



REPORTS AND ENQUIRIES

The Housing of Agricultural Wage-Paid Workers

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The bad housing conditions of agricultural wage-paid workers in Europe have frequently been described, and it is not possible to throw doubt on conditions which even to-day in some places attain a terrible degree of degradation. It is true that of late years a very fair quantity of good housing has been constructed at certain points on behalf of the agricultural population ; houses of a first-class type are being inhabited by some agricultural workers. But the general standard is persistently poor.

Different causes have contributed to this bad housing : practical difficulties, the state of rural society, financial stringency, and — quite definitely — an absence of good legislation, at any rate on behalf of agricultural workers.

We may start with certain practical difficulties. Ordinary public services, like sewerage and water, not to mention gas and electricity, are provided in the country at a higher initial cost than in the town and they continuously reach a smaller number of customers. They are costly to introduce and are almost bound to be kept up at a lower standard.

The combined age and solidity of country buildings is strikingly enough a frequent disadvantage. This tends to perpetuate out-of-date standards which have long since disappeared in urban centres. Low ceilings, small windows, damp walls and floors, and even such arrangements as box beds persist because the buildings in which they are incorporated are too solid to be sacrificed, though rheumatism and tuberculosis may threaten the inhabitants.

In some districts the stationary size of the agricultural population is among the most fundamental causes of bad rural housing (especially when allied to rather solid construction, as just mentioned above). Bad housing, it is alleged, often sends rural population into the towns ; but bad housing also remains bad just because the best elements of the rural population move away and the population which remains is stationary in size and unenterprising in outlook — a vicious circle. A more pronounced rural population pressure might result in more building and better housing in the countryside.

There is another factor which is of a vaguer character but which cannot be left out of account. The evil of bad housing in country

districts is at once scattered and concealed. Human habitations in the country are in any case dispersed, but, in addition, many European country districts are still very remote, or, if not geographically remote, then isolated, because badly served by lines of communication. Where this is not the case, and where villages or farm houses are accessible and familiar, there is still that factor of country charm and picturesqueness to reckon with which is so misleading, and which has unquestionably operated to retard the formation of public criticism.

The general financial strain on agriculture of the last half century has, of course, contributed. Production, becoming yearly more elaborate and more careful, calls for far more expensive equipment than was used fifty years ago; vast sums must have been spent on the construction of stables and modern cowsheds in that period, while the acquisition of machinery has absorbed considerable money; there has also been the expense of improving stocks and seeds. There has here been an element of fierce competition which the individual farmer has been unable to resist if he wanted to survive. Unfortunately there has not been the same fierce competition, or any competition, in providing good living and social amenities for the farmer's workers. There has been no commercial motive at work in this direction, and even the farmer's own accommodation and that of his family have suffered heavily on this account.

Pressure by some public authority has usually had to precede any action taken towards improvement. This pressure is of two kinds, legislative and financial: legislative rules raise the standards of building, loans or grants enable these standards to be attained. Nothing could be more desirable. But who is to take the initiative in legislating, or shoulder the burden of finance? Here there has been a fatal division of responsibility between local and central authorities all over Europe. The same difficulty occurs in urban housing, but it is less acute. It appears almost unavoidable if it is realised that, while the need is local, the funds so often have to be provided from national taxation. Rural authorities are seldom in a position to put pressure on Governments, so that it is only through centralised parliamentary action that anything eventually gets put on the statute book. Even then (as most housing legislation is permissive) it needs an energetic Government to get housing schemes really started in country districts. There is no doubt that action is liable to be deferred¹ or altogether neglected. The local authority is permitted to act, but fails to do so; the central authority fails to compel the local authority; nothing is therefore done. The smallholder, the small tenant, the share tenant, and even the peasant who owns a fair-sized farm, not to speak of rural workers not occupied in agriculture, all have ground

¹ Even complaints are only dealt with after very long intervals. A well-known agricultural workers' paper has recently published a list of complaints in one district only which have been remedied after intervals ranging from 41 months to 13 days (average 21 months), and a list of complaints outstanding in the same district since notification for periods ranging from 44 to 10 months (average 31 months). (*The Scottish Farm Servant*, July 1931.)

for complaint; it is by no means only the wage-paid agricultural worker who suffers by this division of initiative.

However, when it comes to a final analysis of the state of rural accommodation, it is always found that the wage-paid agricultural worker is in much the worst position. He takes the worst of what is going (and very bad that worst can be), and suffers in regard to both the quantity and the quality of the accommodation which he can secure. The following survey of facts (which are mostly well known) may suffice to explain the special difficulties of housing these workers, even apart from the general considerations set forth above.

There is first the so-called ideal of ownership: in some countries, married agricultural wage-paid workers not infrequently own the cottage in which they live. But this ideal of ownership, which has been much advocated and is sometimes supported by elaborate legislation, raises big problems. It has the grave inconvenience of confining the agricultural wage-paid worker to one small district throughout his life (thereby depriving him of half his bargaining power), and may also saddle him with a mortgage debt which is really beyond his resources to pay off. The ideal of ownership should only be encouraged in very special circumstances; and, in fact, only a limited number of regular agricultural workers get so far as ownership.

In the second place, there is publicly built accommodation. Apart from the insufficient number of cottages provided by public authorities — in many districts there are none — such houses are also apt to be too expensive for the badly paid agricultural worker. Nevertheless, the construction of at least some dwellings of this type in every district is greatly to be advocated. The publicity involved, and the type of accommodation offered, keep the problem of housing alive, and also set a standard of desiderata which has great local importance.

However, the infrequency of public rural housing schemes, both before and after the war, has usually left agricultural wage-paid workers to make shift with the third type of accommodation, that provided by private persons. A small amount of accommodation is available for them provided by landlords who have nothing to do with the agricultural industry; but, to all intents and purposes, it may be assumed that the large mass of agricultural workers are housed by their own employers. It is this situation which is characteristic and which has given rise to the most difficulties.

