



Wheat-Growing and Flour-Milling

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WHEAT-GROWING AND FLOUR-MILLING

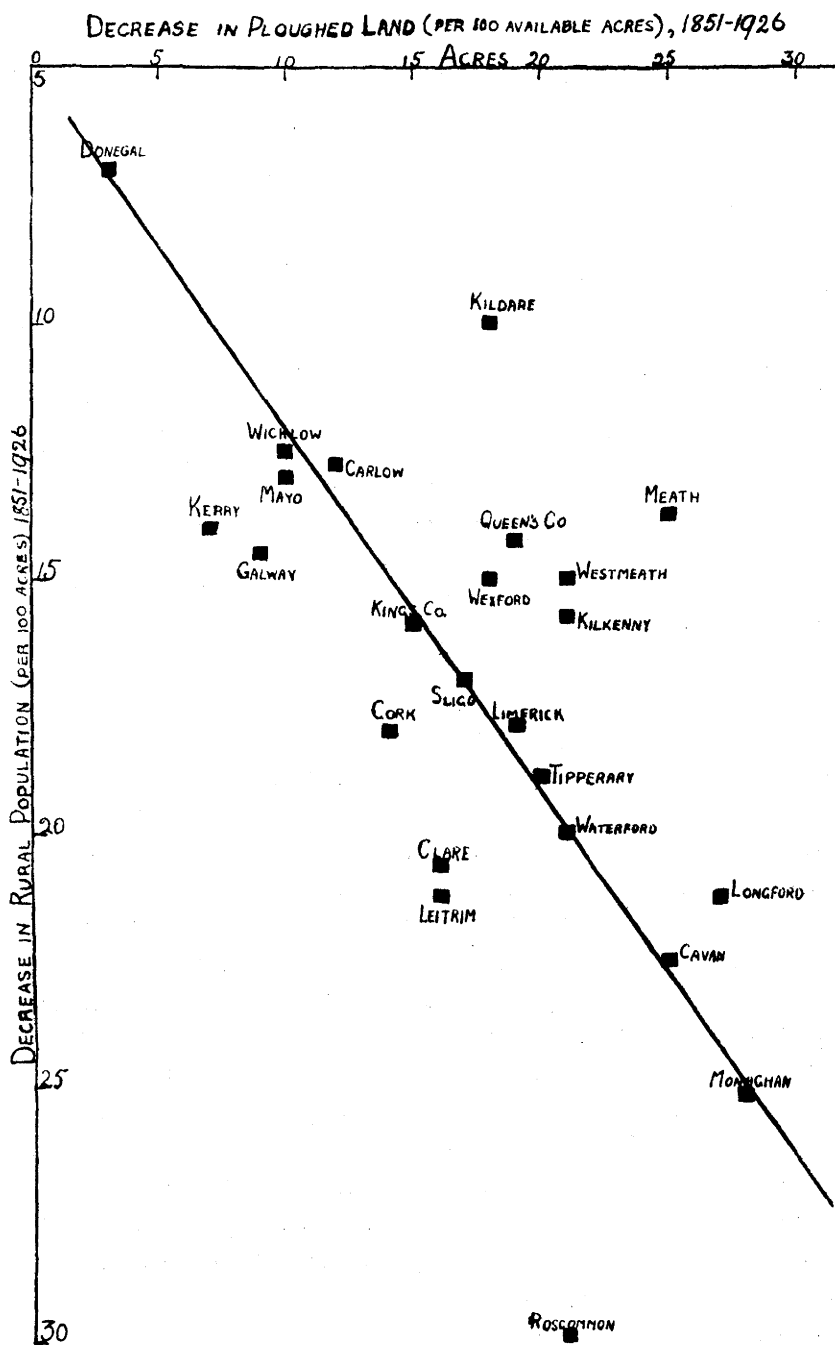
BY PROFESSOR ALFRED O'RAHILLY

ANY adequate treatment of the Reports issued by the Economic Committee¹ would involve a discussion of first principles. We should have to combat not merely the attitude of lordly indifference to wheat-growing and flour-milling, but the whole philosophy of indifferentism. The same signatures would be as readily appended to a report against tobacco-growing. Logically the same people should be against the 'artificial' creation of small holdings or the protection of our woollen industry ; but in these and like cases the brutal exigencies of politics have overcome the squeamishness of the logicians. The same forces will, I trust, produce the same effect in the present case. But meanwhile, without attempting in this short article either to examine underlying principles or technical details, I propose to criticise some salient points of the Reports.

One of the most curious statements is that "the effect of decreased tillage on the density of rural population has been generally exaggerated." To prove this, long quotations are made from a publication of the Department of Statistics. Unfortunately these are rather loosely worded and of limited application ; moreover if the quotations were slightly extended they would have included the statement that "in view of her untilled fields and undeveloped industries and services the available statistics show no reason why this country cannot in time have a largely increased population with an improved standard of living."² In any case I hold that there is a clear positive correlation between the decrease in rural population and the decrease in ploughed land. This is shown in the accompanying figure, which also makes it clear that many other factors must be taken into account. It will be observed that the population

¹ *First and Second Interim Reports on Wheat-Growing and the Question of a Tariff on Flour.* (Stationery Office, 1929, 1/-).

² *Agricultural Statistics, 1847-1926*, p. lxxv.



Dublin (population—decrease 69, tillage—decrease 22) has been omitted as obviously exceptional. For reasons of space, Louth (233, 36) had also to be omitted.

of some counties decreased in a greater ratio than the average indicated by the straight line; in every one of these counties the ratio of population to ploughed land was in 1851 already above the average, while in the counties whose population decreased less, this ratio was invariably below the average, that is, they were already relatively underpopulated—of course with the exception of Dublin. An examination of the individual circumstances of these latter counties shows clearly the particular historical factors which led to a relatively smaller