

investment. Moreover, trade unions do not want merely to keep total investment down, but to devote more of it to the nationalized industries and the social-welfare fields, such as housing and the health services.

There is, however, one elementary concern which the state cannot escape, or allow to slip away to the unions. That is the guardianship of the external balance of payment—a crucial matter in present-day Britain. Here is the sticking point beyond which government cannot yield without abandoning its clear duty. It is the chief historical function of Sir Stafford Cripps to symbolize this sticking point. Just as the trade unions have invaded the general field of economic policy in the character of guardians of the wage earner, so Sir Stafford is bound also to enter as the guardian of the external balance of payments. Cripps, the trade unions, and the potential alliance or clash between them—there is the dominant fact of British economic policy.

The tension between the two has become more clearly visible. Cripps wants British prices lowered in order to increase exports without devaluation of currency. The unions, with their newly-acquired “real” approach, agree. A fall in prices, with wages constant, is better for them than an increase in money wages, with prices high. But although Cripps and the trade unions both come out for lower prices, theirs is a superficial alliance that cloaks a deep dissonance.

If the trade unions have their way, the fall in prices will mean increased domestic incomes, hence increased domestic consumption and fewer products available for export. Cripps, however, wants lower prices in order to sell more abroad, and this means lower domestic consumption—the direct opposite of what the trade unions want. The real divergence will not come into the open until prices actually have been lowered. Then it is bound to appear.

Cripps versus the trade unions, the external balance of payments versus the wage earners—can this conflict be resolved without putting back into the hands of the state the authority of varying the level of employment and the opportunities of policy-making that go with it? The next stage of the experiment will show. —H. W. SINGER

Austerity, Unltd.

Life is bearable, but not luxurious or much fun for the British Family Robinson of Birmingham



European George Morgan,

Leonard Robinson has quite a good job, by English standards, for a man thirty-two years old. He works manager—what Americans call a plant superintendent — of George Morgan, Ltd., in Birmingham, a sizable plant that manufactures drop forgings. When he took a trip to the United States recently as part of a management-labor team to observe American production methods, he also had a chance to observe the living standards of American plant superintendents. They seem very wealthy men indeed to him.

Robinson, a short man with thin, sharply-angled features and the square, efficient hands of an engineer, lives on Valley Road, the Sheldon section of Birmingham, in a semi-detached house which he was fortunate enough to get through his father-in-law, a man of some substance before the war. There are only two kinds of house on Valley Road—first one type, then the other, alternately. The residents are civil servants, commercial travelers, and one or two people in business for themselves. When the Robinsons married three years ago, they acquired some furniture from Mrs. Robinson’s people, and they used the ration points allotted to newly-wed couples to buy a bedroom suite of the Government Utility Furniture which was produced in standard design right after the war.

When Robinson gets up in the morning he has five suits to choose from. Three of them are old, worn suits which were originally good quality; because his work at the plant is often rather dirty, he wears one of these three during the week. Since rationing of cloth-

ing was relaxed, he has bought no new things. Like most Britons, he cannot afford them. Robinson takes some pride in the fact that he wears a clean shirt every day; he has twelve of them.

Robinson enjoys what he describes as a hearty breakfast every morning. It consists of cold cereal with milk (which is quite plentiful in the summer, although in winter the ration for two people is three pints a week), bacon several times a week (his wife doesn’t care for bacon and gives him her ration) and liver the other mornings, and toast and marmalade (which are easy to get now, although the bread is heavy and dark). Occasionally he has fruit: apples are easy to get in the summer; oranges and grapefruit, while not rationed, are hard to find.

Robinson travels the ten miles to his plant in his 1936 Standard sedan. He is allowed enough petrol to travel ninety miles a month simply for pleasure, and he also gets petrol for his work.

George Morgan, Ltd., has not, of course, been nationalized, and Robinson sums up his duties there by saying, “I’m there to see that we make a profit.” His efforts, so far, have met with creditable success. The plant produces parts for automobiles, bicycles, agricultural equipment, and other machinery. He is often required to work overtime in the evenings and on Saturday, but nothing like the sixty- or seventy-hour weeks he used to put in during the war.

He takes his lunch in the firm canteen. Having had a big breakfast, he eats only dessert and tea at noon. (Robinson is a rather lean man.)

He spends most of his lunch hour working a crossword puzzle with a colleague or looking over the six-page *Daily Telegraph*, which one of the

workmen brings to him every morning.

Robinson is tired at the end of his day and goes directly home to a fairly heavy cooked meal with his wife. They have vegetables, and meat whenever they can. Since the meat ration is based on value, not on quantity, one cannot have very much good-quality meat. Fish and fowl are more plentiful.

In summer, Robinson likes to spend what time there is left before sunset out back working on his water garden. Since moving to Valley Road, he has constructed three pools for fish and water lilies. Like most English gardeners, Robinson has very little space and must plan neat, compact plots. The Robinsons are pleased that their back yard borders on Birmingham's Green Belt, where law forbids the construction of any buildings.

About once a month the Robinsons go to the cinema. They are not very

If you've been a registered customer of a liquor store for many years, you can get a bottle of whiskey only once in several months; on the black market a bottle costs three pounds. The beer, which became increasingly watery as the war progressed, is still not much good. The Robinsons do manage to get a little rum and sherry now and then.

Fred Jones and his wife live at King's Heath, right on Robinson's way home from work; he often picks them up on his way and then drives them to the bus later in the evening.

