

## THE DEMOCRATIC FARCE WHO HAS WON THE ELECTIONS?

THE remarkable dead-heat result of the London County Council elections has served to provoke comment which indicates the absurdity of democratic government as it is exhibited to us. The supposed aim of such a method of local government is to ensure that the people will rule—that, after all, is what the word democracy means; and one might have thought that in local affairs this was more easily attainable than in the national sphere because of the local nature of the problems of administration. The people of London could be expected to know what they want and so would instruct their representatives how to act.

In fact, of course, elections pose quite a different problem to the man in the street and his wife. For there is no machinery for "instructing" one's representative. At elections one does not say what one wants, one has the privilege of choosing between programmes of rival political machines, neither of which may suit one at all.

### Meatlessness

But it is apparent that such shrewd political observers as the newspapers do not even expect the electorate to make up its mind on even this matter of choosing between two programmes. The Liberal press, for example, calmly remarks that "it is generally accepted, especially in London, that post-Budget depression and a long succession of meatless days have helped considerably to send votes floating rightwards". The party that has achieved the position of umpire or referee in the political game may perhaps be trusted to favour no interests but its own; but this Liberal opinion seems to be blandly unaware how insulting its explanation is to the democratic concept. For what could be more absurd than determining one's vote in a local election by shortage of a commodity dependent on trade with a remote South American power! No doubt the unconscious, but none the less clearly implied insult is thoroughly justified, but what a farce it makes of the elaborate theoretical justifications for the democratic electoral system!

### Getting Power

Rejoicing in the position of influence attained by Sir Percy Harris, the solitary Liberal at County Hall, whose vote may create a majority for one side or the other of the sixty-four Labourites and sixty-four Tories, the Liberal Press has some more unconscious gibes at the workings of democracy. "Many people would vote Liberal if they thought the Liberals could get power. One way of having power is to hold the balance. The idea should be fostered. It could catch on..." Now Sir Percy Harris' position of influence is quite fortuitous, being due to the accident of a dead heat. There cannot be the slightest reflection here of "what the electors want". Such a result is pure accident, and cannot by any stretch of the imagination be attributed to the wishes of Londoners; yet the Liberals accept it without the smallest qualm.

### But Who has Won?

If democracy meant the wish of the people, these elections could be held to show that anarchists have a majority of more than twice the total votes cast for the political parties. It could be said that we have won. For only a minority of the electorate voted at all. The percentage varied from district to district, but at Marylebone, for example, only 37 per cent. of the people voted. The politicians claim this as a great triumph. For in 1946, only 27 per cent. went to the polls. It must be conceded that the anarchists have lost

more get a mandate from the sovereign people of London, this great and fair city, to rule over them?

### What is it all about?

Now actually we do not argue thus, for we have none of the talent of the party propagandists, and, in our political world, therefore deserve our political obscurity. But just the same, it is needful to wonder why political power is grasped by minority handfuls after apathetic polling. That the above reasoning is not entirely absurd is shown by the continental trend to regard non-voting as a crime. In the Soviet Union and its colonial countries of Eastern Europe, over 90 per cent. of the people vote. In France, non-voters are called traitors, while in Italy, some politicians think that failure—or refusal—to vote should be made a criminal offence. It is doubtful if the fear of the policeman can ever whip up much genuine interest in political affairs, and it is natural to explain this hostility towards the non-voter/displayer by the political as a defence of their own status.

And if it is absurd to maintain that an uncast vote is a vote for anarchism, it is certainly true that such a high proportion of non-votes is a criticism of the political parties and of the electoral system itself as at present operated.

Viewed in this light, the results in London—and they are reflected in less clear degree all over the country—are very significant. The Labour Party fought the election on their past record in the provision of social amenities and necessities. The interesting thing is that

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## Brazil Throws Away Potatoes & Burns Sugar

TIERRA Y LIBERTAD (Anarchist organ in Mexico) publishes a report on the Brazilian situation, as follows:—

"Brazil suffered for fifteen years under the dictatorial regime of Getulio Vargas, under the most inhuman laws. The 'mission of the Brazilian workers' according to Getulio Vargas, was limited to working like a beast for a wage that did not permit him to enjoy the most elementary economic necessities.

"In 1945, in order to associate with the 'triumph of liberty' in the world war, Brazil was 'democratised'. Vargas gave power to his political and military friends: men changed but Brazilian Fascism continued.

"The new masters of Brazil are perfect servants of capitalism and clerical reaction. They attribute the economic crisis of Brazil to-day to low production, but at the same time they continue to work the Vargas system which during the years of his government destroyed 86 million sacks of coffee to maintain the price. At present, and without doubt to keep the Brazilian worker on a famine wage, they are intending to burn 3 million sacks of sugar. Already thousands of tons of potatoes have been thrown away, as well as boatloads of corn and wheat and nobody in Brazil denies it.

"While Brazil exports food all over the world, there are queues in front of all the butcher's shops as in the lands directly hit by the war. But this did not stop the governor of the province of Sao Paulo, for instance, signing an order to export local produce to the other end of the world: to Poland, where the prices are particularly high.

At the end of the war, Brazil opened its gates to European emigrants, but the government has only admitted Fascist elements. The agricultural workers were moved from their dwellings at Ribeirao Preto in order to instal a Nazi colony.

### FOR LONDON READERS

(who may get FREEDOM in time!)

A PUBLIC MEETING will be held at Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, Victoria, at 7.45 p.m. on Good Friday. "A Fight for Freedom." Speakers: Robert Copping and Edward Reynolds.

## THE MIXTURE AS BEFORE

IT has proved to have been extremely easy to take a partisan view of Sir Stafford Cripps' Budget. It probably always is, and we have seen the more irresponsible Tory papers attack it as being against the rich, and the *Daily Worker*, for instance, denounce it for being against the poor. They probably always do.

The fact is, of course, that this is the mixture as before and as it is likely to remain for a very long time. Britain is one of the most highly taxed countries in the world—if not the highest—and with our economy as it is to-day, with our greatly extended social services, with our "commitments" abroad and with the maintenance of war preparedness at home, the bill which has to be faced with such monotonous regularity is unlikely to vary very much from year to year.

We can say this much for Cripps: that, according to his lights, he has been fairly honest. He has also shown a faith in the loyalty of the Labour and Trade Union movements which is rather touching. This was, to all intents and purposes, the pre-election Budget. Cripps will not be able to present another before the General Election next year, and in view of that and the wide-spread demand for the relief of Purchase Tax it was widely supposed that the Budget was going to have at least some gesture to make it a "popular" one. This did not happen, and Cripps appears to have shown some integrity in this, according to his own standards.

