

The National Coal Board

Much of the work Fritz did in the 1950s, which led up to his lecture course in 1959-1960, was a direct consequence of his job at the National Coal Board. The death of Sir Arthur Street in 1951, removing Fritz's most important line of influence in the Board, heralded a decade of frustration and under-utilization in which he was eventually forced to conclude that he could be doing more useful work elsewhere.

The positive side to this unsatisfactory situation, and one which Fritz freely acknowledged, was that he had a degree of freedom to follow his other interests. He had time to read and think deeply about the many questions stimulated by his reading. This did not mean that he sat around with his feet on his desk reading uplifting works to while away the time. He worked a full day and by normal standards his work was prodigious. But his capacity was greater and his mind was never still.

The pressing problem facing the coal industry when Fritz joined in 1950 was how to supply enough coal to fill the huge and growing demand brought about by post-war reconstruction, and Fritz set out at once to discover ways of increasing efficiency and preventing waste. There were about nine hundred different mines to be considered and five tiers of management structure, and Fritz saw that it was impossible to weld such an enormous industry into a cohesive unit without having some means of acquiring a clear and concise picture of what was going on. This was not available. Although masses

of statistics were being collected all the time and sent to the statisticians in Hobart House for analysis, few were really useful pointers to the state of the mines or indicators of the problems that were hampering the efficient supply of coal. For this reason, in Fritz's view, the Board was not able to formulate the sort of policies that could really get to grips with creating an efficient and dynamic framework for the industry. Fritz's suggestion, however, that a new approach should be made to the whole area of statistics and statistical analysis was ignored and it was to be twelve years before he was allowed to put this vital proposition into practice.

The other fundamental problem that Fritz immediately identified in the industry was that of human relations. He believed that this had a far more significant effect on efficiency than technology. 'Here, as everywhere,' he wrote to his parents in November 1950, 'it is human relations, that is the relationship between worker and management, that need improving far more than technology. The mine managers are experts in machines but not in leadership. The wonderful machines are of no use at all if the workers don't feel like working. One needs to start on this human element.'

It was a theme he was to pursue relentlessly, which he had already faced in Germany after the war and towards which he had tried to contribute a solution in his plea for the socialization of German industry in 1946. Then it had seemed to him that doing away with private profit by putting the means of production into public hands was a crucial factor, both in changing attitudes in industry and in removing the danger of concentrating economic power in the hands of a few private individuals at the expense of the nation as a whole. 'Yet within six months he had seen that three years of nationalization had failed to make any impact on attitudes in industry, and the following year, 1951, when the Conservatives were returned to power, it became even clearer that public attitudes had not been touched either. The success of the new government's campaign against the nationalized industries, reflected in the hostility of the press, highlighted the extent to which the nationalized industries were lonely 'socialist islands in a sea of capitalism'.

The change in the public atmosphere under the Conserva-

tives caused Fritz to think much more deeply about public ownership and its importance in changing society. The crux of the matter was the question of profit. To a socialist the evils of private enterprise were rooted in the fact that its sole justification was private profit and private gain. Nationalization, by placing ownership in the hands of the nation, removed the danger of exploitation and other excesses perpetrated by private greed and meant that the workers were contributing not to an individual's wealth but towards the nation as a whole of which they were part. Yet Fritz was faced with the fact that this beneficial aspect not only failed to impress or positively motivate the miners but also caused considerable confusion among socialists. It led him to two inescapable conclusions: firstly that generations of 'capitalistic working for profit' had moulded attitudes which would take time and patience to change, and secondly, that ownership, although vitally important, was only an element in a framework within which new aims and ideals had to be set.

He tried to clarify these points both within and outside the industry. The problem of profit had many implications. In articles and lectures he pointed out that the profit motive, with its simple appeal of reducing every decision to the one question of how it would affect profits, had led people to believe that efficiency and profit were synonymous. Now they were faced with a new scenario. Nationalized industries had been set up to serve the nation as a whole and the removal of profit-making from the centre of the stage had confused even the best minds as to the lines on which the industry should be run. If there was no profit there was public outcry that the industry concerned was inefficient, yet if there was a profit it was accused of overcharging the public. He wrote:

The first thing I should like to emphasise is that, while the word profit, with some people, may have a bad sound, this sound attaches only to *private* profit and cannot possibly attach to any profit of public enterprise. That is, because what is often considered objectionable is the *private appropriation of wealth* through profit-making; but in the case of *public* enterprise there is no private appropriation of wealth at all ... As a general rule and within certain reasonable

limits, nationalised enterprise should strive to maximise profits, so as to make the greatest possible contribution to public revenue and capital formation.¹

In other words, over a wide area of decisions the Board must indeed act 'commercially', in the interests of the N.C.B., just like a private firm acting in its own interest. But all the time the Board must consider 'the public interest', whatever that may be, and in case of conflict must give precedence to the public interest over the interest of the N.C.B. ...

