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when economic realities would warn them not to come or to move out.

We are not ourselves against compassionate aid from national governments to large cities. Subsidies may be necessary for their redemption from long-accumulated evils and difficulties out of which they cannot extricate themselves by their own resources. What is imperative is that government intervention, now that it has come, should be so contrived as to reduce, not to intensify, the urban difficulties that necessitate it.

F. Osborn, A. Whittick, "The New Towns.
The answer to Megalopolis"

Chapter VI

EVOLUTION OF THE NEW TOWNS POLICY

'All reflection on the problem of a society changing itself tends to emphasize the necessity of "gradualness". The use of intelligence, even in the scientific sense, and in fields where conditions are most favourable, involves a tremendous "overhead cost", especially in the form of time.'

—FRANK HYNEMAN KNIGHT: *Economic Theory and Nationalism* (1934)

WE have mentioned in Chapter IV the propaganda society now known as the Town and Country Planning Association, and its activities prior to the foundation of Letchworth in 1903-4. From that time onward the history of the garden city movement is bound up with that of the town planning movement, then engaging interest in overlapping sections of opinion, of which the best account so far is in William Ashworth's book *The Genesis of British Town Planning*.¹ We can only briefly sketch here the garden-city or new-town strand in the story. It is difficult for the present authors, ourselves active members during recent phases of the Association's campaign, to strike the right balance between objective truth and modest understatement in evaluating its share through sixty years in influencing opinion and policy. Beyond doubt its persistent advocacy, along with the visible demonstrations that it inspired at Letchworth and Welwyn, have been weighty factors in the evolution of planning thought. As members we have been particularly conscious of the obstacles the Association met in gaining public and authoritative attention for its proposals, and some account of these should be of interest—particularly as some of them still hold back the thoroughgoing adoption of an urban dispersal and new towns policy. (See Chapter X.)

Sidney Webb used to say that the normal lapse of time from the first promulgation of an important reform up to its general acceptance was about 18 years, in proof of which he was in the habit of quoting impressive instances. From 1898, the date of Howard's book, to 1946, the date of the New Towns Act, the interval was 48 years. Why was the progress so slow? Some critics have been disposed to place part of the blame on the fluctuations of clarity and intensity in the campaign of the Association itself, and certainly there were such fluctuations. But small in membership and weak in financial resources as it was, the Association never ceased to keep the garden-city idea and the two experiments in evidence. The fact that the idea did not catch on earlier

¹Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1954.

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with the public was the cause rather than the consequence of the Association's relative ineffectiveness in certain phases. No doubt if in the 1900s or 1920s the new-town idea had engaged the enthusiasm of some popular literary genius of the order of Rousseau or Tom Paine, some dynamic demagogic statesman like Lloyd-George, or even some astute as well as dedicated reformist wire-puller like Sidney Webb, things might have moved faster. Howard and his articulate followers, Unwin, Neville, Thomas Adams and others, were themselves no mean propagandists. They stated the idea lucidly and did lodge it in many minds. General acceptance of their propositions was however delayed by two pieces of sheer historical bad luck—the coincidences in time of the suburban boom at the turn of the century and of the great national housing drive of the 1920s and 1930s.

Almost contemporaneously with the publication of Howard's book, the development of electric traction and the internal combustion engine began to revolutionise urban transportation, and it became practicable for city dwellers to obtain without a serious increase in travel time acceptable dwellings in suburbs. Nothing was there to stop the consequent exodus of prosperous families from crowded city quarters to new and more spacious environments. No governmental powers were existent or in prospect to prevent the simultaneous expansion of industrial and commercial business in city centres, drawing towards the agglomerations further populations, some of whom reoccupied the dwellings vacated by the exodus, and others of whom settled on the suburban fringes along with those who were flocking out from the centres.

THE TOWN PLANNING MOVEMENT

It was the untidy fringe developments created by the haphazard outward rush that, from the 1860s on the continent of Europe and in 1909 in Great Britain, prompted the first town-planning legislation. Planning control was indeed a long-needed governmental function, and the Association obviously had to support its introduction and subsequent application. Some of its leading members, notably Unwin, took a leading part in the advocacy and drafting of the 1909 Act. The Association was opposed in principle to the addition of further suburbs to London and other cities too large already; but clearly suburbs were going to be built around many towns, and planning-minded people could not be indifferent to the new means of improving their character. After some heart-searchings over what seemed the questionable case of Hampstead Garden Suburb (1907), for which Unwin and Parker were appointed as planners by an independent public utility company, the Association decided that if a new suburb had to be added to London a good suburb would certainly be better than a bad suburb, without departing from its view that garden cities (new towns) were the only solution for the fundamental problem.

This tactical decision need not in itself have caused any obscuration

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of principle. Unfortunately the application at Hampstead, and in other contemporary suburbs and housing schemes, of the attractive new pattern of residential design, layout and planting that Unwin and Parker had matured in the first garden city was seized upon eagerly by housing developers all over Britain and in many other countries. Commercial builders, public-utility societies, writing architects, even some town planners (but not Unwin, who was clear-minded) appropriated Howard's carefully defined term of art, 'garden city', and used it indiscriminately as a label of prestige for any kind of open residential development—suburb, industrial village, or public or co-operative housing estate. 'Garden city' and 'garden suburb' became in popular parlance interchangeable. The residential pattern that both terms were taken to stand for became the fashion and then the popular norm; and it remains the popular norm today, with variations in generosity and parsimony of space. The fundamental principle exemplified by the first garden city—that of a self-contained industrial town, for working as well as living in, and limited in extent by a country belt—was temporarily understood by thousands of technical and political visitors, effusively praised, mentally pigeon-holed as something worth consideration some day, and, in the press of practical suburb-building, dropped out of consciousness or relegated to the realm of beautiful dreams. Except in rare cases the initiation of new towns would obviously have required governmental powers for the choice of location and the acquisition of large sites; to build them was therefore beyond the scope of municipal administrators, co-operative housing groups, and technicians. And so the suburban flood went on, often, despite the expostulations of Howard's followers, under the stolen banner 'garden city'. And many able planners, who would no doubt have preferred to be designing genuine new towns, were caught in the flood and swept away from active interest in the movement. They are not to be severely blamed, save in so far as they contributed to the terminological confusion. It is difficult for a technician to earn a living in an ivory tower.