But there may be more to it than that. The Conservatives have made great play over the recent coincidences between the ending of some rationing (sweets, clothes) and the occurrence of by-elections (Sowerby, Hammersmith). Had Cripps

made this a "popular" budget, they would have been able to make even greater play of the "vote-catching" story. The Chancellor has very cleverly spiked their guns by refusing to panic—and has given, as we just said, the appearance of being a man of integrity. He will be able to go before the electorate in 1950 as the man who saved the country from inflation—and, of course, the man who will lead it to prosperity during the ensuing five years if the Labour Party is given the chance to continue its planning for a better Britain—etc., etc.

All of which is playing politics and ignoring the real issue. The fact is that this is a war budget, and that this country can now be regarded as being on a permanent war economy. Cripps' honesty is only apparent within the contexts of capitalist economy, governmental society and war preparations. As was pointed out in our last issue, no less than 40 per cent. of our income (£2 in every £5!) goes to the government for expenditure as it thinks best. And it thinks it best to increase the amounts spent on defence while pegging food subsidies and passing the increase in prices on to you.

If the colossal sums taken out of our pockets each day and week of the year were spent on the much-publicised "benefits" of the Welfare State, there might not appear to be such strong arguments against taxation as we could put up. But the money also goes on, besides war-preparation, the maintenance of all the vast useless and repressive machinery of local and national government (2,000,000 bureaucrats!), the police, legal apparatus, prisons and reform schools.

And as long as we retain those millstones around our necks, we must pay the bill—and if we only pay in money, we'll be lucky!

## THE COPPING CASE

IT is not the purpose of this article to recount the details of the prosecution of Messrs. Copping and Reynolds for their alleged unfittedness to have the care of children at their school, Horsley Hall. The facts of the case (somewhat garbled it is true) have been widely published in the national news papers. Two main points of interest arise out of the case: first, the importance which the law attaches to sexuality in adolescents, and second, the danger of conducting any activities of a revolutionary nature without taking precautions against interference.

A certain section of the anarchist movement vociferously denies the importance of the struggle for sexual emancipation as an integral part of the revolutionary struggle. The reactionaries are wiser. They know that sexual emancipation is dangerous to the established order, and that children will be less docile to authority when they grow up. It was obvious from the evidence submitted by the prosecution, that what really enraged the authorities was the fact that sex was not taboo at Horsley Hall School. The charge of keeping the children in an insanitary condition was thrown in for good measure—but as it was quite untrue, it was not seriously pressed.

Most of our ruling class have been to Public Schools. These are boarding schools where the children are kept segregated from the opposite sex during the period of their adolescence. The general atmosphere in such schools is one of sexual frustration; adolescent sexuality there takes the form of various kinds of homosexual attachment and practice (which is

more or less furtive), and of sadism which is well organised and catered for by the school authorities. This system of schooling is held up as the ideal by our ruling class, and such places as Horsley Hall, where the boys and girls associate with one another as much as they please, are pilloried as corrupting the "white souls" of the young.

It is a dangerous mistake to regard our ruling class reactionaries as bigotted old fools; on the contrary, they have the wisdom to see wherein lies their own narrow interest. The fact that they put on a dim-witted hypocritical act of being concerned for the "purity" of adolescents, while they probably remember quite well their own adolescent period as a festering sink of frustration and furtive half-satisfactions—is a sign of cunning and a shrewd appreciation of reality. They know by the practical experience of ruling that makes young people docile or rebellious, and their traditional wisdom is such that they have managed to preserve their rule by rigidly upholding certain standards which they may privately recognise as hypocritical bunk.

Mr. Copping, who has been chiefly responsible for Horsley Hall, seems to be naively unconscious of the full revolutionary implications of his school, a condition which is fairly common among pioneers who have a limited objective in view. He is sincerely concerned for the welfare and happiness of children, and appears to attribute the persecution which his efforts have aroused to stupidity and misunder-

standing. Perhaps the authorities understand the implications of his pioneer work only too well.

Mr. Copping has devoted time and money in the past to publicity for his educational venture, and such publicity has had its value. Who can tell what widespread ripples of revolt have been spread by his staging of a demonstration of how easily half-a-dozen boys can thrash any man who brandishes a cane at them. But he has not realised fully that all action of revolutionary implication must be conducted with due regard to the power and vigilance of counter-revolutionary forces.

Mr. Copping appears to have been extraordinarily open and frank to a police detective who questioned him; he has yet to learn the truth of Stirner's maxim when confronted with the forces of the law which seek to entrap us, we should have the courage of a lie.

If one is to conspire with children to enable them to achieve the freedom which is not granted to them by law and repressive tradition, one must open their eyes to the full necessity for observing the conditions of conspiracy. One must not let children grow up with too trusting an attitude to adults, or they will soon have their confidence abused. A few determined lies in the right quarters, and less trust of those who acted as informers in the case, and Horsley Hall School might have been saved to continue its work. Frankness is no virtue when it puts a weapon in the hands of our enemies.

There are a number of schools in the country similar to Horsley Hall, and all of them could have been closed down years ago on evidence no stronger than that which was used to dish Horsley Hall. Let us blazon abroad the principles of free education under which these schools operate, but be very chary of letting damaging evidence fall into the hands of our enemies. G.



THE purging fever has broken out in Moscow again, and this time the principal indirect victim is no less a figure in Russian literature than Dostoevsky, for a certain Professor Kirpotin has been publicly attacked and expelled from the Gorky Institute of World Literature for writing a book in which he tried to justify Dostoevsky.

Dostoevsky was described as "a wicked, arrant enemy of the revolution and of revolutionary democrats". No doubt Dostoevsky did have some pretty great faults; at times he toadied to the Tsarist authorities, attacked the Populists and Nechaev, and even anticipated the Bolsheviks themselves by his blatant Russian nationalism. But at least it can be said in his justification that at one time in his life he did stand before a firing squad for revolutionary activities and afterwards spent years in Siberian prisons; we have yet to hear that the pundits of the Gorky Institute of World Literature have stood before a GPU firing squad for their activities against the present heirs of the Tsar. Naturally, we do not claim that this in any way justifies Dostoevsky's later attitudes, but it does make them more easy to understand.

