

F R E E D O M B U L L E T I N

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UNEMPLOYMENT—AND THE COLLAPSE OF CAPITALISM.

Unemployment in Great Britain has become a chronic condition. Figures fluctuate from week to week, from season to season. Now so many hundred more insured persons are working than was the case a week or a year ago; now so many hundred less. Always the increase or decrease percentage can be measured in decimals only. The condition continues acute.

“We can conquer unemployment,” cried the Liberals before the General Election in May. “We are conquering unemployment,” retorted the Conservatives, with amazing faith in the electorate’s stupidity. “Labour and the Nation” (a short cut to the Earthly Paradise, price 3d. net) told the country just how the Labour Party would abolish unemployment if given a chance. The Labour Party has been given the chance, or at least four-fifths of a chance, and the queues still block the footpaths outside the Labour exchanges. Statisticians conjure furiously; some to prove that the Labour Government is improving matters, others to prove the opposite. Comparing the 1930 week’s figures with those of fifty-two weeks ago, some improvement is registered. But comparing the alleviation with the magnitude of the ill, the improvement is negligible. Lord Privy Seal Thomas hedges and twists and holds out vague promises of better times to come—when, and when, and when; but no practical proposition that would absorb any appreciable proportion of the unemployed emerges from his statements.

So Parliament scraps over how many shillings a week shall be given to the man without a job to keep him quiet in his queue. More doles, more taxation; more taxation, a higher cost of living and less goods for the money and a higher cost of production; a higher cost of production, and a lower export trade; a lower export trade, and less employment. The vicious circle entangles everything.

Raise wages, one section of Socialists advises. Then demand will be stimulated and production increased and there will be a job for everybody. But prices will rise in the home markets, and our capitalists will lose more of their export trade to foreign competitors. The vicious circle.

Make jobs—and raise taxation and production costs, and so it goes on.

Empire trade—the buffoon takes the stage.

Meanwhile, more than 10 per cent. of those who normally would be expected to work have nothing to do—except draw the dole (or try to) and listen to how the good time coming is to be brought about. Add to that 10 per cent., all those who are not expected to

work, then add those tens of hundreds of thousands whose labour could very well be done without, then the other labour that the useless work necessitates, then make work free, and machinery free, and land and transport and distribution, so that these can be used without permission of capitalist, landlord, and shopkeeper—and what wealth we could produce, and with how many hours a week less per man! With rationalisation transformed from a source of misery to a possibility of immense advantage, speeding up production and promoting leisure without privation.

Capitalism will never solve unemployment in Great Britain, because here capitalism is decaying, and excessive unemployment is one of the symptoms of its decay. The Labour Government is trying to solve it within the limits of capitalism, and its efforts are foredoomed to failure. Unemployment—the inability to work—is not due to natural forces. We have labour and material in plenty. It is due to the power that opposes work except under given conditions. Those conditions are dictated by the capitalist and landowner and shopkeeper (an unholy trinity! united they stand, united they will fall). They are enforced by the State, whether the Conservatives control the machine or the Labour Party. Work can only be freed by abolishing the force that opposes its emancipation—capitalism.

There is no other way.

What is to take the place of capitalism? There are a hundred and one possible alternatives, good, bad, and indifferent. Whichever the alternative is to be (and some alternative there will have to be), the sooner it is inaugurated the better. The alternative must be ready to function before capitalism collapses.

B. B. W.

WEALTH OF NATIONS.

The national wealth of the United States of America is £88,000,000,000, according to a survey made by the Dresdner Bank, Berlin; of Great Britain, £22,400,000,000; of Germany, £19,500,000,000; of France, £14,900,000,000; and of Italy £5,200,000,000. Great Britain has the highest “favourable investment balance”—£4,000,000,000.

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WHITEWAY COLONY

STROUD, GLOS.

THE BOLSHEVIKS AND THE PEASANTS.

All the news from Russia points to a crisis in the fierce struggle between the Bolshevik Government and the peasants. The acute position of the Government is shown by the figures relating to grain purchases by the principal organisations during the 1928-29 agricultural year (July 1st, 1928, to June 30th, 1929), published in the "Bank for Russian Trade Review" for December.

