

Freedom

AN ANARCHIST FORTNIGHTLY

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Threepence

"Prisons are built with stones
of law, brothels with bricks
of religion."

—WILLIAM BLAKE

"The greatest enemy of truth
and liberty is the solid
majority."

—IBSEN

LIBERALISM: COMPROMISE IN THE WILDERNESS PAINLESS GOVERNMENT?

THE Liberal Party is said to have doubled its membership during the last six months. It is making considerable political capital out of the fact that both the Tories and Labour are committed to a considerable degree of State regimentation—the Liberals are, by contrast, the defenders of freedom. All over the world one is seeing a similar kind of search; the search for a government which is neither of the Right nor the Left, a government of the Centre which avoids extremes and excesses and shows more tenderness towards the ideas of the rights of man. Elsewhere it is usually a choice between Communists and Nationalists; but the problem is always to avoid being embroiled in an either/or conflict in which both contestants present the same undesirable totalitarian features.

Now, the Tories and the Labour Party in this country are mild affairs no doubt, but it is not to be gainsaid that both lend active momentum to the centralising trend of the century towards increasing State control of more and more aspects of social and even private activity.

The Liberals have been dwindling away out of office for close on thirty years. It seems likely that they hope that the Tory eclipse will blacken into a rapid decline, a landslide which will leave the field open for themselves as the challengers of Labour supremacy. Just the same, at the moment they are a tiny minority, and like all opposition groups with no chance of office, they can afford to be "uncompromising", "radical", etc., in their attitude to practical problems and principles. Do they really offer an acceptable escape from the problem of government in the twentieth century, while leaving intact the idea of government itself?

Two shillings out of five
Governmental services now absorb no less than 40 per cent. of

the national income. True, these services are far more comprehensive than in the past, although many of them are by no means willingly accepted by an ungrateful population. But even if one charitably assumes that all the scheme for social betterment really are an unmixed boon to us citizens, one is justified in wondering if governmental services are valuable enough, "worth" enough to compare with all other expenditure in the ratio of two to three? Most of us, it may be felt, would say that even to-day the aspects of life in which government has not stepped in to take charge are rather more than only one and a half times as valuable to us as those which the State paternally looks after. Of course, this may be a rather base and materialistic way of regarding the benefits of government; but which of us, when it comes to laying out our hard-earned wages, can afford to be idealistic?

Do the liberals represent a change from all this, can they really offer us a cut-price government willing to reduce expenditures on the administration of our lives, on the armed forces, on social

services? Thirty, forty, fifty years ago, there seemed to be the same creeping identity of interest and behaviour between the Tories and the Liberals as now blurs the outlines of Tory and Labour. Certainly, the benefits of Liberal government were not so apparent to the ungrateful electorate when, thirty years ago, they let the Liberals out into the political wilderness.

And then there is the grandiose scheme of social services itself. Undoubtedly, it was officially accepted and made law by the Tory Coalition, and put into effect by the Labour Party. But did not the scheme itself originate under the Liberal white hairs of Lord Beveridge? When the social service scheme was first put forward, anarchists did not welcome it with open arms as the solution which at last made government a harmless, a useful and acceptable institution. Instead, we regarded it as a plan for the stabilization of poverty by the removal of its more glaring features. We do so still—and we have to pay for it to the tune of two shillings in every five.

Government covers all Parties

It is becoming clearer and clearer that the impact of government makes the lines between the political parties less and less distinct. When Liberals and Tories both seemed to represent the interests of the propertied classes, the electorate saw no need to retain both. Now the propertied class, at all events, the administrative class, is equally represented by Tory and Labour with similar blurring of the outlines. Both want to retain existing nationalized administrations, both are committed to the same foreign policy, the same defence estimates, the same social services. The Liberals cannot offer anything very different from this—and neither could further Left Socialists or Communists for that matter. The evils which one Party points out in another are really the evils of government itself—evils for which we pay two-thirds of what we spend on all other benefits. The Liberals may hold up the bait of painless government, but it is not a convincing appearance, and is quite illusory in reality.

Control or Ownership?

LATEST and probably the last, since there is hardly anybody left now, to climb on the band-wagon for greater workers' participation in the running of industry, are the Liberals. They, however, studiously avoid the words "workers' control", for which we are truly thankful, and have hatched up a wonderful scheme for co-ownership. This scheme, like the entire Liberal policy in such matters, seeks to tread a middle path between the statism of Labour and the "Free Enterprise" of the Tories, and represents a typical example of the feebleness of compromise.

Searching for the best of both worlds, while denying any good in either, the Liberals would find themselves forced to use the State (to enforce their compulsory clause requiring every concern with over £60,000 capital, or more than 50 employees to submit a profit-sharing scheme) yet at the same time (per the *News Chronicle*) asserting that "the rights of private property are the basis of individual liberty."

One is tempted to ask, of course, how much their professed opposition to the State is based simply upon the fact that another party has control of it? For it is easy for a political party out of office to sound most libertarian—the Liberals oppose con-

scription for instance, yet would be certain to retain it if they gained power. But in the context of their industrial policy, we are interested chiefly in the issues raised regarding co-ownership, and where they differ from our own ideas of workers' control.

Which is more important?

There is probably wide-spread confusion regarding the relative importance of ownership and control, and certainly in a system of private ownership the two go together. And yet ownership always seems to us to be a strictly legal business—a stamp on a piece of paper asserting ownership rights—while control implies a far more real and intimate connection with an industrial undertaking. True, to-day, the owner of a works can exercise control over both the works itself and the workers inside it, but that is largely so only if he takes an active interest in the running of the concern. Absentee owners and share-holders, while perhaps having final say, yet do not exercise direct control over the work done, but install managers and a whole graded system of bosses, large and small, to look after their interests which, anyway, are only for the profits and not for the products.

Fundamentally, what is important is control. If the workers were in control of a plant, it would not matter a tinker's cuss that someone, somewhere, had a deed of ownership, except that it would enable him to call up the forces of the law to exert his will upon the real controllers. Thus, ownership remains a legal conception, control being what really matters as far as production and the distribution of products is concerned, and it is only in a system where the law is backed up by the forces of the State that ownership has any meaning at all.

That is why anarchists tend to avoid the use of the words "common ownership". In effect, if the means of production were "owned" by all, they would be owned by nobody (the *News Chronicle* says as much, but adds, "and that is not good enough") but who wants to own them anyway, except those seeking protection against economic insecurity—which by workers' control would be abolished?

There are many other small ways in which this co-ownership scheme can be attacked. Since the workers will be co-responsible with the managers, for instance, it gives them the right to "hire and fire"—a distasteful right for any worker, but, more important, the general economy is still to be a capitalist one, and the Liberal's real concern is not so much to democratise society as to give as many as possible a stake in a capitalist society.

These schemes, and there will be others like them—are interesting from only one point of view: they betray the extent to which pressure from below is making itself felt. The growing demand for workers' control will be fed by many such reformist tit-bits, but they leave the main issues untouched—that workers' control entails—demands—a society libertarian in all its aspects.