One problem is that of security. The dwelling is part of the worker's contract of employment. He is therefore sure of accommodation as long as he agrees to be bound by the terms of his contract. But if he does not like his contract, or if he should be dismissed, he loses his house. There has long been bitter complaint that the agricultural worker is not sure of his home, and does not dare to bargain freely with his employer for fear of losing it. The disadvantage of the arrangement is not much modified in practice even where the worker is able to secure a separate tenancy contract for his cottage (i.e. separate from his employment contract); in practice it is usually possible for the employer-landlord, within certain limits, to terminate the tenancy contract very soon after the employment contract. From the em-

ployer's point of view this is often necessary, in order to secure accommodation for other workers.

The other difficulty is that of quality, which is indeed a crux. The practice of housing farm workers on or about the farm is a traditional one, dating from a period when standards were quite primitive. There is therefore the fight against inertia.

To sum up. It is at least doubtful whether either side—employers or workers—is in a position to bargain fairly at the present moment about accommodation. The financial weakness of the private employer in agriculture is very pronounced, and makes the whole problem most difficult, especially during the prevailing depression. On the workers' side, it is doubtful whether they will ever be in a position to bargain fairly if the quality of accommodation is a matter to be regulated exclusively by the terms of their employment contracts. Experience has proved this method of treating accommodation as an item in the labour contract to be unsatisfactory. Being concerned to maintain their wage standards or to negotiate about hours, workers are not usually in a position to bargain also on a third item of housing. Attempts to deal with the matter by collective agreement do not greatly mend matters. The question of enforcement is at once raised, and it is on this that the best arrangements often appear to come to shipwreck. The whole weight of the collective bargain cannot be employed to enforce the arrangement of a single kitchen. This is a practical difficulty of no small importance. In any case it is often impossible to secure that the worker sees beforehand the accommodation which he is to have, and this naturally leads to some trouble.

There is therefore much to be said for removing housing altogether from the bargaining process and treating it as a question amenable to fairly detailed and, if possible, special legislation. It is totally immaterial whether such legislation forms part of a Health, Building, or other Code, or is formulated as an independent Act. What matters is that a sufficient number of points should be dealt with in the plainest terms, that what is laid down should be thoroughly practical, and above all that it should be enforced. Collective bargaining may form a useful preliminary stage to the introduction of such legislation; it has the advantage of concentrating opinion and information on the question and can foreshadow the standards which the workers desire and which it is probably possible for parliaments to adopt. The function of collective bargaining, considered from this point of view, may be a very important one. But the real word must be with the legislator. Certain standards are, after all, necessary and are enforceable. A Recommendation of the International Labour Conference (Third Session, 1921), couched in the most moderate terms, laid down a conspectus of conditions which would suffice to secure satisfactory accommodation for all classes of agricultural workers, including seasonal workers.¹ The recent European Conference on Rural Hygiene,

¹ Up to the present, ten European States have informed the Secretary-General of the League of Nations of the action taken in reference to the Recommendation, namely, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland; seven European States have intimated that the Recommen-

held by the League of Nations in July 1931 at Geneva, unhesitatingly affirmed the need of legislation.

Agricultural workers appreciate good housing; but the standard of their desires has been threatened by residence over many generations in neglected dwellings and by the perpetuation of primitive conditions, and it is the business of the legislator to see that they get something really in conformity with modern ideas.

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The remainder of this article will summarise the principal points which are mentioned in a series of existing enactments, regulations, and collective agreements in various European countries.¹ No claim

dation has been submitted to the authority or authorities competent in the matter, namely, Albania, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Lithuania, the Netherlands; seven European States have supplied other official information, namely, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Latvia, Luxemburg, Rumania, Spain, Yugoslavia; finally, three European States have supplied no official information, namely, Greece, the Irish Free State, Portugal. Eight States were originally in favour of an International Convention on living-in accommodation for agricultural workers. (Cf. *Report of the Director to the Fifteenth Session of the International Labour Conference, 1931.*)

¹ The following Acts, etc., are referred to:

Germany: Civil Code, section 618; Provisional Agricultural Labour Code of 1919, sections 15-17 (INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE: *Legislative Series*, 1919, Ger. 3).

Austria: Domestic and Agricultural Labour Code of Upper Austria, 10 March 1921 (*Legislative Series*, 1921, Part I, Aus. 3); Agricultural Workers' and Domestic Servants' Code of Carinthia, 1 June 1921 (*Ibid.*); Agricultural Labour Code of Lower Austria, 22 March 1921 (*Idem*, 1921, Part I, Aus. 2); Act respecting the regulation of employment in domestic service, agriculture, and forestry of Styria, 29 October 1921; Agricultural Labour Code of Salzburg, 20 January 1922; Domestic Servants' and Agricultural Workers' Code of the Tyrol, 29 May 1922; Agricultural Labour Code of the Burgenland, 14 January 1926 (*Legislative Series*, 1926, Aus. 5).

Belgium: Regulations on the housing of permanent and seasonal agricultural workers of the Provinces of Brabant and of Hainaut.

Denmark: Master and Assistant Act, 1921; Employment of Alien Workers Act, 1912.

England: Housing (Rural Workers) Act, 1926.

France: Act on the improvement of agricultural workers' housing, 1929.

Hungary: Farm Servants Act, 1907.

Italy: Unified Health Code, 1907, sections 69, 71, 72-81.

Netherlands: Decree of 10 March 1924 issuing regulations under the Housing Act (*Legislative Series*, 1924, Neth. 3).

Norway: Act of 30 July 1915 on accommodation of workers and horses during forestry and floating work.

Sweden: Acts on the provision of accommodation in certain cases for forestry and charcoal-burning workers, 1919, and on the provision of accommodation in certain cases for timber-floating workers, 1919.

These enactments are hereafter referred to by briefer descriptions.