Deprived during this period of the concentrated interest of its technical personnel, and handicapped in the recruitment of lay support by the confusion of terms, the Association languished somewhat in effectiveness. Its journal, *The Garden City* (the world's first periodical in the planning field, started in 1904 and now known as *Town and Country Planning*), kept Letchworth's progress and purpose in the eye of a small public, but inevitably much of its space was occupied by information about the progress of statutory town planning and about the planned suburbs and housing estates proliferating in Britain and overseas. Much journalistic ingenuity is required (as we have discovered) to put the same case over and over again in different words and with the fresh data, illustrations and anecdotes necessary to interest readers. The journal was never in a position to pay professional writers, and at times the shortage of bright copy as well as of cash compelled it to fall to quarterly instead of monthly publications. Its coverage was erratic

and incomplete, but its files are indispensable to students of the history of the movement.

THE HONOURED BUT UNSUNG

Our mention in these pages of the names of some of the members of the Association who figured in its affairs at various times must not be taken as an attempt to rank them in order of influence or devotion as compared with the many whom we do not name. In any history names may survive through accidents of titular position or presence on the scene during episodes that the historian thinks significant, no less than through personal thoughts, convictions or deeds. Assessments of relative effectiveness are not implied—are indeed impossible. Names can be found in the records of the Association of a long succession of tenacious honorary officers, committee members and lecturers, and of hard-working (and ill-paid) secretaries and editors, who sustained its activities through many difficult years. Devoted service was given by obscure adherents who, like the protagonist of Upton Sinclair's *Jimmy Higgins*, had no thought of personal benefit from their endeavours and never saw the results. Credit is due from survivors, who have seen the results, to the hundreds of persons, eminent and forgotten, who kept the garden city movement in being through times of hope and times of discouragement. Without their efforts the coming of the new towns would have been delayed for generations.

THE NEW TOWNS MOVEMENT AND PUBLIC HOUSING

Towards the end of the war of 1914-18 another reassertion of the true garden city principles was made by a small group consisting of Howard, F. J. Osborn, C. B. Purdom and W. G. Taylor, calling themselves the New Townsmen. Howard in letters to the press, and Purdom in a pamphlet of 1917, were the prime movers in this revival. The group issued in 1918 a little book restating the case in the light of experience at Letchworth and proposing the creation with Government support of a hundred new towns as part of the expected post-war reconstruction policy.¹ The book aroused appreciable public interest and restimulated the Association, which welcomed its fresh accent, absorbed the New Townsmen into its ranks and appointed Purdom as full-time secretary. With the help of a generous grant from the Joseph Rowntree Village (now Memorial) Trust and with Richard L. Reiss as chairman of the executive, a vigorous campaign for new towns as an integral part of the expected national housing effort was undertaken.

But again public and authoritative attention was distracted—this time by the strength and popularity of the inter-war housing drive. New and admirable human standards of accommodation and layout had been formulated by the Tudor-Walters Committee of 1918², in which

¹New Townsmen (F. J. Osborn): *New Towns after the War*, Dent, London, 1918. Revised and reissued, 1942.

²Report of the Committee on the Housing of the Working Classes. HMSO, London, 1918.

Raymond Unwin was a powerful influence, and the recommendations of which were based not only on Letchworth, Earswick and Hampstead experience but also on evidence collected from all over the country as to the working people's housing desires. This was an epoch-making document, setting standards for low-rent housing that were governmentally adopted for two decades; but it was a housing report purely; it was not concerned with large-scale town planning or new towns. Lloyd-George's well-phrased slogan for reconstruction, 'A Land fit for Heroes to Live in', was soon boiled down, in practice as well as in words, to 'Homes for Heroes'. The returning soldier could envisage a 'home'; he knew the sort of house and garden he and his family wanted. But he had no picture in his mind of 'a Land for Heroes'—good towns for work as well as home life in a green and pleasant land. The Association tried to enlighten him. But its still small voice was drowned by the din of hammers building four million houses—good houses on the whole, but, as it cried unheard, mostly in the wrong places.

Some great-city authorities made really imaginative efforts to design their major housing projects as 'quasi-satellites' with community facilities—notably Manchester at Wythenshawe and Liverpool at Speke and Knowsley, where also some provision was made for local industry—and the planning of these did represent a considerable advance. Yet they were still continuous extensions of overgrown agglomerations, not true new towns.

The Association lost the full-time services of some capable propagandists in this period by the suction of Howard, Reiss and the New Townsmen into the demanding work of building Welwyn Garden City. And once more, in order to survive, it had to combine pursuit of its main mission with an active interest in the preoccupation of the moment—housing, housing, housing. But the Welwyn group never lost sight of the wider objectives in their preoccupation with their specific project. And the Association still had singleminded enthusiasts like Dr. Norman Macfadyen (of Letchworth), Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter, and the first Lord Harmsworth, who did their best to keep the garden-city concept in the public view and hearing (so far as the hammers permitted) with the aid now of two physical demonstrations of its practicability and attractiveness.

THE CHAMBERLAIN AND MARLEY COMMITTEES

Thus some impact on opinion was maintained. In these inter-war years two Government committees, to which the Association and the garden city companies gave evidence, studied the problem of urban concentration and strongly endorsed the garden city principle.

The Committee on Unhealthy Areas, with Neville Chamberlain as Chairman and R. L. Reiss as a member, made a notable advance in thought by recommending the restriction of factory industry in the London area, along with the movement of some employment and persons to garden cities (in the correct sense) where the inhabitants

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could live 'close to their work in the best possible conditions'.¹ Though nothing came of this at the time, it was the first official contemplation in Britain² of the idea that control of the location of employment is the key to the redistribution of population. There is little doubt that the evidence to this committee was the origin of Chamberlain's interest in urban decentralization and the garden city idea, manifested in succeeding years by many speeches, and in 1938 (when he was Prime Minister) by the setting up of the Barlow Royal Commission.

