



to the newspapers, is "stimulating the national imagination and there is no lack of Irish recruits for the R.F.C." The Government is certainly to be congratulated on its new move, from more points of view than one. In the first place, we cannot for obvious reasons increase our facilities for aircraft construction too much. As we have so repeatedly insisted, what is wanted to establish aerial supremacy and to win the war is the exertion of the very maximum of effort and whether it is Ireland or any other part of the Empire which is called upon to assist in the task it is all to the good of the ultimate aim. Then the creation of an aircraft industry in Ireland will necessarily take more money into the country and assist materially in the solution of many of the problems which beset a settlement of the perennial Irish question, the root cause of which is undoubtedly to a great extent the poverty of the people. There is no better remedy for political discontent than material prosperity of the workers and if the erection of aircraft factories in Ireland had no other effect than the alleviation of some of the unrest which is at present rife, it would be altogether justified. When, however, we take this in conjunction with the acceleration of the aircraft programme which follows on each new departure of the kind, it is to be doubly applauded as a wise and statesmanlike move.

It is satisfactory, too, to receive the assurance that the decision of the Government is stimulating the imagination of the Irish. If only it would bring home to the 250,000 or so Irishmen of military age who are walking about at their ease while the whole of the available man-power of the rest of the Empire is fighting the battle of civilisation—and with it the right of Irishmen to live as free men—then it might be classed as the wisest thing this or any other British Government has done for many a long year. Let us hope that it may.

**The State as Profiteer.**

While State control of industries is so much in the air it is just as well that we should pay attention to what is going on around us, with a view to arriving at a proper appreciation of what State trading is likely to mean to the individual. There is another aspect of the matter to which immediate attention should be given, and that is the patent fact that the State is in many directions a worse and more unashamed profiteer than the butcher or the grocer. Lord Rhondda and other lights of the Government publicly condemn profiteering in food-stuffs and fulminate against the guilty, promising ruthless punishment to the malefactors who are making undue profits out of the national necessity. Yet we find that the Government is profiteering in food to a scandalous extent. Take tea, for example. We have before us a letter addressed to the Shipping Controller by the acting secretary of the Indian Tea Association, in which is set forth the whole story of tea freights since the beginning of the war. It is too long for reproduction, nor is it necessary to traverse the whole of the facts set forth, since they are not essential to the present argument. Briefly, it is disclosed that under an agreement between the Association and the shipping lines concluded in 1912 the rate of freight was fixed at 30s. per ton. Since the war, although this rate was held to be legally binding of the lines, the rate was raised on four separate occasions, and on September 30th last, when the

agreement expired, stood at 75s. per ton, less certain rebates which do not affect the main issue. Immediately the agreement expired, the Ministry of Shipping, which now has complete control of all rates, raised the freight to 300s. per ton. Moreover, it insists that this extortionate rate shall be paid at time of shipment and not as is usual against delivery, so that the unfortunate shipper has to pay up, loss or no loss!

That is briefly the case as set forth in the letter in question. If that is what Government control of commerce means, Heaven help the British business community and the consumer of overseas products after the war, unless Parliament turns a deaf ear to the demands that are being made, and will be, for a continuance of Government control. What, too, are the people going to say about this sort of thing, and about a Government which, with its tongue in its cheek, curses profiteering by the private trading firm and multiplies the freight rate on an essential commodity by four? What does it all mean? Does it mean that the Government wants to stop the import of tea, and has not the pluck to say that such a course is necessary? It certainly looks as though it might be so. The price of tea is "controlled" to a point at which it is obvious that it can only be sold to the public at a loss after the present usurious freight has been paid. That means that the growers will be unable to sell their tea or the importers to import it. Then the Government will say it is very sorry, but the growers have failed us, or there is no tonnage, or something of the sort. It is either that or the Government is frankly out to profiteer the nation's food. And, it will be observed that when the Government does set out to profiteer it does not do the thing by halves.

**Food from Aerodromes.** According to the *Times*, consideration is being given to a suggestion that part of the many aerodromes which—doubtless for the best military reasons—have been established on arable land should be placed under cultivation. It would be impracticable to devote any large space to this, but a modest border within the circumference of the aerodromes would, it is estimated, furnish many thousands of acres for intensive cultivation by soldiers in their spare time, aided by any outside labour that could be obtained through the medium of the county executive committees, who would also be able to supply seeds and tractors for ploughing where horses were not available.

The suggestion strikes us as being eminently practical and sound. As a matter of fact, there is quite a lot being done in this direction already at certain aerodromes in the country. Many of these establishments have been rendered entirely self-supporting in the matter of vegetables and such produce as can be grown by the men themselves, and every encouragement has been given by the authorities in this direction. There is no doubt, however, that where the character of the land lends itself to intensive cultivation much more could be done if a comprehensive and related scheme were thought out and applied.

**Air Raids on Germany.**

DURING December there were, according to a German report, 13 Allied air attacks on German territory—six on the industrial districts of Lorraine and Luxemburg, and the rest on Freiburg, Baden, Mannheim, Saarbrücken and Zweibrücken. Seven persons were killed and 31 injured, including some French prisoners of war.