

In this Issue:

- Anarchism - - - p. 2
- Elisée Reclus - - - p. 2
- Northern Ireland
Goes to the Polls p. 3
- Rome vs. Moscow - p. 3

Freedom

A N A R C H I S T F O R T N I G H T L Y

Vol. 10 No. 4

February 19th, 1949

Threepence

UNOFFICIAL STRIKES AND SYNDICALISM

THE more observant of industrial correspondents and commentators are producing very interesting reading for anarchists and syndicalists just now. For many articles and broadcasts are dealing with the vexed subject of unofficial strikes and the journalists are very obviously discovering undercurrents in industrial life which they find disturbing.

Nor is it only observers from outside who are seeing the writing on the wall. The spate of recent pronouncements on the rôle of the trades unions to-day shows that the union leaders and politicians are aware of the necessity to find new reasons for the existence of the T.U.'s in the face of their obvious default as organs of militant working-class action.

These "vital organs", as Winston Churchill called them the other day (and the fact that the arch-reactionary now sees the unions as "vital" surely points to their own reactionary nature) are now being sold to the workers as not "merely" concerned with the interests of the workers, but having an essential part to play in the British way of life in general and to be concerned with production and discipline as much as, if not more than, welfare. While, contrariwise, those workers who find the grinding machinery of negotia-

tion too slow and who take action in their own interests are denounced as saboteurs of national recovery, criminals, lunatics and various other irresponsible categories.

NOTICEABLE TRENDS IN STRIKE CAUSES

Apart from these developments, we can see for ourselves one or two very noticeable trends in working-class direct action to-day which are of great interest to all those tired of reformism and its cramping effects on class-consciousness. By far the most important of these is the trend in the causes of unofficial strikes towards principle instead of pay. This principle may be simple solidarity, as in the cases of the three most important London dock strikes of the past year and the recent Euston van-drivers' strike. They may have an economic background like the recent De Havilland dispute, but even here the workers' action was taken in defence of a fellow-worker sacked at one hour's notice for refusing to be timed for the fifteenth time without getting a price on his job, and the strike committee describe the employers as attempting to "get back to a system of 'observing' and spying, like the inhuman Bedaux system which has caused strikes all over Britain."

(Continued on page 4)

SEEDS OF WAR

Competition from Germany

ANARCHISTS are opposed to war primarily on what are called moral grounds—they are appalled by the spectacle of working men and women devoting their activity to the task of destroying other working men and women. Of course, all reasonable human beings are similarly appalled by war, but to anarchists, with their conception of co-operation between men in general, and the joint struggle of workers in particular to throw off their bonds in international solidarity, hatred of war is usually carried to the point of individual resistance to war and war preparation.

During the last war, while reiterating the "moral" case against it, these columns continually analysed the so-called practical justifications for war. Thus, during 1914 to 1918, the allied powers successfully crushed Imperial Germany as a competitor in the world's markets, and this object was undoubtedly an outstanding undeclared war aim. Yet, after the war

German industry was set on its feet again by means of loans so that German competition again threatened the "prosperity" of the other capitalist nations, and again brought about another war.

All Over Again

Now the same cycle appears to be repeating itself all over again. The Western occupying powers continually deplore the burden which the maintenance of the broken German economy places upon the "victorious" taxpayers. To lift this burden, it has been necessary, they say, to put German economy once more upon its feet. We have often pointed out the government's preference for this kind of argument instead of responding to simple humanitarianism which revolts at the kind of conditions in which the German population has had to live since 1945.

Now, it seems that the re-establish-

ment of German economy is raising the spectre once again of competition. Sir Stafford Cripps is reported to have told a delegation of German politicians that the government is not afraid of the competition of German firms. But a few days after the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Harold Wilson, was receiving a joint delegation of employers and union officials of the engineering industry who were expressing very considerable fear on this head. Mr. Wilson has since felt it necessary to make a statement to Parliament about it.

It is obvious that in the economic field the revival of German industry will involve the revival of German competition, and one of the concrete aims of the war will have been dismantled in favour of the *status quo ante*—will, in fact, necessitate another war later. But it is equally obvious that there is a conflict between political and economic aims. On the one hand, the politician-industrialists want to build up Germany as a factor in the European balance of power against Russia; on the other, the economist-industrialists want to remove the trade competition of Germany altogether. Nor is it a matter of struggle between one set of politicians or industrialists against another, for these aims co-exist in the same people. It is a question of the conflicts which exist in capitalist economy and its political administration.

Trade Unions

It is a point of great interest that the delegation to the Board of Trade consisted of a joint group of employers and trade union leaders. There can be no doubt that they both spoke as patriotic nationalists just as they did during the war. But when it comes to justifying their position, they will doubtless suit their arguments to their respective audiences. The employers will speak frankly as patriots, being unhampered by years of socialist ideology. But the union leaders have nominally some allegiance to the international working-class, and between wars they can give themselves some rope. They act as patriots, but they know how to dress their arguments in the broader conceptions of socialism. Thus they claim that the present threatened German competition is unfair because wages are so low in Germany that German goods can undersell those of countries with a higher standard of living. Their concern for the wages of the German workers is thus the same as that of the employers: raise German wages and defeat German competition. It is an irony that this is the exact reverse of their position regarding British workers, to whom they act as spokesmen for the governments' policy: increased wages will mean less stability for export (i.e., less competitive power), therefore you must be content with no increases. The dependence of the official unions on the structure of capitalist economy could hardly be more clearly revealed.

Solidarity with German Workers

We have continually appealed in these columns for solidarity with German workers, reduced to the most ghastly economic straits after twelve years of the most appalling tyranny. And we think our motives for supporting any betterment in their wages position is dictated by somewhat higher motives than mere concern for British marketing. Yet obviously the path which is now being laid down is one with war at the end of it. Increased wages within a revived German capitalist economy are a poor return for future bloodshed.

British workers have the same economic interest as German workers: but that common interest lies in the struggle to throw off the yoke of wage slavery altogether and with it the spectre of competition and war. British workers should demand for their German fellows—and for themselves—not merely better working conditions, but the control of industry itself. With the elimination of competitive marketing, increased productivity of German industry (that is, of the German workers) will mean increased commodities for the world at large. At present competition means lowered or pegged wages, unemployment, and—war.

NO DILEMMA

An army atom bomb expert, Col. James P. Cooney, recently declared that radiation was scaring too many people. At Hiroshima, he said, 85 per cent of the deaths resulted from the instant blast and fire, while radiation killed only 15 per cent. On the very next day, however, the National Military Establishment at Washington released a statement saying that every atom bomb dropped by an enemy would kill 20,000 outright, with another 20,000 dying soon, and 60,000 seriously injured. And it put its emphasis on radioactivity. The boys in charge are not together, but marching off in all directions. If the experts are confused to such a degree, naturally the public is confounded.

Worldover Press, 28/1/49.

There is no confusion in our minds. Whether atom bombs kill only 15 per cent. or 40 per cent—we are against it.

Forest Dwellers

a way of life is often a rather sordid and demoralizing one. If this is so, to some extent at least, with a migrant life, it is very much more so with a settled life lived under essentially migrant conditions. As long as a small group of persons are constantly changing their place of residence, and in addition, spend most of their time out of doors, a rather low standard of personal hygiene, and a complete absence of all those accessories to daily living known as 'modern conveniences', do not have a marked adverse effect on mental or physical health. Living conditions which in the open country, apart from the extra work involved, can be relatively healthy would, if they existed in a large town, produce disease and squalor. The modern obsession with hygiene is mainly a concomitant necessity of urban living.