P.S.

TEN YEARS AFTER

"THE Atlantic Pact without Spain is an omelette without eggs". This sibylline statement comes from General Franco, who has shown his skill at managing political eggs and has always carefully avoided putting them all in the same basket. Thanks to this simple rule he was able to celebrate on the 29th of March the tenth anniversary of his ascension to power. This occasion has been no doubt an occasion for self-congratulation for, if his position in international world affairs could be more brilliant, at least it is far more so than ten years ago, and he has not only survived his two powerful protectors but has also profited from the war which has annihilated both of them.

Neutrality has proved highly profitable for General Franco and if he has a complaint to make it is that the war ended too soon. Like his Argentinian colleague, Franco is aware that the economic situation of his country could only prosper as long as it was based on war profiteering. Now the factories of Catalonia are reported to be at a standstill owing to lack of electricity, prices of commodities are soaring and food supplies are getting scarce owing to Peron's own critical economic position.

Franco, far from trying to disguise the weaknesses of his own regime is determined to make the greatest capital out of them and is frantically agitating the Communist bogey. In the last few days he has warned the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Madrid, and Dr. Salazar, the Portuguese Prime Minister that public order in Spain can no longer be guaranteed unless the Spanish Government receives substantial American help. Franco's faithful ally, Dr. Salazar, is reported to have made it a condition of Portugal's accession to the Atlantic Treaty that Spain should be simultaneously included and an assurance

given that the preamble of the Treaty, with its reference to democratic liberties, has no application to Spain.

This political bluff is having some effect in the United States, where a substantial body of politicians and Catholics leaders favour economic aid to Franco in the shape of a loan. Britain is reputed to be hostile to compromise and to favour the restoration of the Monarchy but there is little proof that the Foreign Office is working for the overthrow of Franco and even admitting that it wished to do so (which is unlikely) it would not be able to follow a different policy from that of America.

An even more doubtful enemy of Franco's regime is to be found in the Vatican. Even if, as has been reported, the Pope has, during recent months, instructed all Spanish bishops to withhold support from General Franco and avoid anything that could be interpreted as an identification of the Spanish Church with the present political regime in Spain, it is unlikely that this is anything more than a manoeuvre of the Church to obtain greater political power over Spanish affairs. It would be indeed ironical if Franco's downfall was to be due to its greatest ally, the Catholic Church, but thieves do not fall out so easily, they are kept together by common enemies rather than by a great love of each other. Furthermore, we see that while the Vatican seems to withhold its support from Franco, Cardinal Spellman agitates American opinion in his favour. In view of the consistency of Catholic policy all over the world, such apparent contradictions can only be explained as a tactical move on the part of the Vatican which consists in making its support seem insecure in order to enhance its value.

Though Franco is using the unrest of the Spanish people as a bargaining

weapon it represents nevertheless a serious danger for him and obliges him to be doubly skilful in his handling of his foreign policy. Hitler and Mussolini had succeeded by their demagogy to gain a considerable amount of popular support. Franco, on the other hand, can only rule by terror and by maintaining the Spanish people in a state of chronic physical exhaustion. The opposition to his regime is more powerful than that which existed against Mussolini's and Hitler's dictatorships and this in spite of the fact that Franco was only able to establish himself after a struggle in which a million Spaniards lost their lives, half a million left the country and a great destruction had taken place over the whole land. The vitality of the opposition comes from the fact that the Spanish people have not been defeated by their own weakness but by the betrayal of the whole democratic world. It can only surprise those who have misunderstood the nature of the Spanish revolution. This revolution has been represented as a struggle against Fascism, or sometimes, against the Army and the Church and more seldom as a struggle against capitalists and landowners. This struggle was not, in reality, merely a negative one, it was a struggle for freedom of thought, of education and the education and the equality of women, it was a struggle for workers' control of the factories and the collective ownership of the land and means of transport; it was a struggle for the abolition of the State and the establishment of a free federation of provinces, towns and villages.

These positive aims of the revolution which were in some places partially achieved, made the Spanish revolution an experience which the Spanish people are not likely to forget and which prevents them from being enslaved by the demagogic propaganda of Franco and the Church.

41 REFUSE TO PAY INCOME TAX

25 men and 16 women, in scattered parts of the United States, announced recently that they would refuse to comply with the federal income tax laws. They released the following statement to the press through a Tax Refusal Committee of "Peacemakers", national pacifist group with headquarters in New York City:

"Believing that men are accountable for their actions, and that laws requiring immoral acts should not be obeyed, we have after serious consideration determined upon a course of civil disobedience with relation to the income tax laws of the United States.

"We are united in affirming the brotherhood of all men, and we are therefore unwilling to contribute to preparations for war. We renounce the ways of war and violence, and call upon our fellow men in all countries to lay down their arms, to renounce forever dependence upon violence and murder to protect their property, their lives, and their ideals. We testify the methods of violence have failed utterly, and that they have failed because they are morally wrong. We plead with our fellow citizens of the United States to join us in acting for peace by refusing to manufacture weapons of war, refusing to serve in the armed forces, and refusing to finance war preparations. We urge them to join us in working together in love and non-violence for a world in which peace replaces conflict, abundance replaces want, and freedom and equality replace tyranny and injustice."

The Committee stated that some of those refusing would pay no portion of their tax, since they maintain that the major activity of the federal government at this time is war. They point out that 80 per cent. of the national budget is devoted to "past, present and future wars." Others will refuse to pay that percentage of their tax which corresponds with the percentage which the government spends for military preparations.

"Peacemakers" has been prominent in the news recently for advocating that young men of draft age refuse to register for Selective Service. Several of their number have been sentenced to prison terms, while others are now awaiting trial

THE PROBLEMS OF ANARCHISM TO-DAY

THE *Resistance Group* have performed a notable service to the English-speaking anarchist movement by surveying the field of anarchist endeavour, and attempting to assess the heritage of the past and the tasks of the day and the future. The *Freedom* group is well aware of the difficulties as well as the value of such an attempt and accordingly give it an all the more appreciative welcome. Tribute must also be paid to the evident sincerity and seriousness which the group has brought to the task.

Whether their article commands agreement or dissent, the fact that they have attempted to survey the whole field of thought and activity confronting anarchists to-day, "to think our situation through again", is the most important thing about it. For it is essential that in the turmoil of adjustment to a post-war situation, we should not allow ourselves uncritically to accept the old analysis and the old precepts. The ideas of anarchism remain living ideas only if they are constantly applied to the existing, the new situations. And it is of the first importance that the movement should retain unimpaired the sharpest critical faculties; there is no inviolable canon of anarchism, set down for all time, and immune from the criticism of succeeding generations.