Agricultural collective agreements in the following States have been examined: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Sweden. The system of collective agreements was introduced in these countries shortly after the war; generally speaking the stipulations of the agreements have not altered much. All references to housing clauses are to clauses at present in force.

is made that the texts chosen are exhaustive of all that exists on the subject in Europe, but they are typical. The points which emerge, were they all combined in a single code, would be amply sufficient to constitute an excellent standard for the housing of all groups of agricultural workers. The findings on housing in rural districts of the European Conference on Rural Hygiene of the League of Nations already referred to, and a resolution on the housing of farm workers adopted by the Sixth Congress of the International Landworkers Federation at Stockholm in July 1931, are given as an appendix.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEGISLATION AND AGREEMENTS

Accommodation for Resident Farm Servants in the Farm House or Adjacent Dependencies

The farm servant contract is an important form of labour contract in agriculture in practically all European countries. It is a typical contract of unmarried workers.¹ It prevails on peasant farms unable to engage the more expensive and older married worker, but needing permanent help which can only be got from workers living in. The living-in of workers is, in fact, a practical necessity on farms which cannot afford shifts of workers or special workers to take charge of livestock and horses.

The farm servant is often engaged at a centre distant from the farm or in some other way which offers him no possibility of seeing beforehand the accommodation provided. His isolated position makes any use of workers' clubs or similar places of resort impossible. He cannot himself contribute much to ameliorate his conditions. He often has not money to buy even a small amount of furniture, and even if he had, transport difficulties and the uncertainty of knowing whether there will be room for his things put such proposals out of the question.

Undeniably the standard provided for the farm servant depends on the general standard of comfort attained at the farm house by the farmer himself. As long as farm servants ate and lived with the family of the farmer the accommodation question was mostly a matter of sleeping room. But there tends to be a much greater separation than formerly. There is therefore sometimes a phase when the patriarchal relationship has disappeared and other standards have not been properly substituted. The accommodation offered to farm servants in these circumstances can be very bad indeed and far below what the general standard of civilisation in the country ought to be prepared to tolerate. An important point is the youth of many farm servants, both men and women; in the case of such workers bad accommodation tends to form a life-long low standard.

¹ But not all farm servants are unmarried and resident at the farm house. The section on married workers also makes reference to farm servants, especially in Hungary.

Certain countries formulate in their legislation a general definition to the effect that farm servants' accommodation must be "unobjectionable as regards health and morals".¹ Such general statements are quite useful, but they cannot be considered sufficient. Consequently most legislation, etc., lays down at least some specific points.²

Separation of the sexes is mostly insisted on and appears to be general in practice. There is less said about size and ventilation. However, the Danish Master and Assistant Act of 1921 states that farm servants' rooms shall be light and airy with windows which open easily. They must measure at least 16 cubic metres for one person or 25 cubic metres for two. No room must be used as a bedroom for more than two persons, although provisionally and exceptionally this may be allowed if an additional 8 cubic metres is provided for each extra person. In Belgium the Hainaut regulations provide that quarters must be quite dry, away from noxious exhalations, and properly aired; there must be 16 cubic metres per inhabitant (18 cubic metres in Brabant). The French Act of 1929 and the Italian Code of 1907 place the responsibility for ensuring adequate size and ventilation in the hands of administrative authorities.

As far as is known to the International Labour Office no legislation insists on artificial lighting, but the Danish collective agreements require means of artificial lighting to be provided. The question of heating, though of first-rate importance in northern climates, is also too often forgotten. The 1921 Recommendation is precise on this point, but with due allowance, of course, for climate. Important recommendations made by the French National Council of Labour Supply in 1927 endorsed the standard laid down in the Recommendation.³ The Hainaut Regulations demand "sufficient means of heating". Danish and Swedish collective agreements require either that the farm-servant shall have his bed "in a warm room" or else that he shall be able to spend his off-time in a heated room. In Scotland it is customary to allow men living in the "bothy" (i.e. a building detached from the main farm building) to sit by the kitchen fire until 9 o'clock at night; practically the same requirement is laid down in a model farm servant's contract drawn⁴ up by the Swiss Peasants' Union.

The desirability of separate beds is universally emphasised (e.g. French Act of 1929); that there should be a minimum distance (30 centimetres) between bed and floor is a useful point made in the reply of the Austrian Government to the International Labour Office questionnaire of 1921. It is, however, certain that by no means all

¹ German Code (repeating a requirement previously laid down in section 618 of the Civil Code); Brabant and Hainaut Regulations; Tyrol Code.

² An amendment removing all specific points from the text of the International Labour Conference Recommendation of 1921 and substituting only the words that accommodation should "conform to the requirements of morality and hygiene" was adopted in the Committee of the Conference by a narrow majority, but was rejected by the plenary Conference and the specific points replaced.

³ Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XVIII, No. 6, Dec. 1928, pp. 775-776.

⁴ SECRETARIAT DES PAYSANS SUISSES: *Les salaires et les conditions du travail dans l'agriculture suisse. Enquête de 1929-1930.* Brugg, 1930. 182 pp.

farm servants' beds are so constructed, or that they are of iron; quite often a straw paillasse or shake-down on the floor is considered sufficient. The requirements as to bedclothes vary from a pillow and one woollen coverlet to a demand for clean sheets once a month and clean towels once a week (Danish collective agreement; cf. similar terms in the Swedish collective agreement). In addition to the bed, a table, chair, and locked cupboard must be provided according to, e.g., the German Provisional Agricultural Labour Code, and the locked cupboard or receptacle is also mentioned in four of the Austrian Provincial Codes¹; the Hainaut Regulations mention a bedstead (preferably iron), metal chain mattress, table, chair, and cupboard suitable for the holding of personal possessions; the Brabant regulations mention an iron bed with bedding. Elsewhere minimum standards are stated in more general terms, e.g. that the room must have "the most indispensable equipment" (Salzburg and Styrian Codes), or shall be "decently furnished" (Swedish collective agreement).

The question of washing accommodation is rather a separate one. The replies of the Governments to the International Labour Office questionnaire of 1921 laid stress on some facilities for washing and on decent sanitary accommodation, but it is still to be feared that a great deal needs to be done in this direction.

