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A Long Awakening? Environmental Concerns in the United Kingdom
Since the Nineteenth Century

A Toxic System: Lord Douglas of Barloch and the Fight for 'Natural' Food and Water (1940s-60s)

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A Toxic System: Lord Douglas of Barloch and the Fight for 'Natural' Food and Water (1940s-60s)

Un système toxique: Lord Douglas of Barloch et son combat pour une eau et une alimentation 'naturelles'

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Introduction

In the 1980s, Donald Worster, one of the pioneers of environmental history, argued that “environmental history begins in the belly”.¹ On the whole, however, it seems that histories of environmentalism in Great Britain and elsewhere have paid much more attention to pollution and the preservation of natural landscapes than they have to concerns about food and agriculture.² It could nonetheless be argued that food was throughout the twentieth century a powerful driver of environmental consciousness, especially in Great Britain, in spite, or maybe because, of the prevalence of a highly industrialised and processed diet.³ If the organic movement – both its origins in the 1930s and its subsequent development – has been carefully studied by historians, it is generally regarded as either very right-wing or as the work of a group of antiquated mystics during the post-war period.⁴ The aim of this article is to chart the work and ideas of a post-war politician, Lord Douglas of Barloch (1889-1980), whose role has largely escaped the attention of histories of environmentalism. Douglas seems of particular interest since he was active mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, and was a Labour peer who promoted organic ideas for more than twenty years in the House of Lords.

Douglas' role is interesting as it underlines the political plasticity of the organic movement, and proves that the 1950s and 1960s were not just a hiatus between the right-wing movement of the 1930s and 1940s and its left-wing counterpart that developed from the 1970s onwards. More importantly, the study of his ideas and of the debates that he raised in the House of Lords shows that concerns about the un-healthiness of the modern

diet in the post-war period were always embedded in wide-ranging considerations about the entire “food system”: the production of food (land ownership, agricultural methods), its provenance and transport, its processing and consumption and its ultimate disposal. For Douglas and others, concerns about the potential toxicity of a particular item or process was therefore always recast in wider questions about the noxious character of the entire system upon the health of the population and the environment. The paper also shows that the House of Lords played a rarely noticed role in the early politicisation of environmental questions in Great Britain, and the paper thus attempts to demonstrate that the case for an entirely new food system was made rather audibly in Parliament but that post-war governments decided to deliberately ignore or sideline its arguments to pursue another path.

Biographical details and food campaigning

Francis Campbell Ross Douglas was born in Manitoba, Canada, in 1889, but his parents moved shortly after to Scotland. After graduating from Glasgow University in 1913, he became an accountant and then a solicitor in 1924, in London, where his political career also began, first as a member of the Battersea Borough Council (1919), and later of the London County Council (1934-1946). In 1940, he was elected Labour MP for North Battersea (1940-46) and became Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Board of Education (1940-45). After the War he was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Malta (1946-1949), where he oversaw the transition to self-government. Upon his return to Britain, he was made a peer in 1950, as Baron Douglas of Barloch, Maxfield, Sussex and in 1962 became Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords in 1962. He died in 1980.

When he became involved in politics, his chief political interest lay in the question of land valuation and taxation, and he campaigned during the 1930s in favour of land-tax reforms by publishing several pamphlets on the question and reediting books by Henry George.⁵ This early interest in the land question led him to focus increasingly on how British people were fed and he started campaigning during the Second World War on issues related to food and agriculture. The war indeed sparked great debates on these topics as the nascent organic movement and some members of the House of Lords (of which Douglas was not a member yet) contended that the faulty industrialized diet prevalent in Great Britain was weakening the nation's physical resistance and abilities.⁶ People were particularly concerned with the question of the unsatisfactory nature of most British bread, and in order to deal with nutritional deficiencies and shortages of flour, the government passed new regulations in 1942. This ensured that all bread met the standards of the “National Loaf”, with added calcium and vitamins and a considerably higher extraction rate (i. e. the proportion of wheat turned into flour).⁷ After the war, bread, and in particular the extraction rate, continued to be at the heart of heated debates concerning the transformation and healthiness of the modern British diet.⁸ This was a very important question for Douglas who campaigned for the retention of wholemeal bread and against the return to pre-war white flour, and tried to lobby the government against going back to a lower extraction rate of flour.⁹