The *Resistance* group have exercised considerable critical ability and appear to have used it with judgment and balance. They have subjected the ideas they have received from the past to close study, and they have rejected some of the teachings which have been handed down to them. Nevertheless, theirs is not a revisionist position. They "believe the basic goals and values of anarchism are sound", and proceed to outline these basic standpoints in a traditional manner. Where they differ from what they term the older anarchists they do not flatly disagree, but think that a shift of emphasis is required—a shift which some of the older traditionalists will find hard to swallow, it is true, but which cannot be termed revisionist.

No religion of anarchism

In the past, there was a tendency to accept "progress" as inevitable and, by implication, irreversible—"Thought is anarchistic, and toward anarchy moves history." *Resistance* makes a very important point when they warn that "reliance on the kind of social evolution the older anarchists anticipated runs, in the world to-day, dangerously close to a religious type of faith." We are in full agreement that our outlook to-day should be scientific and should take into account the very considerable body of new material that has accumulated during the present century. But this does not mean that we should pursue a method all too frequently employed in the nineteenth century—that of simply searching among the facts for those which support one's preconceived ideas. That may have been all very well when there was a dearth of factual material, but to-day it is important to begin with the study of facts and allow ideas to follow from this objective study.

Who are "the older anarchists"?

At this point, we feel it necessary to consider the body of traditional opinion which the *Resistance* group questions. In brief, it may be said that *Resistance* finds an undue optimism about the outcome of social upheavals characteristic of the older anarchists. But we doubt if this is a true representation of the position. The English-speaking anarchist movement has had only a very partial access to the corpus of anarchist thought, and one in which the influence of Kropotkin preponderates unduly. Bakunin's work, and Proudhon's also, are virtually unknown, while hardly a single theoretical (as distinct from agitational) work of Malatesta is available. Malatesta's influence is very considerable upon the Latin movement, and his outlook does not appear to us to be open to the kind of criticism which *Resistance* makes. He certainly developed conceptions quite at variance with the optimistic outlook of Kropotkin.

Our Statement on the *RESISTANCE* Article

Of course, it may be said that for the English-speaking movement, the anarchist outlook heavily coloured by Kropotkin's views is, in fact, the important and relevant influence, and is therefore the one *Resistance* has to take into account. But it is unsatisfactory if one is going to attack "the older anarchists" to attack only the partial account of them that has filtered through to Britain and America.

We may expand this point into a more general criticism. Throughout, the *Resistance* article betrays a too exclusively preoccupation with the American scene. One feels that there is insufficient appreciation of the international character of the movement and of its achievements in the theoretical field—and this criticism applies with equal, if not more, force to the movement in this country. There seems to be a too superficial study of history—witness the references to Spain which are inexact and misleading—and little understanding of the social contexts in which the ideas of the past were relevant. For example, the ideas of Ferrer are described as "undoubtedly wrong"; but one does not compare these ideas with, say, Neill's, because Ferrer's importance is not that he was an advanced educationist in the purely educational sense; it is that he set out to break the Clerical monopoly in education in Spain, and he partially succeeded. The point by itself is perhaps a small one, but it will serve to indicate a criticism which applies to much of the article.

The present position

Coming to the present-day we find ourselves in general agreement with the

Resistance group's clear recognition of some obstacles to the realization of anarchist ideas which were less stressed in the past. Yet we are not wholly at one with them. There is a tendency to think that revolutionary mass action is remote—revolutionists thought so in 1917 and in 1936. Nothing is more difficult to gauge than the revolutionary temper of a people, and it can be very misleading to be too despondent about it.

People's indifference to radical ideas and to world events is partly explicable because we live during the aftermath of a war, partly due to the sell-out of the radical movement as a whole. Such moods are not necessarily permanent. In any case, however, such moods are partly protective. Governments seek to breed anxiety among the ruled, the more easily to push them around by playing on fear. Indifference to danger of war may serve to preserve us from this cultivated anxiety.

Furthermore, the alleged apathy extends mainly to political questions and may more properly be regarded as scepticism. In matters which touch their lives and happiness directly—sex, family, education—very considerable interest is shown.

If one is at a loss in the face of apparent apathy and indifference, one looks around for causes, and the lure of material well-being presents itself as explanation. One feels that it is this that makes the *Resistance* group dwell so roily upon the economic position of the American workers. But is it really as satisfactory as all that?

Then there is the question of slave mentality. It is true that the security of

the ruling class depends on the general acquiescence of the people as a whole. But it is easy to be rather patronizing about the sheep-like qualities of the workers, and to say that slave psychology is more important than the armed force of the State. For any group or individual which tries to throw off the acceptance of rule finds the police a very important weapon of the State. True enough that the State cannot stand against the people as a whole, but it is increasingly well equipped to deal with much less than a hundred per cent. rejection of authority.

There are many other controversial matters, some of which have been dealt with by other contributors to this discussion (see, for example, the comments of Louis Adeane and Pat Cooper on the question of mutual aid and the free society); we have made enough particular points to indicate some differences in our own approach to some of the questions raised by the article.

Practical points

It seems to us important for our movement not to be too much concerned to see results. Much goes on that we do not see and it is impossible to judge the delayed results of anarchist ideas. We are already seeing the results of pioneer work by such militants as Emma Goldman in the sphere of sex (work which was criticised, be it remembered, by sections of the movement at the time). And it should not be forgotten that our movement supplies what may be called the public conscience of men. An uneasy conscience about doing what is expedient instead of what is just and right is more

widespread than is always realised, and this is in part due to the influence of uncompromising schools of thought such as anarchism.

When it comes to the practical outcome of the *Resistance* group's assessment of their position, we very much welcome their uncompromising attitude against militarism and racism. But we also welcome their critical attitude towards matters which are too often taken for granted. The question of revolutionary unions and syndicalism for example requires a thorough critical examination.

They are not however fully clear about direct action, and once again one finds the question viewed from a too exclusively American angle. Direct action in the *Resistance* article means militant action at the point of production. But the continental anarchist movements are beginning to think of direct action more in terms of direct reconstructive action along non-authoritarian lines and independently of State institutions. It is perhaps an unfair criticism of an article requiring considerable condensation of content, but one would have preferred to see more concrete proposals regarding direct action.

Problems of Life

Having drawn attention at some length to points of difference, it is well to stress also the very important positive points which the American comrades make. The most significant content of their statement is the very clear case they make out for directing attention to problems affecting the lives of individuals. We have to look at other aspects of life as well as those which concern the wages' struggle and strictly political questions. We do not minimise these matters; but we consider that the problems of sexuality, of family relationships and their relationship to the development of authoritarian attitudes and their acceptance, of education—all these are of immense importance as well, and our movement cannot afford to ignore them, or even deny them intensive study.

FREEDOM PRESS.

THREE REBELS

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM HAZLITT, by P. P. Howe. Penguins, 2/6.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU, by Joseph Wood Krutch. Methuen, 15/-.

LEO TOLSTOY, by Ernest J. Simmons. John Lehmann, 25/-.

THE last two months have been marked by the appearance of three definitive and very thorough biographies of men who were alike significant for their contribution to world literature, and also as radical thinkers rebelling against the reactionary currents of their age.