It can easily be seen, therefore, that efficiency for the Coal Board does not always mean the same thing as it would mean for private enterprise. Nor can it be measured in the same way. Yet, when we have recognized these - and other - differences, we shall do well to remember the identities. Nationalized industry is every bit as much concerned with the attainment of maximum efficiency as is private industry. Once the public interest has been recognized by the Board's adoption of certain specific points to that end, then - within the framework thus given - the criterion of efficiency must rule supreme.²

These similarities between the operation of private and public industries were the source of much confusion, particularly as there were a number of large private firms which had an enlightened policy towards their workers, a fact exploited by the Conservative government in their campaign against the nationalized industries. Such private firms, it was argued, performed both functions more efficiently than their public counterparts. But Fritz insisted that these suggestions merely clouded the fact that there was an essential difference between the two types of ownership:

It is necessary to recognize that private ownership of the means of production is severely limited in its freedom of choice of objectives, because it is compelled to be profit-seeking, and tends to take a narrow and selfish view of things. Public ownership gives complete freedom in the choice of objectives and can therefore be used for any purpose that may be chosen. While private ownership is an

instrument that by itself largely determines the ends for which it can be employed, public ownership is an instrument, the ends of which are completely undetermined.³

By 1959 the importance of this essential difference was beginning to show itself as the coal industry was put to the test by the sudden change in the market, felt since 1957. In that year, demand had suddenly fallen and the coal industry entered into a prolonged period of crisis. Although the seriousness of the crisis at first remained unrecognized by most of the policy-makers at the Board, the adverse effects of the cutback in demand on the employees in the industry were minimized. Fritz had a different view of the crisis from most of his colleagues – an issue which will be dealt with later in this chapter – but he believed that the way it was being handled by the Board was a vindication of the ideals of nationalization. They followed a policy which put men before money, despite the fact that this caused a tremendous amount of criticism outside the industry.

It is a sad reflection on the confusion of thought prevailing in our society that the Board has come in for the most violent criticism on precisely those policies which are its finest achievements – policies with which it not only lived up to its highest obligations as a nationalised industry but also recognised the fundamental truth – which should be completely obvious in an affluent society – that it is wrong to chase after a trivial and temporary economic advantage at the cost of grave hurt to a considerable number of honest and guiltless fellow-citizens.⁴

It was hardly surprising that with such confusion over the true value of nationalization in the top levels of the industry and in government attitudes, the high ideals of the socialist pioneers should fail to penetrate to the workers. But Fritz saw a more sinister influence at work in the failure of these ideals to spread. 'The nationalized industries are founded on a higher ideal than personal greed: on the idea of service. But this idea cannot penetrate down to its workers when the ideological currents of society as a whole are flowing in the opposite direction.'⁵

What Fritz meant was that the effect of capitalism, whose

motive force was the satisfaction of greed, had replaced the concept of just pay for an honest day's work with an ideology which praised those whose gain was in inverse proportion to the amount of work they had done. It was symbolized for Fritz by the prominent attention given to the football pools, where the aim was to make money without doing any work at all. In a society where such attitudes were praised, the virtues of hard work and honesty were seriously undermined regardless of whether the ordinary worker was employed by a public or a private enterprise. 'The people inside . . .', explained Fritz, 'are as much in the grip of the "profit ideology" as the people outside. They get confused.'

Fritz's understanding of the subtle influences of generations of capitalism, private ownership and private profit on attitudes in society strengthened his belief that new forms of industrial organization must be found. The first step was to change ownership, but nationalization had shown clearly that this was not enough, a completely new structure must follow. He realized, too, that one could hardly expect the workers to respond to the ideals of the intellectual socialists when their work was soul-destroying in its tedium. This was also an area where the nationalized industries could spearhead the way to change.