decline of rural population. Beyond the indisputable fact that tillage carries a larger population, it is unwise to indulge in facile quantitative generalisations, without a knowledge of the nearness of population-density to the saturation point, the standard of living, the type of tillage, the size of the holdings, etc. All during the nineteenth century it has been true that the maximum density of rural population has been along the potato and poultry belt, characterised by small farms, and to a lesser extent in the medium-sized dairy farms of the south-west. What was the wheat-belt in the 'forties—roughly the district south and east of the Shannon up to Louth, excluding Kerry and Westmeath—contains land capable of carrying a much larger rural population without any decrease in the standard of living.

But no serious person pretends that tillage alone, without a concurrent industrial development, can stem the tide of emigration. Both tillage and industry must advance together, each providing a home market for the other. In my pamphlet on "Wheat, Flour and Tariffs" I pointed out the futility of 'listening to the Irish countryman's dying request to kill his urban brother so that the funeral may be more general.' Both are suffering from the same disease; our industrial as well as our agricultural policy has been shaped too exclusively towards import and export, ignoring the potential home market which British commercial policy does not wish to exist or develop. I also showed that if we compared this

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country with Denmark on the basis of available agricultural land, we find that the *additional working* population which could and should be now existing in the Irish Free State amounts to 930,000, composed as follows :—

Agriculture	120,000
Industry and Handicraft	430,000
Commerce, Finance, Transport, etc.	210,000
Domestic	170,000

If these 930,000 workers—starved, emigrated or unborn—were with us to-day, if our economic system were adapted to fit them, our population would be 2,500,000 greater than it actually is. Instead of unemployment, work for a million more workers ! In the presence of such an appalling deficit, is it not high time for serious statesmen to cease their partisan sniping and to divest themselves of their British-fostered prejudices ? If the majority of the Economic Committee, in their eagerness to score a point, had not forgotten the example of Denmark, they might not have been so ready to hint that lack of tillage has not really much to do with rural depopulation. Remember that pasture forms 88 per cent. of our available land, while in Denmark it is only 39 per cent. ; with the result that relatively to us Denmark—in spite of the comparative infertility of her soil—produces more than three times as much and supports practically twice as many people.

