

simplifying the existing fishery law and administration is hopeless. No one interested in the development of British fisheries believes in the economic fallacy contained in the first sentence I have quoted from your pages. To quote Mr. Secretary Cecil in 1563:—"The causes of the decay of fishing must be the lack of the use of fishing, which must be divided into ij partes, small eating of fishe in ye Realme, and not selling of it abroad." Both these causes have operated during the war. It is our purpose to remove them both. As this is not always understood, I shall be glad if you will publish this declaration, which can be taken as "official" on behalf of every branch of the fishing marine, to which the nation owes its freedom in 1919, as it did in 1588.

G. C. L. HOWELL.

National Sea Fisheries Protection Association,  
Fishmongers' Hall, E.C.4, March 24.

I ENTIRELY agree with Capt. Howell, and think that the road to fishery reconstruction, in the national interest, is marked out by the lines of the propaganda of the National Sea Fisheries Protection Association. I am sorry if it should appear that anything in the views put forward in the *Times* correspondence and articles is misrepresented in the note in *NATURE* of March 13, but it seemed to me that Lord Dunraven's letter did suggest such an antithesis as that to which Capt. Howell refers—that fish which is scarce and dear might be more profitable and more easy to handle than fish which is cheap and abundant, and that while the former condition might possibly be preferred by the distributing trades, the latter condition is that which is favourable alike to the nation as a whole and to the consumers in particular. In order to make it impossible that the former condition might be established, Lord Dunraven seems to suggest some form of nationalisation of the fisheries; this would also, he hopes, create revenue. The National Sea Fisheries Protection Association, on the other hand, seeks to secure the same object by its advocacy of a strong Imperial administration—a sounder method, it seems to me, for better than State revenue would be a prolific fishery population retaining its individuality; and largely increased British exports would be preferable to Lord Dunraven's Colonial imports. The note was intended to be purely descriptive, and so my personal opinions were not expressed.

THE WRITER OF THE NOTE.

#### Goal in Thrace.

I AM much obliged to Prof. Louis for his interesting information (*NATURE*, March 20, p. 45).

I assumed the coal to be anthracite on account of the assertion that the use of the bellows extinguished it, while it encourages the combustion of bituminous coal by a fuller supply of oxygen. The high temperature needed for the burning of anthracite would not be attained, I fancied, owing to the cold blast.

The geographical description does not apply to Pontos.

There is another "wonder" cited by Antigonos that has a possible bearing on the coal district of Thrace. He quotes Eudoxos as saying: "It is related that in the Thracian Sea, at the mountain which is called Sacred, during certain times bitumen (*asphaltos* in the Greek) is borne on the surface."

The *Mare Thracicum* in Kiepert's atlas extends from Thrace north of the Hellespont to the coast of Thessaly. The "Sacred Mountain" is probably Mount Athos, which in vulgar speech is still called "Hagion Oros."

EDMUND M'CLURE.

80 Eccleston Square, March 24.

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#### THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT.<sup>1</sup>

"A MAN without a purpose," said Carlyle, "is like a ship without a rudder." What is true of an individual is in this case true of a community: a people without a common purpose can make no permanent progress. It must stagnate and ultimately disintegrate. In the last resort a free people can only be held together by either of two means: custom or community of purpose. It is not difficult to see that anything—and not least the machinery of Government—which facilitates the coherence of free people, whether in a single State or in a world commonwealth, and their co-operation towards the fulfilment of a common purpose, makes for the welfare and advancement of mankind.

During the war many English customs have been broken down, but the consequent tendency towards disintegration has been more than counterbalanced by the increased sway of a common purpose. Higher efficiency and more rapid progress have consequently become apparent in multifarious departments of the national life, as, for example, the exhibition of British scientific products held in London last summer, and repeated this winter in Manchester, has shown in the case of scientific industry. But with the signing of the armistice community of purpose began to lose its hold, and disintegration threatens to set in. Labour leaders are warning the nation against it, and leading articles in the *Times* are echoing and emphasising their warnings.

How is this danger to be avoided? New habits and customs take time to form. Moreover, as we may perhaps learn from the Americans, bondage to custom causes many of the evils that result from other kinds of fetters. So the prosperity, progress, and even preservation of the State demand, above all, community of purpose. Perhaps spiritual ideals alone can supply it, and the essential emotional drive towards its realisation. But, whatever the purpose be, some central Government is needed to plan and to direct the advance towards it. This—and not merely to police the route—is the function of the Government of a State.

In the past, of course, this function is very far from having been fulfilled, whether by Ministers of the Crown, who determine policy, or by the permanent Civil Service Departments, which pursue it. When Mr. Gladstone entered Parliament in 1832 he thought his first concern would be with questions of the succession to certain unstable European thrones. A dozen years later, after a close connection at the Board of Trade with the leaders of British industry and commerce, he held a very different view. But it has taken a long time for these industrial statesmen, these leaders of British activity outside the House of Commons, to see in the Government and its principal Departments the natural centre and focus of their activities in the service of the State. The process is not yet complete; nor have some captains of

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Machinery of Government Committee. Ministry of Reconstruction. (Cd. 9230.) (H.M. Stationery Office.) Price 6d. net.