In 1935 a Departmental Committee under Lord Marley's chairmanship, of which Sir Theodore Chambers (then Chairman of Welwyn Garden City Ltd) was a member, again recommended the governmental encouragement of the building of new towns on the garden city model. Its report also proposed the establishment of a Planning Board to promote by restrictions, facilities and inducements a better distribution of industry.³ No immediate action resulted, but the idea was now in the political air, and began to be discussed and even commended in responsible newspapers.

THE BARLOW ROYAL COMMISSION

In 1936 the Report of Sir Malcolm Stewart as Commissioner for the Special Areas (regions of high unemployment) aroused political interest by a forceful reiteration of the 1920 suggestion that London should be placed 'out of bounds' for new factory construction (with certain exemptions)—for the sake of the regions suffering from industrial decline. In the same year the Association complemented Sir Malcolm Stewart's proposal with an equally forceful renewal of its own campaign, arguing the necessity of dispersal from the other angle—for the sake of London and other regions suffering from industrial plethora and thrombosis. F. J. Osborn had become honorary secretary, and the full-time services were engaged of a young Scotsman, Gilbert McAllister (later M.P.) who had a great enthusiasm for the new town idea, and proved one of its most effective exponents in books and articles as well as in Parliament. New supporters of influence came in, and the decisive phase of the Association's long struggle for a national new towns policy began. Gilbert McAllister and his wife, Elizabeth McAllister, successively organized the activities of the Association from 1937 to 1947, and the influence of its campaign during that period owes a great deal to their energy and devotion.

By the late 1930s Welwyn Garden City had become a visible entity, and its industrial growth, social liveliness, and outstanding quality of design had made a worldwide impression, comparable with, even exceeding, that made by the first garden city two decades earlier. Probably

¹Report of the Unhealthy Areas Committee. HMSO, London, 1920.

²It was not of course an entirely new idea. The Report of the New York Committee on Congestion (1911) proposed such an embargo; and in Italy a decree of 1927 prohibited the starting of factories employing over 100 workers in any town of over 100,000 inhabitants. See F. J. Osborn: 'Industry and Planning': *Journal of Town Planning Institute*, July 1932.

³Report of Committee on Garden Cities and Satellite Towns, HMSO, London, 1934.

it was the combination of Welwyn's prestige, the pressure of the Association, and the ideas in the Marley and Malcolm Stewart reports, as well as his own report of 1920, that stirred Neville Chamberlain, on becoming Prime Minister in the Conservative Government in 1938, to appoint the Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Anderson Montague-Barlow, Bt, whose report in 1940 raised the problem of large towns for the first time to the status of a major public issue.¹

The published evidence to the Barlow Royal Commission, official and unofficial, contains a massive collection of facts and figures about British towns up to the time; of permanent value to students of urban history and structure and of contemporary thought (and lack of thought) about the advantages and disadvantages of large towns. The printed evidence of the Association was well documented as things went in those simple days (before 'horse-head equations' were considered indispensable in social-economic argument) and, with the supplementary verbal evidence, is known to have had much influence on the Commission. The secret history of the struggle within the Commission for a definite national policy, of which the Association had glimpses, would be of fascinating interest if it could be written. All we can say here is that supporters of the new towns policy owe a special debt to two clear-thinking and resolute members, Sir Patrick Abercrombie and Mrs. Lionel Hitchens, without whose efforts the recommendations in the majority report would have been far less definite than they were. These two also added great force to its total effect by the minority report that they signed along with H. H. Elvin.

The majority report contained a most impressive study of the disadvantages of excessively large urban agglomerations, fully confirming the contentions of the Association, while, no doubt to conciliate hesitant members, making the most of the countervailing advantages of substantial town size. In our view it was too hopeful about the possibilities of overcoming the disadvantages of 'million cities' by better planning, but it was unequivocal about the balance of disadvantages in multi-million cities like London, and about the extreme urgency of preventing their further growth.

Among the considerations that influenced the Commission, the social and economic drawbacks of large towns—overcrowding, ill-health, shortage of recreational space, noise and smoke, long journeys to work, traffic congestion, and so on—were prominent. The injurious effects of suburban sprawl on agriculture and countryside amenities, on which much evidence had been given, were also regarded as serious. And as the shadow of Hitler, Munich and a possible coming war loomed heavily over the nation at the time, the strategical danger of having so large a proportion of Britain's population and industry massed in large agglomerations was the subject of a grave chapter in the report. All these considerations told in the same direction—towards the imperative neces-

¹Royal Commission on the Geographical Distribution of the Industrial Population. Report and Evidence. HMSO, London, 1940.

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sity of limiting by some means great-city congestion and further growth.

When it came to proposals for a policy, however, the Commission was badly inhibited by internal differences that could not be resolved. The famous 'Nine Conclusions', unanimously adopted by the 13 members, agreed that 'in view of the nature and urgency of the problems' national action was necessary, and proposed the setting up of a 'central authority' whose activities should transcend those of any existing government department. The 'objectives' should include redevelopment of congested urban areas and decentralization and dispersal both of industries and industrial population. But the Commission left open the question whether the central authority should be executive or merely advisory, what congested urban areas should be dealt with, and whether and how far decentralization or dispersal, 'if found desirable', should be 'encouraged or developed' in garden cities, garden suburbs, satellite towns, trading estates, existing small towns or regional centres, or by other 'appropriate methods'.

In effect this was a promising programme for further study and research, with tentative suggestions as to the lines that might be pursued. It was an attractive shopping list, rather than a purchasing order. Yet it was conspicuously marked 'urgent'. The Association, while thrilled by the text of the report, was at first not at all sure that the conclusions had crossed the Rubicon, and hesitated whether to give it a lukewarm welcome as moral support for sound principles, or to hail it as a great historical manifesto.

The minority report, however, was much more definite, and obviously more consistent with the balance of considerations expressed in the text of the majority report. It went straight out for a new Ministry to plan the location of industry on a national scale, to have definite powers—powers to impose restrictions in some areas, to provide encouragements in others, and to promote the building of 'garden cities and satellite towns' and the expansion with industry of small towns and regional centres. Starting with these powers, it concluded, the new Ministry should report urgently as to what further powers it required for the redevelopment of congested town areas and for the policy of decentralization and dispersal.