The next attack on wheat-growing consists in the discharge of a mass of technical objections. I will not discuss these in detail, at least not in this article. During the past week I read these objections to three practical wheat-growers in the County Cork ; they individually rejected them all as in contradiction with their own experience. Here for example is the experience of a farmer who grows about 20 acres of wheat every year. He ploughs pasture-land in October and sows the wheat at the beginning of November ; that is he makes the wheat precede the root-crop, so that he need not sow grass with the wheat. His average yield is 25 cwt. per acre,

he got 32 cwt. when he sowed wheat in tillage ground (after mangolds or turnips) during the War, but last year was a bad season and gave only 19.5 cwt. As he dresses the seed with Corvusine or some similar preparation he has had little loss from depredation by birds. The wheaten straw, so far from being less valuable than oaten or barley straw, is worth 30s. per acre more ; apart from its use for thatching, it makes a far better litter and manure (being more absorbent of liquid). Last year he obtained 2 cwt. more per acre from oats, but in spite of the abnormally bad year for his wheat he made more on it for he sold it at 10s. to 11s. per cwt., whereas oats fetched only 6s. per cwt. immediately after threshing. He maintained that wheat is easier to save than oats ; the strong stalk prevents lodging ; and it need be left only a week in the stook when oats require a fortnight.

In this brief enumeration I have omitted many practical details ; I am not writing a treatise on agriculture. I am not aware that any of the distinguished gentlemen who signed the majority report ever grew a rood of wheat or knows more about the subject than an outsider like myself. All I maintain is that their *ipsi dixerunt* is neither final nor authoritative ; their statements are at variance with those of several experts, instructors and farmers with whom I have at various times discussed the subject. To be frank, I have little doubt that these same gentlemen could with equal convincingness prove that tobacco could not be grown in Ireland. When they assert that "wheat cannot be grown with success on the wide range of soils which are capable of producing good crops of oats," I begin to wonder how our grandfathers ever grew wheat in the 'forties. What unkind old fellows they must have been, thus by anticipation disproving this nice little pet theory of our national advisers, to wit, that God Almighty, in His metereological and climatic wisdom, arranged that Europe from Norway to Sicily could grow wheat but Ireland never !

They used to say the same about Canada—until Red

Fife was discovered in 1882 and Marquis wheat in 1908.¹ Which reminds me that there is a lot of talk about trying to discover proper varieties for Ireland. One sometimes gets the impression that there are people in Dublin who think they are pioneers in a country hitherto inhabited by reindeer and nomads. To safeguard our common sense, it may be necessary to assert that there was Irish wheat quite a long time before there was a Department of Agriculture—and, let us hope, it will not predecease the latter. The quest is not for wheat but for a 'strong' wheat suitable for bakers' flour in accordance with the current taste of the public (and the bakers). I would be the last to decry scientific research. But inasmuch as the said strong wheat (Yeoman) has already been discovered by an Englishman in England, the principal scientific problem seems to be now to secure supplies of the seed and to investigate possible improvements in management (sowing, manuring, rotation, threshing, saving, storage, credit, etc.). In any case this question of strong wheat is at present irrelevant. We are importing soft Pacific and German wheat. We could use our ordinary Irish wheat (Squarehead Master, Red Stettin, etc.) for shop flour, and in particular for one-way flour. And I have shown in my pamphlet (p. 16) that we could with advantage use as much as 25 per cent. of Irish wheat in our bakers' flour. Therefore this question of strong native wheat, while it is very important for the future, lies entirely outside the present issue.