Here, I believe, lies the greatest contribution which nationalized industry could make – and ought to be given a chance to make – to a new industrial outlook. We must *invest* in the reduction of boredom. Stupid work produces stupid or desperate people. Mere Welfare and Education, Consultation and Conciliation cannot offset the effects of shovelling, shovelling, shovelling all day and every day. All these worthy efforts will come to naught if we fail to reduce soul-destroying boredom.⁶

Turning to the question of the framework of industry, a part of which was the change of ownership from private individuals to the public, Fritz drew on ideas on which he had been working since the war. As early as 1941, when his mind was still very much occupied with matters of international trade, he had at the centre of his analysis the concept that a proper structure must incorporate the opposing elements of freedom

and planning, or control. Nations had to be free to determine their own policies and yet, within the framework of their co-operation over trade, there needed to be definite controls so that their behaviour did not endanger other nations. In his multilateral clearing plan Fritz tried to build in the controls in subtle ways, using moral pressures and persuasion rather than rules imposed from above.

His studies, in quite a different field after 1950, namely Eastern wisdom and religions, had reinforced these ideas. He had realized that life itself is a process of constantly reconciling opposites. His favourite example was from the French Revolution where, he pointed out, the opposing concepts of liberty and equality were reconciled by a third and what he would call 'higher' concept of fraternity. His visit to Burma had shed more light on the reconciliation of extremes as Fritz studied the Buddhist concept of the Middle Way, but had also added to his thinking in other ways. He had come across the Buddhist concept of work, of the value of work as a good in itself for the development of man's whole-being, and this had strengthened his concern about the destructive effect of many jobs on the personalities of those subjected to boring, repetitive tasks.

More obviously linked to the whole question of the structure of nationalized industries had also been his work on the socialization of German industry. In these proposals he had put forward suggestions for many different kinds of socialized enterprises, each appropriate to the type of business being put in public hands. As he came across different kinds of socialized enterprises in Britain he took careful note of their structures and the effects they seemed to have on their employees.

All these different strands of thought formed the background to his thinking about the structure of the nationalized coal industry. Right in the centre was the question: how, in such a vast industrial set-up, is it possible to allow enough freedom to enable people to use their initiative and be given the responsibility necessary for them to achieve satisfaction from their work while at the same time enabling the Board to keep a firm control over the workings of the industry? As usual he tried to devise a specific plan to solve these problems. In 1958 he submitted to the Board a paper which he thought would satisfy the criteria he had set himself. It was called

'Financial Control', and proposed that while the Board should retain overall control of policy for the industry as a whole and concern itself with planning, prices, research and development, and such top management questions, the day-to-day running of the industry should be put into the hands of those who actually produced the coal, namely the area managers. He proposed that they should be left to manage their own affairs and be given their own banking systems. These would quickly reflect anything that was going wrong, and would force the area to go to the Board for assistance or to justify the deficit they had acquired. 'It is the Board, not the Area, that ought to be able to sit still until something happens. It is the Area, not the Board, that ought to have to take the initiative if the Area's accounts go into the red.'⁷

The scheme was too revolutionary for the Board, preoccupied by 1958 with the problems of overproduction after years of coal shortages. Once more Fritz's ideas were ignored. The Board, then under the Chairmanship of James Bowman, were not men of vision and daring, Fritz thought, but men who allowed themselves to be discouraged by the unsympathetic political atmosphere and public criticism, and whose concern rarely went beyond the immediate calling of their expertise. Their narrow view prevented them from making use of their economic adviser and left him in the frustrating position of feeling that he had many of the answers to the industry's problems up his sleeve but no audience eager to watch him produce them and act upon his suggestions.

It was, in a sense, a continuation of Fritz's position since the outbreak of war. He was as powerless as ever. His experience at Prees Heath was still relevant: persuasion, explanation, kindness, clarity and justice had to remain substitutes for getting his way through the power of his position or by force. He did not despair at the failure of the men at the top to understand what he considered were the real problems of industrial society: he went directly to the men, to the managers in the areas, to the staff trained by Sam Essame; and everywhere his skills as a public speaker, his clarity of thought and his ability to tailor his message to the audience he was addressing endeared him to his public and increased their understanding of the industry they were serving. On a personal level too, Fritz

kept his door open to all. He maintained his motto 'I never met a man I didn't like,' and only admitted to one real failure. He detested the Board's scientific adviser, Jacob Bronowski, and confessed: 'I couldn't find it in my heart to like the man.' When Bronowski finally left the Board for America, Fritz commented, 'America's loss is the Coal Board's gain.' There are some, including David Astor, who believe that Fritz's intense dislike of Bronowski was largely because they were very similar men, both brilliant and very arrogant. Be that as it may, Bronowski was to Fritz the epitome of *homo sapiens*, a man who believed that he had evolved in a purposeless world and to whom Fritz could only say, 'Well, speak for yourself.'

