ELECTRICITY FOR FACTORIES

USE OF PRIVATE GENERATORS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—The imminence of a General Election calls for clarification as far as possible of all questions that crucially affect our economic and defensive power.

On the fundamental question of an adequate and assured supply of electricity, an essential for national production, it would be wrong to let the public and, indeed, Parliament be left mistakenly to think that it turns on the issue introduced by Mr. H. F. Carpenter, secretary of the British Electricity Authority, in his letter to *The Times* of September 20. Mr. Carpenter says that in my letter of September 8 " . . . Sir Lynden Macassey makes a number of statements which are liable to be misleading, and even to imply that the British Electricity Authority has failed to honour agreements to which it has been a party." Neither directly nor by implication have I said or suggested that the British Electricity Authority has broken any agreements, indeed, quite the contrary. My point was and is that the British Electricity Authority has not made agreements sufficient to encourage factory owners to install and use private generators, the only remedy for load-shedding, cuts, &c. I am perfectly certain that that would be the conclusion of the committee of the Federation of British Industries (of which I am not a member), which has been negotiating with the British Electricity Authority, if the committee were asked for it.

The difficult position in which the British Electricity Authority is placed must be recognized. It may argue that it is entrusted by Parliament with a statutory monopoly which it is bound to conserve and conduct on a commercial basis, and that it is precluded, in the making of agreements, from showing " any undue preference " to any particular class of consumer. It might contend, therefore, that it can neither make special concessions to any factory owner merely because his factory is engaged on important production for rearmament or export, nor legitimately undertake the installation of power units where, even though the capital cost would be much less than that of modern steam plant, the operational costs might be higher. Mr. Carpenter's letter makes it quite clear that the British Electricity Authority does, in fact, regard itself as doing all it thinks can be fairly expected of it under the conditions and circumstances of its constitution.

There is much in this contention, irrespective of its effect on national production, but here is the paradox of the times. The Government are admittedly the custodian of all the predominant national interests involved in export trade and rearmament. The Labour Party has prided itself on the power of planning. On the one hand the Government have taken over monopolistic powers for the supply of electricity, and, on the other, are exhorting factory owners as a national duty, but at their own expense, to strain every nerve to maintain and expand production. Included in that, the Government have left to factory owners the responsibility of protecting their output from the disastrous effects of load-shedding and cuts by the British Electricity Authority. By the large-scale export of steam generating plant and the limitation of capital expenditure on the installation of generating capacity in this country, the plan has been set for a continuing power crisis throughout the whole foreseeable future. The Government have taken no constructive part whatever in assisting factory owners in their discussions

TOUR OF FESTIVAL BRITAIN

LOCAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

From Our Special Correspondent

The Festival of Britain will officially end to-morrow night at South Bank. The festival entered its most important stage of preparation in June, 1949, when the heads of local government in England and Wales assembled at Guildhall to hear the Lord Mayor of London invite their cooperation in a nation-wide enterprise. The King sent to this gathering a message of good wishes which concluded: —

The Queen and I trust that every family in all parts of the country will share in this great Festival so that all of us may join in showing that Britain lives on, now as ever, taking her rightful place among the nations of the world.

To-day it is possible to look back on a fine record of achievement by local authorities in all parts of the country towards making the festival a nation-wide success. The royal hope that every family would have some share in the festival has been fulfilled, largely because of the ready and willing way in which public bodies, voluntary organizations, and private citizens together played their part in the plans for the festival.

The catalogue of festival events outside London, were it ever to be compiled, would make an interesting volume. The most numerous item in its index, next to exhibitions, would probably be pageants, for it is through pageantry that cities, towns, and villages alike delight to recall their ancient history and to glance at the future. It has been, in the main, a wholesome exercise, awakening in many different communities throughout the land a sense of local pride and, at the same time, bringing them into closer comradeship with their neighbours. In particular, small towns and villages have felt themselves to be living parts of the English counties.

HEART OF ENGLAND

The festival has also inspired some more enduring records of local history. One of the most remarkable is a well produced volume entitled " Two Parishes—One Village." It was compiled by " J. W. Crick, the village schoolmaster, and his senior scholars "—the ages of the scholars range from 14 years to 11 years—and is as complete a record as could be desired of affairs and personalities in the twin parishes of Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy in Huntingdonshire. Historians in a dim and distant future may well feel grateful for such praiseworthy mementoes of " the year of the Festival of Britain "; the sub-title of this one, typical of many others, is " In the Heart of England."

During the planning period there was some criticism of the proposal sent from Savoy Court to the parishes, villages, and rural areas of England for celebrating the festival by a general process of " tidying up." It seemed an unkind suggestion to villages that were already tidy and a tactless one to those that were untidy. Yet it replaced by a young oak, so planted that it has branches in the three counties of Derbyshire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire; and at Glastonbury a sapling grown from the Holy Thorn was planted on Wearyall Hill.