The debate about bread took a more heated turn after the war with the controversy surrounding ‘agene’ a process used since the early 1900s to ‘bleach’ flour, to produce a whiter loaf, thanks to the use of a gas called nitrogen trichloride (NCl₃). A 1927 Committee had argued that it should be banned but its recommendation was not followed and the

process continued to be used very widely.¹⁰ Then, in 1946, Edward Mellanby, a physician, nutrition scientist and secretary of the Medical Research Council, published in the *British Medical Journal* a paper describing an experiment in which dogs fed with flour treated with nitrogen trichloride developed a form of “canine hysteria”.¹¹ Mellanby's article reached a wide audience in Great Britain, rekindling fears and concerns about the harmful effects of some of the chemicals used by the food industry.

Douglas was at the forefront of this debate in Parliament, along with former Cabinet Secretary Lord Hankey and Lord Teviot (Chairman of the Liberal National Party), who brought up the question several times in the 1950s. Using the agene scandal as his starting point, Douglas broadened the discussion to include the potential toxicity of many other agents and chemicals used in modern milling and bakery, such as bread softeners, colouring matter, flavouring and sweetening agents. In the early 1950s, he thus alerted the House of Lords to the “dangers to national health arising from the increasing use of poisonous chemicals in the growing and preparation of foodstuffs, and to the need for strict control over all processes which may affect the natural quality of food”.¹²

On the particular question of agene, rather than enforce a ban which would have created economic difficulties for the milling industry, the government chose to favour a policy of voluntary compliance to allow the milling industry to find a satisfactory substitute, which meant that agene was still being used as late as 1955 despite its proven noxious character. More generally, it was felt that existing legislation, particularly the Food and Drugs Act of 1938, provided considerable safeguards against the dangers of chemicals used in processed foods.¹³ In fact, despite some significant progress in the 1920s, such as new preservatives regulation in 1927, business opposition had managed to shelve or water down most of the interwar period legislation.¹⁴ More importantly, the rapid advance in food chemistry meant that new products and chemical substances were appearing and this industrialisation of the food system was not without causing grave concern, as the nitrogen trichloride example shows.

The 1955 Food and Drugs Act

Starting with the 1875 Sale of Food and Drugs Act, the British Parliament passed a series of laws which succeeded in increasing food safety by preventing the grosser forms of adulteration and banning the use of known toxic chemicals. But as the case of agene showed, and as Douglas insisted, chemicals might not be toxic in themselves but they may combine “with some elements in the protein of the wheat” to form “a definitely poisonous compound”.¹⁵ Apart from the unforeseen dangers arising from the combination of various chemicals, Douglas and others warned of the risks linked to the long-term cumulative effects of some of the chemical compounds.

Their message was given resonance in the 1940s and 1950s by the increased awareness of the problem of food poisoning, with serious cases of salmonella for example attracting the attention of the press and of the public.¹⁶ A new piece of legislation was therefore considered and debated in the early 1950s which resulted in the 1955 Food and Drugs Act, the first major overhaul and updating of food legislation since 1875. The objectives of the Bill were twofold. First of all, stricter standards of cleanliness were enforced in places where food was prepared, such as restaurants or canteens. Secondly, the Bill was intended to “bring up to date the protection of the public against the use of substances and processes which are liable to render food injurious to health”.¹⁷ Douglas actively took

part in the debates on the Bill and proposed many amendments designed to enforce a stricter regime of regulation.¹⁸ The 1955 Act indeed strengthened legislation and gave increased powers to inspectors to protect consumers against toxic chemicals and preservatives. The law not only prohibited the addition to food of substances that might render them “injurious to health” but mentioned for the first time that “the cumulative effect” of some substances had to be taken into account when assessing the toxicity of a given article of food.¹⁹

Even though Douglas played an important role in the debates leading to the drafting of the legislation, the Act clearly did not go far enough, in his opinion, to protect consumers against the new dangers of processed foods. Douglas did not favour a blanket ban on all new chemical substances but campaigned for much more rigorous labelling regulations, compelling food manufacturers to indicate the addition of flavouring agents, colouring agents or preservatives: “If it is desired to use polyoxyethylene derivatives or bromates or other things in cakes and bread, let them be labelled to show that these things have been put in”.²⁰ This proposed amendment was, however, defeated in the House of Lords. He was more successful in other respects and managed to have a provision inserted in the Bill stipulating that in making regulations, Ministers should “have regard to the desirability of restricting as far as practicable the use of substances of no nutritional value”. Nevertheless, Douglas later expressed his disappointment that the government had not really seized the opportunities offered by the new Act to enact a more ambitious set of regulations.²¹