Settled Migrants

It is, however, when conditions suitable to, and more or less harmless in, a migrant life are carried on into a life on a permanent or semi-permanent site, when the migrant ceases to migrate yet does not, or cannot, change his mode of life, that the very worst slums are created. And this, as is explained by word and photographed in *Picture Post*, is what has happened to the one-time New Forest travellers. In the English-speaking world, one would indeed probably have to go to the Deep South of the U.S.A. to encounter such rural squalor as is found in some of these compounds. This squalor is made worse by the Forest laws, which, originally designed expressly for the purpose of preventing travellers from settling on any one spot for more than a few days on end, and thereby creating ramshackle slum settlements, now compels them to reside, under licence, on semi-permanent sites while at the same time

continuing to regard them as migrants. This in practice means, that, even if they have the money and the desire to do so, they are not permitted to erect anything that could be legally termed as a permanent dwelling. In other words, the authorities deny them, as far as possible, the right to live a migrant life, while at the same time compelling them to live on a fixed site, under migrant conditions. These regulations are so patently contradictory that it is only fair to say that they are likely to be modified in the near future.

But in justice to the authorities, entangled as they are in unworkable regulations drawn up in another age, it should be made clear that, though the Forest Committee and the local Councils undoubtedly do regard these ex-vagrants as a damned nuisance and a blot on the otherwise beautiful landscape and show their little sympathy, they do not display towards them the overt hostility shown by the local population of all classes. This hostility is even stronger among the local rural workers and small tradesmen than it is amongst the retired middle-class people who live in the neighbourhood, these people often showing more tolerance toward the compound-dwellers. Partly, no doubt this greater tolerance exists because, from the safe distance of their picturesque modernised cottages they consider that these 'gypsies' provide a bit of local colour. Not so the local inhabitants, however. As pointed out by A. L. Lloyd, few publicans will allow compound-dwellers to contaminate the Public Bar by their presence; though this, it is true, is often more in deference to their customers' dislike of 'having the place full of dirty gypsies', than because of any personal objection to the presence of such untouchables. As long as they have the money for any drinks they may order, and do pay for them, and do not create any undue disturbance under the influence of them; that is all mine host is primarily concerned with. When in business one's reaction to a man is based largely on one's assessment of his probable purchasing power.

Guerilla Warfare

This hostility on the part of the local workers, though based partly on prejudice plus a touch of snobbery, has at bottom a genuine basis of fear; the fear of those who have for those who have not. Even if the having consists in a cottage garden, this puts the owner or tenant of same on

the side of all property holders, big or small. Now those who possess no property have an understandable tendency to disregard what are called the rights of property. Hence a state of intermittent guerrilla warfare has always existed between travellers and gorgios. (One might note incidentally, in passing, the resemblance to the Jewish word Goy.) A 'gypsy', in his naivety will argue that if a farmer has a field of turnips he is not likely to be any the worse off if one takes a couple out of several thousands still remaining. Likewise, he refuses to acknowledge the morality of a law which says that if a rabbit happens to be on a certain man's property at a given moment of time, then that rabbit is also automatically the property of the owner on whose land it is. This gorgio logic seems to him patently absurd, as of course, it is; about as absurd also is the ruling that if one wants some sticks for the fire, it is an offence to step through or over the fence into the wood alongside and pick some up.

Social Reintegration

The article in *Picture Post* would seem to have been written with a genuine sympathy for the people it describes, and is obviously also a plea for the abolition of such appalling conditions. But the solution proposed, which would seem to imply that these people should be ultimately absorbed into the framework of the existing social order is really a very partial solution. Some of these people would undoubtedly like to be "absorbed"; their present way of life, restricted as it is and having all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of the former vagrant life, has little indeed to offer them. *Picture Post* is careful to emphasize that many of them, given the chance, are potential good citizens. Perhaps they are. But since in the first instance, these people, or their immediate ancestors, have either consciously rejected the existing social order, or have been forcibly ejected from it in the far-off days of surplus manpower, it seems rather ironic, and an unconscious impertinence, to suggest that the best thing that can be done for them, is that they should be re-integrated into that society that had no use for them, that persecuted them persistently in many minor ways and which in any case would only receive them into the social fold on its own terms. Which, put rather crudely, is to do a decent, steady job of work for an employer and not to ask the why or wherefore.

GERALD VAUGHAN.

UNDERSTATEMENT

The plight of a family of eleven living in a one-room sub-let was disclosed at Dunfermline juvenile court yesterday.

Fife County Council petitioned for the removal from the parents of the seven youngest children of their nine children.

The area medical officer said the mother did not have much chance under the circumstances to show her housekeeping abilities.

News Chronicle, 27/1/49.

PICTURE POST, in its issue for January 29th, carries a feature article by A. L. Lloyd on the compound dwellers of the New Forest. From what I know from personal observation and casual contact with these people the account given is a fair and accurate one. It explains briefly the history and origin of these social outcasts who are known locally, somewhat erroneously, as 'gypsies'.

Just as Gypsies, or 'Travellers' as they prefer to call themselves, refer to all house-dwellers, whether they be the lord of the manor or a farm labourer, as gorgios, so do all house-dwellers label all non house-dwellers indiscriminately as 'gypsies'.

This may be a convenient way of classifying such people but it leads to some confusion and inaccuracy. The word 'gypsy' derives from the word Egyptian and originally denoted a people of quite different racial stock, language and customs who, appearing in Eastern Europe about the 14th century, continued to wander Westwards, until they were well established in England by Elizabethan times. Tradition named Egypt as the country of their origin; which idea gained some support from the gypsies themselves who, knowing nothing apparently of their own racial origin, were quite content to believe that they came from Egypt as from anywhere else. In fact later research showed them to have almost certainly come from India, their language, apart from other supporting evidence, bearing a very close resemblance to Hindustani. The word 'gypsy' should therefore be confined to these people—also referred to as Romanies, this term being also based on another myth as to their origin.

Just as some of the travelling tinkers, blacksmiths, horse-dealers, and other migrants intermarried with Romanies and established half-caste families, or *diddekais* to give them their Romany name, so did many of the travelling folks, who for centuries roamed the New Forest, acquire Romany blood. But that does not make them gypsies. This is made fairly clear in the article to which I referred at the outset.

The article is further to be recommended as helping to debunk the romantic idea that the more comfortable members of the bourgeoisie have created around those that dwell in vans and tents; an idea created largely as a compensatory fantasy for the frustrations and limitations that the possession of comfort and security impose upon those that possess them. It is an idea that bears little resemblance to the reality. As one who once travelled the roads and knew Romany, I give it as my opinion that such

ANARCHISM

Part 2

Practical Applications

WE come then to the question, what is to be done?

One point should be clarified. "Political" or revolutionary actions are commonly understood as power-struggles for greater or lesser objectives—that is, a struggle of the mass of people against their rulers. Though we will be glad to gain concrete victories—we would be glad, for example, if resistance to the draft in America could be as effective as it was in Canada—we realize that we shall probably "lose" every struggle. But the social struggle of people against their rulers does not exist, and the central struggle now is for what we might call the psychological liberation of people from the ideas and habits of the existing social system. The chief criterion, therefore, is not "success" or "failure" according to the view of those who want "concrete results", but whether behaviour and action tend toward realizing of a will to freedom among people—a will without which social struggles and upheavals are blind and without meaning.

It is our belief that the process of developing a will to freedom among men and women is identical with the process of developing and maintaining our own sense of freedom and individuality under severe conditions.

1. Direct Action

A. Economic. We think that direct action by workers—well-established in the tradition of all radical movements—is still a valuable field of action. More human conditions of work for those who must work in factories and mines is a sound end in itself. More important, lessons in solidarity, mutual aid and self-reliance can be learned through action and association on the job. It is not the task of the anarchist worker to build up union organizations, or to reform them or create new unions: granted the psychology of workers and the nature of the master-slave society, bureaucracy and conservatism are the normal fate of workers' organizations. (The job of the anarchist is to influence and teach his fellow-workers, more by anarchist actions than by anarchist words, and to help create actual solidarity and self-reliance.)

We do not accept, however, the anarcho-syndicalist concepts of the class struggle and revolutionary unions as the chief mechanisms of revolution. It is logical that anarchists should be active in unions, encouraging militancy and direct action; it is also natural that when anarchist ideas become wide-spread, organizations applying those principles to unionism should develop. In a concrete situation (though we cannot see its relevance in America) such unions may be of considerable educational value; but their severe limitations and potential dangers must never be forgotten.