The really important objection to encouraging wheat is that it will merely have the effect of ousting oats. Even if this were partially true, it would still be arguable that it would be more important for us to have our own supplies of human food and to lessen or abolish the importation of

¹ Talking about precariousness, here is what a Canadian Wheat Pool Statistician says: "Wheat growing on the Canadian prairies is notoriously a risky business. . . . Thousands of farmers made preparations in August to harvest what they expected to be a 30 bushel per acre crop of No. 1 or No. 2 Northern wheat, which turned out to be a 20 bushel crop of No. 6 and feed."—*Milling*, 1 Dec., 1928, p. 598. He is alluding to the frost of 22 August 1928; and of course the Canadian farmers are equally unfortunate if their harvest is too good. But the Government has not advised the farmers against wheat-growing as precarious!

seven millions worth of wheat and wheat products. But inasmuch as most of our oats is grown for home consumption, not for export (the demand for which is likely to lessen in any case), it is very unlikely that oats will to any serious extent be superseded. In 1847 we had 671,448 acres of wheat instead of the 29,000 acres of 1926; but in 1847 there were also 1,544,148 acres of oats, while in 1926 we had only 647,000. Oats are now extensively grown in Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Cavan and Monaghan—counties which never grew much wheat. Without going to the extent of compelling grass lands to be broken up for wheat, as the Popes did long ago in the Campagna, it is surely possible, by a prudent and gradual encouragement of wheat, to extend the area under tillage. It is curious that the scruples which now spring up concerning wheat, do not seem to have been very vocal when there was question of heavily subsidising beet-root! In any case an extra crop of wheat could easily be inserted into the rotation in many farms: pasture—wheat—roots—*wheat*—oats and grass—hay—pasture. During the War the second crop of wheat (after roots) was grown, and by using extra top-dressing there was no deleterious effect on the oats following. Anyway the question remains, if eighty years ago we could grow wheat *and* oats, why now are we reduced to the dilemma: wheat *or* oats?

So much for the wheat, for the moment. I now turn to the Majority Report against a Flour Tariff. Not a single new idea or argument, not even an attempt to reply to the numerous criticisms, just the repetition of errors already exploded and a graceful whitewashing of the Tariff Commissioners—signed by the three Ministers who nominated them. Well, it won't work. This kind of thing may dupe the ignorant public, but the people in favour of protecting our milling industry are not so easily taken in. I myself was naturally interested in examining how far my own published arguments were answered. But the writers do not even pretend to refute me; they

exhibit what I already called pachydermatous indifference—like the little boy who bravely said after a whipping “It doesn’t hurt!” My indictment stands unrefuted. So I will merely make a few desultory comments on the new performance. They—and also, I observe, the signatories of the Minority Report—quote the scale of transit charges given by the Tariff Commissioners; yet I proved (p. 8) that, in the case of Cork, these estimates were double the actual charges. They (and also the Minority) refer to wheat parcels as only “occasionally” available in England; whereas they are quoted daily in Liverpool and London. Allusion is made to the possibility of “the setting up of at least one mill here” by an English miller. They do not consider the possibility of forbidding this, just as the Minister for Agriculture forbade a German factory in Tipperary. In any case, is it not better to have an English mill supplying us with flour situated here rather than in Birkenhead?

In spite of my attack on the Brummagem idol of efficiency, the stock old phrases such as “smaller and less efficient mills” occur once more. All I can do now is to ask the efficiency-worshippers if they refer to port or country mills, if they wish to encourage or to get rid of Irish wheat, if they are speaking of national or profit-making efficiency, if they think it immoral to encourage small mills as well as small holdings. Meanwhile, more to get the taste of the Mersey out of my mouth than for any other reason, I will give myself the pleasure of quoting two measures adopted by Spain and Portugal¹ :—

It is forbidden to open new flour mills of a producing capacity exceeding 1,000 kilograms [6.2 sacks] of milled flour per 24 hours. Nevertheless the authorisation to open mills of a milling power inferior to the capacity quoted shall still remain by special concession in each case and provided they are specially intended for rural consumption and for consumption by small villages lacking in means of communication. Existing mills may renew their machinery provided such renewal does not signify an increase in their milling capacity—(Spain).