One of the main problems that any effective legislation faced, according to Douglas, was that the “onus of proof that an article of food has been rendered injurious to health” always lay with the administration charged with enforcing the regulations. Douglas believed, on the contrary that “there should be an obligation upon the manufacturer or upon the vendor to show that those articles, or the treatments to which the food has been subjected, are not injurious to health”. This problem was further compounded by the absence in the UK of a real organisation in charge of protecting the health of consumers. Douglas regretted that the enforcement of legislation remained largely in the hands of local authorities, who did not have the power or resources to detect and ban all substances deemed dangerous. Local authorities could benefit from the advice from the Food Standards Committee, formed in 1947, but this institution was an advisory committee and had “no research staff and no organisation of its own” and depended “entirely upon the evidence which it may discover in public sources or which may be tendered to it by other people”.²²

Douglas was not alone in advocating the establishment of an official testing and toxicological laboratory, as this had also been strongly supported, until his death in 1955, by Edward Mellanby who considered the British situation as highly abnormal, and further worsened by the fact that the decision to allow or ban a chemical lay mostly with the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, whose primary objective was not to protect consumers but to increase food production.²³ Mellanby and Douglas liked to refer to to the United States Food and Drug Administration, which had its own staff of researchers and greater powers, calling for the establishment of such an institution in the UK, but it took several decades for this to happen.²⁴

Even if all his amendments were not accepted, Douglas' contribution is worthy of notice as it shows that the discussions leading to the 1955 Food and Drugs Act did not center only on the question of gross adulteration or hygiene and food poisoning but were also

informed by quite a comprehensive view of the new risks raised by the “chemicalisation of food”.²⁵ What is more, these discussions did not consider the topic of food security in isolation from the broader questions pertaining to the transformation which British agriculture was going through at the time and Douglas' concerns about processed foods were always embedded in a wider critique of the industrialisation of the British food system.²⁶

Composting

From its inception in the 1930s, the organic movement had been mainly concerned with the inferior diet of the majority of the British population, and the need to maintain and nurture a “healthy soil” to breed a healthy population. During the Second World War, which had led to a tremendous growth in the use of artificial fertilizers to rapidly boost production, this movement gained momentum and structured itself around various other movements which coalesced to form the Soil Association in 1946. This early organic movement was clearly associated with the far-right: Jorian Jenks, for example, who was the Editorial Secretary of the Soil Association from 1946 to 1963, had been a prominent member of the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s.²⁷ Most studies on the early organic movement have therefore rightly insisted on the ideological plasticity of a movement which originated on the far-right in the 1930s but, by and large, migrated to the left in the 1960s. Douglas' involvement in the movement is worthy of notice as he may be considered one of the “missing links” in this evolution.²⁸ It also shows that in the 1950s, which are often seen as a hiatus in the history of the organic movement, the case against industrial agriculture was not completely marginal, having quite a strong mouthpiece in the House of Lords.

The question of artificial vs organic fertilisation was clearly at the heart of the early organic movement, and the Soil Association's first President, Lady Eve Balfour warned Great Britain in her book *The Living Soil* (1943) against the dangers of artificial fertilisers.²⁹ During a wartime discussion at the Royal Society of Arts, Douglas also criticised the rapidly increasing use of artificial fertilisers and expressed concerns regarding the nation's failure “to return to the soil the organic waste materials which are a by-product of the life of plant, animal and man”.³⁰ For Douglas, the question of soil fertility was definitely not simply a technical aspect, and was deeply related to economic and political issues: the lack of fresh home-grown food and the declining fertility of British soils had to be seen in the light of over two centuries of specialisation of agriculture and urbanisation, which had led to a disconnection between the city and the country.