The Joneses and the Robinsons get along well. Jones goes in for water gardening, too, and, besides, both couples are Conservatives. They pin their hopes for the future on a change in Government at the next election; they feel that the most important element of British foreign policy is getting on with

outside a tobacconist's. He likes to smoke a lot, but she is able to get him only about two packages of Players a week; otherwise he smokes a pipe.

Whenever they can, the Robinsons spend the weekend at a bungalow Mrs. Robinson's father owns on a river about thirty miles from Birmingham. The father-in-law is an electrical contractor and they make the trip in his van. They would never use the ration of white petrol that they get for their private car on such a trip, but red petrol for commercial vehicles is plentiful. Their Siamese cat, Sammy, is locked up in the back for the trip.

The Robinsons take a two-week vacation every year. They save up enough petrol to drive to the seashore in the car—last summer they went to Somerset—but once they get there they have to lay the car up and do their sight-seeing on foot or on rented bicycles. For



European

keen on films, but they like to see a British picture, if there's a good one, or the best of the American movics. Occasionally the Robinsons see an opera at the Theatre Royal or a straight play at the Alexandra. They used to go out more often when they were first married, but walking nearly a mile in hopes of catching a bus without too much of a wait seems a terrible bother to them now, and using up precious petrol strikes them as foolish. The most enjoyable evening out for the Robinsons is to hear a concert at the Town Hall by the City of Birmingham Orchestra, one of England's finest, conducted by George Weldon.

Entertaining at home is difficult for a couple like the Robinsons. A few sandwiches are all they can offer any guests who happen to drop in.

the United States and that Winston Churchill is the man for that job. They feel that the social gains the Labour Government has effected are all good, but that the Government is simply proceeding at a faster rate than England can afford.

Robinson has been to the doctor twice since the National Health Service was enacted. He goes to the same man he has gone to for years, Dr. Haslam at Selly Oak, and pays the fee privately. As a private patient, he makes appointments and doesn't have to wait in a queue.

His wife must wait in line at the greengrocer's, at the fish market, at the sweets shop—now that sweets have gone off ration it is always a long queue—and stands in one to buy cigarettes for her husband whenever she sees one

the two weeks of their vacation they try to leave off worrying about what they can afford; they like to put up in a smart hotel and live at a rate far in excess of their income for a few days.

The Robinsons have no children. "To educate a child in the way we would think proper costs a great deal," Robinson explains. "Unless a child were particularly brilliant, he wouldn't get very much individual attention in the schools which the government provides, and since we would not anticipate having particularly brilliant children, we would wish to send them to special schools. We couldn't afford it.

"Furthermore," says Robinson, smiling as if he were about to get off something amusing, "a chap ought to be a bit more optimistic about the future than I am to go in for having children."

Laborites on the Defense

Clamor for further immediate nationalization was muted by thoughts of economic crisis and general election at the Blackpool Conference



There is nothing in America quite comparable to the annual British Labour Party Conference at Blackpool. Not only is it a curious mixture of political convention, jamboree, debating contest, and evangelical meeting. It is also an accounting by the Cabinet (speaking not only as Ministers but as party leaders) of their past records and their future hopes and fears. That is why the coastal city of Blackpool was, for a week in early June, the place in which to examine the immediate past and glimpse the immediate future of British Labour Party policy.

The strongest impression is that the party has decided to give the country a breathing spell. It used to be said that the Conservatives accepted Labour's foreign policy and rejected everything else. The whole sector of budgetary policy has been added to foreign policy, and now the area of agreement between the major parties is larger than that of disagreement. The Labour budget has been whittled by the keen edge of Britain's economic crisis. The shortage of dollars, the sudden dwindling of Britain's proportion of world trade, the dearth of capital equipment, the meagerness of resources and manpower, the shadow of an American depression—all have made both parties faithful to Sir Stafford Cripps.

Every Labour Party Conference, someone has said, provides a wailing wall at which the younger men inveigh against the immobility of the leaders and the slowness of socialization. This year there was, perhaps, a larger number than usual of these wailers and inveighers, which led the Conservatives

to hope for a showdown fight. They were disappointed. The youngsters went through their routine, but they, and everybody else, knew that they stood no chance of moving the movers and shakers. Aneurin Bevan, the stocky Welsh miner turned intellectual and Minister, gave them an out by saying that the old abstractions of the Labour movement had been "married to contemporary reality," and that compromise had to be the issue of the marriage. Even more brilliantly he argued that in a deficit economy the main problem for socialists was one of making the right moral choices in assigning priorities.

Even on the moral choices Cripps had the last word. If he had to make a choice, he said, between using surplus business profits as a source of new taxes or as a form of reinvestment, he would choose the latter, since it would lead to higher production. In that conclusion,

more than in Aneurin Bevan's, one gets the new mood of the Labour Party.

To accept what Bevan calls "the language of priorities" means to move away from the religion of nationalization. The nationalization program up to now, in the four years of Labour power, has been a rapid one for a social-democratic, or Fabian, party—more extensive than any non-Communist government has ever undertaken in a similar period. *Labour Believes in Britain*, the election blueprint pamphlet circulated at the conference for criticism, expresses pride in that record. But now Labour is ready to mark time.

In place of nationalization the new Labour theory is based upon a mixed economy. It was Aneurin Bevan, the acknowledged leader of the left-wing group in the Cabinet, who was picked by the executive committee to defend the new economic line. Bevan did his usual accomplished job of walloping the Tories. But he was under a disad-



Bevan