The cleaning of rooms is often a difficulty. There are innumerable complaints on the way rooms are kept. They are often totally neglected, and the sheets not changed for six months. The laying down of a requirement that rooms must be kept clean is not considered impossible, and is done in some collective agreements; the model farm servants' contract of the Swiss Peasants' Union demands that the farm servant "shall be lodged in a clean room". But the farm servant can himself be made responsible for "the good maintenance" of his room (French Act of 1929); this is with a view to guarding against gross neglect or wilful damage. In Hainaut the farm servant is responsible for cleanliness, but minimum requirements are laid down as to the material of floors and also walls, which have to be distempered once a year. In Brabant the farm servant is subject to detailed regulations designed to secure cleanliness, safety from fire, and temperance. It is interesting to find that in Scotland attendance on farm servants living in a bothy is valued at £3 per year.²

None of these points compare in importance with what is universally admitted to be the principal consideration of all, without which, indeed, they do not come up for regulation. This is the insistence on an adequate separation between the farm servant's sleeping accommodation and that of the animals which he has to tend. The habit of

¹ An important point which is often neglected is to secure to farm servants means of locking their rooms, which should be possible from both inside and outside. This small practical detail is often forgotten, but is mentioned in the German and Austrian Agricultural Labour Codes.

² DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOR SCOTLAND: Supplement to the *Monthly Agricultural Report* for 1 July 1931. (Cash equivalent of perquisites: bothy accommodation, with attendance, £9 per annum; without attendance, £6 per annum.)

requiring farm servants to sleep, not in the farmhouse itself or in a building suitably set aside for human habitation, but in sheds or stables housing animals, is condemned by all responsible authorities, but nevertheless persists and has not even been legally forbidden in all European countries where it has been an old custom. It was formerly maintained that animals required attendance at night. Granted that this is so from time to time, such occasional attendance need not entail the assigning to the farm servant of a corner in a stable as his permanent resting place and sole refuge. Some notorious and terrible descriptions have been given in parliamentary debates and elsewhere of the filth and degradation which the custom entails, the utter want of any decency, when workers are couched on straw, or on a paillasse placed on the ground, in close contact with the stock, and with no place whatever in which to put their clothes or possessions, no opportunities for even the most elementary cleanliness or decency. The 1921 Recommendation incorporates a condemnation of this practice as one of its principal articles. In the replies forwarded by Governments to the questionnaire circulated by the International Labour Office before the Conference there was a general consensus against the practice, though one or two countries were prepared to allow workers specially in charge of stock to sleep in stables provided that bunks were properly arranged away from the animals; other countries were prepared to allow sleeping quarters to be set up in rooms in stable buildings provided that entry was separate (Denmark, Sweden), and sometimes provided that this separate entry was at a certain distance from the entry to the stable (Italy). Since the date of adoption of the Recommendation, while the practice has been forbidden, e.g. in France by an Act of 1929, and in Brabant¹ and Hainaut¹ (but not in the rest of Belgium), it has been formally admitted in the Agricultural Labour Code of Styria (but a proper bedstead must be provided), and has not been legally forbidden in some other European countries.

Apart from this most desirable prohibition against permitting the use of stables, or analogous buildings such as sheds or outhouses, there is no reason to demand that farm servants should necessarily be accommodated in the farm house itself. This, indeed, would be often quite impossible. It is a frequent practice to lodge them in separate buildings, such as the Scotch bothy. The amenities of these buildings must then, however, be made the subject of special attention, as there is a tendency to admit a lower standard of such requirements as heating, lighting, and cleanliness than in the farm house itself.

Accommodation for Married Farm Workers and their Families in Separate Cottages or Dwellings

The accommodation of married agricultural workers is the most important part of the problem of agricultural workers' housing. It fixes the conditions under which the mass of agricultural workers are

¹ A glazed but closed window may communicate with the stable.

obliged to pass the greater part of their lives as adults and under which their children grow up. It is especially in reference to such accommodation that the statement may be made that a bad standard of housing results in a poor general level of rural health and poor resisting power to disease, dropping here and there almost to a state of physical degeneracy.

There can be no doubt that the standard of accommodation occupied by agricultural workers varies greatly throughout Europe, less perhaps on account of climate than by reason of tradition, custom, the general situation of the workers, and the general situation of farming. The directions in which improvements are desired are, however, usually much the same; measures are asked for to deal with the insufficient number of dwellings, the insufficient size of those that exist, their poor repair, and the absence of certain essential amenities such as water supply, heating, sanitary conveniences.

The following summary applies principally to dwellings provided by employers.

As in the case of accommodation for farm servants resident in the farm house, some general standards are formulated in legislative texts: dwellings must be "free from objections in regard to morals and to health" or must "satisfy moral and hygienic requirements"; in fact, the same clause may cover resident farm servants and non-resident married workers.¹ Collective agreements² repeat or emphasise the law: the Bavarian regional collective agreement contains the interesting stipulation that "the parties agree that during the course of the agreement improvement of accommodation conditions shall be aimed at and pursued by all reasonable means". Other collective agreements in Germany and Austria do not venture so far; most stress is laid on the employer's obligation to keep the dwelling in repair.

So far stipulations on the size of the dwelling leave much to be desired; they often do not go beyond a declaration of principle about "adequate size"; even this, it will be remembered, is absent from the 1921 international Recommendation, an amendment on this point having been defeated in Committee. The German Provisional Code states that the dwelling of a married worker must be "of sufficient size in respect of the number of his children and the sexes";

¹ Austrian Provincial Codes; the Hainaut Regulations demand proper standards of "health, safety, and decency"; German Code (first enactment to extend a protection secured by the Civil Code on behalf of farm servants resident at the farm house to farm workers residing in separate cottages); Hungarian Farm Servants Act of 1907 (married workers in Hungary not resident at the farm house frequently have the status of farm servants); Italian Code of 1907; the Belgian Labour Act of 10 March 1900 states that the employer must offer the worker "a proper dwelling". In France the general principles of the Labour Code originally laid down certain principles of hygiene, etc., in regard to the housing of workers; until the 1929 Act on agricultural workers' housing the application of these to agriculture has been rather by way of general rural housing measures, from the "Siegfried" Act of 1894 up to the latest "Loucheur" Act of 1928, than by way of enforcement of special standards.