Taking together the majority and minority reports, the 'dissentient memorandum' on the defects of planning law and administration by Abercrombie, and the 'reservations' by three members of the majority, which proposed machinery for the restriction and encouragement of industrial location for other regions as well as London, the Association decided that, if the Barlow Report as a whole were interpreted as a triumphant vindication of the Association's own policy, it could be made so in fact. And this bold judgment turned out to be correct. The ex-chairman, *functus officio*, fell in with this interpretation, joined the Association, and in cordial co-operation with it took an active part in the campaign for a new Ministry with the necessary powers for cen-

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tral redevelopment, dispersal, green belts, and new towns. In effect he retrospectively endorsed the minority report. He was in due course deservedly (but sad to say posthumously) awarded the Ebenezer Howard Memorial Medal by the Association for his distinguished contribution to the garden city movement. The Barlow Report did in the event prove the historic turning point in the governmental concern with urban development.

THE WAR AND NATIONAL PLANNING

The outbreak of war in September 1939 pushed aside propaganda and discussion on long-term issues. Building development was checked, and much of it diverted to purposes ancillary to war needs. Many planners and other governmental officials were drawn into the armed forces or emergency functions. Large sections of the civilian population had to add to their work in factories, shops and offices service in the Home Guard and Civil Defence. Voluntary societies suspended or re-directed their activities. The Town and Country Planning Association closed its London office and carried on in one room in Welwyn Garden City, with a one-person staff—Miss Elizabeth Baldwin, the business secretary—who to relieve its budget took a part-time job in a local office.

In view of the tragic circumstances of the time—the call-up, the departure of troops to Europe, the vast evacuation of children and their mothers from the big cities to country towns and villages, the fall of Britain's only co-belligerent, France, bombing from the air, losses of ships by submarine attacks, food shortages and rationing, and intense anxiety about personal and even national survival—it is not surprising that the Barlow Report, published in January 1940, went almost unnoticed onto the shelf. What is remarkable is the speed with which it came off the shelf. As a result of the great damage done to towns by the bombs, an unexpected popular interest arose as to the form their reconstruction after the war might take. Across the extensive areas of destruction and rubble, which it was the Government's policy to clear promptly and convert into melancholy vacant sites, city dwellers saw new vistas. After the first shock they were astonished at the amount of sky that existed—the unaccustomed brightness of the devastated scene. Their sense of the permanence and unalterability of the built-up background dissolved; the 'urban blinkers' were dislodged from many eyes. What would replace the former crowded buildings if and when we won the war? Might we not have much better homes and work-places and retain this new sense of light and openness?

Spontaneously reconstruction and town planning became a popular theme of discussion. There were more opportunities for this than might be assumed. Though people were working at enormous pressure, war conditions produced long hours of boring inactivity—in air-raid posts and shelters, Army and Air Force training camps, Home Guard watches, even in factories where inevitable delays in supplies caused 'waiting time'. In such intervals it was natural to discuss, among other

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things, the after-war future, and there was a popular demand for talks and lectures from speakers who had ideas on the subject. It is to the credit of the Government that they saw the value of this in upholding morale: the hope of a Better Britain helped to sustain the desperate determination to fight and work for victory.

The Government not only encouraged popular discussion of post-war reconstruction, but even devoted a modicum of ministerial and civil service attention to it. As early as October 1940 Lord Reith, then Minister of Works and Buildings, was personally charged with the responsibility of studying and reporting to the Cabinet on the methods and machinery for physical reconstruction in town and country after the war. A man of extraordinary dynamism, nationally well known as the former head of the British Broadcasting Corporation, he got to work with characteristic speed. The Barlow Commission's report was retrieved and examined, and proved to be a most opportune textbook on the sort of policy needed for the occasion. Its timeliness was the first piece of historical good luck the new towns movement had had. Lord Reith, using it as his basis, called into consultation leading persons interested in physical planning, including members of the Association, and by February 1941 he had obtained from the Cabinet acceptance of the principle of a national authority to pursue a positive policy for agriculture, industrial development and transport, with attention to the unordered growth of congested towns and the indiscriminate sprawl over the countryside. This in itself was perhaps a safe enough decision, leaving plenty of escape holes for future choice; but it was a step in the right direction. New legislation was foreshadowed for these objectives.

BEGINNINGS OF A GOVERNMENT POLICY

In the meantime (January 1941) an expert committee had been appointed to study the problem of compensation and betterment in planning, as had been recommended by the Barlow Commission. And in July 1941 the Cabinet accepted this committee's interim recommendations¹ that for purposes of public acquisition or control of land a 'ceiling' value as at March 1939 should be fixed, that the central planning authority should at once be set up to control all development, that 'reconstruction areas' should be defined, and that until proper schemes were prepared rebuilding in these areas should not be permitted except under licence.

At the same date Lord Reith was authorized to take steps to work out a national planning policy, within the framework of the general study of post-war problems then under the charge of the Minister without Portfolio, Arthur Greenwood, M.P. A Council of Ministers was set up, consisting of Lord Reith as chairman, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the Minister of Health.

And in February 1942 came the Government's more definite decision:

¹Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment (the Uthwatt Committee): *Interim Report*. Cmd. 6291. HMSO, 1941.

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to establish forthwith a central planning authority—not a board or an advisory body, but a ministry. The Ministry of Works and Buildings was to become the Ministry of Works and Planning and to take over for England and Wales the town and country planning functions of the Ministry of Health. The Secretary of State for Scotland would retain the planning functions for Scotland. There were to be arrangements for co-ordination by a Committee of Ministers and a Committee of Senior Officials representing certain other departments.

This was accompanied by a highly important, though still very cautious, statement that the Government would consider the steps that should be taken towards the recommendation of the Barlow Report for the redevelopment of congested urban areas, decentralisation or dispersal therefrom of industries and population, and encouragement of a reasonable balance and diversification of industry throughout the regions of Great Britain. In terms this was a decision to consider setting up an authority to consider what ought to be done—not even a shopping list, but a note to consider preparing one. But the circumstances of the moment must be borne in mind. It did mean acceptance of the idea of a national planning authority of some kind: the one thing on which all schools of planners were agreed. The Government, however, added that care would be taken to avoid interference with the aim of the highest possible standard of living, the waste of existing capital equipment, and diversion of productive agricultural land to other purposes if less productive land was available. These reservations are significant as deriving from differences of accent then already apparent in planning circles, which were later to blow up into fierce controversies.