Compared with 1927-28 there was a great reduction in the purchases of wheat, which decreased from 5,437,000 to 4,592,000 metric tons, and also in rye, which decreased from 2,597,000 to 1,325,000 metric tons. These figures show a decrease of over 25 per cent. in twelve months in the purchase of grain used in the making of bread, which explains why there are bread cards and bread queues in the great cities of Russia.

The Bolshevik Government are on the horns of a dilemma. They want grain for export to pay for the machinery and other things they buy from abroad, but the peasants refuse to grow or sell grain because the Government are unable to give them manufactured articles in exchange owing to the poverty of industrial production. At one time the Government favoured the richer peasants, as they were able to produce on a larger scale than the poorer peasants; but they feared the growing economical power of the richer peasants, on whom they have now declared war.

Michael Farbman and others tell us of the huge State farms and the collective farms of the peasants, who are pooling their land, and are allowed the use of tractors. It is quite evident, however, that the State farms have not yet made up for the great decrease, while it is doubtful whether the peasants of the collective farms will part with their grain any more willingly than before unless they can get something tangible in return. The State farms have two purposes—to increase the amount of grain under the control of the Government and to proletarianise the peasants and wean them from their individualism. When Lenin was interviewed in 1920, and was asked about this idea of making wage-workers of the peasants, he said: "It will have to be done very carefully, and must take a long time." The interviewer then asked: "Did he think they would pull through far enough economically to satisfy the needs of the peasantry before that same peasantry had organised a real political opposition that should overwhelm them?" Lenin laughed. "If I could answer that question I could answer everything, for on the answer to that question everything depends. I think we can."

That is the essence of the struggle to-day, ten years after Lenin was interviewed. That is the reason why the Bolsheviks are concentrating all their energies on the five-year plan of intensive industrial production and State farming. It explains also their feverish activity in seeking loans from foreign capitalists—to defeat the peasants' growing political power. The collective farms initiated and worked by the peasants are likely to prove a menace rather than a blessing to the Bolsheviks, as men who work together economically are almost certain to work together politically, and they will demand that if the Government cannot provide them with manufactured goods they shall be free to sell their grain abroad to get the things they need.

Two articles by "An Eyewitness" in the *Round Table* for June and September, 1929, give a vivid impression of the great change that has taken place in the mentality of the Russian peasant. The writer describes a mass meeting called by the local Soviet in a village off the banks of the Volga. Word had been sent round that an *inostranetz* (foreigner) would be present, and everyone was urged to come. There was a large gathering. Glowing with pride, the young chairman proceeded to expatiate for the benefit of the foreigner on the achievements of the local administration and on its ambitious plans for the future. Suddenly an elderly peasant shouted: "Words, words, only words! All for the benefit of the foreign visitor." Attempts were made to stop him, but he went on:—

"I am sixty-five years of age. The Soviets did give me land, but what am I to do with it? Can I eat land? I have no horse, and what can I do with land without a horse? In the old days we had a Czar, landlords, exploiters, and yet I could always buy a horse if mine died, and boots, too, and all the calico I could pay for. Now there is no Czar, there are no landlords, there are no exploiters, and yet—no horse, no boots, no calico, nothing. Remember that, stranger."

At first the writer thought that it must be an exceptional outburst, but further experiences in other villages dispelled any such supposition. It was the same wherever he travelled. On trains, on highways, in market places, in Soviet offices, everywhere he heard the peasant roaring out his laments and protests. The peasant has found himself. This new self-esteem has helped to kill his ancient dread of government. He no longer regards it with the terror and dismay of the old days.

This loss of fear of authority has had a striking effect on the food situation, and is partly responsible for the scarcity in the cities. To-day the peasant's standard of living has been raised, not because of any beneficent action on the part of the Government, but because he consumes more of his own produce than before. Much to the consternation of the Communist leaders, he does not take his eggs and butter, his ham and cheese, nor even his rye and wheat to market as readily as he once did. Owing to the disparity in prices between farm stuff and manufactured goods, he receives little in return for his produce. Why, then, should he sell?