² Germany, Lower Austria, Burgenland.

the Austrian Codes state only that the dwelling must be of "sufficient size". Read together with the requirements on morals referred to above, it might reasonably be supposed that an absolute minimum of two bedrooms was indicated by the German Code; however, no commentator on the Code has ventured to assume so much, and the single family bedroom is thus still apparently permissible even under this Code. Elsewhere a specified number of rooms or, alternatively, a minimum total floor or cubic space for the whole dwelling may be laid down. The Hungarian Farm Servants Act states that dwellings constructed after the coming into force of the Act shall allow each family "a room and a small room". Of collective agreements, a single German agreement stipulates that a married worker's dwelling shall consist of three rooms, kitchen and cellar; the Danish national collective agreement states that such dwelling shall consist of at least two rooms and a kitchen and scullery, three-roomed dwellings must always be assigned *in toto*, while new or reconstructed dwellings must comprise three rooms; a Polish collective agreement demands a room and a small room; the Swedish national collective agreement states that a dwelling shall consist of two rooms and a kitchen, or of one room and a kitchen of a minimum combined area of 35 square metres, an indemnity of 10 kronor per year being payable in respect of every 3 square metres of area below that minimum.

Undoubtedly the question of size is one of very great difficulty. Ideally speaking, the four-roomed cottage, containing a kitchen-living-room, *plus* a scullery, one bedroom for the married couple, and two more bedrooms for the children according to sex, would be a minimum; but we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the three-roomed and even the two-roomed cottage is frequently assumed to be the very most that can be hoped for and the most that the law will enforce.¹ The situation is further complicated by the great sacrifices many rural families will make—this is observable in countries as different as England and Sweden—to maintain a parlour apart from the kitchen. This might at first sight appear a foolish extravagance where bedrooms are lacking, but viewed as an effort to maintain or reach a definite ideal of culture it can only be applauded.

On the other hand, attempts to lay down a minimum area of floor space or a minimum cubic content for each dwelling seem even more difficult. If calculated per head strict observation would have the very

¹ In this connection reference may be made to a stipulation common in German collective agreements and also found in a Polish collective agreement that no person not working for the employer other than members of the worker's family (and this often excludes his married children) shall inhabit the dwelling of a married agricultural worker covered by the agreement, nor may any part of such dwelling be let out to a third party. The purpose of this stipulation is to secure, on behalf of the employer, that no accommodation which he provides shall be used except for the purpose of housing workers for his farm, but indirectly it prevents overcrowding. The definition given does not, however, exclude in Germany the housing of an adult male stranger engaged to work for the employer under the so-called *Hofgänger* system (a sub-contract employment system by which the principal worker engages to provide, house, and board an extra worker, whether his own son or relative, or a stranger, for the employer), and there is much objection to this system on the part of German workers precisely on the score of overcrowding.

undesirable effect of tempting the employer to engage families with few or no children; nor could any arrangements be imagined which could deal with an increase in families. When calculated per house such minima are more feasible but more meaningless; as has already been pointed out, where this arrangement is attempted in Sweden it breaks down and monetary compensation is given instead of the needed room. Minimum requirements as to height, at any rate in new buildings, seem, however, perfectly practical, and would do something to secure cubic content: but on this score thousands of old cottages would have to be condemned.

Other points on which standards are laid down are heating and building materials. The Provincial Codes of Salzburg and Styria state that dwellings must be heatable; the Swedish collective agreement states that it must be possible to keep the building "well heated"; the Danish agreement demands at least one good stove, or in three-roomed dwellings two. As regards building materials, the Austrian collective agreements insist that all inhabited rooms shall have wood floors; the Polish collective agreement already cited in addition stipulates for distempering. The Brabant Regulations insist on certain minima as regards materials used; the Italian law lays stress on these points and also on the availability of drinking water. Undoubtedly the question of building materials requires attention. Very poor building material is found in some older cottages; in general the standard of agricultural workers' housing would appear to be higher where wood is cheap.

Of course, all rural dwellings, those provided for wage-paid workers by their employers included, benefit by general minimum requirements for inhabited dwellings as laid down in Health and Building Codes, etc.

The difficulties of housing the married agricultural worker properly may be greatly alleviated if attention is paid to the provision of proper annexes; moreover, their construction is comparatively cheap. A small cottage is much less overcrowded if, besides housing the family, it does not also accommodate a winter's supply of coal, wood, potatoes, all other family provisions, tools, and the family washing, not to speak of chickens, etc. Special relief is therefore given by store-houses, larders, wash-houses, and sculleries. In Danish and Swedish agreements mention is made of a cellar or other place for storing potatoes, scullery, wood store, wash-house, copper (Danish agreements), sanitary convenience or access thereto, access to a well adequately served by pump or hoist and protected (Denmark), to a supply of drinking water if obtainable at reasonable cost (Sweden; cf. the Italian Code of 1907); in Sweden, owing to the danger of fire in wood constructions, many of these annexes are customarily placed at a certain distance from the dwelling. The provision of a porch would also be worth consideration in countries where there is a cold climate and cold winds; entry direct from the outer air into the principal living-room is highly inconvenient and productive of many permanently closed windows and much tuberculosis. A small brick path leading to the front door or to the well (Polish collective agreement) is a "luxury"

which only the dweller in the country can appreciate at its full value. But the question of annexes may also make all the difference to the worker's chances of carrying on some minor agricultural employment, which is of great assistance to him. German and Italian collective agreements pay great attention to this point. In Italy agreements commonly secure a vegetable garden, a pig-sty, a hen-run, and a baking-house, which is often shared (sometimes with the employer himself).