A NEW MINISTRY AND THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

At this stage the shape of a post-war policy was still vague, and it could not be assumed that new towns would figure in it. Lord Reith had consulted many people with views on planning, and had set up a Consultative Panel on Physical Reconstruction which had made a start on the working out of certain details of policy. He had visited a number of bombed cities and encouraged the local authorities 'to plan boldly'. The work done by the advisers he had got together and by the civil servants in his department—notably H. G. (now Sir Graham) Vincent as the under-secretary concerned with planning—and the successive decisions he had extracted from the Cabinet, intensified the already lively public and press interest and the expectations that a strong post-war policy would be pursued.

It is difficult to assess the weight of the various influences in the public discussion, and within the Government itself, during this period. The Conferences of the TCPA in 1941 and 1942, the debates in the House of Lords initiated by Viscount Samuel and others, the 1940 Council

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formed by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, the BBC talks and debates (in which TCPA members were often heard) and the publications of various specialized groups, all contributed. Inside the Government Arthur Greenwood exercised important influence; and from Lord Reith's account it is evident that Sir John Anderson (later Lord Waverley), then Lord President of the Council, was in constant touch with all the Ministers concerned. All these we have named seem to have been in favour of the 'national planning authority' proposed by the Barlow Commission. But whether any of them at that time definitely favoured the governmental creation of new towns is doubtful: some of them seem to have regarded it at most as just an interesting possibility.

To everybody's astonishment, a day or two after the Government's decision to set up a national planning ministry, Lord Reith was dismissed from office by the Prime Minister (Winston Churchill). He was replaced as Minister of Works and Planning by the late (first) Lord Portal, who in his short period of office showed no particular interest in post-war planning policy. However, Henry G. Strauss (now Lord Conesford) who was then a member of the TCPA executive committee and keenly interested in the aesthetic aspect of planning, was appointed an additional Parliamentary Secretary to deal specially with planning functions. The work of preparing legislation on the lines of the Government's decision proceeded.

Exactly why Lord Reith was dismissed remains something of a mystery even after a study of his account of the affair in his extraordinarily candid autobiography.¹ There were certainly tensions between him and other Ministers about the allocation of functions in the reconstruction policy: and our own view is that Lord Reith himself did not fully appreciate that town and country planning would be, if given its due status, a big enough subject to engage the full-time activity of a Minister of the highest rank. If he had shared our own estimate of the importance of planning and physical reconstruction, and had been prepared to concentrate on it as he had concentrated on the creation of the BBC, his own and national history might have taken a happier course; but admittedly this is a vain speculation. Lord Reith must be accorded credit for a remarkable contribution to the advance of planning in getting the main Barlow recommendations accepted in the short space of 14 months. Years later, as chairman of the New Towns Committee, he was to make another extremely valuable contribution.

When in 1943 the Ministry of Town and Country Planning was at last established, the first Minister was W. S. Morrison (afterwards Speaker of the House of Commons, and as Viscount Dunrossil, for a few months before his death, Governor-General of Australia), who proceeded to build loyally on the foundations laid. Under him the important Town and Country Planning Act of 1944 was passed, giving strong new powers for the acquisition of land in bombed and obsolescent urban areas and for comprehensive redevelopment. All development was

¹Lord Reith: *Into the Wind*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1949.

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placed under interim planning control, and thus the stage was set for a national policy when the Government could find time and will to decide upon it. New towns were still not in sight. And the controversies then in full swing made their ultimate appearance seem doubtful.

WAR-TIME CONFERENCES AND DISCUSSION

During the Reith-Morrison period (1940-45) many societies and persons entered into the discussion of post-war planning and physical reconstruction, and some of these were far from enthusiastic about the creation of new towns. The TCPA made many endeavours to unite the various schools of thought on a practicable and balanced policy. As early as the spring of 1941 it arranged a widely representative conference at Oxford, attended by distinguished leaders of differing views and interests and delegations of all types of local authorities.¹ Among the speakers at this conference were Sir Patrick Abercrombie, Sir A. Montague-Barlow, Lord Brocket (Chairman of the Land Union), (Sir) Donald E. E. Gibson (then City Architect of Coventry), Sir Herbert Manzoni (City Engineer of Birmingham), F. J. Osborn, (Sir) George Pepler, Professor W. A. Robson, Viscount Samuel, Lord Justice Scott, Lewis (now Lord) Silkin, Sir George Stapledon, Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, and Dr. Dudley Stamp. A stimulating discussion took place, but apart from the general acceptance of the Nine Points of the Barlow Report, it cannot be said that a common policy emerged. The published report did however prove a clarifying element in the subsequent public controversies.

In 1941 also the Association began the issue of a series of shilling booklets by competent writers, dealing with aspects of the national problem, and these were widely circulated.²

A second conference at Cambridge in 1942 specialised on the agricultural and rural aspects of planning and industrial decentralization,³ and this again brought together a highly expert assembly of speakers and delegates—among whom were Professor G. M. Trevelyan, OM, Sir Daniel Hall, L. F. Easterbrook, Sir Malcolm Stewart, Professor Sargent Florence, Professors A. W. Ashby and C. S. Orwin, and Dr. Thomas Sharp. The evidence of the TCPA to the Scott Committee, a constructive effort to reconcile the urban and rural accents, was among the papers for this conference. But again general agreement on the major issues could not be attained.

A definite advance in this direction was however achieved by the TCPA in 1941 when its 'National Planning Basis' was accepted by the Royal Institute of British Architects, the National Council of Social Service, and the National Playing Fields Association.⁴ This still stands as a useful expression of the consensus of responsible opinion on which national policy was ultimately based.

¹*Replanning Britain: Report of the Oxford Conference of the TCPA*, Faber, 1941.