¹ *International Year Book of Agricultural Legislation*, 1926, pp. 53, 49.

The installation of new cereal crushing factories shall not be authorised unless it is ascertained as the result of an industrial inquiry that there is an insufficient manufacturing capacity to answer the needs of consumption. The translocation of existing factories only will be allowed, in which case they must preserve their particular characteristics or else the amalgamation of these same factories with a view to industrial concentration ; a determined enterprise may not by these means increase its producing capacity as compared with its present capacity unless it has applied for the previous authorisation of the Agricultural Exchange.—(Portugal).

The Majority Report has become very mild about the price of bread : “ the price of bread, which varies with the price of flour, would rise sooner or fall later than it would if no tariff were imposed.” This practically amounts to a rejection of the contention of the master bakers that “ *any* increase in the price of flour due to the proposed tariff would have to be added to the price of bread.” But there is a discreet silence about the findings of the Prices Tribunal on the subject.¹ And by the way did not one of the signatories, the Minister for Industry and Commerce, declare in the Dáil that “ the *only* impediment to the granting of the tariff ” was the increase in the price of bread ? This impediment is now getting less ; with a further study of the relations between flour and bread prices in this country, it would vanish altogether. Assuming that the bakers will with impunity be allowed to raise the price of bread, the Report refers feelingly to the place of bread in the worker’s family budget. This laudable sympathy would be more appreciated if they dealt with my thrice repeated challenge about the incidence of the tax on sugar.

The end of the Report² rejects the contention of the Minority that two invoices submitted to the Committee were evidence of dumping. The question is really a side-

¹ Also it must be remembered (as I pointed out in my pamphlet p. 24 note) that the bakers base their bread-price on the officially quoted flour-prices (I have this from a baker). But the bakers really buy at the “ taking ” price, which is from 2s. to 5s. below the official and supposedly economic price. This undisgorged and undisclosed profit is therefore available in case a flour-tariff is imposed.

² In connection with an argument about the price of offals I will quote Mr. James V. Rank : “ The price of wheat offals is not fixed in relation to the cost of wheat but in relation to the cost of other feeding stuffs.”—*Milling*, 27 April, 1929, p. 453.

issue. From the national point of view it is much the same to us whether our mills are wiped out by fair or unfair competition. In fact the distinction may become very fine; and it is quite allowable to hold, as I hold, that any foreign competition which injures our milling industry is unfair nationally and should be stopped. To my mind it is merely solemn foolery for Irish statesmen to start wrangling about the production costs of two particular consignments of foreign flour. (As they were at it, why did they not refer to the derating of English mills and the rebate on the transport of offals?) However, as the matter seems to have some sentimental influence, I will deal briefly with it.¹ The English paper *Milling* refers to the incident as follows in its issue for 4 May 1929:—

Flour has been sold at uneconomic rates, but from all that we know of the prices actually accepted in England at the time of the transactions above referred to, it was most certainly not a case of disposing of surplus production at a price lower than that taken in the domestic market.

Now that is an enlightening comment. It contains two admissions: (1) Flour *has been* sold at uneconomic prices, (2) the price of the flour sold then in Ireland was not lower than the English price. But it is *not* asserted that this price was economic. We can now extend the first admission by turning, in the same issue of the same paper, to the District News from the East Midlands:—

The more one thinks of the prospects of the milling industry, the more despondent one becomes. The action of some mills in offering *prices below cost* and in broadcasting offers by post, has compelled other mills to meet this competition or close down. It is utterly impossible even to give an approximate price as prevailing at the moment, as offers vary about 2s. 6d. per sack.