Surely this action of the Russian peasant is an object-lesson to the workers everywhere. Safe in possession of the land, he will only exchange his produce with the industrial workers in the cities on a fair basis. If the town worker were equally free the Revolution would indeed be a success. In Great Britain and most other countries neither the factory hands nor the farm workers own or control the tools they use or the land they cultivate, with the result that all they produce is taken from them and only sufficient given them in return to enable them to keep up strength enough to produce more—precisely the same treatment as is meted out to the horse and the ass. So we can learn something from Russia though it may not be what the Communists try to teach us.

THIS GOVERNMENT.

Since the Labour Government was formed in June we have witnessed one of the most extraordinary exhibitions of downright duplicity and sheer effrontery that the people of this country were ever elected to suffer, and when I say that there is widespread dissatisfaction in Socialist circles, I am merely repeating an obvious truth, for it is abundantly clear that there is an open revolt against the Government and every indication of an impending crisis.

Anyone conversant with the story of Christian as recorded in John Bunyan's masterpiece will easily be able to understand why it is so difficult for these persons to remain true to their principles. Mr. Worldly Wise is still a very active individual, ever awaiting an opportunity to waylay those who set out for the Celestial City; but his long series of successes with working-class politicians has caused some people to seriously consider the possibility of removing him to some sphere where his malignant influence will be less harmful. For his victims there is little sympathy, because there is a host of people who deserve it more, and it is almost impossible to expose treachery without implicating individuals. Even Jesus, whose denunciations of the Pharisees were personally offensive, failed in his effort to let the traitor's name remain unknown. It should be recorded to the credit of Judas that he did his best to rectify his mistake, and some of us in the working-class movement to-day are perhaps sanguine enough to expect a similar demonstration of repentance if we provide his modern prototypes with sufficient rope. But, then, we must remember that our capitalist masters can afford to expend more than the thirty shillings paid by the Hebrew ecclesiastics, so that we should really avoid forming hasty conclusions about the possible terminations of these interesting careerists whose native conceit provides such a remarkable psychological study.

It is, perhaps, reassuring to know that the present

situation is not without precedent in world history; Machiavel, the Florentine statesman, was a classical example of that double-dealing, cunning type of politician, whose main characteristics appear to be inconsistency in principle and consistency in deception. To an Anarchist it comes as no surprise to learn that there is no mark of distinction between the present Government and its predecessor, unless, of course, we consider that the raising of the school age (if I were a schoolboy I should not rejoice over this) is really a serious departure from the conventional course of the Parliamentary procession. I am not, of course, leaving out of account the question of adequate representation, but I am amused at the efforts of the Government's apologists when they try to convince us that the inactivity of Labour Ministers is caused either by the people's lack of confidence in their ability or by the fear that the Tories and Liberals will unite in order to defeat them if they dare to introduce any Socialist measures. The thing is altogether absurd.

What it does prove, however, is precisely what I am always trying to instil into the minds of the workers, that is, that capitalism has the power to convert any political organisation which answers the requirements of the constitution into a means of preserving the old traditions; in short, Parliament conquers the individual instead of the individual conquering Parliament.

So far as we ourselves are concerned, our duty as Anarchists is clear. We must declare openly that we are out to regenerate society, do our utmost to make our position understood by the multitude, be resolute in our effort to turn the people against authority, confident in the knowledge that we are messengers of truth elected to preach the gospel of Liberty to the confused millions of men and women. The result will be determined by the intensity of our enthusiasm.

LEONARD T. DUNKERLEY.

THE NAVAL CONFERENCE.

The representatives of the five great Imperialist Powers are now discussing ways and means of fighting on the cheap. In spite of Locarno and Geneva and the Kellogg Pact, that is really what the bother is about. They are exploiting the desire for peace manifested by the people of the world since the butchery of 1914-1918, but the people will be misled and betrayed by the politicians as they have so often been. As long as these great Empires are in existence there will be danger of war. Even if they cut their navies down by half, the cause of war will remain. The fierce competition for markets between the enormous industrial combinations of the world must of necessity breed friction. The United States and Germany have cut into the export trade of Great Britain and are steadily pushing their goods into parts of the world where hitherto this country had almost a monopoly. French opinion inclines to the view that Great Britain and the United States have virtually formed an alliance and are trying to force naval limitation on all the other countries. If this is so, it means that sooner or later the rest of the world will combine against the

English-speaking races and another and more savage conflict take place.