In all cases a married worker should be secure of an organic dwelling, which is to him and his family a real home. The building of dwellings in barrack form or continuous block, or as square blocks of four connected dwellings, is unobjectionable as long as the essential separation between family and family can be secured; common staircases and lobbies are less objectionable than shared kitchens, but on the whole the separate front-door is in the country easily secured and certainly most desirable. The system of the shared kitchen occurs in barrack dwellings in Hungary, but several municipal authorities have issued regulations that not more than two families shall share one kitchen.

Finally, the surroundings of a worker's dwelling are worth attention. The standard of orderliness in the surroundings of rural dwellings varies in Europe from the absolutely best to the absolutely worst; it can scarcely be improved except by educational means. But the provision of a manure-pit away from the water supply is an elementary requirement, which can be handled directly at the time of construction, though much educational effort is needed on this point also, on which the worker himself often shows great carelessness. A requirement on this exists in Italian law.¹ The growing of flowers and vegetables round cottages would seem to be a question of national custom, but is dependent on occupation rights over some land directly contiguous to the cottage. This question of the quantum of land to be attached to a worker's cottage is of obvious importance, but lies outside the limits of the present report.

Temporary Accommodation for Seasonal Workers in Hutments, etc.

The operations for which seasonal agricultural workers are required in Europe are connected with large field crops, etc., and with forestry. Crops which absorb an unusual amount of labour at a particular time of the year, especially roots (beetroot and potatoes), rice, fruits, hops, and to a lesser extent vine, call for seasonal labour. In forestry there is timber-felling in winter and timber-floating in summer.

Housing difficulties occur because seasonal workers for the cultivation or the gathering of crops usually arrive in large gangs, having been brought from more remote districts. This causes acute difficulties, as they are looked on as strangers, and as they are often accustomed to a standard of living below that current in the district. In forestry,

¹ Act No. 1155 of 23 June 1927.

on the other hand, the difficulty is that of housing the ordinary labour force where the industry itself is carried on in remote regions. The housing of forestry workers gives rise to special difficulties.

Housing for seasonal workers in agriculture and forestry is almost always supplied by employers. It is not charged for and becomes part of the worker's remuneration. If, on the one hand, there is the temptation of doing it "on the cheap", on the other, the engagement of workers in large groups, almost always by important enterprises, for concentrated bulk operations at one spot contributes to the enforcement of certain minima. Where control is found lacking it is generally in the case of casual engagements, not arranged on a gang system, of a floating population, sometimes of a very poor type. The arrangements made in these cases may vary from the best to the worst, or even to none at all, so that workers sleep under hedges or in ditches. Such practices bring down the housing standards of a whole district. The housing of alien workers is now usually controlled, as such workers are mostly engaged only on recognised conditions laid down in international agreements.¹

The length of time for which the seasonal operation is to be carried on has an important bearing. If it is only for a short period, e.g. for hop and fruit picking, less exacting demands in the way of comfort need to be put forward than if the worker spends half his life on such work. But there is apt to be a temptation not to cater even for these demands on the assumption that the workers will be able to manage somehow for such short periods. The standard of housing eventually secured will affect the health, morality, and happiness of the workers and will also influence their ideas of the standards which they are entitled to demand when they return to their home district. It is an incidental effect that where adults are away on seasonal work for a large part of the year, their return home during the off season is likely to lead to overcrowding.

The points on which stress is laid by controlling authorities are largely identical in all countries and are easily stated. Site is of importance owing to the need for avoiding damp. Without insistence on this point farmers may be careless; existing sheds, etc., constructed for another purpose, may be very badly placed for human habitation. The revised model by-laws of 1929 of the British Ministry of Health referring to accommodation for hop, fruit, and vegetable pickers insist that the site chosen should be reasonably free from damp; an open space of 15 feet, or of 20 feet if buildings are face to face, has to be provided in front of each building. The Danish Act of 1912² on the employment of alien workers also mentions that buildings must be dry and healthily situated. Regulations under the Italian Health Code of 1907³ enforce

¹ The texts of these international agreements will be found in a publication of the International Labour Office: *Migration Laws and Treaties*, Vol. III, *International Treaties and Conventions*. Studies and Reports, Series O, No. 3. Geneva, 1929. xii + 383 pp.

² This Act formally covers all alien seasonal workers in whatever occupation; in fact the only workers of that type are those employed in the beet fields.

³ *Gazzetta ufficiale*, 1 May 1908, No. 103.

a minimum distance between huts and rice fields (on account of the danger of malaria), and an Italian Government Circular of 27 August 1927 recommends that only sheltered sites should be chosen; this Circular and the Netherlands Huts Decree mention that water must be drained off the ground and that the upper surface of the floor must be raised. A requirement as to weathertightness and safe construction of the building is frequent. A general requirement that buildings must be unexceptionable from the point of view of morals and health is incorporated in international Conventions concluded both by Austria and by Germany with countries which supply seasonal labour. Safe egress in case of fire is sometimes mentioned, and the use of electric lighting or safety lamps recommended (British model by-laws).

It is usual to insist on a minimum quantity of accommodation, either in general terms, as sufficiently large for the number of workers (Austrian standard contract for Czechoslovak seasonal workers), or in specific terms. The Danish Act of 1912 lays down that a building must include a kitchen (with stove), a living-room if there are more than five inhabitants, and a sufficient number of bedrooms. The Netherlands Huts Decree states that each building must accommodate not more than a maximum of twenty persons and must include a living-room and dormitory; the living room shall measure 15 square metres if inhabited by not more than ten persons, otherwise 20 square metres, shall have a porch measuring 0.80 square metres, and shall measure not less than 3 metres along any one wall; comparable standards are laid down for dwellings assigned to single families. The Hainaut regulations insist on separate living-rooms and dormitories of specified sizes.

