eggs, $x - \frac{1}{2}$ d. for the second 500, and $x - 1$ d. for all in excess. This would bias the system

SMALL INDEPENDENT UNITS

in favour of the small farm but still allow scope for enterprise and initiative on the part of the big farmer with organising ability and plenty of capital. It may be worth while having a scheme on these or other lines which will favour the small farmer. In these days, when industry and business run to big combines, with everyone employees and servants, except the board of directors, there is a danger of the national characteristics of virile independence and initiative being lost. To preserve these it may be worth while taking steps to prevent the small independent men, shop-keepers, traders, farmers, from being crushed out.

If it were desired to create an agricultural population in the more fertile parts of the Highlands, we would need to consider what branches of agriculture were best suited for these districts. The Orkney Islands have shown what can be done with poultry. Another branch which might be developed is the production of store cattle. Stapledon's work in Wales has shown that the productivity

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of the grassy hills can be greatly increased. In the milder climates of the Western Highlands there is a luscious growth in summer. Some of this might be preserved in small silos for winter feed, and so increase the number of stock which can be kept. The higher subsidy being paid by the Meat Commission for home-produced animals should favour the production of store cattle in the Highlands, and might form the basis of a national scheme for increasing the number of cattle which in turn would help to tramp down the bracken that is now covering land which at one time supported families.

If agriculture is to be made profitable in the Highlands, then the Marketing Boards would need to bear the cost of transport. If in some of the Highland glens they could get their feeding stuffs, manure and other material at the same price as on the outskirts of the great consuming centres, and get the same price for their produce, it might be possible to make agriculture profitable in these outlying dis-

CANNING FACTORIES

tricts. But this would involve more labour to produce food for Scotland, and the nation would need to decide whether or not the repopulation of the Highlands and other outlying parts of Scotland is worth the extra labour.

It is not worth while considering putting factories in the Highlands. If you wish to make the Highlanders factory workers it would be cheaper to bring the Highlanders down to the factories. The only kind of factories which are worth while considering for the Highlands are possibly fish-canning and fish-curing, and small factories for the canning of fruit and vegetables, provided it is established that there is sufficient fertile land to grow enough to warrant factories.

The problem of provision of food and the settlement of people on the land should be considered in relation to the problem of housing. The housing scheme would need to be taken for Scotland as a whole in the light of the agricultural development and redistribu-

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tion of the population. The number of bricklayers and masons in Scotland are quite insufficient to build the houses we need quick enough. Why should we not mobilise all the unemployed youths between 16 and 20 who are at present deteriorating physically and morally because they have never been under the discipline of work? These would be set to work helping to build new houses in the towns and new homesteads in the country, improving means of transport and communication in the Highlands and on land reclamation. But the amenities of the country must also be increased. Is there any reason why these unemployed youths should not be set to laying out tennis courts and golf courses, not merely for summer visitors, but for the use of the inhabitants?

The mere bringing of these unemployed youths together and giving them something to do would remove the worst evil of unemployment, viz. the physical and moral deterioration of young Scotland. The youths would

MAKE USE OF THE YOUTHS

be well fed and looked after. Their health and physique would be improved; the work would be an education and a discipline. They would find a meaning and a purpose in life, and no longer have the feeling that they were unwanted and unneeded members of the community. They would be working for their country. The youths themselves would be much happier. Germany has organised its youths into labour camps in a great national preparation for war if war should come. Surely Scotland can organise its youths for these works of national importance which would increase the real wealth of the country and prove valuable national assets. Germany's national drive was done by the enthusiasm of youth. Scotland's youth dawdle at the street corners, and with the exception of some semi-charitable organisations which only reach a few, they are left to their own resources as if Scotland had no need of her youth.

A national scheme for ensuring that every Scottish family shall have a house which will

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enable them to live in decency, and every Scottish child sufficient of the foodstuffs of special health value such as milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables to enable them to grow up to be a virile race of to-morrow, could be carried out. We have the resources, but the brutal truth is that the general mass of people in Scotland do not want such a scheme. The majority of the well-to-do people, who have the leadership and the organising ability, are not really interested in these things, because they do not see how they would yield a payment to them in money. And the submerged third of the population, living under the conditions they are in and fed as they are, have not the energy to put up a fight for themselves. The future of Scotland is of little interest to people living in the misery of the slums.

An attempt to carry through a national scheme of reorganisation would be resisted by powerful vested interests. Would the house-building trade unions be willing to

VESTED INTERESTS

allow the monopoly of their trades to be broken by a housing campaign carried on by those who are at present unemployed? Would contractors look with favour upon work being done in which they had no chance of making a profit? Even the architects would be loath to see new housing schemes in which they had no hope of any commission. All the different vested interests which are apt to be short-sighted would be liable to oppose any scheme which they thought was going to interfere with their profit-making.