The movement's intellectual reference was the agronomist Albert Howard, who had devised in the early 1930s the 'Indore method', which involved the large-scale composting of agricultural or urban waste materials.³¹ The rise of the organic movement coincided with a wide-ranging recycling campaign organised at the start of WWII and supervised by the Ministry of Supply's Salvage Department, which led to the collection, salvaging and reuse of an unprecedented amount of paper, iron, steel, rags, bones, while kitchen waste were collected in 'pig-bins'.³² This campaign also saw the promotion of composting in private gardens and allotments in numerous pamphlets and movies.³³ If official promotion of composting during WWII remained limited to individual gardeners, the practice attracted increasing attention, and started to be presented as a desirable method of dealing with urban waste and maintaining the fertility of British soils.

The campaign to promote composting continued after the war, and Douglas, who was a founding member of the Soil Association, became one of the most prominent advocates of composting. For example, he wrote to several of the most important members of the newly-elected Labour government to urge them to pay more attention to the recycling of urban organic waste, but to little immediate effect.³⁴ He was also involved in some discussions on the topic in the House of Lords, where he was described as “a great authority” on the subject. Douglas' arguments around the need to minimise waste resonated in a period which was still marked by various shortages (rationing only ended in 1954) and widespread concern over the most efficient use of the country's resources.³⁵

The campaign gathered momentum in the 1950s, as important schemes were developed abroad, especially in the Netherlands, where nine new composting plants were set up in the 1950s.³⁶ In the UK, a few plants were installed, most notably in Leicester, Jersey and Edinburgh, and as the question gained visibility, the British government was repeatedly asked what it was doing to set up research schemes and pilot plants, and if there was any will to encourage this practice. The official position was that this was a matter that was entirely in the hands of local authorities who had to choose the method of refuse disposal (controlled-tipping, incineration or composting) which was most adapted to their own circumstances.

In fact, the British government did have a clear position on the topic and repeatedly discouraged local authorities from investing in this technology.³⁷ The attitude of the government was informed by a report written under the authority of biologist Solly Zuckerman. Zuckerman was chairman of the Natural Resources (Technical) Committee (NRTC) which had been set up in 1950, to provide advice on the best ways of enhancing the material and natural resources of the nation “through economy in use, substitution and recovering from waste”. Their investigations led the members of the Committee to conclude that the amount of nutrients (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium) which could be made available through large-scale composting was insufficient and compared too unfavourably with artificial fertilisers.³⁸ Proponents of composting argued that the approach taken by the Committee was too reductionist, and that a proper evaluation of the method should include a much broader set of considerations, most notably the economic and environmental costs of treating refuse by conventional manners and the physical and biological benefits of compost on the soil, as opposed to the purely chemical approach favoured in the Report. The supporters of composting organized themselves, in the late 1950s, into an unofficial Joint Working Party on Municipal Composting, which was chaired by Douglas.³⁹ In spite of their lobbying, the NRTC Report informed official policy for over twenty years: no official research schemes were set up and compost could not qualify for subsidies, as opposed to artificial fertilisers, and the movement gradually declined from the 1960s, before knowing something of a rebirth in recent years.

The campaign in favour of composting testifies to the rising controversy between different conceptions of agricultural modernisation and this particular debate was part of a much wider discussion with agricultural, political and environmental aspects. The involvement of Douglas and Zuckerman also shows that these discussions, far from simply being a case of a few “mystics” battling against the uncontroversial “truths” of modern science, were indeed discussed in Parliament and official circles, and that the case for composting – as well as wider environmental concerns – was, however, deliberately rejected.

Pesticides

Ten years before the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), which is generally seen as one of the first warnings against the harm caused by the use of toxic chemicals in agriculture, Douglas and his allies repeatedly drew the attention of authorities to the dangers posed by the increasing use of pesticides.⁴⁰ The development of new insecticides and pesticides, and of DDT in particular, during and just after WWII was indeed not without causing some disquiet in the UK and elsewhere.⁴¹ From the early 1950s, many people started to voice concerns about the safety of these new products, in particular for the health of agricultural workers. In 1952, to assuage those fears, Parliament passed the Agriculture (Poisonous Substances) Act, which required the use of protective clothing for all employees dealing with toxic products. This, however, was far from being enough for those who thought that the most dangerous substances should be banned altogether and that pesticides posed the wider problem of endangering both the health of consumers and the "balance of nature". Douglas voiced these arguments in the House of Lords from the early 1950s onwards. In the discussions which led to the 1952 Act, Douglas indeed called for a much more rigorous process of testing and vetting new products, in order to ensure that "no poisonous substances" could be used and harm agricultural workers and the people consuming agricultural products.⁴²