B. Anti-Militarism. War and militarism are the main political facts of our time. Against them we can hardly hope for great success, and the chance that war may be prevented is slight. Nevertheless, whatever chance for success there is, justifies resistance. It is not general "propaganda against war" that matters, however, but outright individual opposition to war. By learning to act as individuals, to take a stand outside the State and against it, people learn what anarchism means; and they learn also the effective method of combatting the State.

C. Among a number of other areas of direct action that could be mentioned, anti-racist action is perhaps the most important. How racist prejudices and practices interfere with human solidarity is obvious; how deep-rooted these prejudices are is not always realized, nor the fact that we have many opportunities to take direct action against them.

2. The Anarchist Movement

The importance of an anarchist movement is often not rightly understood. Among young American anarchists, individualist-inclined, suspicion and rejection of "movements" is common. Actually, the anarchist idea of a movement is something very different from Marxist concepts. A movement—an association or federation of groups of anarchists (the form is not so important as the active participation of individuals)—is the most important aspect of our activity. It is one of the main defenses of the individual against society, and potentially a powerful lever for building a different society.

As far as economic matters go, Americans are generally satisfied. (It may even be true that the most obvious problems can be solved within the present society: economic statism may solve unemployment, American world domination may solve the problem of peace, and so on.) But something fundamental is missing in America, something only a free society can provide: basic human rewards and satisfactions, human happiness. To many this seems like merely an aesthetic criticism; but it is actually the feeling of emptiness and barrenness of modern living—the meaninglessness of the monetary, acquisitive, competitive values that American society alone favours and makes really possible, the discouragement and denial of the human values of association, love and creation—it is this feeling that makes rebels to-day. It is this feeling that is fraudulently exploited by religious

groups; but the appeal of these groups indicates the basic uneasiness and dissatisfaction of people.

Our ideas are justified, in the last analysis, by our belief that the State, economic slavery and other forms of illiberty must be abolished before we can have a society where association, love and creation will flourish as the natural condition of people. Perhaps our strongest achievement and our strongest propaganda is a movement where these things exist, where people can find a refuge of sanity and health, where they can learn in practice what anarchism and an anarchist society are. To put it another way: It is much more important to be an anarchist, and live anarchically, than to merely have anarchist ideas.

3. Education

Yet it is clearly not enough merely to act in concrete situations with people in the hope of helping them learn from action; and not enough for our movement to constitute a kind of community of free men and women. If it is so difficult for most people to grasp and accept radical ideas, it is primarily because they have been too strongly conditioned by other factors. Mutual aid is a practical principle, easily enough learned; repudiation of authority, acceptance of individual responsibility and independence, are much harder; their lack in Spain by many even of those who were anarchists was one of the decisive causes of the defeat of the revolution.

Many anarchists have looked upon education as an attempt to sidestep the fundamental question of revolution. There has, of course, been a traditional division between "revolutionary anarchists" and "gradualist", "educational" anarchists. We accept neither extreme; we see that revolution does release great strength; but we also see that it is not enough. An education that would make the young individual independent, capable of initiative and incapable of submission to authority, would be a revolutionary achievement.

Anarchists once put a great deal of

effort into education under the impetus of Ferrer's Modern Schools; many of the ideas were undoubtedly wrong, and to these the somewhat disappointing results may be attributed. A. S. Neill in England now provides an example for study of what is possible by applying more recent knowledge. Naturally, the State is very jealous of control of the young, and anarchist education would encounter trouble; yet the ferocity of the State's defence of its prerogatives over children is evidence of the significance of education.

But we believe it is necessary to go behind education in any formal sense, to the beginnings of the education of children: the family; and beyond the question of learning to the questions of morality and authority in the family.

This subject has been treated superficially by most anarchist thinkers, ignored by many, seldom given the importance we believe it has. It has been assumed by some that freedom will "purify" marriage and the family; or that (as Marx said) capitalism has already destroyed the family; or that everything existing must be swept out—all this with very little regard to psychological or anthropological evidence. In practice, some anarchists have attempted to create completely new types of sexual, familial and moral relationships; others have merely (as anarchists) ignored the State, while accepting traditional customs. This is not merely a question of theories incidental to anarchism, as some have asserted; relationships between men and women, between adults and children, are the closest of all human relationships; their nature has profound influence on the individuals involved, and the way a person learns to react to these situations is carried over into more general social situations. Moralists and church people are wide awake to the crucial function of the family in morality, and of morality in social conservatism; it is time that we, on the opposite side, were equally alive.

Avoiding psychological jargon, here are some fairly definite facts: The character of the individual is usually well-established before he leaves childhood. A child whose

This section completes our reprint from **RESISTANCE** of the analytical article on Anarchism. Our views will appear shortly and meanwhile we invite discussion from our readers.

spirit is broken by its parents is most often submissive to all forms of tyranny, while a child who has been raised in freedom will always rebel against any effort to impose authority. In most families a strict anti-sexual morality is imposed on children from a very early age, and the common results of repression of this basic human need are direct unhappiness, inability to achieve sexual satisfaction even when the permissible age is reached, and habits of submissiveness or aggression and sadism, depending on the particular circumstances (social phenomena that are usually called "atavistic", like the atrocities of the Nazis or a lynch mob, can be understood in this way). Likewise, the child normally produced by the present-day family has not been allowed to acquire a genuine independence such as will enable him or her to act in a lively and self-reliant fashion as an adult. It is not only in the prison of the old-fashioned father-authoritarian family that these disastrous events take place, but also in the reformatory of many a "progressive" family where the child is more subtly moulded.

Attempts in *Resistance* to discuss some of these problems have caused some comrades to object that all this might or might not be true, but it has no connection with anarchism. However, we believe that the present state of "human nature" is largely responsible for the present state of human society, and that this "human nature" is formed in the early part of life when the family and morality and discipline (and not economic or political institutions) are the dominant facts in the life of the individual. If we want healthy, rational people, capable of being free, we shall have to create a childhood environment that allows and encourages people to develop their best natures.

This is truly one of the sorest points of society and most of the people in it; the violence of reactionaries against discussion of the family, sex and morality

is matched by the violence of some anarchists. But it must be discussed. We have no facile solution. Nor do we wish to give the impression that this is the only useful line of approach; we are not so deterministic as to regard human beings solely as products of families. But if we can provide children with an atmosphere of freedom and love we shall have done much more than all our printed propaganda can.

The Perspective

Now, by itself none of these three major areas of action is enough; even taken together, they may not seem adequate to the objective of an anarchist society. But they are the best answer we know to the questions: What can we do right now to make our lives human and satisfying? In what ways can we work together for immediate gains? What can we do to lay the basis for future social change?

The perspective is less obviously optimistic than that of those who have a narrower faith in revolution as a dramatic historical event that will nullify centuries of slavery and a century of defeat. Yet in terms of what the anarchist movement has actually done and actually does, we believe we reject nothing of value, if a revolution arises, we are not afraid of it; what we propose now is to search openly for the most effective actions.

At the same time we should like to encourage and maintain within the anarchist movement the spirit of intellectual freedom and undogmatism that is the great strength of anarchism—a freedom that will enable us always to improve upon our knowledge and our actions. Surely we are not in a position to assert that there exists a theory of anarchism (including our own) that answers the question: How are we to achieve freedom? It is a question of always approaching closer to an answer to this question.

KROPOTKIN ON ELISEE RECLUS—2

(Continued from Jan. 22nd.)

IT was at Clarens that his principal work, the *Universal Geography*, was begun; of this first volume appeared in 1876, and the last—the nineteenth—eighteen years later, in 1894.

It was also at Clarens that we became acquainted, and soon all of us had learnt to love him by meeting him at meetings, at congresses, and at the informal parties of the Jura Federation. Side by side with the *Bulletin*, the organ of the Federation, Reclus had started, with Lefrançois and Zhukovsky, a monthly review, *Le Travailleur*. Then, when the *Revolte* was founded at Geneva, he joined us and soon identified himself completely with our paper. To help us, he disdained no work, however small it might be. And later on, when the anarchist movement took a more violent form, he did not halt half-way; he endorsed all the consequences. He knew how to hate, as he knew how to love; and he hated the regime of the bourgeois.