The many others who came to Fritz's little room which for years overlooked the inner courtyard of Hobart House, were received with courtesy and friendliness. His relaxed manner gave his visitors the impression that he had all the time in the world to listen to their problems and over the years his advice was sought on a wide variety of questions, many of them personal and unrelated to Coal Board business. Colleagues would drop in for a chat and many would feel that they came away having learnt something new and useful. There were occasions when this rule of friendly courtesy was broken. If anyone came to Fritz for advice and then started disputing what he said, he could become extremely annoyed and impatient, eventually sending them out with an icy reminder that he was a busy man who could not afford to spend his time with people whose only intention was to waste it.

Despite his openness to all who sought his advice, and their evident respect and appreciation of his willingness to listen, Fritz remained a lonely figure. His penetrating, questioning mind made many of his colleagues uncomfortable, if not sometimes resentful, and he had few allies on the Board itself or in top levels of management. There were notable exceptions, although not all were based at Hobart House, among them Harry Collins, Sam Essame and Geoffrey Kirk. They were all men with whom Fritz could discuss many aspects of his interests. Until 1956 he lacked someone with whom he could work closely. Then he recruited a young Scottish economist who became more than just a support in the office, and who was to play an important part in Fritz's life. George McRobie was an

economics graduate from the London School of Economics. He had worked for some years for Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.), where Fritz had first come across him. Fritz was giving some help on a P.E.P. study on energy and liked George at once. He was a man who listened and understood what Fritz had to say, a perfect sounding-board who was able to make the right comments and ask the right questions. He was an idealistic young socialist too and, above all, had a sense of humour and enjoyed the good things of life. When Fritz and George were together the chances were that a bottle of whisky would be near by and there would be a good deal of hilarity and ribald humour which reflected little of Fritz's high ideals and morality. With George Fritz could join the ranks of ordinary mortals for an evening.

Possibly this is the reason that, despite an otherwise close relationship, Fritz did not share much of his inner spiritual life with George. In 1956, when their partnership began, he naturally told George a great deal about Buddhism and Burma but it was more in relation to 'Buddhist economics', than its implications for personal development. He discussed with George at length the whole question of world energy consumption and the conclusions he had come to about the future of industrial society, conclusions which had been reinforced by his Burmese experience, and used him to try out the many lectures he gave in England and in Europe on the subject.

In every lecture he made the same basic plea backed up always with the latest statistics from every publication of good repute that he could find. He was particularly careful to scour the publications of the major fuel industries and to use their figures to make his points. The statistics he quoted about projected fuel consumption and estimated reserves always came from the industries themselves. He merely put the two figures together and by making what he called exploratory calculations came to his startling conclusions. For example, in 1956:

It is hard to comprehend the changes the world has experienced during the last *fifty* years ... It is even harder to comprehend the changes of the last *ten* years - the changes since the end of the second world war. It is easy enough to

describe them; but it is very difficult to understand their meaning . . . During the last twelve years or so the world has burned more oil than in its entire previous history. During the last twenty years, it has used more steel than in its entire previous history. And if we take all 'non-renewable' resources together - all metals and fossil fuels - we find that during the last thirty-five to forty years man has used up more of these irreplaceable assets than the whole of mankind has used in its entire previous history. What are forty years in relation to the history of man? How long can we go on like this? . . . At present, about four-fifths of the world's fuel supplies come from 'non-renewable' resources, from coal, oil and natural gas . . . Four-fifths, in other words, is capital; only one-fifth is income. Eighty percent of the world economy is based on fuels which cannot last forever. If we double, and double again, the speed with which we remove these resources, are we not removing the foundations upon which we have built our house?⁸

In October 1958 in a general talk about fuel he said:

All modern industries, and large sectors of modern agriculture too, depend on fuel and power . . . The first important fact about fuel, therefore, is the universal, inescapable need for it. The second important fact is that the overwhelming proportion of the fuel and power used in the world today stems from *non-renewable* sources . . . The third important fact about FUEL is the unevenness of its distribution over the face of the earth . . . Economic expansion is the common ideology of all mankind today. Technological progress supports this ideology . . . two facts stand out, first, that the question of fuel supplies under conditions of sustained world economic expansion is the greatest unsolved question in the economic field which mankind has to face, and, second, that it is Western Europe more than any other part of the world, which is most directly involved.⁹

In another talk that same year he went further: 'Instead of concentrating on long-term forecasts of requirements, they might make long-term studies of availabilities; they might open

people's eyes to the fact that the problem of resources is in no way solved and that the way we are carrying on exposes our own children to totally insoluble problems.'¹⁰

Apart from George McRobie and Harry Collins, Fritz's ideas met little support. It was assumed that oil and nuclear energy, neither of which had been properly exploited, would fill the so-called energy gap. Nuclear energy Fritz dismissed as being unimportant in the equations. He did not believe that it would make a serious impact on energy supplies in the foreseeable future. At first he was also somewhat dismissive about oil as a serious source of fuel in the West - both because he thought it unlikely that Europe would be able to pay for it but also because it would be a politically unwise act to depend on the Middle East for such an important product. As early as 1952, arguing for a strong coal policy, he had said (my italics):

During the next two decades it is most unlikely that the supply of oil and natural gas will keep pace with requirements . . . In other words, the world will have to look to coal to take the load of the additional requirements for heat and energy. When you turn to Europe the picture is clearer still. At present more than eighty per cent of Europe's heat and energy requirements are being met by coal. Now that the United States, in spite of producing more than half the world's oil, has become by far the largest oil importer, the chances of Europe's being able to buy (and pay for) greatly increased quantities of oil - which would have to be obtained almost exclusively from the Middle East, *politically not the most stable part of the world* - are very small.¹¹

Fritz was soon proved wrong in his assumptions about oil, which in less than one decade was to become a major source of energy in Western Europe, but his point that the Middle East as a major source of oil for the West was politically undesirable because of the area's instability, was a vitally important one. Fritz seemed to think that this was self-evident and did not bother to spell out the implications, until some years later he realized that even experienced politicians seemed to be blind to the political realities of oil dependence.

These first warnings were uttered in a period of acute energy

shortage but in 1957 the picture suddenly and dramatically changed. By the end of the year the N.C.B. found a stock of coal on their hands. Demand had fallen significantly. At first this was explained by a warmer winter than usual and a downturn in the economy, but as coal stocks continued to rise it became clear that something more serious was happening than a mere hiccup in the economy. What had changed was the supply of oil. Cheap oil from the Middle East had begun to flow to Britain in significant quantities.

Fritz regarded the situation with the greatest possible disquiet. It was clear that politicians in general did not share his view that it was inadvisable to allow the British economy to become dependent on imported fuel, in particular from an unstable part of the world. He suggested at a conference to the Federation of British Industry in 1958:

Quite apart from the balance of payments problems created thereby a development of this kind . . . would mean the end of Western European independence. The whole Western European economy would become so vitally dependent on Middle Eastern oil that anyone in a position to withhold, or even only to disturb, these supplies would be Europe's master. If present plans are carried through, the position will be irretrievable within twenty years from now. Western Europe will then have attained a position of maximum dependence on the oil of the Middle East precisely at the moment when the first signs of a world oil famine become visible. The political implications of such a situation are too obvious to require discussion.¹²

These views were received with ridicule and disbelief. Those who had not immersed themselves in world fuel questions like Fritz, but whose blinkered view looked only at Britain, or possibly Europe, could see only that the demand for coal had fallen because cheap oil had taken its place. Their conclusion was obvious: the days of coal were over. From a period of frantic expansion the coal industry was now faced with an apparent need to contract. Fritz had praised the way this contraction had begun in his vindication of nationalization quoted earlier. Only those mines that were almost worked out

were closed and the men were absorbed in other parts of the industry; cuts were made in strip mining that used mainly machinery; voluntary Saturday working was stopped and import contracts were terminated as soon as was possible. Such adjustments, although costly, were gentle and safeguarded the long-term interests of the industry, so that while output objectives were scaled down from 250 million tons per annum to 200 million tons per annum, the ability of the industry to respond to an upturn in demand in the future was not harmed.