Until we get the spiritual revival which Mr. MacLehose would like to see there is not much hope from the Government. In a democratic country the Government can only carry out the wishes of the people. In this country the people who have the power and influence think mainly in terms of money making and profit, and the Government must do the same. Apart from war, the balancing of the budget, imports and exports and other trade considerations must be the primary

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interests of the Government of a country of traders. The third of the population consisting of unemployed and poorly paid workmen, whose standard of living is far below what the present material wealth of the country warrants, cause a certain amount of uneasiness. The well-to-do don't like to think of them, for we are a kindly people. We soothe our consciences by charitable organisations and the poor are kept from rising and asserting themselves by periodically giving them a little more. A little extra on the 'dole', a few more houses, a third of a pint of milk at half-price to prevent gross malnutrition among children, and other such social measures take the edge off the bitterness of poverty, and help to keep the masses quiet. Our labour leaders think they have achieved something worth while when they have got these crumbs, when the people they represent might secure their full share of the loaf, which is big enough to supply sufficient for everybody.

THE MONETARY SYSTEM

Scotland is ripe for a spiritual revolution which would enable us to put first things first. A great national scheme for raising the standard of living up to the level which our wealth can support would lead to a revival of agriculture, re-population of the land, a great boom of industry and internal trade, and plenty of room for profit-making. It could be arranged to bring about a period of prosperity for everybody.

Some will ask where is the money to come from. But if the people of Scotland wish a higher standard of living, and the material resources are there and the people are willing to work for it, and the whole scheme is held up because there is no money, then it is obvious that the present monetary system has broken down and no one can expect the country to be run in the interest of an obsolete monetary system. The argument of there being no money is highly dangerous for the people who have money. It may lead to a condition of affairs when their money,

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which after all is only vouchers, may become of no value. As a matter of fact, in my opinion there is plenty of money in the country if it were used and made to circulate fast enough. The people who have money, and who would need to pay, need not fear, because if it is put in circulation it is all likely to come back eventually into their hands again.

What we want is not more money, but leaders. Will our dukes, our lords and our Highland chieftains come forward to build the new Scotland? They would be more than welcome, and several of them have shown that in such a work they would gladly play their part. What a vision it would bring to the people in the slums and in the depressed industrial areas if they were told that a great national scheme for bringing prosperity to every family in Scotland was being initiated and led by people of that kind. Could we not have a national movement in which these and the equally important trade union leaders

NEED FOR LEADERSHIP

and the great captains of industry could combine in a scheme which would win the enthusiastic allegiance of the youths who, dissatisfied with the present state of affairs, join the Communists or the Fascists or some other political group which holds out the hope of rebuilding society on a better basis? Is Scotland, which led the world in the fight for religious and political freedom, which gave civilisation the steam engine, which was the origin of the wealth that the factories of the world produce, now so bankrupt of ideas that it must turn to Russia and Germany for leadership? These systems have an idealism which appeals to youth, because they call for action to do something. And let us make no mistake: great things are being done in these countries. But these systems are not suitable for Scotland, where individual freedom of thought and speech won for us by our forefathers is dearer than material prosperity.

The social and economic structure of society which grew out of the industrial re-

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volution is either collapsing in chaos and disorder or, as in most of the smaller democratic countries, being rapidly adjusted to suit the new age of plenty. The best service which Scotland could render a distracted world would be to show that it is possible to get the cooperation of all classes in an organised national movement to apply the almost inconceivable wealth which modern science can produce to build up a state in which the poorest can lead a full life. If that can be done anywhere without bloodshed and bitterness it can be done in Scotland, where the different classes are of the same blood and understand each other. We have all the same pride of race. The wealthy families of to-day are descended from the working class families of yesterday. Men with Highland names, however poor in wealth, boast—and that truly—that they have the blood of chieftains in their veins. Peer and peasant have stood shoulder to shoulder in many a hard-fought fight in the past. The time has come to close the ranks of all classes

THE GREATEST STRUGGLE

for the greatest struggle of all, to lift our Scottish race out of the morass of poverty and confusion which the false ideals of the industrial revolution created.

It is here that the example of our past heroes of Scottish history can help us. Inspired by them, Scotland shook off the domination first of foreign kings, then of her own barons, and finally of the rich monastic institutions which were taking too much from her and giving too little in return. If our forefathers could do that, we can shake off the vested interests in our time, and so make the Scotland of 1957 a happier place for our sons to live in. We have the men, we have the materials, we have the land: all we need is a touch of the ancient fire in our hearts. It may well be that Mr. MacLehose's book will kindle the first glow in the hearts of patriotic Scotsmen.