Turn now to the editorial of the same issue:—

Millers will buy wheat which must show at least a small margin of profit [to the grain merchant] and turn it into flour which they will sell at a loss . . . The most amazing feature of the situation is that every miller is quite unable to understand how the trade endures its present position.

¹ In the first issue of my pamphlet I ignored it altogether; in the second issue (p. 44) I proved its existence out of the mouths of our competitors.

A letter to the editor in the same issue declares that

At a recent important millers' meeting, the representative of one of the largest organisations stated that no miller could make a profit at the prices lately taken.¹

No wonder that the editor declares (again in the same issue) that "it is highly necessary that a check should be put on this form of reckless trading in the commerce of flour; it has resolved itself into a sort of commercial anarchy." The editor of *Milling* is hardly surprised that some of us on this side of the Channel have proposed to put a forcible check on the anarchy.

Therefore I take it as proved—for where could we get a better proof than in the official organ of the English millers?—that flour is being sold in England at uneconomic prices. Like the editor of *Milling*, I am at a loss to understand how the trade endures its present position, unless the English millers have other industrial undertakings or make money by speculation and options. But the fact of uneconomic selling is openly admitted and denounced. Hence I conclude—I would even like to add *a fortiori*—that English flour is being sold, not only in the East Midlands, but in Ireland at uneconomic prices. Whether this is or is not "dumping" is a dictionary dispute in which I am not interested.

It is hardly likely that Irish consumers will find satisfaction in the knowledge of this dumping. Apart from the fact that the benefit merely goes to swell the profits of the bakers, the dumping is bound ultimately to lead to a price-ring disguised under some euphonious name. If when that day comes, when the English millers have mopped up their own mess, we have no vigorous milling industry of our own, we are going to pay dearly for our folly. A foretaste of what is to come may be

¹ The following is an extract from the editorial comment of the *London Corn Circular* (13 May, 1929) on the speech of the chairman at the annual meeting of Spillers, Ltd. (this firm no longer publishes a balance sheet): "What would interest the trade much more than the bare mention of the total profit on trading would be to learn the results of the two branches of the business separately, i.e., the milling and the feeding-stuffs branches. It is well known that the milling industry as a whole did not have a very successful year during 1928 Any losses sustained were much more likely to have been occasioned by sales of flour at less than cost price than by the ups and downs of the wheat market."

discovered in the "national scheme of co-ordination" announced in *The Coal Merchant and Shipper* (London).

An agreement (we are told) has been arrived at between the colliery owners in England, Scotland and South Wales for the regulation of the coal trade with Ireland The colliery owners in the various areas will act in co-operation in the regulation of the prices at which coal will be supplied to Ireland, and under the scheme supplies will be made only to members of the Irish Importers' Association who, it is stated, deal with all but a small percentage of the coal imported by Ireland. A joint co-ordinating committee is to be appointed, consisting of representatives from the Irish Importers' Association and the various British associations of coal-owners. This committee is to act in a consultative or advisory capacity in regard to all matters affecting the Irish coal trade, including *inter alia* the raising or lowering of prices of coal either generally or in regard to any one or more of the districts, and joint action in the event of colliery owners or coal importers acting in a manner prejudicial to the objects contemplated under the scheme (4 May, 1929).

The Shannon Scheme may give us some relief against this plot of coalowners and importers. Only a tariff on foreign flour imposed now can save us from that 'national scheme of co-ordination' which sooner or later the English millers will adopt.

There is only one other matter in the Majority Report to which I will refer. This is the "suggestion that the importation into Saorstát Eireann of flour other than straight-run flour should be prohibited." "We shall submit at a later date a separate report dealing with this proposal." The report ought to prove interesting especially if read in conjunction with my already published criticism (p. 50). Meanwhile the comment of *Milling* (4 May 1929) is worth quoting: "This presumably is just to keep the ball rolling, since it is obvious it would be a very difficult matter to turn this suggestion into an effective law."