But, however arrant an enemy of the revolution Dostoevsky may have been, he had a right to his opinions, and Professor Kirpotin has an equal right to defend him, and the Moscow authorities are merely displaying the very reactionism of which they accuse the famous novelist by trying to suppress his defence.

It is significant that one of the accusations levelled against Kirpotin is that of "cosmopolitanism", and that the attack on him comes at the same time as an attack on André Malraux for having said that a man is more human the less he is tied to his country. The Russian spokesman contended that "Soviet patriotism is inseparably linked with proletarian internationalism". A long road, indeed, from the days of the early Marxists, when "the worker had no fatherland"! But one wonders how this fits in with the attack on Dostoevsky, who was, after all, one of the first exponents of the idea that a great Russian empire was a guarantee of well-being for the whole world.

G.W.

## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

- Socialismo y Humanismo** by Ernest, Ediciones Reconstruir, Buenos Aires.
- La Filosofia de Lenin** by Anton Pannekoek, Centro de Estudios Materialistas, Santiago de Chile.
- Conscription Conflict** by Denis Hayes, Sheppard Press, London.
- Controllo delle Nascite** by Cesare Zaccaria and Giovanna Berneri, Quaderni di Rivoluzione Libertaria, Napoli.
- Luigi Fabbri** by Ugo Fedeli, Gruppo Editoriale Anarchico, Torino.
- Libertà e Rivoluzione**, Michele Bakunin, Scelta delle opere a cura di Carlo Doglio, Istituto Editoriale Italiano, Milano.
- Revista Americana de Educacion**, La Plata.
- Confessions of a Congress Delegate** by Feliks Topolski, London Gallery Editions.
- Fra Contadini** by Errico Malatesta, Quaderni di Rivoluzione Libertaria, Napoli.
- Dove va la Confederazione Generale del Lavoro** by Alberto Meschi, Torino.
- Babel**, Revista de Arte y Critica, Santiago de Chile.
- Il Socialismo** di Carlo Pisacane by Alessandro Bagnato, Edizioni Bonelli, Vibo Valentia.
- Concord Scenes** by May Alcott, Thoreau Society Booklet Number Six, U.S.A.
- Comparative Systems of Law-Enforcement** by Charles Reith, Peace News Pamphlet, London.
- Interim**, Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 3, Washington.
- Man for Himself** by Erich Fromm, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Wordsworth** by Herbert Read, Faber and Faber, London.

## from our stock . . .

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## FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

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THIS book\* is, in effect, Part Two of *The Village Labourer* by Barbara and J. L. Hammond. Reg. Groves takes up the story of the struggle of the rural workers where the Hammonds left it and brings it right up to date. I have several times wondered when somebody was going to undertake this obvious and necessary task, and now it has been done—and adequately done, too.

The book is written in a "popular", journalistic style which has both limitations and advantages. One limitation is the tendency of Reg Groves to describe imaginatively some of the more dramatic events in his story, rather as a B.B.C. programme on the subject might do, bringing a little fictional description to help put across the historical facts. Though these small embellishments are quite well done, they are more in place in a historical novel and would have been better omitted in what purports to be a record of facts.

The main advantage, however, of Groves' approach to his subject lies in its simplicity and warm humanity which makes the book stirring and enjoyable reading for any class of person and perhaps especially for the working people about whom, and about whose predecessors, it is written. This is social history made vivid and understandable for man and one hopes that many of them will read it, particularly the younger generation of farm-workers who would do

**SHARPEN THE SICKLE!** *The History of the Farm Workers' Union*, by Reg. Groves (Porcupine Press, 12s. 6d.).

WE are glad that the two editorial comments in the last issue of *Freedom* should have provoked considerable interest, and the fact that so much space in this issue has been given to the views of comrades will, we hope, encourage other readers to contribute regularly to the correspondence columns of our paper.

We cannot hope to deal adequately with all the letters published since so many different points are discussed, but since the controversy on what workers want was started by our comrade Mat Kavanagh's letter, we think that special attention should be given to our comrade's reply to our comment on his original article. Comrade Kavanagh has most significantly shifted his position, for in the third paragraph of his letter he takes great trouble to show that the "New Anarchists" have not discovered a new approach to anarchism through Sex and Education (who said that they had?) and he gives examples of such activity forty years ago, adding his approval of these efforts. But in his first contribution, Comrade Kavanagh stated that the workers "are not interested in Sex, Art and Education. It's no argument to say they should be, they are not, as all who are in direct connection with them know . . ." It is true that Comrade Kavanagh states that this anarchist interest in Sex and Education forty years ago came second in importance to industrial agitation, but nevertheless he admits the importance of these questions, and we feel they have not lost interest during the ensuing years.

Comrade Kavanagh quotes on the credit side of the "agitational propaganda in the past", the General Strike of 1926, but he does not think it of importance to put on the debit side the fact that it failed. He also refers to the Spanish struggle as a proof of the "value of mass propaganda, etc." In fact, Spain is just a country where "Sex and Education" were lapped up by the workers and the anarchist propagandists realised that they could not win over workers to their ideas simply by slogans. The literature of the Spanish movement was of a very high level intellectually, both before and during the struggle against Franco. And Gerald Brenan in the *Spanish Labyrinth*, describing what the Spaniards called an *obrero consciente* (a conscious worker) pointed out that among other things "he sub-

well to remember that their present greatly improved economic position has only been achieved by the long, bitter and often heartrending struggle of those who worked before them in the fields of England.

### Life on the Land

By the very nature of farming the economic fight of the rural workers was in many ways an even harder one than that fought by the workers of the towns; harder because the urban worker had, at any rate in theory and usually in practice, a wide choice of employers. If one fired him he could usually get taken on by another. Not so the farm-worker who, before the coming of the bicycle and public transport to the country districts, was restricted in his search for employment to those farmers whose holdings were within reasonable walking distance of the insanitary and overcrowded hovel that he called home; and reasonable walking distance might mean two or three miles each way, morning and evening, after a 12-hour day. Within that radius, especially in large-farm districts, the choice of employers was small, and if he incurred the displeasure of one, or if he himself actually had the audacity to give notice, he was quite likely to find himself refused employment by all the farmers in the district, who have always tended to show a united front against the workers, even when they were at odds with each other personally. If he lived in a tied cottage, his home went with his job (as it still does) and if he lost the latter, he automatically lost the former

also. Even if his cottage was not tied to his job, his landlord would quite probably be personally known to his employer who might, and often did, persuade the landlord to turn him out and let the cottage to another man who was more "reliable", i.e., docile. Furthermore, in the sparsely populated countryside, and in the villages, everybody knows everybody's business, and for a labourer to be known to be even sympathetic to the work of a union, or not to attend divine service regularly, was frequently enough to cause him to lose both home and job.

