

## NOTES ON THE MONTH

**THE HOLY YEAR.** The pain of losing and loss is all that is Time's own. The life and freshness in it derive from Eternity. Nevertheless, that is the sadness of history; everything passes. But the Logos, the exemplar of all perfections, was born into the stream of Time, and there offered Himself in sacrifice; that nothing might perish, but everything be gathered into His Eternity. This is the central fact of history. In our present distresses, the Pope now bids us think of that. His message is not one of escape, but of our supremacy over what is only an incident, after all, in human life; a crisis, not *the* crisis.

**TECHNOCRACY.** Thus viewing the situation in proportion, we should be the first to tackle it. The evil is large and extensive. But to many able men, the problem is not difficult—in the sense of complicated—either to diagnose or remedy. Put us in charge, says a group of engineers and scientists, and we will provide plenty for all and with short hours of work: we have mastered machinery: all that remains is to sweep away the obsolete system of finance that prevents the world's wealth from reaching all for whom it was created: this we can do without violence or shock. For a non-technical account of their position, we commend a booklet recently published, *The ABC of Technocracy*, by Frank Arkwright (Hamish Hamilton, 1/6.).

**OBJECTIONS.** The matter is not one for the economists alone, for it touches the very nature of man. Technocracy may be without economic flaw, but traditional religion is said to be critical of, even hostile to, the very advantage Technocracy offers, namely the Leisure State. Is not hard labour the penalty for sin? And furthermore is it not a necessary discipline? To quote the headmaster of Mr. Williamson's *Dandelion Days*: 'The only thing in this world is work! Why, without work, where should we be? Lying on our backs in the jungle, waiting for ripe bananas to drop into our mouths. Some of you no doubt would prefer such a life: an ideal of a soft snug job after leaving school. Boys, don't be pauper spirits!'

**LEISURE NOT LAZINESS.** It can be urged that plenty of work will remain long after production and distribution

## BLACKFRIARS

have been scientifically designed to meet consumption. The problem of leisure should not arise until the waste land has been reclaimed, the slums cleared, and with them the rows of mean streets, and the shacks that litter the fringes of the town and stretch out along the roads into the country. There are many other urgent schemes of destruction and construction. Then the ascetical objection to Technocracy can be met by a distinction between leisure and unemployment. The subjects of industrial capitalism have only experienced the latter, and so it is difficult to judge the probable effect of leisure on the people. The upper middle classes have not notably suffered from their tradition of leisure. There seems no strong reason to suppose that a system which ruled out drudgery would make people flabby.

THE CATHOLIC ATTITUDE. Two facts are not without significance. The Church makes a precept of abstaining from servile work (the number of leisure-days she encouraged was a scandal to the economics bred of the Reformation), and a counsel of the vow of poverty, one of the purposes of which is to free men from worry over material things. But although the Catholic temper is opposed to the go-getter, man is a worker, an artist, and there will be no sympathy with any scheme that would make him little more than a consumer. Production, as well as consumption, needs to be equitably shared and distributed.

WORK WORSHIP. At present, a job should not be regarded as the only title to a livelihood. The Dole, so far as it goes, is primarily a matter of justice, not expediency or charity. A Catholic would not admit that the divine ordination of work includes the degrading employments which people are forced to take up in order to eke out a living. The Vienna correspondent of *The New Statesman* has described some of them—stealing into the slaughter-houses at night and plucking bristles from the pigs in the pens; searching the gutters and sewers and racking the refuse dumps for odds and ends; fishing for fat at the outflow of the town drain; touting for illegal operations. We cannot congratulate ourselves that conditions are very much better in this country.

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**LEGALIZATION OF THEFT.** The Kenya Legislative Council has passed an ordinance nullifying the Native Land Trust Ordinance, which assured the natives some security in the overcrowded reserves left to them. If this had been done because a vital commodity had been discovered to be worked for the public good, there would have been some defence for expropriation. But the reason in this case is the discovery of gold, and the motive behind the exploitation looks suspiciously like the profit of a private group.

**RADIO SERMONS.** Catholic services may be criticized by the neutral listener, but not for the reason he criticizes so many others—namely for their bleating. There are noteworthy exceptions—a listener last year may remember the Christmas Eve sermon on the Incarnation by the Dean of Winchester, and one earlier in the year on Christ the King by the Rev. B. Walke—but the majority are a real danger to Christianity. The urgent calls to an ideal undefined, the sentimentality that deserves the jeering it provokes. It should not cause surprise if a non-Christian's best instincts are revolted by such a religion, or the evening service taken as Sunday vaudeville.

**A DIMINISHING NATION.** Careful calculations show that the population of Great Britain should reach its peak about 1940. Afterwards an uneven decline should set in. One result will be an increased proportion of old people—in 1960, says *The Times*, we shall have to adapt ourselves to a nation composed perhaps of a million fewer small boys and a million more elderly women. Leaving mortality aside, and patriotism too, we may notice another result, the threat to Industry. Already the Manchester Corporation, doubting whether it will ever supply a need, have decided to postpone indefinitely a Westmorland water-works scheme, on which £1,000,000 has been spent and liability for £300,000 assumed. There is a warning here for other schemes of industrial development.

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