If the government was ready to accept the need for improved protection and regulation, it found that Douglas' position was too alarmist. In particular, they accepted that some categories of products (the dinitro and the organo-phosphorus compounds) might involve risk to agricultural workers, but argued that most other substances were perfectly safe. As Peter Carrington, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, claimed "certainly, in this country there has been no evidence that D.D.T. has been at all harmful to human beings".⁴³

The views of the Ministry of Agriculture were largely shaped by a working group, chaired once again by Solly Zuckerman, and which had been set up to provide advice and guidelines for a set of regulations on the use of pesticides. In its first report, published in 1951, it had argued that "until harmless alternatives (could) be found, the use of dinitro weedkillers and organo-phosphorus insecticides must go forward" but that some statutory measures should be taken to ensure the safety of the workers who had to handle these products: protective clothing, regular medical examinations, and proper instructions on dangers and precautions.⁴⁴

As Douglas and other campaigners widened the potential dangers of pesticides to include the problem of residues in food and dangers to wildlife, the Zuckerman Working Group issued two further reports on these topics, in 1953 and 1955 respectively. In particular it advised the appointment of an Advisory Committee and a system of voluntary notification by the chemical industry.⁴⁵ On the question of the hazards caused to birds or other wildlife, no new legislation was deemed necessary but it was argued that these risks should be included in the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee and that the latter should include representatives of nature conservation groups. The scheme became subject to criticism for its non-statutory nature and also because the Advisory Committee did not run toxicology tests itself but depended on data provided by pesticide manufacturers.

Long before the publication of *Silent Spring*, numerous alarms on the dangers of pesticides had thus already been raised: in 1957, for example, the British government was informed of the lethal consequences of pesticides on bird populations. The publication of the book, however, gave wider resonance to these ideas and presented them to a general audience. Increased pressure from Parliament and in particular from the House of Lords, resulted in tougher action being taken against pesticide manufacturers, as the Advisory Committee recommended that the production of those chemicals most toxic to wildlife (aldrin, dieldrin and heptachlor) be discontinued.⁴⁶ The adoption of statutory regulation in the UK was, however, delayed until 1985, more than ten years after DDT had been banned in the US and most other Western countries. It is, however, important to acknowledge the role of whistle-blowers, like Douglas and others, who tried to pressure the government into taking stronger measures, but with only very partial success.

Chemical coercion? The fluoridation of water, toxicity and the rights of individuals.

In Stanley Kubrick's 1964 movie *Dr Strangelove*, American General Ripper describes the fluoridation of tap water as “the most monstrously conceived and dangerous Communist plot” the West has ever had to face.⁴⁷ The addition of fluoride to tap water as a preventative form of medication against tooth decay started to be implemented in a few municipalities in the US just after WWII. Although it was in fact rarely seen as a direct communist plot to take over the West, its detractors usually claimed that fluoridation was a form of “compulsory medication” by the State or other political authorities. In the UK, detractors of fluoridation, such as the British Housewives League, described it as a direct “political assault on the civil liberties of the nation” and mounted a campaign against it from the early 1950s.⁴⁸ As recent research has argued, however, anti-fluoridation activists cannot be simply described as right-wing, since the movement included broader concerns about the long-term impact of fluoridation on health and the environment.⁴⁹ This may once again be seen in the role of Lord Douglas of Barloch, who became very early on involved in the fluoridation controversy, and was a founding member and first chairman of the National Pure Water Association, an anti-fluoridation organisation created in 1960.

In the early 1950s, the UK's Ministry of Health sent a mission to the US to observe the results of the first experiments conducted there and to see whether fluoridation should be introduced in Britain as well. Studies were first launched in 1957 in three pilot areas (Watford, Kilmarnock and part of Anglesey) and from 1964 several local authorities initiated fluoridation schemes.⁵⁰ Douglas' involvement in the controversy can be traced back to 1954, when he first gave a speech to the House of Lords in which he expressed concerns about “projects of mass medication, such as the addition of chalk to flour, iodine to salt and fluorine to public water supplies”.⁵¹ The case of fluoridation was an extreme example of this and Douglas likened it to a form of medical treatment imposed upon all, without consent and irrespective of age, sex or medical condition. The detractors of fluoridation generally argued that dental decay was primarily due to the industrialisation of diets, characterised by the ingestion of large quantities of sugar, refined carbohydrates and over-processed foods so that a proper health policy should revolve around education and prevention, rather than compulsory medication.⁵² Douglas and other anti-fluoridation campaigners conceded that fluorides, taken as tablets for example, might be useful for some categories of the population, children especially. The problem lay in the