I now turn to the Minority Reports which advocate, in addition to the imposition of a tariff on imported flour, the establishment of a Wheat Control Board which will purchase and import foreign wheat, fix a price for

home-grown wheat and determine the percentage of such wheat to be used by the millers.¹ I have no objection in principle to this scheme. There is nothing revolutionary in it; under various designations such a Board already exists in Italy, France, Switzerland, Norway, Portugal.² But I consider the scheme rather elaborate at the present stage of our wheat-growing; moreover there is the practical objection that the scheme has at present little or no chance of being carried. It seems to me better to aim at what is immediately practicable and to prepare for future development by careful experimenting and inquiry. So far we have had very little practical and positive examination of the problem; there have been sweeping negations followed by a sweeping scheme. What we want at the start is a few essential measures, whose effects can be carefully supervised by a Wheat Committee of experts and farmers who can in the course of experience advise further measures, corrections and developments.

The first essential is a guaranteed home market for Irish wheat. Practical farmers like Senator Linehan have declared that this is all that is required.³ Others, such as the members of the Economic Committee, assert that a minimum guaranteed price of 30s. per barrel (or 12s. per cwt.) is required. There is no doubt that the stabilisation of prices is one of the most urgent needs of agriculture. "Let prices be what they will," says Sir Daniel Hall, "the uncertainty is almost as bad as low prices." It is extremely doubtful whether the low price of wheat has been of any benefit to this country; it has caused the ruin of tillage, emigration, unemployment, increased taxation and rating; and it is equally doubtful

¹ I am inclined to agree with the criticism of the two Labour members, that the Board should not be a limited liability company; it could be an organ of the State with a special corporate personality to keep it free from political influence. I also think that if wheat sold to the mills is subsidised, a 'milling bonus' should, as in Switzerland, be paid to those who grow wheat for their own use.

² A similar Wheat Board for the purchase of foreign wheat and consequent stabilisation of price was advocated by the "Committee on Stabilisation of Agricultural Prices" in England (*Report*, 1925, pp. 72f.).

³ I asserted this in my pamphlet (p. 12) as a result of my conversations with wheat-growers.

that it has meant cheap bread. The attempt to regulate the price of essential commodities such as wheat and bread would be a healthy reversion to medieval ideas; to a large extent it is already being done in France, Portugal, Switzerland, Norway. But the almost entire lack of a Catholic social outlook and the prevalence of materialist economic views would make it exceedingly difficult to start such a scheme here at present. Our economists do not object to railway-tickets and taxi-fares being standardised in price; but they would be up in arms against an assize of wheat or bread. Moreover such a scheme would require not only an educated public opinion but expert elaboration. Fixing the price of home-grown wheat would involve questions of financing, grading, storing and marketing. I do not believe for one moment that the questions are insuperable; they have been solved in small countries such as Norway and Switzerland.¹ But at present our farmers are depressed and apathetic, officialdom is hostile, vested profiteering interests are powerful, and the economic theories of Adam Smith are the prevailing fashion. I am therefore of opinion that it will be necessary to start by guaranteeing the market and to exert a beneficial influence on the price by prescribing the percentage of home-grown wheat to be used in our mills.

A Belgian Decree² emphasises "the wisdom of progressively utilising home cereals for milling purposes," and prescribes that from 27 September, 1926 the composition of mixtures of breadmaking cereals for milling must be: 15 p.c. home-grown or foreign rye, at least 20 p.c. home-grown wheat, at most 65 p.c. foreign wheat. Even the Conservative Prime Minister in England made the following announcement in his speech of 18 April, 1929: "During the six months after the harvest we believe that it is quite practicable to stipulate in Army and Air Force contracts that at least 25 per cent.