HAZLITT.

The first of these is a welcome reprint of P. P. Howe's biography of William Hazlitt. Hazlitt, the melancholy, embittered genius who wrote what many regard as the finest essays in the English language, was also one of the few writers who took an uncompromising stand during the reactionary period of the Napoleonic wars. When men like Wordsworth and Southey, former disciples of Godwin, went over to the Government party and betrayed their former principles for advancement and security, Hazlitt, like Godwin, remained in the opposition, and fearlessly criticised the war and the repressive policy of the Tory administration. No doubt he showed what was at times an uncritical admiration of the Jacobins and even of Napoleon but this was largely due to his hatred for everything their opponents represented and a linger-

ing hope that liberty would still survive as a result of the French Revolution. Himself, he was completely devoid of any kind of servility, and, although he did not wholly accept Godwin's anarchist ideas, always stood by him in the period when that writer was hated and reviled by all the literary turncoats. It must also be remembered that it was Hazlitt who first sprang to Godwin's defence against the attacks of Malthus, and

tribution to make on that subject of the individual's struggle against the collective which will always remain an important part of anarchist thought. Joseph Wood Krutch presents a very well-balanced study of the various aspects of Thoreau's thought, and shows how individualism, properly understood, leads always towards some recognition of social responsibility.

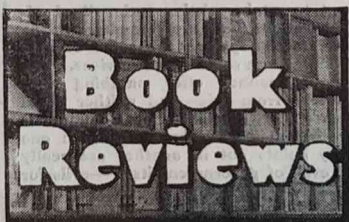
TOLSTOY.

The last work, *Leo Tolstoy*, by Ernest J. Simmons, is expensive, but also exhaustive and indispensable to the student of this writer and the period in which he worked. It runs to more than eight hundred pages, contains an unprecedented mass of documentation of Tolstoy's personal development and activities, and if, as is very probable, you are unable to afford the high price, at least you should insist on its appearance on the shelves of your local library.

In considering Tolstoy's tangled and unhappy life, one is always reminded of Romain Rolland's remark, that Kropotkin was what Tolstoy wrote. Always there was the endless struggle against his background, the failure to achieve completely what he set out to do. Professor Simmons does not fail to show all these contradictions, to illuminate Tolstoy's personal faults. But he also demonstrates the clear sincerity of Tolstoy's attitude, the unanswerable simplicity of his criticism of State, Church and property, and the way in which he for so long acted as a focus in Russia for those forces of intellectual revolt and indignation against tyranny which did not find expression in the conspiratorial circles. Much that has been half-forgotten he brings to the surface, such as Tolstoy's interesting experiments in free education, and the final result of reading his work is that, while one is left in no doubt concerning Tolstoy's weaknesses, one's general respect for him, both as an artist and as a rebel, is much increased.

One unfortunate omission in such an exhaustive book is any reference to the deep mutual respect which existed between Tolstoy and Kropotkin, and which was illustrated in the frequent messages which Tolstoy sent through visitors to Russia, and Kropotkin's own tribute in *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*. Nor is any mention made of the influence which *Fields, Factories and Workshops* had on Tolstoy's ideas on reforming Russian agriculture. But this is a minor criticism, and, on the whole, Professor Simmons has left very little for any other biographer of Tolstoy to say.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.



wrote the brilliant *Essay on Population* which was the first and very able refutation of the Malthusian theory.

P. P. Howe's biography of Hazlitt is a scholarly and skilful work. At first sight it may appear overloaded with quotation, but when the quotations are from such readable writers as Hazlitt himself and Lamb, when the central character is allowed to tell his own story in his particularly fascinating way without too much intrusion of the biographer's views, this apparent defect becomes a merit, and Howe's book presents a remarkable amount of excellent background material about the romantic period. Students of Godwin will be particularly interested by the quite copious information about the early connection between the Godwin and Hazlitt families, and the sympathy which always linked the two rebels, despite their often differing views.

THOREAU.

Krutch's study of *Henry David Thoreau* is the first really thorough study of this important individualist. Thoreau has tended to become a legend, and therefore any full and frank biography is liable to be slightly disillusioning, particularly when we learn how trivial was in fact the whole incident of his famous night's imprisonment. Yet it is perhaps because he was in life so humble and unsuccessful a writer, because his ideas were formed and elaborated in such isolation from literary fashions and close connection with the ordinary rural life of New England, that Thoreau is really significant. For he represents an idea which is very important to anarchism; that simplicity of life is the best breeding ground for freedom and independence of thought and action, and that in complexity we become steadily more in danger of being led into accepting material comforts as an inadequate substitute. In the present age we face a danger that some intelligent state may solve the problem of material want, at least for a relatively long period. It is in writers like Thoreau that we can find the answer to this offer of bigger and better bread and circuses as the price for the loss of liberty. We cannot ignore the teachings of the individualists; the best of them, like Thoreau, have a vast con-

RUSSIA'S "THIRD REVOLUTION"

The Inside Story of the Kronstadt Rising
by
I. Mett

WHILE the Kronstadt rising has long been recognised by revolutionaries as a genuine manifestation of the revolutionary and libertarian aspirations of the Russian people against the iron dictatorship which the Bolsheviks had imposed on them by force and fraud in the years immediately following 1917, it has always been difficult to obtain adequately documented information on this event with which to counter the deliberately falsified accounts, put forward by Stalinists and Trotskyist Communists alike.

In Ida Mett's work, "Russia's Third Revolution", however, these needs are amply supplied by a volume which combines an adequate narrative of events with copious quotations from contemporary manifestoes and newspapers, from official Bolshevik historians as well as insurgent sources, showing clearly the real nature of the rising as a genuine working-class manifestation, and the true rôle of the Bolsheviks, including Trotsky, as military oppressors.

★

The whole book presents such an admirable picture of this too often ignored portion of revolutionary history, and provides such a useful source book for the student of Russian affairs, that Freedom Press has decided to publish it in the near future. However, as the appeal of such a work will necessarily be restricted, printing will not commence until we have received reservations for 500 copies.

"Russia's Third Revolution", which contains nearly 40,000 words, will be priced at 5/- (\$1) post free, and reservations should be sent, as quickly as possible to Freedom Press, 27, Red Lion Street, London, W.C.1. A descriptive leaflet has been prepared and copies of it sent to all subscribers. Further copies may be obtained from Freedom Press.

ANOTHER STEP TOWARD TOTALITARIANISM

ONE learns without much surprise that the Czechoslovak National Assembly recently unanimously approved a bill ending the publishing rights of individuals, and putting the printing and issue of books and music entirely under State control. Churches and religious societies, however, will retain rights to publish books and pamphlets.

The preamble to the bill says "private

capitalist elements" must be eliminated from any part in the nation's culture. Mr. Kopecky, the Minister of Information, said he regretted that so many "valueless, superfluous, and sometimes harmful books of Western production" were published before February, 1948, and even after, while "national classics and other Czech and Slovak writers were neglected. Intense efforts have been needed to catch up on the demand."