Ventilation and lighting are not easy problems. A good deal of expense is laid on employers and some fairly onerous conditions are laid down. Proper and sufficient means of ventilation and lighting by natural light are required in Great Britain (model by-laws); windows in each room not less than one twenty-fifth of the floor space and in any case not less than 0.40 square metres, a stipulated proportion to be capable of being opened, in the Netherlands (Huts Decree). Specific minimum floor or cubic space allowance and minimum internal height of building are sometimes indicated; e.g. 18 square feet of floor space per inhabitant, 2 children to count as 1 inhabitant (British model by-laws); buildings 2 metres (in some circumstances 2.30 metres) high, an air space allowance of 7 cubic metres per inhabitant (Netherlands Huts Decree; cf. minimum size of living-room above); floor space of 1½ square metres per inhabitant in the living-room and air space allowance of 12 cubic metres in dormitories (Hainaut Regulations); minima to be laid down by local regulation (Italian Health Code). Other arrangements mentioned are a separate cooking-place, also suitable for drying and washing clothes, with a fireplace for every fifteen persons (British model by-laws; German standard contracts); rooms for storing personal possessions (Austrian standard contract); arrangements for some heating (Danish Act, Netherlands Huts Decree); a special sick-room if there are over twenty inhabitants and if the

medical officer finds it necessary (*ibid.*); a sick-room for malaria or infectious cases (Italian Health Code). Insistence on separation of the sexes is practically universal, and some attempts are made to secure separate accommodation for single families (British model by-laws, French international agreements, Netherlands Huts Decree).

Furniture other than beds or bunks is seldom insisted on; furniture and utensils necessary for cooking and for a living-room are mentioned in the Hainaut Regulations; the German and Austrian standard contracts for alien workers mention tables, seats, and washing accommodation to be provided, besides a bed or bunk, straw mattress and pillow, and woollen blankets for each person; the French international agreements mention sheets, but not furniture other than beds or bunks; the Danish Act and the Netherlands Huts Decree forbid the placing of bunks one over the other or too close together, the Netherlands Decree specifying that bunks must measure 1.90 metres by 0.75 metre, if fixed must be raised 0.50 metre from the floor, and must be separated from each other by partitions at least 0.80 metre high with 0.50 metre between bunk and partition, and from the centre gangway (1.50 metres wide) by partitions at least 0.30 metre high; the English model by-laws only mention that where straw is used for bedding it must be clean, dry, and unused; cf. also the Italian Health Code.

Access to good drinking water and to washing water is also necessary (British model by-laws; Danish Act; Italian Health Code; Netherlands Huts Decree). Definite arrangements for cleaning are recommended, both before the workers take up occupation (lime-washing once a year and cleaning immediately before arrival, British model by-laws; cleaning before arrival, Austrian standard contract), and while they are in residence; in the latter case, the obligation is sometimes put on the workers themselves (French Act of 31 July 1929¹), but distemper and disinfectant are provided by the employer, who allows half a day off for cleaning (Austrian standard contract); or he makes provision for the removal of refuse (British model by-laws, Netherlands Huts Decree), or is strongly recommended to employ a camp superintendent who is responsible for the order and cleanliness of the camp; such a person may be a worker himself (British model by-laws). The provision of properly constructed latrines, to be kept in order, is essential (British model by-laws, etc.). The Italian Health Code insists on the wiring of windows against mosquitoes in the rice districts.

The conditions for forestry workers may be deduced from the Swedish Forestry and Charcoal Workers' Accommodation Act of 1919. This Act lays down that employers must provide accommodation for forestry workers, or those in similar industries, who work away from their homes. Such accommodation must be of adequate size, must give adequate protection against cold, rain, and snow,

¹ This Act covers accommodation for temporary as well as for permanent workers, with the sole exception of constructions used for sleeping on the high mountain pastures.

and must fulfil the requirements of a temporary dwelling with due regard to the period and conditions of its proposed use. The text of the Act has been supplemented by regulations issued by the Social Board for the guidance of the inspectors charged to see that the Act is enforced. These regulations state that accommodation shall be constructed during the summer or autumn before the ground is frozen and on a level dry place, with water accessible in the neighbourhood. Where more than twelve to sixteen workers are to be lodged for a considerable period, the dwelling must be divided into two or more rooms or more accommodation must be constructed; not less than 5 cubic metres must be allowed per inhabitant. The height of the building must be 2 metres in those parts not used for bunks. Accommodation to be used for a considerable period must have a wooden floor, a watertight roof, and must be able to retain warmth; the necessary number of double-glazed windows shall be provided, doors shall be large and well fitting, the fireplace must draw up the smoke; there should also be a lobby, which may conveniently be combined with a storing place for food, clothes, and tools. Bunks must be at least 0.40 metre above the floor, at least 1.9 metres long, 0.65 metre wide for one person or 1.20 metres for two; where a common couch is provided, this should be divided into sections for one or two persons. The necessary tables, benches, shelves, and if possible cupboards should be provided. Stables must be separated from the dwelling accommodation, both for hygienic reasons and on account of the danger of fire in wooden buildings; in no case must horses be lodged in the same room as the workers.

APPENDIX

The following passage adopted by the Third Committee of the European Conference on Rural Hygiene held by the League of Nations at Geneva in July 1931 deals with rural housing, and (in section 4) with the special problem of agricultural workers' housing.

HOUSING IN RURAL DISTRICTS

1. There is urgent need for improvement in the housing conditions of rural districts. Progress in this respect is hindered by the lack of cheap credit and the fact that education in hygiene in rural districts has not reached a sufficiently high level.

The housing shortage in cities has led in most countries to concentration on the housing problem in industrial areas, and the needs of rural districts have not always received the attention they deserved.

Good housing is a fundamental requirement for rural hygiene. It is influenced by social and economic conditions and in its turn exerts a strong influence on these conditions, resulting in better health and general elevation of the standard of life.

2. The principal defects of rural housing from the point of view of hygiene are:

(a) Overcrowding. Good houses are too few. There are too few bedrooms in the existing houses. The house may be too small or,

in planning it, the existing space may have been insufficiently utilised. Apart from considerations as to the necessary cubic space, attention should be drawn to the height required for living purposes.

(b) There is inadequate provision of toilet and sanitary facilities.

(c) The living-quarters are insufficiently protected from the stables.

(d) Manure and other sources of pollution and odours are in too close proximity.