These conditions, in an only slightly modified form, existed right up to the outbreak of the last war, when even to attend a Labour Party meeting was often very risky for many a farm-worker. These facts help to explain what often appeared to the visiting town-dweller to be the subservient and cap-touching attitude of the rural workers.

### Challenge and Response

*Sharpen the Sickle!* is the history of the workers' struggle against such a humiliating existence, a struggle in which the employing class seemed to hold, as I have indicated, almost all the cards. One advantage, and one advantage only, the farm-workers had, and will always have, and cannot have, in their struggle with the employers—and that is that, unlike industrial operations, farm operations have to be performed at certain seasons and in certain weather conditions. A strike therefore, holds much more terror for the farmer, who has to get his crops

## Worker, Intellectual or Human?

(See Readers' Letters—page 4)

scribed to at least one anarchist paper, read the little books on history, geography and botany brought out by Ferrer's press and held forth on these subjects whenever possible."

And to take Mat Kavanagh's second paragraph last. We have certainly not suggested that the alternative is between a "small and select audience of already convinced anarchists listening to lectures on Art, Sex, etc.," or getting out on "to the streets and talking to people who have never heard us". Again Comrade Kavanagh has shifted the argument which was on the rôle of *Freedom* which, being the printed word, can do neither of the above. But we have had constantly in mind that it can assist both these activities. For, unlike Mat Kavanagh, we do not think it a waste of time to direct some attention to the "converted". As we have already stated, we think it necessary to be always subjecting our ideas to examination in the light of new developments and discoveries in social sciences. To give a concrete example: we think that Ferrer's Modern School was most advanced for 1901 and, as Mat Kavanagh points out, has had its influence on present-day efforts at free education, but it is fantastic that in 1949 there should be in Europe anarchist functional groups actually in existence for the propagation of the ideas of Ferrer's "modern School"! These comrades apparently have not yet heard of Freud, though he has even penetrated Hollywood!

There is also the continual harping

on "intellectuals" and "working-class" by some of our correspondents. It may have been noticed that we did not make such distinctions in our contribution in the last issue of *Freedom*. We are primarily interested in reaching men and women, irrespective of whether they wield a pick or push a pen, whether they receive a salary or a wage or whether they do or do not wear a collar and tie. If, however, one is to be labelled an intellectual the moment one starts exercising one's thinking capacities or because one directs one's approach to people who are prepared to do a little thinking for themselves then by all means call us, and those who understand *Freedom* and *Resistance*, intellectuals. But in that case, how many manual workers would have to be labelled "intellectuals"? This continuous attack on "intellectuals"—as applied to people who dare to think and who write in words of more than one syllable—is wearing rather thin (especially since our protagonists are always referring with approval to Bakunin, Malatesta and Kropotkin) and is certainly not assisting the development of our movement. In our movement there is room for many different approaches. Some groups may be more effective with the spoken word, others by the written word; some by activity inside their factory, others inside their office. But it is too much to expect that the objective—the realisation of anarchism—be always to the forefront, or else what is there to prevent us from being absorbed by the day to day struggles within the capitalist system which ultimately lead to choosing of the lesser evil and joining the army of despair at the polling booths? As Comrade Kavanagh so well puts it: "Better by far to be in the company of the revolutionaries of the past than to be a timid dilettante reformer of to-day"! But even better we would suggest is to "learn from the revolutionaries of the past and apply with the knowledge of the present".

## ANGELINA

THOSE of us who have been able to get to cinemas where European films are shown, have had the chance of seeing during the last few years, the truly remarkable rebirth of the Italian cinema, in a series of films of contemporary life in Italy—"Open City", a story of resistance to the Nazis and Fascists in Rome; "To live in Peace" probably the best of them, which told of the solidarity shown by villagers to escaped prisoners; "Shoeshine", the story of two shoe-shine boys who are sent to the Regina Coeli jail in Rome and epitomise Kropotkin's saying that "prisons are the universities of crime"; and "Paiza", a collection of "human stories" during the war in Italy.

The latest of these films to reach London\* is "Angelina", directed by Luigi Zampa, with Anna Magnani as sharp-tongued housewife who becomes the spokeswoman for the people of the slum suburb of Pietralata at Rome. Unable to feed their large families, Angelina and her neighbours raid the store-room of the grocer who prefers to sell his rationed foods on the black market. The success of their direct action encourages them to apply it in other fields, which they do so as to get an adequate water supply and a bus service. Then, when floods drive the people out of their squalid houses and they are billeted in an old stable, their newly-acquired independence of spirit, of which Angelina is the vocal expression, prompts them to "squat" in a nearly com-

pleted block of luxury flats. The police arrive and the sergeant, who is none other than Angelina's husband, has to arrest her, amid the jeers of the neighbours. But the landlord dare not prosecute since, when he drew the housing subsidy from the Institute for State Housing, he spent a mere pittance on building the hovels on the marshes of Pietralata and the rest on the high-rental luxury flats. By this time, Angelina has become famous and is approached by various politicians who want her support for their party. From this point on the story falls into a typical "Hollywood" formula—Angelina is duped by the wicked landlord, is spurned by her former supporters, her husband is disgusted at being left to do the chores, and she is imprisoned on a false charge. But all ends happily, with a romance between her pretty daughter and the landlord's son who has a social conscience, a change of heart in the landlord who allows the squatters to remain, while Angelina disillusioned with politics decides that a woman's place is, after all, in the home.

Despite the deterioration of the plot, after a very interesting start, the film succeeds because of the very fine acting of Anna Magnani and the witty and pointed dialogue. With all its shortcomings, it is still delightful.

C.

\* At the Academy Cinema, Oxford Street.

sown or harvested at a particular time, than it does for the factory owner who, if necessary can shut up shop and wait for starvation to force the workers back and then continue production where it was left off. At the same time, to organise a strike effectively over a large rural area is much more difficult to achieve than when the workers are concentrated thickly on one locality and in large units of production, as in the case in industry.

Reading this book, one is struck throughout by the contrast between the modesty of the men's demands and the ferocity and savagery with which they were almost invariably refused outright. For requesting, usually in the most respectful terms, for an increase on their starvation wages of two or three shillings, men were sacked, intimidated and thrown out of their homes on a vast scale as if they had threatened revolution.