Thus, from the moment when the *Revolte* was menaced with persecution, Elisee placed himself entirely at the disposal of the Geneva friends who kept up the paper after I was arrested. It was then that he wrote so often for *Le Revolte*, and that he delivered in Geneva his lectures on "Evolution and Revolution", of which the Anarchist conclusions scandalised his numerous friends and scientific admirers.

He remained the "Communard" he had always been. And later on, in the nineties, when so many others, terrified by the bombs at Paris and scared by the theories which were cropping up in our circles as a negation of bourgeois morality, hastened to move aside, Elisee Reclus remained where he was. He took his place among those whom the governing classes and the socialists of the government had placed outside the law, and he did it so well, so frankly, so openly, that the governing classes of every party, who were at this time exploiting the Republic, vowed an implacable hatred to the Reclus family—at least, to its entire revolutionary branch.

He left France for good, and went to settle in Brussels. It was not until the conscience of the French nation began to awake during the Dreyfus case, that he decided again to set foot on his native soil.

In the meantime, he founded a really "free" university in Brussels—one of those universities such as Europe, regenerated some day by the social revolution, will see. In this university it was that Elisee Reclus delivered his wonderful course (nearly 100 lectures) on the origin of religious ideas, and of religions, and that Elisee gave for several years courses on the influence of various geographical conditions. These lessons, from which Anarchism stands out, as a conclusion, as a scientific necessity, form the essence of a fine work, *Man and the Earth*.

In the spring of 1904, Elisee Reclus completed this work. The energy which he had retained up till then, in spite of the heart disease which had touched him

for the first time in 1880, began to diminish visibly. The death of his brother Elie in January, 1904, had also been a severe blow to him.

After the massacres of January, 1905, in St. Petersburg, he had yet the courage to come to Paris and speak for a few minutes, hailing the first bright rays of the Russian popular revolution. But it was evident even then that if his mind retained its entire lucidity and force, the heart could no longer cope with the functions of keeping up the spark of life. It ceased to beat on the night between the 3rd and 4th July.

Anarchism had already produced a group of characters of marvellous beauty. Elisee was one of the most striking, one of the most expressive. One sees men, very revolutionary in their thoughts, but one cannot help asking oneself—How will they one day accommodate themselves to the beginnings of the Social Revolution, when they will have to give up many habits of a leisured life or of the life of exploiters of other less lucrative trades and professions, such as we all are, we men of privileged trades? How will they attune

themselves to the principles of equality, without which no Social Revolution is possible? Where will they find in their tyrannical souls that tolerance for conceptions of others side by side with a passionate love for their own principles? Will they possess that equalitarian trend of thought, which is, in fact, the essence of Anarchism? Where, at last, will they find this understanding of the wanderings of the mind and the passions, which become an element of progress when the dying "twilight of the idols" comes and upsets a decayed régime?

Not the slightest of such doubts was possible with regard to Elisee Reclus. He was an anarchist to the uttermost depths of his mind—to the smallest fibre of his being. Dry bread would have sufficed him to go through a revolutionary crisis, and to work at building up a future full of wealth for all. He managed to remain poor, absolutely poor, in spite of the success of his beautiful books. The idea of dominating anyone at all seems never to have crossed his mind; he hated down to the smallest signs a dominating spirit. For him, who knew so well all the peoples

scattered over the globe and showing us now the stages passed through by mankind for the man of science who could at a single glance retrace in his mind the long martyrdom of man—for him anarchism was not a poor lover's dream. It was the conclusion, the keystone of human history, a science; the aim, indicated with as much necessity as is the path along which our solar system is to-day directed in "infinite space."

And then the ideal, for him, meant application to-day. The hypocrisy of the despot and the ambitious man, which makes them say: "This is good for tomorrow, and in the meantime I shall continue to rule"—this hypocrisy he never knew. Since Nature, the study of Nature, of history, of man under all latitudes and at all times, had brought him to see in man—both in the community and in the individual—a product of the surroundings; since he had conceived Anarchism in its sense of progressive force acting through the ages, it was for him no vain word, or far off desideratum. He saw, even to-day, a better way for men to live without seeking to govern one another.

SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

THE recent discussion of sex education in schools makes disheartening reading. At every turn one sees attempts to make such education "innocuous", respectful deference to every reactionary and irrational opinion. The upshot, one may be sure, will be a form of sex education in schools which will not be desperately helpful to adolescents and children in the very serious sexual problems which confront them.

One sees in the discussion, too, clear warnings to radical sex teaching. A Birmingham juvenile magistrate has stated in his official report: "If there happens to be someone in the schools giving this instruction in the wrong way or to the wrong age, it might excite the minds of the young in a way which would explain some of the indecency cases coming before us."

One may be confident that "the wrong way" here means a frank and affirmative discussion of sexuality, with especial concern for the sexual problems of the young. The education authorities have hastened to state that they have the fullest confidence in their sex educators. Since it has been stated that sex instruction can "profitably" be given during gymnasium classes when the sexes are normally separated, one can be fairly sure that the authorities are fighting shy of inculcating a sex affirmative attitude.

The "Right" Age

What does our Birmingham J.P. mean by "giving instruction to the wrong age"? There is no doubt at all that parents brought up in the sex-negating atmosphere currently regarded as "normal" set about deforming the sexual attitudes of their children as a matter of course when they are infants.

But it is clear that our J.P., echoing the conventional sex attitudes, thinks that any discussion of sex should be deferred till a certain age—probably long past puberty. Official opinion will continue to stigmatize as subversive any intelligent and humane person who seeks to rescue children from their sexual misery by a radical approach to the whole problem.

A Breach in the Citadel

Nevertheless, the fact that the necessity for some kind of sex education is now

recognized is really a tremendous step forward, and represents a victory for the forces of progress. Radical ideas in the field of sex have had their effect, even if it is pretty attenuated by the time it filters through to official minds.

But despite our J.P. who thinks sex education a cause of sexual delinquency, there is a growing realization that juvenile sexual delinquency is caused by the lack of sex education, and more specifically the lack of sexual outlet which our society and morals afford to children.

PRESS BOYCOTT OF KINSEY REPORT

The Kinsey Report—"Sexual Behaviour of the Human Male"—has been subjected to a boycott by the press. No National or popular paper or magazine has reviewed it since it was published in this country, although on its appearance in America, some British papers mentioned it. Is it in order, then, to discuss such a book if it is not available to the public, but to establish a "conspiracy of silence" when it is available?

Sexual Behaviour of the Human Male— the Kinsey Report ... 32/6 (postage 11d.)

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Journal of Sex Education, No. 4
February, 1949
edited by Norman Haire—A Popular scientific Journal for the Sexual Enlightenment of Adults.

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

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ROME vs. MOSCOW

TRUE to tradition, the Roman Catholic world is making a united and vigorous stand in defence of Cardinal Mindszenty and the Hungarian Catholic leaders convicted in the Communist courts, and in all the vast gatherings of protest against such a farcical trial, not one can be found to reflect that, after all, this is precisely the sort of trial for which Rome was notorious for centuries. Mindszenty faces just the same sort of court as Galileo once did, and there is even a faint reflection of that trial in the Cardinal's prior announcement that any confession of his would be due to "human frailty", just as Galileo also confessed his "errors" as to the earth moving round the sun, thus contradicting orthodox teaching, but is said to have remarked that "After all, it still moves." The Catholic Church is vigilant in defence of the rights of free speech in non-Catholic countries, and the leader of obscurantism in Catholic countries. In England, it defends religious minorities, and in Italy it attacks them; free speech and the rights of man mean nothing to the leaders of the Church, who justify their position in their own way just as do the Communists and Fascists. If the Church is making a stand for liberty in Hungary, it ought not to be represented, as the Yankee capitalists' propagandists would doubtless so twist it, as a struggle for liberty as such, but merely a stand for the rights of the Church.