Many projects for restoring old buildings and reviving their usefulness to the community were put in hand as part of the festival celebrations. The ancient Moot Hall at Elstow, near Bedford, intimately associated with John Bunyan, was thus restored, and in the same county Stevington windmill, dating back to 1770, was put into repair. In the west of England Buckland Abbey, the home of Sir Francis Drake, near Plymouth, was opened as a museum, and Colston Hall, Bristol's noted home of music that was burnt down after the war, was rebuilt for the festival. In Somerset part of Brean Down, a bird sanctuary overlooking the Bristol Channel, was bought by the Axbridge Rural District Council for presentation to the National Trust in commemoration of the festival, and in North Wales a scheme for rehabilitating three Welsh hill farms on the Arenig hills was carried out as a festival project.

ENDURING RESULTS

In the realm of art some achievements inspired by the Festival of Britain also promise to have enduring results. It is reported from Rawtenstall, in Lancashire, for example, that

as a result of the festival a new association has been formed, named the Borough of Rawtenstall Arts Association, consisting of seven organizations of a cultural nature, that will be kept in being in subsequent years.

At Stoke-on-Trent the festival has left behind several schemes of permanent betterment, such as that for " honouring the memory, marking the birthplace, or otherwise commemorating the associations with Stoke of local men and women who achieved eminence by their outstanding work," and another for the " restoration of local antiquities to a satisfactory state of preservation."

Exhibitions held in connexion with the festival would, like the pageants, make an impressive list in any catalogue of the year's events. Some were truly remarkable, even as special efforts for this festival year. The Regency Exhibition in Brighton, for example, brought together treasures which, displayed in the unique setting of the Pavilion, made the largest and most valuable collection of its kind ever to be assembled in one place. The small township of Tenterden, in the Weald of Kent, affirming its claim to be the birthplace of William Caxton, staged an exhibition of printed books that would have done credit to London itself; some of the exhibits were sent from as far afield as St. Andrews University and Shrewsbury.

less one to those that were untidy. Yet it is precisely what many villages did do for the festival—and with results that may well be lasting. A report from West Stafford, near Dorchester, for instance, modestly states:—

We are too small a community to have arranged any events sufficiently noteworthy to have been the subject of photographs, programmes or Press cuttings. They have included general tidying up of the village, the planting of flowering shrubs on a waste space and flower beds outside the village hall, and the erection of a thatched shelter at the village bus stop. These efforts, though small, have certainly added to the attractive aspect of an already pleasant Dorset village.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Many places in rural England erected village signs in celebration of the festival and most of them are praiseworthy additions to the amenities of the countryside. One typically fine example is the wrought iron sign at Barns Green, in Sussex, made by the village blacksmith and, as the inscription "W.I. 1951" beneath it indicates, inspired by the local Women's Institute. Local folk describe this pleasing sign as having put Barns Green "on the map," and it is a feeling that will be shared by many wanderers who know of places in our countryside unmarked by any other form of sign. On a rather larger scale some county councils, as in Bedfordshire, have placed name signs at the entrance to all villages in the county.

Tree planting has been a favourite way of commemorating the festival in many parts of the country. At Cheddar 7,000 trees have been planted on the hillside "to beautify our parish as a holiday resort," the rural district council of Hertford planted some 1,500 trees in its area, and in the borough of Buckingham the council planted 104 trees, each of which was the gift of an individual citizen. At Worksop the famous "shire oak," which had long been a withered relic, was

as St. Andrews University and Shrewsbury.

PRIDE IN TRADITION

Exhibitions, like pageants, are not as a general rule expected to leave behind them permanent effects beyond those implied by their being memorable events. But the festival year has confirmed Brighton in its supremacy as a centre for keeping alive the memory of Regency traditions and has perhaps given Tenterden a new and firmly established pride in William Caxton. Many other exhibitions, like that in which Canterbury depicted its long history, were remarkable for the skilled work voluntarily put into them by students of municipal art schools and technical colleges. Not all exhibitions were successful, if measured only in terms of the numbers of visitors who attended them, and the chief disappointment of this kind was the Exhibition of Industrial Power at Glasgow, which somehow failed to attract the interest it certainly deserved.

The tour of Britain in festival year was full of interest and pleasure for all who could make it. But the festival scene was not planned, nor intended to be planned, in such a way that it provided an itinerary of events for tourists. The larger Festivals of the Arts, some of them well-established annual events and others staged specially for 1951, were mostly reviewed during the season in *The Times*, and are not touched on in this brief survey. Nor is it suggested that what is glanced at here forms anything even approaching a summary of other festival activities. The mere "official" mention last February of Trowell, in Nottinghamshire, as the village with the best festival programme, showed how unwise it was to confer such distinctions. Places mentioned in this article are taken only as typical of what many others also did throughout our land to celebrate the festival in some way that would have enduring results.