... from our stock ...
Sharpen the Sickle Reg. Groves 12/6
Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization Elton Mayes 12/6
Talks to Parents and Teachers Homer Lane 6/-
Birth Control To-day Marie Stopes 6/-
The Study of Heredity E. B. Ford 3/6
List of Progressive Schools Progressive League 1/-

Some Second-Hand Books of Special Interest:

Kropotkin's Fields, Factories and Workshops	5/-	Williams Godwin's Caleb Williams	6/-
Emma Goldman's My Disillusionment in Russia	5/-	St. Leon	6/-
Elie Reclus Primitive Folk	5/-	Stepniak's Career of a Nihilist	6/-
		Underground Russia	6/-
		K. E. Barlow's A Home of their Own	1/-

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AMERICAN LETTER

THIS is a communication from that other world—the one that hasn't been bombed, rationed and has, thus far, successfully evaded any variety of socialist government. The avoidance of this triplicity constitutes a considerable asset, although the general presentiment of catastrophe is with us here. The predominating feeling since the end of the war is of interstitial recovery: that is, waiting around, with that feeling of doom, until No. 3 comes up.

This feeling did not prevent the economic boom, which while not terribly real, may look good retrospectively in the bust days ahead. It is still possible that the coming depression may be forestalled temporarily by a fuller return to a permanent war-economy. The government saved the day once by taking the ten million ex-G.I.'s and corralling them into schools, loaning them money, etc., and withdrawing them from the labour market. But they've got to graduate some day . . .

Industrial workers are still flying high compared to depression and pre-war days—although there seems to be some difficulty in getting work in some areas. Ten dollars per day is rather average wages as against three dollars ten years ago. But an average restaurant dinner of forty-five cents at that time is now very well over a dollar, and food for home consumption is correspondingly high.

Rents are fairly static, but the housing shortage, particularly in N.Y.C., grows more distressing every month. Private life insurance corporations are buying land cheaply from the city, and allowing only people in the middle-income brackets into these ghastly pill-box constructions. This forces the truly needy people—who have been evicted from relatively satisfactory houses (some even nearly new!) which have been wrecked in order to erect these huge (150 acres, 12 stories high) concentration "homes"—into the worst slum areas to live.

Clothes, third in the material triplicity, are fantastically high, and poor people simply don't buy anything very good. For the rich, the New Look* serves as a conspicuous outlet for inflationary income.

I think this is an appropriate place to mention that the *reductio ad absurdum*

THROUGH THE PRESS

WHEN A SNEEZE MAY BE CRIMINAL

In *Latin Quarter* the majestic showgirls display the utmost respect for our curious laws which enact that ladies in "the almost-altogether" must remain stationary objects. The standard of immobility is well up to legal requirements. I sat apprehensively wondering what would happen if one of the beauties sneezed. Presumably, Mr. Chuter Ede would have been sent for; he might even have arrived with half Scotland Yard behind him. But all was innocent calm.

The Observer, 20/3/49.

A NEW DEVIATION

Six Soviet architects—three of them members of the scientific council of the Academy of Architecture—were severely criticised in *Pravda*.

Members of the council and the Academy of Architecture also came in for a scolding as "cosmopolites".

"Cosmopolites in the Academy of Architecture", said the article by G. Krisko, "are trying with all their might to retard the creative growth of young Soviet scientists and push them off the correct path." *N.Y. Herald Tribune*, 22/3/49.

NOW WE KNOW

Monsignor C. Cowderoy, Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Southwark Diocese told the *Pictorial* last night:

"Sexual irregularities are not due to ignorance. They occur mostly because people neglect to pray and do not attend the Sacraments. The fact that they know about sex does not stop people committing sin." *Sunday Dispatch*, 13/3/49.

WORKING TO RULE

French customs inspectors decided yesterday to press their demands for higher salaries by going to work with a real vengeance for an unlimited period beginning February 28th.

Where the normal labour union calls upon its striking workers to lay down tools, the union of custom agents instead ordered its members to inspect baggage as baggage has never been inspected before. Every paragraph, subparagraph and explanatory note of the customs regulations is to be adhered to brutally. Not a shirt is to be left folded, not a package unwrapped, not a shaving kit unscattered.

Authorities estimated that an assiduous customs agent should be able to pursue illicit goods in an ordinary suitcase for about 2½ hours before being satisfied that nothing is being slipped past the border. A trunk might consume the better part of a day. A woman's handbag could take weeks. *N.Y. Herald Tribune*, 18/2/49.

DUMP CIVILISATION

dum of a process that has dogged the lower and middle-classes for a century has been reached. I speak, of course, of the democratic myth. The quantity of commodities now available to the ordinary man is fabulous, the quality is deplorable. This extends from food (never have most people in this country eaten so badly!) to clothes (never before have so many people had so much shoddy clothing), to housing (despite the acute shortage of houses, there was until the last few months virtually no small building going on for lack of, among other things, nails).

Food price control was in partial effect during the war, and one way in which the loss in profits was evaded was by depreciating the quality of food alarmingly. Now prices have zoomed, but manufacturers have not thought to restore the quality. All tinned foods (except gourmet products, naturally)

range from ghastly to dangerous. The famous American white bread which makes of every proletarian a king, has within the last few months been discovered to be poisonous. This poison, put into the flour to bleach it, and preserve it against worms, drives dogs insane, and the precise effect it has on humans remains, for obvious reasons, undetermined. However, to judge by the increase in neurotic and psychotic conditions, and by similar manifestations in American culture, like bebop music, man possesses a more extensive area of insanity, not all of which, admittedly, can be attributed to white bread. Yet it is this white bread, which is so chemically treated that a huge amount of each pound package is air and water, and the remainder some dubious substance which nourishes no one, and is undoubtedly abetting the neuroses of a people already far gone in mental

affliction, that remains in Europe the symbol of affluence and achievement.

Shoes are, in many parts of the world, similarly regarded. And in this country of preposterous democratic symbols, I believe it is true that the worker's wife may purchase as many shoes as the employer's. The price range now for the wearable shoes is from \$15 to \$40, for the relatively useless shoes (some are rendered entirely functionless after three wearings) from \$1 to \$10.

The rich buy a new car every year (and many others buy an old car as frequently or more so!) and while some of that is conspicuous expenditure, it is not entirely so. One year is all a car is expected to run well. While one may still see any number of ancient Model T Fords on country roads, it is rarer to find a car only ten years old. Most of the latter cars are on dump heaps.

The United States, like Europe, has

become a dump civilisation; unlike Europe, the dumps are deliberately rather than accidentally created, and indifferently exploited or not at all. There are sufficient parts to assemble at least a million automobiles in these dumps. (They would, of course, run very poorly, or not at all.) During the war, housewives were sacrificing usable household metals, like pots, for munitions, while the junk piles continued to grow larger, despite the disintegrating rust. These dumps contain not only metals; it is indeed possible to find enough articles of furniture and utensils to set up a modest establishment from even the more meagre ones. Anything out-moded, slightly broken, chipped or frayed, finds its way there. A recent addition to one junk heap were nine large excellent chickens just killed by a neighbour's dog.