The Roman Church does not conflict with the Moscow imperialists because of any conflict between "Christian" and "Communist" ideology. This wilful lie is shown to be

fantastic by the width that lies between the Church and Christianity and the Stalinist and Communism; but even more so by the fact that the breach between Rome and Moscow does not go back to 1917, but is an inheritance from the past, and one more legacy of the present rulers of Russia from their predecessors in Imperialism. The conflict between Rome and Moscow was ever-present in the days of the old Tsar, and the closing of Roman Catholic places of worship, and the persecution of its followers (most particularly in the Polish provinces of the Tsar), was a commonplace long before Lenin. The impossibility of any working agreement being reached between Rome and Moscow is not because Rome has any objection to totalitarian principles—it has fitted itself into sufficient—and is not even primarily due to the conflict between two conflicting totalitarian powers (this has something to do with it elsewhere in the world but it is not all-important in the Balkans). The fact is that Russia finds itself in political opposition to the claims of the Catholic bloc in the Balkans; and her traditional rôle has been to rally the Greek Orthodox forces to her imperialist policy of Pan-Slavism; while Austria-Hungary mobilised the Catholic forces and Turkey the Mohamedans. The break-up of the latter two empires in the last war upset the customary rôle of things, and the political changes in Russia altered matters somewhat too. But with the settling down of Red Tsarism all the old weapons have one by one come out of the armoury, been glossed up with a finish to deceive the faithful, and used again in defence of the old interests. One can instance the interest shown in the Armenians, always used as a catspaw by the Tsar against the Turks, and now, in the scheme for Armenian resettlement in Soviet Armenia, to be used as a catspaw against the Middle Eastern powers. Anti-Semitism is again operated, and thousands of Jews escape from the Russian-dominated countries in an effort to get to Palestine, which fits in with the Soviet plan to have a scapegoat handy at home, and also to upset the plans of other Imperialisms for the Levant. Nationalism and Pan-Slavism serve their turn, too; intervention in the Far East is easier than it once was; all this is now done in the name of Communism and given suitable catch-phrases of justification from the Marxist textbooks; all of it could have been duplicated fifty years ago, when, incidentally, the same anti-Russian scares were evident in the West. Not from any fear of a rival system, but solely out of imperial rivalries. The struggle between Rome and Moscow fits into this pattern, and none of the Catholic defenders of free speech from other people's tyranny, the censors of Dublin and the free-speech fighters of Liverpool, the eulogisers of Franco and denouncers of Tito, the civil rights defenders of Hungary and the press law supporters of Italy, can make us believe that it is anything but the same old political struggle in which the Tsar once used the Greek Church and Austria once used the Catholic Church. Now it is Stalin *versus* the Catholic Church, the latter leaning strongly on the arms of the United States.

When we hear such idle chatter as that this is Catholic resistance to anti-Christ, it is as well to study the defence of Mindszenty. Perhaps he was drugged; perhaps not; but his defence was still one that challenges the humbugs abroad. His creed taught him to serve "Christ" and "Caesar": he declared he was not guilty of treason, that is to say, that he did not oppose the "Godless Bolsheviks". And Catholics elsewhere mostly echo the claim that he was not guilty: but if what they say about Communism is true, then he ought to be guilty, for why should he not oppose an "anti-God" state? Mindszenty wished to find a way, according to his statement, to reconcile Church

and State; to find a working agreement between Rome and Moscow so far as Hungary was concerned, and so far as the political conceptions of militant Catholicism and Bolshevism are concerned, they could fit in quite as well together as did Fascism and Catholicism in Italy. The only obstacle to it was that in Hungary as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, stakes are claimed by heads belonging to various groups labelled by faiths or origins to which they pay little allegiance, but which marks their ethnological differences, and because of that there could be no concordat.

Mgr. Spellman of New York claims boldly that if America went "atheist" he would also be a "traitor": fine words, but does he mean them? Does the Church believe in "national treason" to a country that goes anti-Catholic? Ever since the days of the Armada, we have been assured constantly by word and deed that this was not the case, and English Catholics have insisted even in days of persecution that their loyalties were to be the State even against an invading "faithful" nation. The German Catholics fought for Hitler even when their Church was persecuted and made the same excuse. Does Mgr. Spellman wish to declare that the Catholics now believe in not defending the national State even when it is anti-Catholic? That would be a completely new departure from Catholic Political action. And it is not true: Mindszenty's hesitations and vacillations in court were not due to "human frailty", not to torture but to mental conflict: because he knew that Catholic political teaching made him support the Hungarian State, and seek to fit the framework of the Catholic Church within it. After all, they never ask for much at first—religious teaching, rights of parents and therefore priests, over children, self-expression. It is only when political power is regained that they demand more.

The Catholic Church can be fitted into a Communist society; because the Catholic Church is opportunist and self-seeking, and the Communist society will make any concession to reaction that safeguards the position of the new ruling-class. Unfortunately, political expediency makes it impossible for that to happen in certain countries at the moment. But neither has anything the other lacks; they are not antitheses, and the only struggle between Rome and Moscow is imperialist and not one of principle.

INTERNATIONALIST.

TRADE AND STABILITY ABROAD

THOSE who do propaganda for a body of ideas quite rightly pay attention to pronouncements in support of their opinions coming not from their friends but from sources generally regarded as hostile. Some recent pronouncements in the Times come in to this category, and are worth pondering.

The British government have recently concluded a trade agreement with Poland which has been hailed as the most extensive volume of economic exchange yet entered upon beyond the Iron Curtain. It envisages the delivery of industrial goods and capital to Poland in exchange for agricultural products and timber. Nothing very remarkable in that.

What is very significant, however, are certain comments which the *Times* went on to make, of a kind which is quite unusual in the official press. For it pointed out that the British Government, in making such an extensive deal, willy nilly acquired an interest in the ability of Polish economy to carry out its side of the agreement, and hence in the stability of the present regime.

The Polish peasants have been conducting a considerable campaign of passive resistance to the collectivization which the Stalinist administration is attempting to carry out. Inevitably such a campaign involves go-slow methods, or down right "sabotage", that is, failure to carry out the production programme. Having committed the planned economy of this country to the delivery of agricultural products and timber from Poland, the British Government has placed itself in a position in which the resistance of the Polish peasants acts not only against their own government, but ours also. It follows that before the British Government can take any action which might be interpreted as favourable to the Polish resistance, it has to take into account the possible effect on the new trade agreement and even its effect on British economy.

This is a particularly plain example, and one all the more interesting because it is pointed out by the *Times*, of a process which is going on all the time. For while trade agreements exist, however much two governments may appear to be at ideological loggerheads, they both have a mutual interest in the stability of both regimes. It is considerations of this kind which render Utopian the hopes of those who expect a government to look favourably upon or even assist a subversive movement abroad. And this remains true even though the regime which it is attempting to subvert is utterly tyrannical and obnoxious to all liberal feeling. It is not deliberate baseness on the government's part, but simply the nature of things in the world of national states.

NORTHERN IRELAND Goes to the Polls

WHEN Sir Basil Brooke, Premier of six counties of Northern Ireland, announced a General Election for February 10th, the present Parliament's five-year term had not yet expired. But Sir Basil has decided to go to the country. The reasons given vary greatly, but it is generally accepted that the Brooke Government wanted a demonstration of faith on the part of their unfortunate electorate. Notwithstanding the rapidly decreasing standard of living and the mounting unemployment figures in Ulster, the Tory junta was returned to power and the world will be told that Northern Ireland has once more shown its determination to have an English King and a government which has seen the rise and fall of Hitler, Mussolini, Chiang Kai Shek and Dollfuss, and could have given those gentlemen the secret of successful dictatorship, had it seen fit to.

Were it not for the fact that the Unionist Party consists for the greatest part of semi-illiterate huntin', shootin' and fishin' squires, one might imagine that they drew their inspirations from *Mein Kampf* and Machiavelli's *Prince*.