²*Rebuilding Britain Series*. Faber, 1941-42.

³*Industry and Rural Life: Report of the Cambridge Conference*. Faber, 1942.

⁴See page 82 (at end of chapter).

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THE UTHWATT AND SCOTT REPORTS

We need mention only briefly the reports in 1942 of the two important committees set up during Lord Reith's period. The Uthwatt Report on the relationship between land-use control and land values stands as a classic among blue-books.¹ A brilliant analysis of the problem of equating compensation for private losses of value with the collection of part of the private gains of value is followed by a study of the possible solutions. Though the solution recommended was not adopted, the report greatly influenced opinion and led in 1947 to legislation that made possible a large scale reservation of green belts and agricultural land, with compensation from national funds. The provisions in the 1947 Act for the collection of gains in value were however subsequently repealed, and the problem of the equation or partial equation of compensation and betterment is at the time of writing unsolved.

The Scott Report² contains a comprehensive assembly of proposals for the protection and advance of the interests of agriculture and the countryside. It accepts the Barlow thesis in principle, but its attitude to the issue of decentralization or dispersal is admonitory, emphasizing the importance of keeping any new urban developments compact and limiting them to relatively unproductive land. Certain paragraphs disquieted the TCPA by suggesting a reversion to high-density flat-building in existing towns to reduce the draft on agricultural land. When the Association expressed its alarm, Lord Justice Scott, as ex-chairman, obtained letters from all the members of the committee disclaiming any intention to thwart the new towns policy; and after a meeting between representatives of both bodies the TCPA accepted the assurances, swallowed its misgivings and publicly approved the report. The printed paragraphs, however, remain on record, and the harm done by them to countryside opinion on the new towns policy has, we regret to say, survived the effect of the personal disclaimer by members of the committee.

THE FIRST ABERCROMBIE PLAN FOR LONDON

The rising public interest in planning was given a great stimulus by the publication in 1943 of the County of London Plan.³ This was prepared for the London County Council, at the instance of Lord Reith when Minister of Works, under the direction of J. H. Forshaw (then the county architect) and Sir Patrick Abercrombie. In many ways an advance on previous great-city plans, it is of special importance to our subject because its careful study of the numbers of persons who could be satisfactorily rehoused at given densities in reconstruction provided a realistic measure of the 'overspill' of population and employment that would have to be accommodated outside the county. Chapter Two, on 'Decentralization' contains the following significant statements:

¹Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment. Final Report. HMSO, 1942.

²Committee on Utilization of Land in Rural Areas: Report. HMSO, 1942.

³County of London Plan: prepared for the L.C.C. by J. H. Forshaw and Patrick Abercrombie. Macmillan, 1943.

'The ideal situation for people to live in is within reasonable distance of their work but not in such close proximity that their living conditions are prejudiced by it; this ideal can be closely realised when planning a new town of limited size in which the time, money and energy spent in means of locomotion are reduced to a minimum. But an approximation to the ideal becomes increasingly difficult in existing large towns or groups of towns. This is caused by many factors such as the immobility of certain of the industries, the impossibility of obtaining satisfactory living conditions near-by, the variability of occupation within the same family or the change of work-place after a home has been purchased . . .' (para. 113).

'Both sides of the subject require careful handling; in the aspect of living quarters, the personal feelings and idiosyncracies of human beings must be given the fullest consideration; in the aspect of industry the equally delicate susceptibilities of economics are involved . . .' (para. 114).

'To produce an ideal scheme of decentralization, the numbers of persons for living and working quarters should balance; this, of course, can never happen . . . Nevertheless, a good deal of sorting out will gradually take place if a serious attempt is made to equate residential and industrial removal . . .' (para. 117).

Thus the authors of this Plan saw clearly that a considerable displacement of persons and employment would be necessary for any decent reconstruction:

'It is desirable to make the industrial boroughs of London so attractive that people whose work is there will not be forced out to distant suburbs for pleasant houses, gardens, open spaces, schools with playing fields and safe shopping centres: on the other hand, the people whom it is necessary to decentralize, in order to produce these satisfactory conditions, should so far as possible have a choice of work near at hand; the aim should be to avoid their being housed in distant dormitories, yet constrained to rush back to the old work-a-day haunts. The facts of the dilemma are plain, but their consequences are not always grasped. Some have been heard to ask why it is not possible for people to live in houses with large gardens, near their central work, and at the same time for the population of the borough to remain at its pre-1938 level. Others, a little more realistic, would cram everyone into lofty close-packed tenements whose high architectural qualities might mask their social deficiencies, and would also keep factories within the town, thus avoiding any further encroachment upon the countryside. Both these points of view ignore two inescapable facts: the first, that to obtain attractive living conditions a much lower density in the industrial boroughs of London must be secured, i.e. a large population must be decentralized, and so far as possible a corresponding amount of industry; the second, that the exodus of people and industry was already taking place before the war. The decentralization has been happening in an unplanned way; the boroughs see their population dwindling, as their best ele-

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ments, especially the young married folk, leave the old surroundings, which are not benefited by this reduction except in strictly limited patches of new tenements. What we now propose is to anticipate this loss, to enhance it by means of a bold reduction and to produce a really satisfactory environment by wholesale rebuilding made possible by war damage. . . . The number we estimate it would be necessary to remove from the congested parts of London to secure the conditions postulated in our Plan is between five and six hundred thousand people.' (para. 21)

THE GREATER LONDON PLAN OF 1944

Bold as this planned reduction seemed, it was shown to be necessary on the standards of maximum rehousing density considered permissible in the boroughs to be decongested. These standards included 200 persons an acre for extensive central areas, and a maximum of 136 persons an acre in 14 of the industrial boroughs. These were certainly not generous standards. A density of 200 an acre means that all persons must live in high flats, and 136 an acre necessitates at least 75% and probably 80% in high flats. Such standards, as the TCPA at once pointed out, hardly seemed likely 'to make the industrial boroughs of London so attractive' as to hold people contentedly within them. Abercrombie was uneasy about them himself. He had had to compromise with strong influences in LCC circles for retaining as much population as possible. In his Greater London Plan of 1944¹ he suggested an alternative maximum density of 100 persons an acre, which would permit of 50 per cent. of terrace houses of 2 or 3 storeys, but would involve a displacement of 200,000 more persons from the county (800,000 instead of 600,000), and from the county and the inner ring boroughs together a total decentralization of nearly 1½ million. It is understandable that in submitting these staggering figures he should have had doubts of his own realism. Nevertheless they were imposed by the logic of the situation.