By 1960 the general consensus of opinion was that the age of coal was over. Even members of the N.C.B. believed this and felt the Board should now bow to the inevitable. An O.E.E.C. report by Professor Austin Robinson, and many other reports that followed, argued the same point over and over again: Western Europe's coal was no longer needed. Fritz did not agree. His calculations based on the figures produced by the energy industries themselves still convinced him of the fragility of an economy utterly dependent on the stocks in nature's energy larder. The fact that he had been wrong in assuming that the West would not substantially increase its imports of oil did not change the fundamental point he was making: at the current rate of increase of demand for energy there would come a time when the larder would be found to be empty. The advent of oil merely gave a little more time to make the adjustments that would be necessary to survive this threatening crisis. But he could not get this view across. His opposition to contracting the coal industry was interpreted as a vested interest. By 1960 the cry outside the coal industry was to contract the industry substantially, a prospect greeted with joy by the Government and the press: it was a sign of progress that the days of the unpleasant and dangerous job of the coal miner was nearing an end. It was clear that the coal industry would have to fight for its life.

After ten years in the coal industry Fritz was utterly convinced that the days of coal were not only not over but that never before had it been so important to keep a healthy, vigorous industry going. While he recognized the fact that coal could not hope to compete with cheap oil, which was virtually being dumped on the British market, he emphatically repeated his view that in the longer term it was essential to keep the coal

industry going at a stable level for the economic future of Britain. To reduce the size of the industry drastically in the short term was in fact to kill the industry for all time – mines could not be closed temporarily. They required constant maintenance. Nor could manpower in the industry be treated in such a cavalier fashion. The families and communities that had grown up around mining activities had taken generations to establish; once broken they would take many years to build up again, notwithstanding the devastating social consequences of mass unemployment.

After years of preaching the dangers of the limited nature of the energy supply, the very foundation of Western economic life, Fritz knew it would be the height of folly to shut down such a major source of energy. Yet his colleagues at the Board seemed unable to grasp the point. There were those, including E. H. Browne, who believed that nuclear energy would fill the gap if and when it came and wished that Fritz would concentrate his mind on the vital issue of closing down the industry with the least harm to the mining communities. Others did not believe in an 'energy gap' at all. Fritz was very depressed. He wondered whether the time had not come for him to leave the Coal Board and follow up some of his other interests. He did not regret his ten years at the Board but the fact was that for ten years he had been talking about very serious issues and his employers in the Board had taken little or no notice. His feelings were reflected in a dream which he often had at that time. He would see the Board members sitting around the Board table talking earnestly and making big decisions. After every decision a member would get up and go over to a large switchboard into which he would insert a plug or move a lever which apparently implemented the decision. After a while Fritz became curious and went over to the switchboard to see how it worked. He would look behind it and discover that it was not connected to anything. It was a totally useless bit of equipment, as useless as the gestures and decisions of the Board.

Taking this as a sign that perhaps he should move on, Fritz looked at the various options that were open to him. His lectures at London University were proving to be a great success and he wanted to put his thoughts together in book form. After his ten years in nationalized industry and his

thoughts about the structure of industry, he wanted to spend some time on a detailed study of socialism and its significance in British industry – another possible book. Since Burma he had also become involved in the growing concern about the underdeveloped nations and in early 1960 had received two invitations to work in India, one from Rosenstein Rodan, at Chatham House during the war, and one from the leading Indian socialist and Gandhian, J. P. Narayan. Surely it would now be right to turn his back on Hobart House and take up one or more of these threads.

The issues at stake were too important: it was a waste of time producing ideas for people who were not prepared to take them up. A year earlier, in his article for *Socialist Commentary*, he had expressed the enormity of what he considered the implications of modern industrial life:

What is at stake is not economics but culture; not the standard of living but the quality of life. Economics and the standard of living can just as well be looked after by a capitalist system, moderated by a bit of Keynesian planning and re-distributive taxation. But culture and, generally, the quality of life, can only be debased by such a system. Socialists should insist on using the nationalised industries not simply to outcapitalise the capitalists – an attempt in which they may or may not succeed, but to evolve a more democratic and dignified system of industrial administration, a more humane employment of machinery, and a more intelligent utilisation of the fruits of human ingenuity and effort. If they can do that, they have the future in their hands. If they cannot, they have nothing to offer worthy of the sweat of free man.¹³