However, though there is no evidence of a direct influence from the better-known exponents of dictatorship, the Northern Ireland Unionists have a Gestapo, in their Royal Ulster Constabulary, of which Himmler might well be proud.

When February 10th gave its demonstration of faith in the régime (and the outcome was inevitable), the Press recorded the thunderous victory speeches of Brooke and his paleolithic following. In an atmosphere of hysteria and fanaticism, equal to Nuremberg at its best, Intellect, Reason, and Liberty, are defied and reviled. The Orange Drums will roll in mad applause and Northern Ireland will return to its well-censored obscurity for another five years.

This is not to say that a mild injection of Democracy in the body-politic of Northern Ireland would not greatly improve matters. To a certain naive group of Honourable Gentlemen in London, S.W.1, the problem of "Ulster" could be solved simply by repealing the Special Powers Act and setting up Schools of Etiquette for the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Pressing though the need is for such reforms (more especially the latter), the cause lies a little deeper than the Statute Book of Stormont. Though Northern Ireland is at present a semi-Fascist State, the mere substitution of nominal oligarchy rule for the present Orange Oligarchy would not be a solution. The State of Northern Ireland was designed specifically as an instrument of the ruling-class, and a change of officials will not alter the function of the institution.

Left-wing groups such as the Northern Ireland Labour Party (N.I.L.P.) and the rump of the old Communist Party of Ireland, while aware of the true character of the State, are scrambling for power as enthusiastically as the Unionists or Nationalists.

They speak glibly of Social Services and the abolition of Partition, but they are as reformist as their colleagues in any other part of the World. In this year of cold-war, the N.I.L.P. and the C.P.I. may object to being spoken of as one group but one remembers their joint support of Churchill between 1939 and 1945. The rôle their Spanish counterparts played in 1937 should never be forgotten. The N.I.L.P. and C.P.I. both adhere to the erroneous ideas which ruined the First International; they may be aware of the futility of political action but it is quite probable that they see opportunities of personal advancement in the continuation of the present phoney-class-war, in which so-called working-class leaders, play political games with their ruling-class enemies. The workers are satisfied that "something is being done" and the leaders draw Parliamentary salaries.

The second-biggest political group in Northern Ireland is the Nationalists, or as they have been called for some years now, the Anti-Partitionists. The term Anti-Partitionist is purely negative, but at least it is self-explanatory. The older term Nationalist is extremely vague. In Spain, China and South Africa, the word is synonymous with Fascist. In Indonesia, Malaya and Indo-China, it describes

movements similar in many respects to the Jacobin type of Republicanism. However, in Northern Ireland it is a generic heading for an amorphous mass of Catholic shopkeepers from Falls Road and Celtic Mystics from the Mist-that-do-be-on-the-bog.

The Nationalists believe that the present evil state of Northern Ireland is due entirely to the geographical situation of the seat of government. An all-Ireland Parliament, sitting in Dublin, or even on the top of Tara Hill, would be the consummation of Northern Ireland's nationalism.

On that happy day they would commission bould Phelim Brady, the Bard of Armagh, to write a few thousand assorted epitaphs for the by-gone patriots who stipulated: "No epitaph till Kathleen Ni Houlihan gets her Four Green Fields back." To a Nationalist, exploiters fall into two groups; those whose mothers spent their pregnancy in Ireland and those whose mothers didn't. The latter are evil men and must be driven into the sea. The former are good men and must be given complete control of Ireland and the Irish people.

So much then for Northern Ireland and its political factions to-day. The question may well be asked, "Whither Ulster?" Should the people of the Six Counties try Socialism (*a lá* N.I.L.P. and Transport House, or C.P.I. and the Kremlin), or an Anschluss with Eire? Though the new government turns out to be a Unionist one, the credit will go to the system of jerry-mandering (rigging, framing, etc., of wards and constituencies) rather than the ordinary people of shipyard, mill and farm.

One day, the bowler-hatted men of the Inner Councils of the Unionist Party will learn that Liberty and Reason are indestructible. They will learn that brutal police and a well-developed disregard for the freedom of the individual will not save them from their Day of Reckoning. They will be disposed of rapidly, and while they are still on their way to their Calvinistic Deity their names will be forgotten.

SEÁN GANNON.

THROUGH THE PRESS

STALIN'S SOLICITUDE

Even in Hitler's Germany the infatuation for medals, titles and uniforms never reached the peak it has in the proletarian's promised land. On the *kolkhozy* (collective farms), a visitor is apt to meet a *Znatnaya Doyarka* (Distinguished Cow Milking Woman). One of the latest additions to the new Soviet aristocracy is Honorable Coal Miner E. P. Baryshnikov, whose picture was published in a recent issue of *Ogonek* (Small Flame).

Baryshnikov wears his new badge on the right of his miner's dress uniform, opposite his "Order of Lenin" (for outstanding production achievements), his "Medal for Valiant Labour in the Great Patriotic War," and two other medals. He knows the miner's medal was not given to him without a purpose. Recently, a *Pravda* editorial warned, "Stalin's solicitude for the miner must be responded in deed."

Time, 3/1/49.

TRIBUTES (I)

Mr. Winston Churchill heads a list of the "ten men with the most sex appeal", prepared by film actress Betty Hutton.

"All great men in any field have sex appeal; they don't have to be actors," she said.

She said of Mr. Churchill: "I never met him, but he has great appeal in his voice. It's not exactly sexy but he has a command that makes women stop and listen."

Evening Standard, 27/1/49.

(II)

William Rust, the greatest editor in British working-class history.

Daily Worker, 4/2/49.

(III)

Signor Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist party, has been notified by the Khirghiz Communists (Russian Turkistan) that a mountain in the Pamirs has been named after him as a tribute to the "mountain of Italian Communism."

Manchester Guardian, 10/2/49.

TUBERCULOSIS INCREASES

The spread of tuberculosis has reached epidemic proportions in Europe, with more than 100 dying daily from the disease in some countries, it was disclosed to-day.

Figures made public by Dr. Paul Andersen, head of the Danish Red Cross team combating tuberculosis in Yugoslavia, showed that at least 130 persons are dying each day in Poland and more than 100 in Yugoslavia, where the epidemic is most serious.

Greece, Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Italy follow Yugoslavia on the tuberculosis mortality list, each reporting areas where the infection rate has reached epidemic proportions. Dr. Andersen said that the war and the resultant lack of adequate housing, food and clothing caused the epidemic.

N.Y. Herald Tribune, 2/2/49.

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WHEN BLACK IS WHITE

Thirty-one so-called "commercial shops" are to be opened in Czechoslovakia, four of them in Prague, for the sale of food off the ration. They will sell principally tea, coffee, sugar, biscuits, sweets, cheese, jam, butter, ham, poultry, and drinks.

It is understood that a pound of butter, for instance, will cost the equivalent of about £2 10s., a pound of cheese about £1. It is still denied that anyone will be deprived of his food rations and will be compelled to buy in these shops, but part of the public is not yet entirely reassured. It is emphasised that large quantities of the food in these shops are Soviet imports.

The "commercial shops" selling shoes and textiles (as well as motorcycles and bicycles) "off the ration" at about five times the ration price continue to do business. Their customers are mostly farmers with a surplus stock of banknotes, workers with very high wages, and those deprived of their shoe and textile rations.

Manchester Guardian, 7/2/49.

Readers Write on:

• Dilettantes

DEAR COMRADES,

In the last issue of *Freedom* (5/2/49), J.H.'s reply to Sean Gannon seems to me very inadequate, and he has given his whole case away when he refers to Sean Gannon's "stuffed dummies" whom it is so easy to use as "Aunt Sallies", for, admitting this, does J.H. wish to tell us that such people do not exist? Unfortunately, we know the dilettante type on the fringe of the revolutionary movement only too well, and it is a very real danger for anarchism that this sort of would-be artistic Bohemian fringe might be thought of as anarchist. The only reason such people would wish to declare themselves anarchist is that it happens to be what they would call "the most extreme" philosophy of the moment; it does not call on them to undertake anything as the old love, Stalinism, did during the war, and I think there is a danger that some anarcho-pacifist-surrealist cult might arise, having about as much connection with anarchism as the Freemasons have with building.