Whereas the County of London Plan of 1943 confined its detailed proposals to the area within the county, and gave a measure of the displacement of population that rebuilding on certain standards of density would involve, the Greater London Plan of 1944 made a further historic advance by definite proposals for the location of the 'overspill' of population and a corresponding quantum of industrial employment. Of the 1½ million to be displaced 125,000 were to be housed in 'satellite' suburbs on the outskirts of the conurbation, about 260,000 in additions to existing towns in the Outer Country Ring (beyond a Green Belt to be reserved), another 270,000 or so in towns at a distance of 40 or 50 miles from the centre, and nearly half a million in ten new towns for which sites were suggested. This left about 100,000 persons to be rehoused right outside the area of metropolitan influence.

A paragraph in Abercrombie's 'Personal Foreword' to the Plan,

¹Patrick Abercrombie: *Greater London Plan 1944*. HMSO, 1945.

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following his tribute to his colleagues, is worth quoting as a reminder of the mood of the time:

'The Plan thus prepared, with this multifarious guidance and collaboration, is now completed, so far as it is possible to say that the stage of finality can be reached by a living organism. There is now a chance—and a similar one may not occur again—of getting the main features of this programme of redistributed population and work carried through rapidly and effectively, thereby reducing overcrowding and locating industry in conjunction. The difficulties in normal times of moving people and industry are rightly stressed; but people and industry will go where accommodation is made available. Moreover, the war has made migration a familiar habit. Give a man and his wife a first-rate house, a community, and occupation of various kinds reasonably near at hand, with a regional framework which enables them to move freely and safely about, to see their friends and enjoy the advantages of London; add to these a wide freedom of choice, and they will not grumble in the years immediately following the war. The industrialist, if he is asked whether he is prepared to submit to the guidance of a Government official, will probably protest. But if he is offered a choice of sites, with every modern facility (including labour) provided, and in addition a licence to build and access to building materials and labour, he will jump at the chance to get started as quickly as possible. Moreover, if Trading Estates are laid out ready for hire and actually a certain amount of building is done for small enterprises, these sites and factories will be eagerly taken up: always, of course, provided they are sited in the most suitable positions. . . . Courage is needed to seize the moment when it arrives and to make a resolute start.' (pp. v, vi)

The Greater London Plan of 1944 excelled in scope the County Plan of 1943 as much as that Plan had excelled all its predecessors. It converted the concept of metropolitan redevelopment on human standards, and decentralization, green belts, new towns and country-town expansions, into a clear and concrete practical proposition. Abercrombie proved splendidly adequate to the unique opportunity afforded by the war-time circumstances and the long preceding processes of thought and advocacy.

It should not be forgotten, however, that among the prior work he and his team were able to build on, was that of the Greater London Regional Planning Committee, a representative body of local authorities set up by Neville Chamberlain as Minister of Health in 1927, with Raymond Unwin as technical adviser. This Committee's second report of 1933 includes an appendix in which proposals are made for the development of new towns with governmental encouragement, and means are suggested for dealing with the practical problems, though adequate powers were not then in sight. It is a reminder of the small importance attached to planning at that period that the budget of this Regional Committee was less than £4,000 a year, and that in 1933 the LCC, pleading 'financial stringency', reduced its contribution to £500

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a year, and Unwin accepted a reduction of his fee and undertook to carry on the whole of the work, and to provide an office, for £1,700 a year. (It was in that year that Unwin, world-famous as a planner, whose advice was in great demand in the USA and elsewhere abroad, received the honour of Knighthood.)

We rank Unwin and Abercrombie, both architects by profession, among the greatest contributors to modern planning thought and practice. They were exceptional in combining high aesthetic sensitivity with an unflinching sympathy for the desires and aspirations of the common man in housing and living conditions, a firm respect for economic and other practical considerations, and above all an ability to marshal a vast assemblage of facts, statistics and considerations supplied by experts in many fields into a coherent picture and a practicable policy.

Though it came later, mention should be made here of the Advisory Committee for London Regional Planning set up (1945-50) to work out an outline plan for the outer area of the region pursuant to the Greater London Plan of 1944. Under the chairmanship of Clement Davies, MP, and with the advice of a technical committee directed by F. Longstreth Thompson (then planner to the Essex County Council) this body, representing over 140 local authorities, agreed on the location of the London 'overspill' as between towns and county districts and specified 'ultimate populations' for each. Its target figures have since been modified. But its work was of historic importance as the first essay in a quantitative regional pattern of town and country on which local plans could be prepared.

THE PARTY RECONSTRUCTION COMMITTEES

During the war the United Kingdom was ruled by a Coalition Government in which all three democratic parties were represented; but the parties continued their separate organizations, and each set up a number of post-war reconstruction committees, with a specialised group to study the problems of post-war housing and planning and formulate a party policy thereon. The TCPA, which had from its birth maintained a non-party, or all-parties, composition and attitude, was called upon for advice and assistance in these studies. Some of its members in fact served on each of the party committees.¹ All endorsed in principle the main proposals of the Barlow Report already accepted by the (Coalition) Government, but within each there were at the outset much the same differences of accent as in the public discussion at large. However, after much argument, all three parties, with some difference of emphasis, included planned central redevelopment, dispersal, green belts, and new towns in their reconstruction programmes. Valuable influence in this direction was exerted by members and others in close contact with the TCPA: on the Conservative committee by Lord Balfour of Burleigh

¹The Communist Party of Great Britain did not approach the Association for advice, though one of its well-known members, the Rev. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury, was a member of its Council at the time. This party, however, received only 100,000 of the 25,000,000 votes cast at the 1945 Election.