I dwell at such length on the excessive materialism and corruption here in order to present the background within which the kind and quality of political and artistic activities move. Politically, apathy and cynicism are still so much the dominant tone that there is little to report. Radicalism has sold out, and with a vengeance. All ex-Stalinists, with virtually no exception, have become jingoistic. Magazines like *Partisan Review* have pushed to the forefront of the ideological war No. 3 debacle. (There is in this nothing more than a desire for self-preservation. Russia's method of dealing with ex-comrades, no matter how ex, is decisive.) The anti-Russian sentiments now seem even more vehement than the anti-Nazi sentiments during the war.

DACHINE RAINER.

* The New Look is not only explicable on the economic level. It represents the intrenchment of female domination to such a degree of security that it can afford to shed its masculine disguises of trousers and short hair, and, without losing its new social and political status (the State of Maine elected a female Republican Governor last November), return to the bustle.

THE AMERICAN SCENE

STRIKE-MAKER

AT the moment of writing, 400,000 American coal-miners East of the Mississippi are obeying the dictate of Mr. John L. Lewis and are enjoying a fortnight's holiday—without pay or union benefit. In fact, it is rather difficult to say whether or no they really are enjoying it, since they themselves had no say whatsoever in the decision to stop work. The strike, ordered by their fuhrer, is advertised as being to mourn for those killed and injured in the mines last year, but there is naturally more than that behind the decision of the bombastic John L.

There is no love lost between the miners' leader and President Truman, who has recently dared to appoint a certain Dr. James Boyd director of the United States Bureau of Mines without so much as asking permission of Mr. Lewis. Whatever solid objection he might or might not have against this appointment, there is no doubt that the blow to Lewis' pride in not being consulted is in part responsible for his decision to bring out the miners.

Another—and perhaps more important reason, is that at the moment there are 70,000,000 tons of coal above ground—25,000,000 more than normally. Because of the mild winter and increased European production, the U.S. government has not found it necessary to buy as much coal as usual—and so prices have dropped. The loss of a fortnight's production will clear off the surplus coal and raise prices

again—and a new contract has to be negotiated in May between John L. Lewis and the owners. Naturally, Lewis wants conditions to be thus favourable for striking a hard bargain.

This may be said to work in favour of the miners, already the "aristocrats" of American labour, earning a basic wage of around £16 per week, but the immediate effect of the strike has been the standing-off and sacking of thousands of other workers—mainly railmen, and may lead to the Taft-Hartley anti-strike law not being repealed. Its repeal was a Truman election promise, and in view of the growing crisis in American economy (3,000,000 said to be unemployed), the Government may be looking for excuses to keep the law standing.

STRIKE-BREAKER

DICTATORSHIP of another kind (please God) was being dished out by New York Catholics' boss, Cardinal Spellman, when (see "Through the Press" last issue) he organised strike breakers against the eight-weeks-old stoppage of cemetery workers at the two R.C. burial grounds in New York.

The Cardinal had forbidden the cemetery workers to belong to the union they had chosen, saying it was "Communist-dominated". There seems to be no evidence that it is and no doubt the Cardinal finds it convenient to thus attack a union which is demanding for its members a five-day week, time and a half for

Saturday work and increased vacation and sick-leave benefits. Not very fierce demands, after all. The Cardinal's first answer was an offer of cost-of-living increase of 2 per cent. (compare Cripps' offer of ¾d. increase to Whitehall cleaners!), later under strike pressure raising it to 8½ per cent., but would not accept any settlement until the workers (all good Catholics) returned to work as "individuals" and not as union members. Then he allowed them to join an A.F.L. union of his choice because it was "moderate" and had relinquished the strike weapon. In his settlement, Spellman refused any additional vacation, sick-leave, hospitalisation or life-insurance benefits.

The Cardinal had made, he said, his "own decision based upon the dictates of my conscience before the highest and only indisputable law—the law of God" (i.e., Cardinal Spellman). He also said that it would be his daily prayer that "if ever again the working men of this archdiocese must make their choice between following their faith or faithless leadership they will, of their own free and immediate choice, choose God" (i.e., Cardinal Spellman).

Which is all very well if one believes that God will provide, and perhaps he will in the next world, but he doesn't seem too keen on providing the five-day week to good Christians who consign the carcasses of other good Christians to his all-embracing arms. But no doubt the *Catholic Worker* can put us right on that point.

Gandhi's Basic National Schools

WE may have differed from Gandhi in his acceptance of the law as a weapon with which to work for national independence, and indeed from his emphasis on national revolution rather than social revolution—which is a characteristic of 20th century colonial revolt. Nevertheless, *Freedom*, which so often is accused of being negative and destructive merely, gave a positive and wholly sympathetic account of Gandhi in its obituary notice in February, 1948.

Of what interest to anarchists were Gandhi's educational ideas and his scheme for Basic National Schools? He proclaimed that books are not the only avenue to culture and by themselves, divorced from life and work, are not such an avenue at all and he showed how a system of schooling might be built up, even in the poverty of India, independent of state funds. His scheme is of interest because it is a genuinely Indian solution to an Indian problem and also because of the extent to which it has universal validity.

Under British rule, the same sum was being spent on education in the whole of India, with a population of 400 million, as in Greater London. The primary schools were staffed by teachers barely literate themselves and so poor that they had to eke out an existence as postmen or by working on the land, with the result that children arriving at school not uncommonly found their teacher absent on other necessary business.

Gandhi seriously put forward his ideas first in *Harijan* and then at an Educational Conference which he called at Wardha in October, 1937. Zakir Hasain became chairman of the committee which carried the scheme forward until it was accepted by the Central Advisory Board of Education of the Government of India. In the autumn of 1938, the first Basic school was started at Sevagram.

The Basic National Schools were free, co-educational, for children aged from 7—14 of all classes and creeds, and conducted in the local mother tongue and Hindustani (*not* English), which is probably to become the language spoken all over India. Competition between pupils was not used as an incentive to work: it was Gandhi's hope to exalt co-operation, above competition, service above exploitation and non-violence above violence.

EDUCATION

The most controversial part of the scheme was that the schools should be based on craftwork, suited to the locality—on growing, gathering, cleaning and spinning cotton, on weaving, silkwork, embroidery, tailoring, dyeing, paper-making, book-binding, cabinet-making, pottery. Except for history, painting and music and

dancing, teaching that could not be related to the craftwork, was dropped. Thus, geometry was used in the making of the spinning wheel, arithmetic for keeping account of the sale of cloth, science in the irrigation works that were required for the growing of vegetables and cotton. Gandhi insisted on craftwork as a basis because he fully appreciated the value of learning by doing for the psychological benefits of a creative activity and in order to develop such qualities as perseverance, thoroughness and patience. It was imperative to debunk the idea that manual work was dishonourable. By selling the pupils' products it was possible to finance a system of schooling for the masses of children independent of the patronage of the state.