One also notices throughout the history of the hundred years' struggle, the dual rôle played by religion, a duality which has many historical counterparts. While organised religion was always staunchly behind the farmers and landowners—the local parson was frequently even more reactionary and domineering than some of the squires and farmers—the dissenting religious groups, above all the Methodists, were the very core of the workers' resistance. This religious strain is still noticeable even in the present N.U.A.W., more especially amongst the organisers and "high-ups" in the union.

### The Limitations of Trade Unionism

From the early days of the old National Union, in "the seventies" (dominated, perhaps too much, by the personality of Joe Arch), the pros and cons of the organisation of trade unionism were becoming apparent. Already at that date a tendency to over-centralisation, to place all power and decisions on local, as well as national, matters in the hands of the executive was becoming evident; though the "National" showed wisdom in its rule that "it permitted only farm-labourers to sit as delegates for the annual conference or to be elected on to the executive".

It is also significant that such failures and set-backs as the unions encountered nearly all occurred when, instead of concentrating exclusively on the economic aspect of the workers' struggle, they allowed themselves to get involved in political intrigues. First, the Liberal Party, in the first decade of this century, tried to infiltrate into the "National" and were, in the last resort, more concerned to obtain votes for the Party than to fight the workers' struggles with the farmers. Later, the Labour Party took over from the Liberals, particularly after the repeal of the Corn Production Act in 1921, and Ramsey MacDonald's betrayal of the farm-workers in the Great Norfolk Strike that occurred in 1923, is well enough known.

I have perhaps implied that steady progress has been made since "those days". Great progress in raising the status of the farm worker has indeed been achieved, but on the other hand, much also has been lost. Reading *Sharpen the Sickle!* one inevitably compares the great solidarity shown by all classes of workers in each other's struggles with the comparative apathy, and lack of solidarity with workers in other industries, that exists now. As recently as the Great Norfolk Strike just referred to, for example, over £11,000 was contributed to the N.U.A.W. Strike Fund, the bulk of it from fellow trade unionists in the towns. Likewise, the use of troops for strike-breaking is now common-place. Yet way back in 1872, when the Aldershot Command lent some soldiers to get in the harvest on a few strike-bound farms, "this action aroused a storm of protest and the following year the London Trades Council were able to get a special regulation enacted forbidding the use of troops to replace men on strike or locked out.

### The Way Ahead

These retrograde trends are in part due to the very nature of the trade union system which is, and always was even at its best, an inherent part of the whole capitalist society. The union's aim was never to change that society, but to modify its worst abuses. That was a very worthy aim and not to be disparaged, but it was not enough and inevitably led to the stability of the union's being ultimately bound up with the stability of the system which they supposedly fought. The limitations of the trade unions are made clear by Reg Groves at the end of this excellent history of one of them.

The N.U.A.W. "strives against capitalist agriculture only to get better conditions for its members, it seeks adjustment rather than drastic change. This, however, put the N.U.A.W. in a halting place, a half-way house, untenable in modern conditions. Not only does it leave the status of the farm-worker unchanged; it also leaves untouched the fundamental unsoundness of present-day agriculture. For capitalist industry and agriculture broke the essential and individual relationship between man, his work and community life, and the land, which was the basis of the older, subsistence farming. The freeing of land and labour from exploitation and destruction is only possible if it purposes to restore man's co-operative relationship with the soil."

GERALD VAUGHAN.



# Arming For Peace!

IN spite of the declarations by politicians on both sides of the Iron Curtain that all they desire is peace, astronomical sums are being spent throughout the world to perfect the weapons of destruction, and millions of men are being kept under arms when they could be assisting in rebuilding all that the last war has destroyed. In this country more than half of the estimated Income Tax for 1949 will be spent on "Defence" (£760 million). And in America it was officially stated that by the end of June of this year taxpayers

## FOREIGN COMMENTARY

will have contributed £850 million to Atomic Energy development alone. In giving these figures to an audience of 1,200 teachers, Mr. W. Kelly, manager of the New York operations office of the Atomic Energy Commission, gave as the credit side of this bill the fact that though the atomic bombs had not won World War II, those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945, had shortened the war by at least 8 days, and since the war had been costing 250 million dollars per day, the net saving was at least £400 million! How easy it is to explain everything in terms of money. Presumably, the additional misery and suffering caused by the atom bombs is an item which finds no place in Mr. Kelly's balance sheet.

★

The total expenditure by America on the "cold war" this year will amount to at least 10,000 million dollars (£2,500 million) according to the democratic Senator Tydings. In this figure he included E.R.P. credits.

It would be a most interesting task to draw up a list of all the countries in the world showing the number of men immobilised in the armed forces or engaged in war production and the quantities of raw material used in maintaining the armed forces and building the defences, etc. It might serve to bring the ordinary people to their senses and make them realise what is the major cause for world shortages of food and manpower.

It may be said that there is nothing new in all this, and it is quite true, but the facts are still there and it is only when they will be understood that we

## The Democratic Farce

(Continued from page 1)

this was no trivial record, so that the reverse of Labour may be taken to mean that Londoners do not attach as much importance to the social advances of the reformers as one might have expected. Now it is not to be supposed that the electors are unaware of the importance of such matters as housing, the health services and the rest. But it does seem likely that they have found that the achievement of these things, desirable as they are in themselves, does not in fact make for happiness and contentment. Local government concentrates on these matters but the citizen finds that the freer, fuller life eludes him. The same emptiness appears in the administration of national affairs. It is not merely that the manifest chicanery of political manoeuvring makes people apathetic; the same apathy extends to the well-meaning and immensely capable activities of such patently sincere administrators as Lord Beveridge. Political apathy is to be explained as a feeling that politics and the administration of affairs in our society somehow has nothing to do with life. It pushes us around, it limits us in all sorts of disagreeable ways, it even provides obvious needs—and yet it is somehow felt to be irrelevant.

Our administrations look after the sick, take care of the casualties of grosser poverty, provide facilities for technological education. But they do not provide a framework in which men, women and children can live a full and happy and creative life in ways which they themselves can determine. It does not take a very critical glance at the democratic machinery built up over the centuries to see that it cannot provide this framework. For it is not based on the idea that people should directly administer their own lives; it is a mere machinery for providing that they should delegate this administration to professionals, and they are conceded the "right" to choose which group of professional politicians shall be in, and which shall be out.