If Sean Gannon had imagined such people, unfortunately, he hasn't—it might be an accurate deduction for J.H. to say that it was implied that the true revolutionist was impatient of all theories. That is an absurd conclusion. You might as well say that anybody who made persistent fun of the Lord's Day Observance Society and the local Watch Committee was a confirmed drunkard and libertine. What conclusion I at any rate would draw from such remarks as Gannon's, is that revolutionary theory in the hands of a middle-class dilettante is only a toy. At least, from an anarchist point of view! The Leninist, who believes in the "vanguard" political party, needs the middle-class theorists, the Lenins and Trotskys, but what place has anarchism for them in the revolutionary idea, holding as it does that the working-class can only emancipate itself, and needs no leaders? Can the would-be followers of nineteenth-century Paris art-life, if not Lao Tzu, be included in a social revolution? How?

What this comes down to is a question of class; the middle-class cannot organise itself for the social revolution. I have no doubt J.H. will retort by pointing to the revolutionists of the past, Kropotkin, Bakunin and so on, who came from the upper classes, but I believe the situation is completely different to-day. In pre-revolution Russia, the students "went to the people", threw overboard their conventions and took part in the struggle. In many colonial countries this is the case to-day. But so far as we are concerned here, to-day, that is not likely to arise. The conscience of the student class has been sadly deadened; the contradiction with the Gospels they once believed in showed them that their world was wrong by their own moral standards; but the Freudian Gospel affords them plenty of excuses! Only the very few will make a break to-day, and those few are the

really conscientious and not those who seek to remain in the upper classes but by purely literary affectations of philosophy, wish to show that they do not belong there but to a class of "intellectuals" which they have invented themselves. When one comes across people who retain their class snobbery by claiming that there is a difference between "workers" and "intellectuals" or "workers by hand" and "workers by brain", those you may be sure are not revolutionaries but dilettantes.

I cannot find anywhere in Gannon's letter where he says anything about the "man of action", this is only the "intellectual" in a different dress so far as modern conditions are concerned; the struggle to-day is for workers' direct control and through their own action, and the adventurer to-day—physical and mental—has little to offer the revolutionary movement. I am not unmindful of the contribution made by the advanced liberals—libertarians, if you will—such as J.H. refers to; I will only say that all such ideas, whether of advanced education or anything else, can only remain in the air so long as they are in the possession of a few. The free school at fifty guineas a term is not anarchism. The patient efforts for fifty years of working-class youths to teach themselves at institutes, libraries and evening-classes, all that was available, is much nearer to its spirit. This wasn't invented by A. S. Neill.

J.H. must learn an anarchist fundamental which is that he is directly wrong when he states "the French revolution drew on the intellectual fruits of half-a-century". What really happened was that the intellectual fruits of the succeeding half-a-century drew on the French Revolution. Libertarian ideas do not come from a few students and trickle down to the masses: philosophy draws on them. I see even J.H. quotes the Spanish Revolution in defence of his position!

A.M.

• Direct Thinking

DEAR COMRADES,

The contributions from J.H. and Albert Dent in the issue for 5/2/49 provide an opportunity for some comments on 'direct action' and the 'intellectual'. I do not know who first put the latter term into general currency, but for the last twenty years at least, the "subtle cunning of the 'Upper Elite'"—to use Comrade Dent's phrase—has passed this and other false coins to and fro with the effect of confusing and dividing progressive groups. Such coinage ought to be discredited before it puts paid to the anarchist movement altogether.

If one thinks in terms of individual experience instead of in terms of 'masses', there does not seem to be a very sharp cleavage between action and thought. It is true that many physical actions are

quite involuntary and that others are habitual; yet an abnormal physical occurrence will occasion conscious reflection. If we run hard we are forced to think about our heart beating, and the failure of habitual action will often make itself known to us. We feel and think about our sensations all our lives. Indeed, the man who works mainly by habit will spend a great deal of his working time even in a flux of undirected thought and fantasy; otherwise his work would be intolerable. When some new 'direct action' is required of him, he has to take thought until that action has also become habitual. A revolution is usually accompanied by a general breakdown of conventional habits.

The 'intellectual' is a man who tries to direct his thoughts instead of letting them drift. The 'artist' is a man who selects from his experience, including his day-dreams, those parts which will be useful in some constructive work. Neither the intellectual nor the artist does as much manual labour as the factory workers, yet their activities are no less arduous. A painter does not usually begin planning his work with brush in hand; a writer does not begin to plan his book when seated at his desk. They are constantly occupied in the preparation and revision of what they will express in a social form. Such activity is often pleasant, whereas that of the manual labourer is often unpleasant; but both activities are 'work'. Both kinds of work are necessary and complementary to each other; in fact there are reasons for supposing that less specialisation would result in a more satisfactory life and work for the individual.

There are also reasons for supposing that the human capacity for meeting altered conditions successfully is due to an ability to think and act with emotional delicacy. When we consider that a revolutionary situation might be one in which people were reduced by privation to a low level of awareness, when they would be tempted to act directly but blindly, we might conclude that a clear idea of what to do and how to do it, a measure of foresight, even a previous training in emotional readiness, would be desirable things. Revolutionary action is sometimes most successful when it is indirect, when it goes round corners instead of straight over the barricades into the machine gun bullets. A revolution without 'intellectuals' of any sort would be as fruitless as one without 'action'. Thought is action, and is just as direct as physical movement.

It is interesting that many of the abstract words which have lost their meaning in the modern world, such as 'love', 'beauty', 'freedom', all refer to things of which people are afraid. Another of these words is 'fine'; it has become synonymous with 'great' and 'glorious'. Yet some turns of common speech preserve the proper meaning of the word: we speak of a fine thread, for instance, meaning a delicate thread. Comrade Dent refers to the 'finer arts', putting the phrase in inverted commas to express, perhaps, his derision. In the proper sense of the word, there are finer arts, and they are

very useful. A sonnet by Shakespeare is more delicate and complex than a motor car engine; it produces, that is to say, a more finely balanced set of attitudes in the mind and body of the person who uses the poem. In other words, it helps the reader to become a better-organised and finer person, it elicits what Comrade Dent calls the "more excellent characteristics of human life". A good painting is more useful than a bomb, and rats and artists are noted for their agility when in tight corners. For these reasons and others the arts, and particularly the crafts, are part of that "new foundation" for civilisation desired by Comrade Dent. Of course, he is right when he says that it is useless to 'preach' to the 'masses' of the 'workers'. Our comrade does not suggest any less abstract form of direct action.

He suggests that 'intellectuals' have put before the question of where we are to go the question of how to dress for battle. I'm not sure what he means, but perhaps it is worth remarking that in the present cold political weather, an undressed person is unlikely to go anywhere at all. It seems to me that it would be a good thing if such words as 'direct action', 'intellectual', 'worker' and the rest were used simply as signs for thoughts and things, instead of being employed like banners. If we cannot be direct in our thinking, we are not likely to be any more direct with other forms of action.

L.A.

• Education

DEAR COMRADES,

I must take exception to Tony Weaver's rather dogmatic opinions on education; he seems to have two major propositions which require examination: (1) that teachers should aim to produce "fully developed children, and adults able to resist the claims of the State; (2) that teachers should get their pupils to 'adopt certain moral and intellectual values'". While we are agreed that proposition (1) is ideal, we also agree that it is "naive" to suppose that the school in a hostile society can ever succeed in that aim. Therefore, the "Open Mind" system having failed, the "Closed Mind" system (2) is to be adopted—the imposition upon the child of certain values (these naturally are the State's values turned upside down). This is the method the State has practised for years, and, I believe, the antithesis of progressive method. In my experience of progressive schools, I have seen values, apparently good, brought into disrepute among the children by the teachers' insistence on them. It seems to me that rather than try to uphold certain values, teachers would be better advised to encourage scepticism towards all values. There is no need to fear that this method will produce amoral adults; they will all too soon adopt values for themselves. I believe that the values they then adopt will be more progressive and beneficial than any imposed on them in childhood.