Great Britain and the United States seem to us to be seeking to stabilise the world as it exists to-day, which is also the point of view of the League of Nations and the Covenant. The world, however, refuses to remain stable. Change is the law of life. Empires rise and fall and newcomers take their place. Russia, China, and India are now becoming nationally conscious, and any attempt to confine this new consciousness within bounds will lead to an explosion.

However laudable may be the desire for peace, we can see nothing to hope for from the Naval Conference. Exploitation of the workers of the world is as ruthless to-day as ever, and the struggle for profits as keen as ever. When our rulers cease exploiting us we may believe their professions of peace, but that will only come when the people throw their exploiters off their backs. They must, however, show more spirit than they do to-day, for as Shakespeare has put it so clearly: "And why should Cæsar be a tyrant then? Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf, but that he sees the Romans are but sheep."

AN ANTHOLOGY OF REVOLUTIONARY POETRY .

In times of change, when men and women are seeking an outlet for the revolutionary spirit burning within them, poets have always played their part in fanning the flames of revolt, and their stirring verses have been sung by the mob in its challenge to constituted authority. Governments have banned the songs and imprisoned the singers, but the songs have survived. Revolutionary songs, however, are often born of individual revolt against the unnecessary hardships and cruelties of the world. In this collection Graham has gleaned poems from all sources and it is a splendid tribute to his energy and persistence in searching many libraries and many publications. Some of these poems are old and treasured acquaintances—two or three are from *Freedom*—but many of them are new to us as they will undoubtedly be to most readers. We miss from this collection anything by Heine, whose humorous and biting satire is worthy of a place in any revolutionary anthology.

This "first limited edition" is sure of a wide circulation even at its present price, but we hope that the publishers will soon issue another edition at a cheaper price. The present edition, however, is a noble book, well printed on good paper, and makes a fine addition to one's library. Its poems have inspired countless numbers of rebels, and will inspire all those who have in them the spirit of revolt.

* An anthology of Revolutionary Poetry." Compiled and Edited by Marcus Graham. \$3.00. New York City: Publication Committee, Box 3, West Farms Station. (Obtainable through Freedom Press. Price 12s. 6d., post free.)

PERSECUTION OF ANARCHISTS IN RUSSIA.

According to a statement issued by the Organisation of Russian Anarchists in Foreign Countries, during the end of May and the beginning of June the Soviet authorities arrested all the Anarchists in Moscow, Odessa, and Kiev. In Moscow thirteen comrades were sentenced without trial to three years' confinement in the concentration camps for Anarchists. The official pretext for these arrests is a book entitled "The Bolshevik Dictatorship in the Light of Anarchism: Ten Years of Soviet Power," published in Paris by Russian Anarchists. None of the comrades sentenced had anything to do with the publication of this book.

Since 1920 our Russian comrades have found it impossible to do anything to spread Anarchist ideas owing to persistent persecution by the Soviet Government. Time after time mass arrests of Anarchists have taken place, and now it seems as though the Bolsheviks have determined that the few who up to the present have escaped their attentions must be put behind prison bars. Some years ago one of the chief officials of the G.P.U. (the secret police) said that the Government would never allow Anarchists to carry on an agitation in the country districts because, as he said, the peasants believe in one of the principal teachings of Anarchism—that one Government, even a Bolshevik Government, is as bad as any other. Their persecution

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of all their political opponents proves that the peasants are right.

We do not publish these facts as a protest, because we know by past experience that protests have no effect on the Russian dictators; but rather as a warning to those Socialists who still believe that liberty can be obtained by putting a Socialist Government in power.

The Secretariat of the International Working Men's Association Relief Fund appeal for funds to provide necessaries and to relieve the sufferings of Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists imprisoned and exiled in Russia. Many of them have been in prison or exile for ten years, and at present there seems no hope of release for any of them. Cash should be sent to A. S. Bergmann, Amexco, 11, Rue Scribe, Paris. Any money sent to Freedom Press will be forwarded. Their needs are urgent. Please send help quickly.

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