But until men can themselves determine their destinies, till they can learn from the experience of their own successes and failures, instead of awarding office or dismissal to the professional representatives for inflicting these things on them, they will continue to be apathetic. There is no need to feel despairing about that. It is a credit to the commonsense of the common man that he never can get very worked up about the choice between the greater or the lesser evil. The next step is to reject the choice altogether, and take a creative step forward in the direction of self-determination.

shall make progress. For this reason we must not tire of repeating them.

## KRAVCHENKO WINS

VICTOR KRAVCHENKO, author of *I Chose Freedom*, whose libel suit against the pro-Communist weekly *Les Lettres Françaises* was front-page news in the French Press, has been vindicated by the French courts on the charges that: (1) He was incapable of writing a book about the Soviet Union; (2) He was a "liar" and a "puppet" made in the U.S.A.; (3) He was an American agent specialising in anti-Soviet propaganda.

The judgement contained nothing sensational but it is interesting to note the judge's reasons for awarding mild damages against the defendants.

"The court praised them for their resistant attitude in 1944, the moment when Mr. Kravchenko quit his responsible office with the Soviet government.

"Because of their proven patriotism, the court decided to inflict light fines on the defendants."

How elastic is this word "patriotism", especially where Communists are concerned.

## AUSTRALIAN RACIALISM

A British United Press report (5/4/49) states that: "A United States Negro boxer, 'Tiger' Parkes, was put on board an aircraft at Sydney for deportation to San Francisco. He had been in prison since March 17th because he refused to obey an order directing him to leave the country, where he has lived (in South Australia) with his Australian wife and child for fifteen years."

This is not an isolated case of racialism in Australia but part of the Australian Government's policy of excluding non-whites, a policy which was reaffirmed by Immigration Minister Mr. Calwell, only last month.

## SELL-OUT OVER SPAIN?

THE Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs stated in an answer in the House of Lords recently that the Government could not consider appointing an Ambassador to Madrid so long as the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly in December, 1946, remained in force. The Government was not prepared to propose the annulment of this resolution or initiate discussions towards that end.

But he added, significantly we think, that "should the General Assembly decide to annul the resolution the Government would accept the decision."

## ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN PORTUGAL

THE Portuguese section of the I.W.M.A. (the anarcho-syndicalist international) known as the C.G.T., continues its struggle against the dictatorship, and from one of the latest issues of its illegal organ *A Batalha*, we take the following manifesto:—

"Since the advent of the dictatorship, we were the first to struggle against it, and we have always used and will continue to use all means to struggle against it, and perhaps we constitute the only serious obstacle it has had to face.

"If the revolutionary action of the C.G.T. had only been followed by a larger section of the workers, the dictatorship would never have been able to continue, and we should be faced by a vastly different situation to-day . . .

## THROUGH THE PRESS

### CAPITALIST SCHIZOPHRENIA

Sam Goldwyn, film producer, is suing himself. Superior Judge Paul Norse was asked this weekend to untangle twenty years complicated lease arrangements over the old United Artists Studio lot, owned jointly by Mr. Goldwyn and Mary Pickford.

Suing for partition of the multi-million-dollar lot are the Formosa Corporation and Samuel Goldwyn, Inc., both of which Miss Pickford calls "altar egos" of Mr. Goldwyn. Miss Pickford, who owns 41/80ths of the studio property, is principal defendant.

However, since Mr. Goldwyn, as an individual, leases space from her and the corporations to make films, he has been made a co-defendant as lessee. This, in effect, makes Goldwyn, the corporation, sue Goldwyn, the man.

N.Y. Herald Tribune, 22/3/49.

### SOVIET MEIN KAMPE

The Russian news agency Tass said today that the U.S.S.R. Geographic Society broadcast a special message to the Russian whaling fleet in the Antarctic informing them of Russia's recent claims in that region.

While the fleet has yet been at sea, Russian geographers have announced that a Russian expedition discovered Antarctica 130 years ago.

N.Y. Herald Tribune, 23/3/49.

## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

AT the beginning of this month, the Argentine Government seized 13,400 tons of newsprint from *La Nacion* and *La Prensa*, two big independent Buenos Aires newspapers.

Each was allowed to keep only enough newsprint for one week. Henceforth the government will dole out paper among all Argentine newspapers every week.

Expropriation of the newsprint was ordered on March 7th. The government said it was designed to save dollars.

Of course, one excuse is as good as another, so long as it's not the truth.

LIBERTARIAN.

## Perons Continue Offensive

PERON and his wife continue their offensive against the free trade union movement of Argentina. In recent months the government has been declaring strikes illegal with increasing regularity. No opportunity is overlooked to weaken, or if possible destroy, those labour organisations which continue to refuse to submit to government orders.

In August, 1948, the Gastronomic Workers Federation was scheduled to hold its annual convention in the provincial city of Cordoba. This is one of the most staunchly independent of all the Argentine trade union groups. The delegates were already gathered for their conference when the government suddenly issued a decree forbidding them to meet.

More recently, the Graphic Workers Federation, which is also predominantly non-Peronista, at least in its leadership, in its bi-annual convention, continued to refuse to join the government-controlled General Confederation of Labour (C.G.T.). This may go far to explain the hostile attitude which the government has taken to the recent printing trades strikes. The first of these was in the provincial city of Rosario, where the city's papers were tied up by a printers' walkout early in January.

### Illegal

The second was a walkout early in February on the newspapers of Buenos Aires. This walkout was quickly declared illegal by the government, the strikers were forbidden to hold meetings and when they tried to do so on Feb. 9th, there was a clash with the police. This despite the fact that the printers' federation in Buenos Aires itself tends to be friendly to Peron.

Other groups have also felt the heavy hand of the regime. The headquarters of two locals of the Shipbuilders Federation, a group of more or less anarcho-syndicalist

## WHAT HOPES FOR AN AMNESTY?

IT is four years since *Freedom*, in support of the *Freedom Defence Committee* campaign, demanded an amnesty for war-time deserters from the Services who were still "on the run". The voices raised in support of this campaign were few at that time. But the issue has been receiving more and more support and in spite of the stubbornness of the Defence Minister, Mr. A. V. Alexander, to admit that the only solution was an Amnesty, questions about these 8,000 hunted are regularly put to the Government, and though the answer never varies, at least one national newspaper uses the occasion to write an editorial comment. This hap-

pened when the matter was raised a fortnight ago, and the *Manchester Guardian* (6/4/49) devoted an editorial column in support of a general amnesty. We quote some interesting factual material from this article:

"There are, it seems, eight thousand war-time deserters from the three fighting services still on the run in Britain, and the Minister of Defence is still pursuing them, though without marked success. These men cannot live at home for fear of arrest. As a result, their wives and families are also victims of their irregular and unnatural life. Some of these men have been absentees for nearly nine years, other for only five or six years.