fact that, by adding it to water, local authorities turned this into a compulsory form of medication, while people should in fact be able to make their own choices when it came to medical treatment.⁵³ This concern with what was perceived as an unnecessary “invasion of fundamental human rights” was coupled with misgivings about the potential “chronic toxicity” of fluoridation. A clear parallel can be drawn with the debates on food safety mentioned earlier, since Douglas argued that the main problem lay with the potential consequences of a life-long ingestion, in uncontrolled amounts, of a product, the safety of which could not be ensured by short-term laboratory, clinical or statistical tests.⁵⁴

Douglas' contribution to the debate is interesting as it shows the possible convergence between an “anti-state” rhetoric and a more left-wing form of environmentalism, bent on protecting citizens from the “chemicalisation” of food and water, and concerned with environmental risks, since some arguments were made regarding the accumulation of fluorides in land and water. As a whole, Douglas' involvement in the debate shows that this was not simply a battle between interventionism vs. non-interventionism. Just like the organic movement, which included movements from the far right as well as from the left, the fluoridation controversy shows that one can not entirely disentangle the two strands of the movement.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Douglas' case is worthy of attention since it shows the clear connections between concerns over food and wider environmental issues in the 1950s and 1960s, thus complexifying standard narratives on the “Greening of Britain”.⁵⁶ The paper shows how concerns about the potential toxicity or deficiency of particular food items and processes were systematically related to broader questions about the environmental impact of the British food system. These concerns, as this example demonstrates, were not limited to a few backward-looking right-wing radicals or romantic mystics. The paper also shows that these issues were regularly debated in the House of Lords, which provided a forum for the discussion of environmental issues in the post-war period, which casts doubt on the traditional assumption that these suddenly appeared in the 1970s. It also showcases the limits of the House of Lords since it enabled Douglas and others to articulate an environmentalist critique of the modern industrial food system but, as the various examples outlined above demonstrate, these concerns were rarely taken into account by policy-makers.

NOTES

1. Donald Worster quoted in Nicolaas Mink, “It begins in the belly”, *Environmental History* 14: 2, 2009, pp. 312-322.
2. See, for example, John Sheail, *An Environmental History of Twentieth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002), Joachim Radkau, *The Age of Ecology* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2014), or Paul D.

Sims, "The Development of Environmental Politics in Inter-War and Post-War Britain" (PhD dissertation, Queen Mary, University of London, 2016).

3. Derek Oddy, *From Plain Fare to Fusion Food: British Diet from the 1890s to the 1990s* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2003).

4. Philip Conford, *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (Edinburgh, Floris Books, 2001); David Matless, "Bodies made of grass made of earth made of bodies: organicism, diet and national health in mid-twentieth-century England", *Journal of Historical Geography* 27: 3, 2001, pp. 355-376 & *Landscape and Englishness* (London, Reaktion Books, 2016 (1st ed. 1998)); Richard Moore-Colyer, "Towards 'Mother Earth': Jorian Jenks, Organicism, the Right and the British Union of Fascists", *Journal of Contemporary History* 39:3, 2004, pp. 353-371; Gregory A. Barton, *The Global History of Organic Farming* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018).

5. His publications on the question include *Agriculture and Land Value Taxation* (London, United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, 1930), *Land-Value Rating. Theory and practice* (London, L. & V. Woolf, 1936) as well as an abridged version of Henry George's *Protection or Free Trade* (London, Kegan Paul & Co, 1929) and *Social Science Manual. Guide to the Study of Henry George's 'Progress and Poverty'* (London, Henry George Foundation of Great Britain, 1937).

6. See for example the debate in the House of Lords, "Agriculture and Food Values", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 129, cc. 291-327 (26 October 1943).

7. Food Standards Committee, *Report on Bread and Flour* (London, HMSO, 1960), pp. 1-2.

8. See for example "Our Daily Bread", *British Medical Journal* 2: 4736, 13 October 1951, pp. 896-898.

9. Correspondence with Hugh Dalton advocating the use of wholemeal not white bread, 6-8 February 1946, Barloch Papers, LSE, Douglas 1/3.