Yours fraternally,
J.P.H.

• Putting it into Practice

There are two statements in connection with Anarchism which are constantly recurring; one, the criticism that Anarchists are too negative and tend to avoid giving a positive alternative to our present social order and, two, the reply, so pathetically and inadequately made, that it is not our business to offer a blue print of a different order, but simply to give the people freedom to solve their own problems. Both these are false and the second, to me, savours very much of hypocrisy.

What Anarchism stands for is obvious enough from its literature and the only question is: will it work, and how? I think I am right in saying that we want a society in which the basic and ultimate political unit is one which is large enough for social efficiency but small enough for all its members to directly and regularly participate in all its activities. That is the idea of the industrial syndicate and the social commune. I think I will have made my point so far, but now I want to enter the realm of controversy by clarifying this idea more particularly than is usually done.

What number of people would be large enough for social efficiency and yet small enough to be intimate and directly manageable by equal participation? The British House of Commons has about 600 members and is an unwieldy enough body and could hardly be exceeded without rapidly decreasing in full and equal self-regulation. An adult population of 600 means a total population of about 1,000 and I think that 1,200 or 1,300 would be the limit, and that must therefore be accepted as our basic social unit. Now I suppose in a large urban conurbation of about 1 to 2 million people there would be about 1,000 or more such units which would each be represented on a central committee fairly easily, but they certainly could not all be represented directly on any regional or national committee of about 4,000 and 40,000 social units respectively. One way out of this impasse would be to have regular Area, Regional and National committees, each recruited by delegates from the committee below them, and each strictly limited to deal only with those affairs that could not be managed by lower, and more numerous, committees. For example, re-distribution of population more evenly over our depopulated countryside would have to be dealt with at a National level, but re-afforestation, flood control and erosion could be better dealt with regionally—but not lower! Health and higher education could be the prerogative of District committees; and each social unit could manage its own problems and maintain local clinics and elementary schools. These committees, of course, do not do these jobs. They simply act as the Intelligence Service of Society. Co-ordinating its social supply and demand.

This sort of indirect representation and hierarchy of committees may be repugnant to more than a few Anarchists, but I ask you—can you propose a better method?

JAMES R. HOWES.

Meetings and Announcements

UNION OF ANARCHIST GROUPS: CENTRAL LONDON

Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m.
At 8, Endsleigh Gardens, W.C.1.
FEB. 20 Albert Meltzer
Building a Free Society

FEB. 27 D. Trotter
"The Peckham Experiment"

MARCH 5 Charles Hatcher
"Organisation in Industry"

MARCH 12 George Melly
"How to make a Bomb"

MARCH 19 Bert Smith
"Materialism"

HAMPSTEAD

MEETINGS TEMPORARILY
DISCONTINUED

NORTH EAST LONDON

The next meeting of the NELAG will be held at Wanstead House (two minutes from Wanstead Tube Station) at 7.30 p.m.

NEXT MEETING MAR. 1st

BRISTOL

Public Meeting
Kingsley Hall, Old Market Street, 7p.m.,
MARCH 1st Keith Greenslade
"Architecture and Society"

BIRMINGHAM ANARCHIST CIRCLE

Regular fortnightly discussions are being held without premeditated subjects. All comrades and readers of "Freedom" welcomed.

S. E. Parker, 72, Coldbath Road, Billesley, Birmingham, 14.

GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP

Indoor Meetings,
CENTRAL HALLS, Bath Street,
every Sunday at 7 p.m.,
Frank Leech, Willy Carlyle, John Gaffney,
Eddie Shaw.

Unofficial Strikes and Syndicalism

(Continued from page 1)

More and more, it seems, workers are beginning to feel restless at the increasing control which is wielded over them even by their own unions, and this restlessness has drawn from bourgeois journalists, not only criticism but comment on the "danger" of syndicalism. In recent months, such papers as the *London Evening Standard* and *News Chronicle* have put the word (attacking it, of course) in front of their millions of readers, and last month there was a broadcast by Francis Williams entitled "Why There Are Unofficial Strikes" in which he tried intelligently to look at the relationship between the individual and the mass organisation. Among other things, he also said:

"There always have been two streams of thought in the working-class movement in this country. It has tended to swing between the two in its development. There have been those who believed in progress through political means, and those who believe that it could best be secured by direct action in the industrial field. The believers in direct action, in syndicalism, in workers' control, have never been in the majority although their strength has varied from time to time. But in the past this attitude, when it has come up, has come up in periods of political frustration, when Labour's parliamentary powers have been small. No doubt this lingering tradition of direct action, helped on quite possibly by communist propaganda, has had some part in these unofficial strikes. But if so, then it is interesting to find that, contrary to former experience, it is now manifesting itself during a period not of political weakness but of political strength. The root cause would seem to lie deeper; at least it seems to me to do so. And because it does, I think it is likely to be not just a transitory but a permanent problem of our modern society. Indeed, it is one which may increase rather than decrease, unless we can find a way to overcome it."

CONFUSED SUPPORT FOR WORKERS' CONTROL

So we can see a growing consciousness among those bourgeois whose job it is to write or talk about such things that the workers are not going to be content to play the part of irresponsible minor partners in industry. On the part of the reformist left, this trend is showing itself in the gathering strength of the demand for Workers' Control, but with what confusion of thought they are approaching it! Such parties as Commonwealth, I.L.P. and the Trotskyists, after advocating nationalisation for years, are now finding its taste rather bitter in the mouth, and are beginning to nibble at Workers' Control instead of State Control. But here there is a contradiction between their industrial experience and their political creeds for which they can probably find very clever dialectical arguments but on which their approach to Workers' Control will inevitably founder.

But more significant is their fear of syndicalism, yet on its ideas have always been based the most militant and successful action by workers, and intrinsic in its theory is the consciousness that industry must be controlled by those who work in it. The reformists, however, join with the reactionaries in their muddled thinking on the subject, believing, (or pretending to believe) for instance, that syndicalism would give workers in an industry the power to dictate to the rest of society. Because socialists still fundamentally believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat, they still just cannot see the truly libertarian approach and that the responsibility of freedom and the awareness of free men is incompatible with dictation from any direction.

INDUSTRIAL EXPERIENCE SIDE-TRACKS REFORMISM . . .

It is perhaps an inevitable aspect of reformism in industry that it limps behind the experience and aspirations of the workers. Certainly current industrial experience is leaving behind those who are satisfied with the joint production committees and trade union practice. The recent strike at Euston

has resulted in a rift between the rank-and-file and the union which looks like widening and deepening and will very likely have important repercussions throughout the railways as time goes on. It seems that the whole Euston branch may withdraw from the union. The recent lightning strike in the London docks in which 2,000 men struck in defence of a sacked crane-driver was 100% successful, giving the dockers a lesson in the value of direct action which is worth more to them than all the political theorising.

. . . AND POINTS TO SYNDICALISM

The really interesting feature of the unofficial strikes at this time, however, is the proof they afford that men do not rebel only under the stress of material shortage and want, or only for material gain. On the contrary, as examples in, say, India, show, hungry people are more easily controlled than those who know a certain amount of well-being. When the world was in the grip of depression and there were millions of unemployed in every country, the initiative was well and truly in the hands of the bosses. Now the initiative could be in the hands of the workers if they chose, and the fact that they do seem to be so choosing, even to a very small extent so far, at a time when a Labour government and the unions are against them, seems to indicate a growing possibility that syndicalism may be on the way back.

Whether it will be known by name or not, does not matter. The facts will be a growing concern by the workers for more freedom; a rebellion against the dehumanisation which comes with bureaucratic control, an urge to assert their dignity and sense of responsibility and social justice. It is not over-optimistic at this stage to believe that the industrial and political experience of the past forty years will bear fruit in a rejection of Statism and a turning on the part of the workers to the principles of decentralisation, direct control and free union, which are the principles of syndicalism.

P.S.

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