"There are another ten thousand deserters with homes in Eire; they are safely home with their families. Australia, it seems, had 7,879 war-time deserters from the forces; they were pardoned in June, 1946. Canada had 14,100; they were pardoned in August, 1946. South Africa wiped the slate clean in December, 1945. But Mr. Alexander is not so soft. In any case, deserters dare not be voters.

"Precisely the same problem existed in Britain after the 1914-18 war, but by March, 1922, a less vindictive Government had ceased to hound these wretched men into gaol. A deserter was enabled to get his discharge without missing a day's work or attracting any publicity whatever; he had to report to an Army unit; unless his record-sheet showed that he was wanted for some other grave charge, he became at once a free man."

The editorial concludes:

"It is hard to see any reason why there should not be an amnesty now for all who deserted before the end of 1945. There are difficulties, as everyone knows. But the plight of sixteen or twenty thousand unhappy fugitives and their families cannot be brushed urbanely aside for administrative reasons, as Mr. Stewart seems to imagine. The Labour party should be the last party to fall into this callous error."

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## THE GOD RACKET

Every few months, a long-suffering public is confronted by some unctuous, new fanatic who claims to be The Messiah.

The latest, robed and bearded in the traditional guise of Christ, has flown here from America (return fare, £156) and set out to seek the meek and humble from a £70-a-week suite in Claridge's.

Then, since a saviour may fittingly endure great hardship, he resolved to face the rigours of a furnished service-flat in fashionable St. James's.

Pencovic attracts more curiosity here than in his own country. For there, Sister Aimee Semple McPherson, thrice-married hot gossip, set a dollar record which none of her many imitators has yet equalled.

A fifty-piece band used by play in her million-dollar Angelus Temple at Los Angeles, while lantern slides exhorted the faithful to patronise advertisers in Aimee's two newspapers. Squads of high-pressure ushers made a collection. Then, before a stage-setting of the Holy City, Aimee began her service. A spot-light revealed her as a simple Puritan—in £500 satin robes. Beside her were two other Puritans. They wore cotton.

Aimee—"Christianity's star saleswoman"—won 100,000 converts, and many more dollars.

When she was not engaged in the Temple, undergoing elaborate beauty treatments, interviewing her dressmakers or feuding in the courts with rival evangelists, she spread the Word in the highways and byways.

On one such mission, she received a £1,000-a-week "Call" to a New York cinema. On another, she put through real estate deals which caused the income-tax authorities to sue for £4,000 arrears.

When she died from an overdose of drugs, she was buried beneath a fabulous, marble monument, while 6,000 followers chanted: "She will rise. She will rise."

So far, she hasn't.

Closely rivalling her past glories—of course, in America—is Father Divine, a Negro who claims to be God.

Sleek Father Divine has a formidable bank balance and extensive property holdings. He owns two newspapers, many restaurants, beauty parlours and dress shops. He also has a mink-coated white wife, several limousines, an entourage of dusky angels with such poetic names as "Sweet, Sweet Love", and as much fried chicken as he can eat.

## BLUE PURGE

Many Conservative clubs have begun a purge of "doubtful or undesirable political elements in their midst," Lord Munster, chairman of the Association of Conservative Clubs, told a conference of 800 delegates at Blackburn to-day.

Evening Standard, 19/3/49.

## BATTLING M.P.'s

The worst fight of all in the Italian Chamber's 51-hour non-stop debate on the Atlantic Treaty came at 5.30 to-night, directly the result of the vote had been declared. Three hundred and forty-two deputies voted for the negotiations, 170 against, and there were 19 abstentions.

The fight, the third in this painful long session, was ferocious and more like all-in wrestling without rules. Swarthy ushers finally separated the fighting M.P.'s after ten frightful minutes only to find the battle had started again in the lobby. Sirens were sounded and the crowded diplomatic and public galleries were cleared. One back-bench deputy pulled off his vest and threw it twenty yards down into the middle of the fray.

Manchester Guardian, 19/3/49.

## WHY BOTHER?

We may have polled only 854 votes at St. Pancras, but we have got China.—Mr. Harry Pollitt.

The Observer, 20/9/49.

Sunday Pictorial, 20/3/49.



# LETTERS

MAT KAVANAGH REPLIES

DEAR COMRADES,

As an "older" anarchist, may I take some of your space to reply to the criticism that has been provoked by my letter in *Freedom* of 5th May.

My aim was to rouse a militant anarchist movement. What is the best method: to have a very small and select audience of already convinced anarchists listening to lectures on "Art, Sex and Education", or to get out on to the streets and talk to people who have never heard of us? The reports of the Birmingham and Liverpool groups is proof of my argument. They have found from experience that to make new contacts you must go to the people and not wait for them to come to you. Perhaps the difference is that the "Mat Kavanagh" work and hope for a revolutionary movement and their critics for a literary and academic circle of theoreticians.

The "New Anarchists" need not flatter themselves that they have found a new approach to anarchism through the liberation of sex-relations. Forty years ago, in the U.S.A., an anarchist paper *The Fire-Brand* was devoting nearly all its space to the discussion of sex questions, as also was *Lucifer*, and in this country there was *The Adult*. Ferrer and his "Modern Schools" woke interest in new methods of education, pamphlets were published on both sides of the Atlantic and there can be little question that his influence has been felt on present-day efforts at free education. The older anarchists were busy fostering and helping these new trends, but were not diverted from the main task of agitating for the organisation of a militant working-class for direct action on the industrial plane.

We may be asked what we have achieved by our agitational propaganda in the past. We can truthfully claim that by propagating the idea of the General

Strike we helped to make possible the General Strike of '26. The late Tom Mann said at a Liverpool meeting that the local anarchist group had done more than any other body to create the militancy that was shown there. And if anything should come of the "Workers' Control" movement along really revolutionary lines it will only be in so far as we have been active in spreading our ideas. If the workers were shown the true facts of how much their wages are worth today compared with, say, ten years ago, it would most likely create a storm that would help to kill the present prevailing apathy.