(e) The house is so located and constructed as to be damp.

(f) There is a lack of proper ventilation, lighting and heating.

(g) There is insufficient protection from mosquitoes, flies and dust.

(h) There is insufficient exposure to the sun.

3. Methods of improving rural housing.

(a) Education.

(b) Cheap credit and improvement of the economic condition of the farmer.

(c) Co-operation.

(d) Legislation, by-laws and regulations and their proper enforcement.

The practice of making public building models from the point of view of hygiene and sanitation is highly recommended.

The construction of model houses at numerous strategic points encourages imitation.

Good housing will appeal more readily to the rural population if the plans are prepared after a study of local customs and social and economic conditions, so as to preserve features characteristic of the district.

Loans at low rates of interest, grants, as well as freedom from taxation, may be provided by legislation, and are potent means of improving rural housing. The award of bonuses for proper construction yields a large return for the investment of small sums.

There should be building codes prescribing minimum requirements in respect of sites, exposure, lighting, ventilation, etc. Technical supervision and enforcement are required to make these effective, as well as proper preparation by measures of education.

Such enforcement should not be left altogether to the local authorities.

The health authority should have jurisdiction over all sanitary aspects of housing.

The preparation and distribution of standard plans satisfying sanitary requirements and local needs has given good results and should be encouraged. Such houses should be of simple design and economic construction.

4. The improvement of housing for agricultural workers presents difficulties which cannot be solved by education and persuasion alone. The agricultural worker is in a particularly weak position in this respect, and suitable legislation, with proper enforcement, as well as public financial assistance, are needed to cope with this problem.

Poor housing for this class accelerates the exodus of the best workers to the cities, where in many cases more attention has been

given to housing for industrial workers, and this in turn lowers the standard of rural life and prevents hygienic improvement.

The organisation in the different countries of sanitary inspection services is desirable. Such services should have the authority necessary to secure satisfactory housing conditions for agricultural workers and to enforce the relevant regulations.

The Conference draws attention to the recommendation of the International Labour Conference (1921) on this subject.

5. Rural housing may also be improved by suitable reconditioning of existing houses. When properly directed and supervised, such reconditioning may yield excellent results sometimes at comparatively small cost.

The construction of model villages and agricultural colonies is of particular interest and importance in respect of rural housing. The tendency to locate industrial plants in rural districts should be encouraged, such new construction offering opportunities for the building up of model villages and the application of all sanitary safeguards.

In the planning of these villages and colonies, the Health Authorities should have jurisdiction over all matters of hygiene and sanitation.

The Conference recommends the further study of this problem.

The following passages are also of interest :

From the Report of the Second Committee :

Co-operation between the public health authorities, the various agricultural technical advisers and the agricultural associations of all kinds is also highly desirable. Inspired by the desire to raise the standard of life in rural districts, these associations offer a valuable means of securing the co-operation of the rural population. The results of their work are reflected in health as well as in economic and social conditions, and they are concerned with housing and sanitation as well as with other hygienic measures.

From the Report of the Third Committee :

Associations and institutions for the improvement of rural life in many fields and, in particular, associations organised on a technical agricultural basis are potent means of propaganda and achievement, and should be led to take an interest in water supply, good housing and other aspects of rural sanitation. The health authorities should co-operate with such associations to this end.

The Third Committee discussed at length, and with interesting results, water supply, sewage disposal, and garbage disposal in rural districts.

The following resolution was adopted at the 6th Congress of the International Landworkers' Federation held at Stockholm in July 1931 :

This Congress declares that the housing conditions of farm workers are deplorable in all countries, and that there is urgent need for building housing suitable for the needs of families, and satisfying modern standards of hygiene.

This Congress declares that the system of housing farm workers in houses belonging to the employer is one of the chief causes of the neglect of farm workers' houses, and that this system prevents farm workers from sharing in the improvements which have been secured by other workers, through housing legislation and public health and sanitation services, while it reduces the status of the farm worker to that of a dependant.

This Congress, therefore, demands that farm workers should share, to the same extent as other workers, in the benefits of improved housing, and declares that this can only be secured by the State and local authorities building houses for farm workers which they can rent and occupy independent of any employer.

“Tied” Cottages in Rural Districts in England and Wales

A survey was carried out in 1931 by the National Union of Agricultural Workers of England and Wales¹ on the so-called “tied cottage”.² The survey, which was carried out by means of enquiries addressed to members of the Union, showed that in 729 parishes there are 10,612 tied as against 6,373 free cottages. The proportion of tied cottages to all cottages in these parishes is therefore 65 per cent., or roughly two-thirds. The proportion of all agricultural workers in these parishes who live in tied cottages is 62 per cent. The report points out that some allowance must be made for the fact that the bulk of the answers to the enquiry came from areas where the system

¹ NATIONAL UNION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS OF ENGLAND AND WALES : *Tied Cottages : Union Enquiry* (24 pp. typescript), and *Evidence on the Tied Cottage System* (14 pp. typescript).

² A cottage is described as “tied” when it is let by a landlord who is also the employer of the worker inhabiting the cottage. Where there is a “service occupation”, the worker's right to occupy depends directly on his remaining in the farmer's employment; should he be dismissed, or should he decide to leave his work, his right to occupy the cottage ends automatically. Where no “service occupation” is granted, the worker may occupy the cottage on an ordinary tenancy from the farmer, who is at the same time his landlord and his employer; if the worker pays his rent (which cannot be raised except under certain conditions), he cannot be turned out; if, however, the farmer can obtain a certificate from the County Agricultural Committee that the cottage is required for another specific person who has been engaged to work on the farm contingently on housing accommodation being found, he may obtain an Order from the County Court for possession. The original tenant then has to turn out and his landlord and former employer is under no obligation to find him other accommodation. Contracts of employment and cottage tenancy in England and Wales are frequently both on a weekly basis. Cf. *National Farmers' Union Yearbook*, 1931, pp. 195-199: “Memorandum of the Law Affecting the Occupation of Farmers' Cottages by Men in Their Employ.”