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EDITORIAL.

WE ARE TIRED OF THE HOB-NAILED BOOT.

Last year we called attention to the folly of denuding the coal mines of skilled labour. It does not require a personal knowledge of the craft to realise how greatly the fate of war depends on the products of the mines, and that the Minister of Labour, himself a miner, should have failed to realise the value of the industry was evidence of his unsuitability for office. It would appear that Mr. Ernest Bevin is no respecter of efficiency. He backed the Nurses Bill, 1943, and dragged down our efficient standards of nursing, to the unknown misery, in future, of the sick poor, and now the qualities of the most valiant and patriotic class of youths are being squandered by ballot, who are compelled by chance—a most unseemly gamble—to burrow underground and attempt to learn a craft for which the majority are totally unsuited.

The mothers of these boys, and the mothers of the highly skilled miners in the Fighting Forces, are naturally up in arms; both realise the waste of power entailed, but not so our autocratic Minister of Labour, who, sooner or later, will be compelled to listen to reason, as the Press is at last given liberty to deal with this vital question. We note that what is often referred to as the "responsible Press" is by no means satisfied with what the *Daily Sketch* refers to as the "State gamble—With Our Boys' Careers." It invites us to:—

"Look at the 'Bevin boys' ballot in isolation, without reference to its repercussions on the general structure of the community. A boy is directed to the coal industry not because he wants to be a miner, not because he is fitted to be a miner, but because by the purest hazard the choice has fallen on him. And he must, on pain of legal penalties, comply, even if he has patriotically trained himself to be of use to his country as an airman, a sailor, or a soldier. Conscientious objectors are better placed; they are not directed into the mines.

"Have we grasped the implications of all this? Do we realise what a precedent we are setting by saying to the rising generation: 'Your destiny may be determined by laws as incalculable as those which regulate the ball in roulette, for this is the most up-to-date development in our democratic institutions'?"

"Is it to be wondered at that some magistrates show themselves reluctant to convict when a youth disobeys

his direction into the mines? Also, is it to be wondered at that the reluctant magistrates are supported by an almost unanimous public opinion?"

Let us hope that public opinion will be sufficiently strong to compel autocratic Ministers to realise that there is a limit to the patriotic self-sacrifice of our people.

We, of course, believe in the utmost self-sacrifice of our people, male and female, but we most strongly protest against the preference permitted to "Conchies," who, for the most part, when not receiving £5,000 per annum in high places, are enjoying cushy jobs with no risk of physical damage.

"NOTTINGHAM LAMBS."

This controversy reminds us that our first public speech was made upwards of 70 years ago to "Nottingham Lambs," a group of Colwick miners, so-called because they were the most unruly men in the community, overworked, underpaid and their lives risked daily.

An election was on. The 'Lambs' sported yellow bows, the Conservatives blue. Driving along the 'Long Row,' at Nottingham, we came in contact with an unruly group of "Lambs."

"'Ere, stop that there cab," they shouted, "and, young woman, 'and over that blue ribbin."

We put our head out of the window. "We'll see you hanged first," we smilingly replied. "We must all stick to our colours."

This defiance brought an instant change of attitude, and the mob began singing "She's a lad, she's a lad."

"And, moreover, gentlemen," we said, "thank you for lovely warm fires in the winter, *and if we had a coal mine, we would share it with you.*" This brought the house down, and it also brought a contingent of bobbies, who proceeded to interrupt our interesting conversation and nip our eloquence in the bud, much to our regret.

"I'm not sure, young lady," said a constable "that I ought not to charge you with inciting these 'ere 'Lambs' to riot. It's uncommon easy to give away other folk's property."

Instead, he escorted the cab out of the market-place, much to the relief of the trembling driver.

After the passing of 70 years, we are still of opinion that those who own coal mines would be wise to share the profits with the craftsmen.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)