¹ The Swiss scheme explained in my pamphlet—which by the way was elaborated by the Catholic Minister of Finance, M. Musy—has since been carried by a referendum. ² *International Year Book of Agricultural Legislation*, 1926, p. 16.

of the flour used in bread for these services shall be flour milled from home wheat. We intend to bring that into effect.”¹ In England slightly less than 16 per cent. of the home-milled flour is milled from home-grown wheat; the corresponding figure for this country is slightly less than 5.5 per cent. We mill about 338,000 tons of wheat of which 18,000 are home-grown. If our annual import of 170,000 tons of flour were reduced to 100,000, then our mills would produce 70,000 extra tons of flour, that is, they would use 100,000 additional tons of wheat. In that case our present wheat production would supply slightly over 4 per cent. of the wheat milled here.

Suppose now that, as a result of a reduction of flour imports and an increase in wheat-growing, it was estimated that in the coming year suitable Irish wheat could supply 10 per cent. of the wheat milled here. If each miller were compelled to mill, say, 8 per cent. at least of Irish wheat, then the home market for Irish wheat would be tolerably secured. It would not matter to us whether the miller utilised his quota of Irish wheat entirely for shop flour or whether he used it up in all his flours within a month of the harvest. The Irish wheat would be bought, and inasmuch as the minimum guaranteed demand is not considerably below the supply, there is a fair prospect that the price received by the producer will not be too low. At least such an experiment would be worth trying, and even if it failed we should have a clearer analysis of the problem. This method—the fixing of the percentage of home-grown wheat in the total milled—seems to me to have advantages over a scheme in which

¹ In connection with Mr. Baldwin's proposal, there have been some interesting discussions among English millers. As the opinions expressed throw considerable light on the so-called efficiency of the big port mills and on the question of wheat-growing, the following summary may be quoted from the *London Corn Circular* of 13 May, 1929: “The impression one gets from the attitude of the big port millers is that it would not trouble some of them one jot if they never saw another bushel of English wheat in their mills. The farmers have partly put English wheat at a disadvantage by cultivating smaller acreages and in consequence selling in smaller quantities, while at the same time the big mills, by having increased their capacities, are less inclined to bother themselves with purchases of mere cotehells The small country millers will not agree, their point of view being that, given a fair chance to compete in the market, they can use all the English wheat which the farmers will sell them, just as used to be the case in the pre-war days. Thus it will be seen that among the millers themselves there is a distinct cleavage of opinion.”

the percentage of Irish wheat is fixed for the mixture used for making all flour sold in the country. It is much simpler to administer, it is more gradual inasmuch as it allows the import of purely foreign flour on payment of a tariff, it enables the soft Irish wheat to be utilised exclusively or mainly for the manufacture of shop-flour. Ultimately, I hope, the percentage for all flour sold here will be prescribed; but we are as yet hardly ready for such a law, and we avoid many complications by not dealing with it now.

Without precluding future developments I therefore advocate (1) the fixing, in accordance with the available crop, of the quota of Irish wheat to be used by Irish millers, and (2) the imposition of a tariff of 3*s.* on every imported sack of flour. To give this scheme any chance of success, the following provisions would also be necessary:—

- (1) Propaganda in favour of Irish wheat and the investigation of the scientific, social and economic problems connected therewith.
- (2) The power to suspend the flour-tax or to issue licences for free importation of flour in non-milled districts such as Donegal, until milling facilities are provided, and also for Jacob's biscuit factory.
- (3) The imposition of a heavy tax on imported bread, say 3*d.* per 4-lb. loaf, to be gradually applied if necessary.
- (4) The prohibition of the export of wheat-offals; and the prohibition of their import except under licence when the needs of our agriculture require outside supplies.
- (5) The registration of all Irish flour-mills and the prohibition of extension of existing mills or the erection of new mills except in so far as the needs of country districts, especially in wheat-growing areas, may require.
- (6) Supervision of the price of bread and if necessary a drastic inquiry into the bakers' accounts.

ALFRED O'RAHILLY.