10. Ministry of Health, *Report of the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Flour with Chemical Substances* (London, HMSO, 1927).

11. Edward Mellanby, "Diet and canine hysteria: experimental production by treated flour", *British Medical Journal* 2: 4484, 1946, pp. 885-887.

12. "Chemicals and Food Supplies", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 172, cc. 624-52 (04 July 1951).

13. *Ibid.*

14. Michael French and Jim Phillips, *Cheated not Poisoned? Food Regulation in the United Kingdom, 1875-1938* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 362.

15. "Processed foods", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 182, cc. 801-70 (10 June 1953).

16. "National Health and Nutrition", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 174, cc. 900-15 (29 January 1952). On the growth of food poisoning concerns in the post-war period see Michael French and Jim Phillips, "Windows and barriers in policy-making: responses to food poisoning in Britain, 1945-1956", *Social History of Medicine* 17: 2 (2004), pp. 245-260.

17. "Food and Drugs Amendment Bill", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 184, cc. 480-510 (24 November 1953).

18. "Food and Drugs Amendment Bill", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 185, cc. 319-80 (20 January 1954); vol. 185, cc. 883-921 (16 February 1954); vol. 185, cc. 1040-63 (23 February 1954).

19. E. G. Whittle, "The Public Analyst and the New Food and Drugs Act (1955)", *The Medical Journal of the South West* 72: 1, 1957, pp. 23-25.

20. "Use of Flour Improvers", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 197, cc. 810 (07 June 1956).

21. "Chemicals in Food Production and Preservation", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 232, cc. 327-82 (15 June 1961).

22. "Processed Foods", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 182, cc. 801-70 (10 June 1953).

23. Edward Mellanby, "The Chemical Manipulation of Food", *British Medical Journal* 2: 4736 (13 October 1951), pp. 863-869.

24. A Food Additives and Contaminants Committee (FACC) was created in 1963 and was merged with the FSC in 1983 to form the Food Advisory Committee (FAC). In the wake of the BSE crisis, a Food Standards Agency was created in 1999.

25. "National Health and Nutrition", *Hansard*, HL Deb., vol. 174, cc. 921-46 (29 January 1952).
26. F. C. R. Douglas, "Economic Aspects of Soil Fertility and Nutrition", *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 89: 4593, 8 August 1941, p. 573.
27. Other prominent members of the organic movement with fascist sympathies include Rolf Gardiner and Viscount Lymington (who became the Earl of Portsmouth in 1943). See Philip Conford, *The Origins of the Organic Movement*, *op. cit.*, and David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, *op. cit.*.
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ABSTRACTS

This article presents the ideas of a post-war Labour peer, Lord Douglas of Barloch (1889-1980), and his campaign against the industrial food system. While histories of environmentalism in

Great Britain have mostly focused on responses to pollution and the preservation of landscapes, this article argues that food was a very powerful driver of environmental consciousness. The study of Douglas' work, whose contribution to the organic movement has rarely been noticed by historians, shows that concerns about the potential toxicity of particular food items and processes were systematically related to broader questions about the impact of the British food system on health and the environment. The article thus shows how the House of Lords provided a forum for numerous discussions of food-related environmental issues in the post-war period, and also how the concerns expressed there were ultimately rarely taken into account by policy-makers.

Cet article présente les idées de Lord Douglas of Barloch (1889-1980), qui fut membre de la chambre des Lords après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, et son combat contre le système alimentaire industriel. Si l'étude des mouvements environnementaux en Grande-Bretagne s'est avant tout concentrée sur les questions de pollution et de préservation des paysages, cet article entend démontrer que la question de la nourriture doit également être placée au cœur de l'histoire des préoccupations environnementales. L'étude des combats menés par Douglas, dont la contribution au mouvement organic a rarement été soulignée par les historiens, montre que les inquiétudes liées au caractère potentiellement toxique de tel ou tel aliment ou processus étaient systématiquement reliées à des questions plus larges relatives à l'impact du système alimentaire britannique sur la santé et l'environnement. Ce travail montre ainsi la façon dont la chambre des Lords fut le siège après la Seconde Guerre mondiale de nombreuses discussions liant alimentation et environnement, mais également que les préoccupations qui y étaient exprimées furent rarement prises en compte par les décideurs politiques.

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