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and John A. F. Watson, on the Liberal Committee by B. Seebohm Rowntree, and on the Labour Party Committee, of which Lewis (Lord) Silkin was chairman, by the Rev. Charles Jenkinson (of Leeds), Lady Simon (of Wythenshawe), (Sir) Richard Coppock, and others. The degree of agreement reached proved of decisive importance when in 1945 legislation for new towns was introduced. This was one of the TCPA'S most successful efforts in political lobbying.

OTHER INFLUENCES ON POST-WAR POLICY

We have stressed the part of the TCPA in the war-time discussions because it was the only organization that placed new towns in the forefront of a comprehensive and balanced planning policy. In this concentration we necessarily fail to convey a proper impression of the variety and complexity of the influences impinging on the public mind. In the kingdom of planning, as of heaven, are many mansions ('dwelling-places' is the word in the New English Bible) and in tracing the evolution of the new towns policy we have to pass by some very important factors without due notice. Many other bodies and Government committees paid attention to particular aspects of policy related to planning—the design of dwellings, the organization and finance of city redevelopment, the administration of planning control, communications and traffic, public services, parks and open spaces, national parks and access to the countryside, neighbourhood planning, village planning, outdoor advertising, architectural control, and so on. Ideas were put forward in conferences, manifestos and exhibitions by such organizations as the Town Planning Institute, the National Housing and Town Planning Council, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, the Housing Centre, the Royal Institute of British Architects and other groups of architects, the Surveyors Institution, the Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction, Nuffield College, the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society, the Ramblers' Association, P.E.P. (Political and Economic Planning), the London Society, and the associations of local authorities.

A group that calls for mention is the Hundred New Towns Association, started in 1933 by A. Trystan Edwards, FRIBA, to advocate new towns with high-density terrace housing as an alternative to multi-storey flats. This was a variant of the 1918 programme of the New Townsmen, of which Mr. Edwards seemed unconcerned. Despite his persuasive presentation of the case its appeal was limited, not only by the unacceptable kind of housing proposed but by his combination with it of unorthodox monetary proposals of the Jersey-Market or Douglas-Credit type. Reformers are always unwise to mix the drinks they offer. Interest-free credits, if justifiable, could obviously have been used for any class of public expenditure—from roads to atom bombs—as easily as for new towns. And few people wanted to repeat in new towns, even in a modernized architectural form, the close-packed terraces and narrow streets of the old towns. Welcome as Mr. Edwards' denunciation

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of the tenement-flat system was, the TCPA could not embrace the Hundred New Towns Association as a valuable ally.

THE NATIONAL PLANNING BASIS (1941)

The Town and County Planning Association works for the best planning of land use in all its aspects, including:

1. National, regional, and local guidance of the development and redevelopment of land and building and of the grouping of people, industry and business, so as to promote the wisest use of all resources in the interests of all.

2. A policy of planned dispersal from congested cities. The new urban developments required for this dispersal, by industrial changes and by the growth of towns up to their planned limits, to be guided to new towns and existing country towns suitable for expansion: such towns to be so sited as to meet the needs of industry, agriculture and business, and designed as reasonably compact units without scattered or ribbon building. All towns, new and old, to be planned with proper facilities for a good social life, health, education, culture, and recreation. Village development to follow the same principles so far as farming requirements permit.

3. The setting of such limits to the size of towns as will avoid needlessly long journeys and protect living conditions; and such standards of residential density as will ensure adequate gardens for family houses and ample open space for recreation and amenity.

4. The preservation of wide country belts around and between towns, for the sake of agriculture and to enable townspeople to have easy access to the country; and the safeguarding from wasteful development of the best food-growing land, places of landscape beauty, national parks, and coastal areas.

5. Attention to good architecture and landscape design as well as sound construction in all development. Outdoor advertising to be restricted to approved positions and controlled in character.

6. National policy in the location of industry and business (a) to encourage their settlement in new towns and country towns, and (b) to restrict their settlement where there is over-concentration or congestion. Business firms to retain freedom of choice within the unrestricted areas.

7. The financial provisions under planning law to be so administered as to place on national rather than local funds the cost of compensation incurred in applying national standards.

8. Efficient, considerate, and speedy administration of planning at national, regional, and local levels.

9. The maximum enlistment of public interest in and understanding of planning and development, nationally, regionally, and locally, to ensure that planning is in accordance with people's desires and has behind it the driving force of public opinion.

Chapter VII

LEGISLATION FOR NEW TOWNS

'And that these things are best, if they be possible, we have sufficiently, I imagine, explained in the preceding part of our discourse.

—Sufficiently indeed.

—Now then it seems we are agreed about our legislation—that the laws we mention are best, if they could exist, but that it is difficult to get them to prevail, not, however, impossible.

—We are agreed, said he.'

—PLATO: *Republic*, Book VI (trans. H. Spens, 1763)

NEW towns did not figure conspicuously in the competition of party programmes during the first post-war General Election of 1945. As in 1918, the major accent was on promises of maximum speed and quantity in building houses. Though the three parties had accepted the policy of planned redevelopment of bombed and obsolete urban areas, and their experts had realised that decent standards in rehousing necessitated some decentralization from crowded cities, and knew there was a wistful popular interest in the idea of new towns, their election manifestos did nothing to show the connection between planning and living conditions, only vaguely apprehended by the electorate. Stout municipal councillors in all parties still wanted more population and rateable value and held that flats and suburban housing were easier and quicker to produce than new towns; architects longed for lofty towers as more 'exciting' to design and photograph; and countryside preservationists urged high density to 'save land.' Party managers could see few votes in a strong emphasis on dispersal. The Town and Country Planning Association therefore felt by no means confident that the combination of central flat-building and a great suburban explosion, comparable with that of the inter-war years, would not be repeated, whichever party won the election.

In the event the Labour Party won it, with a substantial majority, the Liberal Party was reduced to a small fraction, and Winston Churchill's Conservative Government, which had replaced the Coalition for a few months, was succeeded by the Government of Clement (now Lord) Attlee.

Though the Labour Party had not made a feature of the dispersal policy in its election campaign, the subject had been thoroughly discussed by its reconstruction sub-committee on housing and planning under the able chairmanship of Lewis (now Lord) Silkin. A solicitor by