Westerners might note the emphasis on cleanliness among the most progressive circles in India. In their basic training, teachers learn to construct latrines and to nurse the sick: untouchables and Brahmins together clean wells, drains and floors. They say that dirt is not always an essential element of happiness.

The progressive schools, despite their advocacy of activity methods and learning by doing, have only half-succeeded, where Gandhi against far greater odds, or Eric Gill, did succeed, in setting productive work in its proper place. There are only a few schools—the farms at Kilquhanity or at Long Dene, for instance—which have clearly tried to integrate the educational activities of the children with the economic survival of the community. This could be done in more ways than in agriculture, such as cooking, building and the extensive use of camping, and may be the answer to those anarchists who cannot fit into the state schools' coercive discipline and cannot abide the independent schools' high fees.

ANTHONY WEAVER.

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WHAT ARE WORKERS INTERESTED IN?

A NUMBER of letters have been received from readers supporting or opposing the views expressed in Mat Kavanagh's letter (*Freedom*, 5/3/49). Those supporting our comrade are simply a reiteration of his statement with particular emphasis on the sex question. A correspondent from Leeds, for instance, suggests that if we are to attract the ordinary workers, then *Freedom* must of necessity leave out reviews of Sex subjects while an old comrade from Manchester advises us to "Cut the Sex articles right out, toilers want none of it. It's pure tripe to them. Take the present issue, what toiler is interested in the A. S. Neill article, or *Premature Adults*? And this issue contains less high-brow stuff than usual."

We have been too long engaged in publishing to ever hope to edit a paper which will meet with the unanimous approval of all our readers and comrades. It is the greatness of Anarchism that it does not produce stereotyped minds, and the present discussion, in which differences appear between anarchists, is not one of principle so much as one of approach to the practical problem of realising the anarchist ideal.

WE are told by our critics that we are out of touch with the workers. We do not deny that we are not in touch with all sections of the community, but to suggest that *Freedom* is published in a vacuum is too ridiculous to be believed even by those who have suggested it. But, even assuming that Mat Kavanagh and his supporters are right when they say "Workers, male and female, are not interested in Sex, Art or Education", is that any reason for saying that *Freedom* should therefore refrain from dealing with these questions? The group issuing *Freedom* and the F.P. publications is primarily interested in Anarchism as a way of life—and, incidentally, we suggest that this is the ultimate objective of all anarchists. The problems of working conditions in factories to-day have in fact very little to do with Anarchism, whereas Sex, Art and Education have. And we will go so far as to say that only when men and women show an active interest in these questions, will they develop a social awareness which should lead them to want Anarchism. It has certainly been proved that Mat Kavanagh's diagnosis as to what workers are interested in—that is "Cost of living, length of working-day, and working conditions, etc."—are not the subjects which, once explained, will lead workers to Anarchism.

Meetings and Announcements

UNION OF ANARCHIST GROUPS: CENTRAL LONDON

Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m.
At 8, Endsleigh Gardens, W.C.1.

APRIL 3rd Sean Gannon
"English Revolutionaries"

APRIL 10th Tony Gibson
The Achievement of Freedom—A Concrete Programme

APRIL 17th No Meeting

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.

APRIL 12th Margery Mitchell
"D. H. Lawrence"

WEST YORKSHIRE ANARCHIST GROUP

A Public Meeting will be held in Room 3, Laycock's Chambers, Albion Court, Kirkgate, BRADFORD, at 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 1st, 1949. Questions invited. All welcome.

BIRMINGHAM ANARCHIST CIRCLE

The season of indoor discussion-lectures will cease on Saturday, April 3rd. It is hoped that it may be possible to hold a series of outdoor meetings during the summer months, commencing May 1st.

For further details, watch this column or contact: S. E. Parker, 72, Coldbath Road, Billesley, Birmingham, 14.

GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP

On and after April 24th: Outdoor Meetings MAXWELL STREET, every Sunday at 7 p.m., Frank Leech, John Gaffney, Eddie Shaw.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

A German friend of "Freedom" would like to get in touch with other friends of the same opinions. Please write to Freedom Press, if interested.

BUT there is a further question which has a very important bearing on the rôle of *Freedom* Press in the furthering of Anarchism. There is obviously a fundamental difference of approach between the Mat Kavanagh and ourselves as to the way an Anarchist movement can be built up in this country. Our view is that before we can glibly talk of "reaching the masses", of "working among the toilers", or "forming anarcho-syndicalist organisations", we must have a movement of militant Anarchists, of men and women who have thought out their Anarchism, have tested it and are convinced of its correctness. It is a process which takes time and in which there is inevitably a high percentage of "failures". *Freedom* is primarily interested in this work, partly because the group is more suited to this than to the sloganised and purely agitational kind of publication. But also because we think that, at this stage, it is the most important work to be done for the movement.

It is our view that there is to-day a very pronounced libertarian trend in disinterested thought and research in this country which strengthens the anarchist case. We think that the A. S. Neill experiment in education; the idea behind the Peckham Health Centre and the results to date, and certain communal experiments in Palestine, are all of great importance to anarchists and to those men and women who are in the process of studying the anarchist case.

We accept the view of our critics that *Freedom* does not appeal to the casual reader. We have to choose between the casual reader and the regular reader; it is impossible to cater for both. But we

AND A LETTER ON THE SUBJECT

DEAR COMRADES,

If it is true to say that "Workers are not interested in Sex, Art or Education," it is also true that they are not interested in anarchism. But how can we say that workers are not interested in sex, when the *News of the World* has the largest circulation of any journal? ("Subject normal," says the workshop wag when lunch-time conversation returns to this absorbing topic.) And it is surprising to hear anyone familiar with working-class life deny the interest in education. Who has never heard someone say, "If only I'd had more education . . ." or "I'm going to see that my kids have a better chance than I did." As to art (and we should point out that the last article of any size in *Freedom* on what is usually known as "art" was the feature [29th May, 1948] on the Battersea Park sculpture exhibition, an event of very wide popular interest) if, like Eric Gill, we take art to mean "the well-making of what needs making," then the appreciation of good workmanship is still in evidence, even in these days of mass-production, and a working man is probably the best judge of it. Or if we take art to mean "the adornment of our surroundings" then surely the pathetic efforts to brighten dingy homes or the carefully-tended prefabricated gardens, are an indication of artistic sensibility.

Now, it may be objected that this interest is not an anarchist interest—all the more reason for stressing the importance of these things from the anarchist viewpoint. The investigations of libertarian psychologists and educationalists seem to show that the

do attempt to reach the casual reader by issuing occasional leaflets and through a number of F.P. pamphlets.

THE last paragraph of Mat Kavanagh's letter reveals the gulf that separates the anarchists who cling to the past from those who attempt to live in the present. As the editors of *Resistance* pointed out, it is not on principles that there is disagreement with such tried comrades as Mat Kavanagh, but on the question of how a free society may be achieved. Mat Kavanagh says, "The line of action I am advocating is in the traditions of Anarchism in its more heroic days," and then goes on to display his contempt for modern thought and research when he warns us that if we don't accept his line we shall "degenerate into little middle-class circles, forever discussing 'the Function of the Organism' and similar favourite topics of the mentally emaciated." We do not for one moment minimise the effectiveness of the traditional action in the "heroic days" in dealing with certain well-defined situations, but how close has it brought us to the Anarchist Society? In our opinion, if anarchism is not to "degenerate" then it must be the task of anarchists to continuously subject our ideas to close examination. To do this we must be in touch with modern thought and research. We must get to understand more and more about human behaviour and the reasons for man's behaviour. A. S. Neill and Reich and Scott Williamson at Peckham, and others, are doing this. And for this reason *Freedom* is interested in their work, and our interest is increased by reason of the fact that their findings are, in our opinion, strengthening the anarchist case.

authoritarian sexual morality and the authoritarian educational systems of Western society are a big factor in maintaining the docility, dislike of responsibility and servility which are necessary in the workers of capitalist industry, and that what W. R. Lethaby called the "organised ignorance" of state education is designed to give the workers the technical capacity for doing their work, but not for controlling it; that the nature of our industrial system deprives the worker of opportunities for creative self-expression. But such is the resilience of the human spirit and its deep need for freedom that the sexual, educational and artistic deprivations of our civilization have not been entirely successful and we cannot agree with those who suggest that our work in this field is useless. (In the sphere of art, it should be said that in *Freedom* we are not concerned with any particular theory of art, but we do stress the importance of art in the broad sense, in the life of mankind.)

If we shared the contempt which some of our correspondents seem to show for the intelligence of the workers, we might, in a bid for their support, fill the pages of *Freedom* with sensational and exaggerated reports of every little industrial dispute, giving it a quite unwarranted revolutionary significance, but this would not help either us or anarchism. We would be deluding our readers, if not ourselves. For anarchism and the problems of our time are not matters of mere pay and shorter hours, however desirable these things may be at the moment.

Freedom exists for the expression and exchange of anarchist views and for the propagating of anarchist ideas. In its

ANARCHIST MEETINGS

MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST GROUP

THE Merseyside Anarchist Group, being a small group of individuals of diverse occupations brought together by a common desire to further anarchist principles, feel that in the present state of development of the movement in Liverpool, our activities must be essentially of a propagandist nature. Our work has therefore been designed to present anarchist ideas to as large a section of the working class as possible. Our activities have tended to fall into three main groups: indoor public meetings, discussion meetings and sale of literature.

We opened our public meetings early in October last year when the speakers were Mat Kavanagh and others. This meeting was followed by a regular series, at which the speakers were members of the group. In general, indoor political meetings are poorly attended, irrespective of the political colour of the "platform" and the group is making preparations to hold out-door meetings during the summer when it is hoped that we will be able to attract larger audiences.

Secondly, we held from September up to the end of the year, a series of weekly discussion meetings on a variety of subjects ranging from syndicalism to sex. These tended to be more popular than our public meetings and have brought a number of people into contact with anarchist

principles for the first time.

Thirdly, we have attempted to cover our deficiencies in the exposition of the anarchist case by having a variety of literature on sale at our public and discussion meetings, and *Freedom* has been sold at most of the political meetings in the area.

In our contacts with other organisations we are handicapped by having little or no influence in trade union and other working-class organisations, but we intend working with the "No-Conscription Council" recently set up in Liverpool, and hope to play our part in the "Movement for Workers' Control" which is starting activity in the area.

J.S.

BRISTOL ANARCHIST GROUP

THE speaker at the monthly public meeting of the Bristol Anarchist Group on the 1st of March was Keith Greenslade, whose talk was on "Architecture and Society".

This most interesting talk dealt with the way in which buildings tend to reflect the living conditions of the people who build them.

The earliest great architecture, that of Egypt, shows that the architects were in the grip of a powerful religion, their structures being merely tombs of kings and habitations for the gods revealing no idea of shelter or daily usefulness. They

HELP-YOURSELF STORES

WE have many times in *Freedom* referred to the fundamentally unnecessary nature of the bulk of the work done under the heading "distribution". Not that we have anything against shop assistants personally, but their work is basically useless and unproductive—the collecting of money, after—and is only a part of the profit system which enables everybody who handles goods on their journey from producer to consumer to take a rake-off.

We welcome therefore, for this and other reasons, the recent move to extend the idea of self-service in shops. We know perfectly well, of course, that the support given to the idea by the Government (the granting of licences for building reconstruction, which means no outlay from the Treasury) is given only on the score of "saving manpower" and may mean

the dismissal of assistants rendered "redundant". We know also that the saving in the wages of these assistants is unlikely to be passed on in full to the customer. Nevertheless, the elimination of any of the stages between production and consumption is a good step—only a petty reform in itself perhaps, but with implications which may have further effects on the general attitude to distribution, and on which one can gauge the effects of free distribution.

Unrationed goods are to-day largely rationed by price, but it is interesting to note that criticisms levelled at the idea of self-service before it was tried do not stand up in practice. The manager of a Co-op store trying the scheme, for instance, said, according to *Reynolds News*, 27/3/49: "In point of fact, I find that there is no pilfering, and customers certainly do not grab for scarce commodities; while a housewife being observed by a reporter, 'faced with a pile of packaged custard powder' (for long in short supply 'helped herself only to one.'"

One of the objections to the anarchist proposal of free distribution is that "everybody would grab for more than anybody else." In fact, when given the opportunity now, they don't.

COAL BOARD BRIBERY

MINERS at Whitburn Colliery, near South Shields, Co. Durham, dared to come out on an unofficial strike last January. As is now its practice, the National Coal Board lodged a claim against them for damages—in this case, a mere £12,000. But the Board has agreed to withdraw this claim subject to the miners taking no part in any unconstitutional stoppage for two years.

This is the probation system as it is used with law-breakers. The good behaviour of the miners is being bought by their continually having this threat over their heads—£12,000 fine immediately they strike on any issue. To accept this means giving the managements and union toadies a free hand to institute any measures they like within the next two years.

This is blackmail, and is another variation of the N.C.B.'s refrain—discipline from above and submission from below; an integral part of state control.

HUNDRED UP!

THANKS largely to an unexpected windfall from our friends in San Francisco, who sent half the proceeds of a social affair held there for our contemporary "Resistance" and ourselves, the Special Appeal Fund has now passed the £100 total.

Comrades and friends will, we are sure, be glad to hear that we are now at the stage of discussing the possibilities of again issuing the 8-page "Freedom", and we hope this "advance" information will result not in a falling-off of contributions to the Fund, but will, on the contrary, be a spur to increased effort both financial and in the ever-present problem of distribution.

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