I do not like the metaphysics of materialism, if by such is meant that in a governmental system it is possible to find a way or method of making anarchism a way of life. My freedom can only be gained when my fellows are free. Solidarity is the way by which we can achieve that end, and that by revolutionary action. Spain is sufficient evidence to prove the value of mass propaganda. The years of work put in by the CNT-FAI made possible the splendid resistance offered to the reactionaries and also the magnificent reconstruction in Catalonia and Aragon.

I am convinced that a vigorous propaganda can only produce a militant action, that an anarchist movement without any working-class roots, without any backing from the struggling workers, is but a very anemic ghost of what Bakunin and Malatesta conceived a Social Revolution to be. If I am clinging to the past, its not worse for that and is something to be proud of. Better far to be in the company of the revolutionaries of the past than to be a timid dilettante reformer of to-day.

Yours fraternally,  
MAT KAVANAGH.

## FOR THE GRAND CAUSE OF ANTI-SEX!

DEAR COMRADES,

Having just re-read Mat Kavanagh's letter in *Freedom*, in which he says: "Workers, male or female, are not interested in Sex, Art or Education. It's no argument to say they should be, they are not, as all who are in direct connection with them know", and also having heard other anarchists support this viewpoint at Endsleigh Gardens, it can quite safely be assumed that these comrades are in direct contact with the workers and know what they are talking about.

As I work in a bookshop and never see a "worker" from one week's end to another, I can only—with any degree of safety—talk about books. Which is what I aim to do.

In 1940, Penguin Books Ltd., published a book entitled *The Physiology of Sex*, which has since been reprinted five times. This means—at a minimum estimate—

that there are 60,000 copies of the book in circulation. From which we can draw certain conclusions:—

(a) That certain anarchists are mistaken about what the workers are interested in; or

(b) That the comrades who hold the above viewpoint are correct. Which means that all the people who bought the book are either middle-class intellectuals, bosses, bureaucrats or what have you.

The first can safely be ruled out as it is doubtful that clear-sighted anarchists could be fooled into believing something that is false.

Therefore that leaves us with a minimum of 60,000 intellectuals interested in sex. As the workers as a class are directly opposed to the intellectual, it seems that the logical thing to do is to start to propagate an anti-sex campaign.

Firstly, a paper should be started, in which all sex would be taboo—except for full reports on all cases of rape, sexual murders, etc., in which the worker is greatly interested.

Once this has been started, all the workers of the world will unite in the grand cause of Anti-Sex.

Then! the formation of a Free Society. Free for everything—except Sex.

London. AL KNIGHT.

## Meetings and Announcements

### UNION OF ANARCHIST GROUPS: CENTRAL LONDON

Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m.

At 8, Endsleigh Gardens, W.C.1.

APRIL 17th No Meeting  
APRIL 24th Open Discussion  
MAY 1st Open Air Meeting at Hyde Park

### SUMMER SCHOOL

will be held this year in Liverpool on Sat. 30th, Sun. 31st July, and Mon. 1st August.

Accommodation and meals available. Will readers who would like to attend, assuming the cost to be reasonable, please write to:

Joan Sculthorpe,  
Flat C, 45, Catharine Street, Liverpool, 8.

### 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

PUBLIC MEETINGS

in the BULL RING.  
Saturday, 30th April 7 p.m.  
Anti-Militarist Meeting  
Sunday, 1st May 6.30 p.m.  
May Day Rally  
Speaker: Mat Kavanagh

### GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP

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

# Do Workers Really Care About Art, Sex, Education and All That?

DEAR COMRADES,

Nobody seems to have considered the time factor in the approach to the working-class and it seems to me that if "What the workers are interested in" reflects the attitude of the editors of *Freedom*, they are unlikely to do very much towards the establishment of anarchism when circumstances once again usher in "more hectic days". When I wrote of concentrating upon the approach to intellectuals, I suggested this only as a suitable work for the present time until circumstances change, not "until we have a movement of militant anarchists". A movement of militant anarchists we must have, and then fate and the fate of anarchism will be decided by the Time Factor, not by their detailed knowledge of Read-Reich-Neill. Let us attract the intellectual by all means possible but don't let us form little esoteric groups for the discussion of Read-Reich-Neill and call that Anarchism. I am not condemning these theories—I am in complete agreement that their practical application must be an integral part of anarchist society.

I agree that it would be ridiculous to magnify every little workers' dispute in *Freedom* but if we are to do any practical work for anarchism when the time is ripe, there must be a further study for the intellectual anarchist—a study more topical than Kropotkin and Godwin—more topical than Art and Orgasms and Awful Children, and that study is How to Approach the Working-class and every other class to-day. We have to learn how to approach people to-day when it is to-day, and to-morrow when it is to-morrow. And this aspect of an approach suited to its time and subject must be discussed in *Freedom*. If you go to work in a foreign country, it is possible to learn the rudiments of the language first, but if you want to convey your opinions to a man who has lived a different life in the same country, you can't learn the first thing about it because no-one will teach you—and what you do learn in the end is by experience accompanied by a lot of disillusionment and wasted effort.

For instance, there is when to give and when to charge for literature. It took

## FALSE TEETH OR READ-REICH-NEILL?

me a long time to learn that if you charge an intellectual for his first copy of *Freedom*, he will think you are mean and buy it in self-defence as he buys shoes on the doorstep and will not read it. On the other hand, if you are approaching a working-class man, if you give him his first copy of *Freedom* he will think you are "soft" and take it like a tract, and will not read it. Therefore you must give literature to the intellectual and sell it to the working-class. A simple point, but nobody has ever given any guidance on it in *Freedom*.

Another thing the working-class do not like is the sort of propagandist who makes fun of his opponents. This seems to be a failing of revolutionary and reactionary speakers, but there is everywhere a complete distrust of the man who is "clever" at someone else's expense. I know it is a waste of a beautiful phrase if you don't use those slick words that would completely quash your opponent, but we shall achieve so much more if we express our theories with sincerity and simplicity when approaching the working man; and, in fact, his distrust of the man who is "clever" is one of his most valuable assets.

Another point—it's no use complaining that the Government services now absorb 40% of the national income and expect any support from the working man. The payment for it all is a terrible drain upon your financial resources if you are wanting to buy the latest Read-Reich-Neill, but you cannot convince the man who works in the mill, in the mine, on the dock that it isn't worth while. He has 4 or 5 kids and a taste for beer and tobacco—and a conscience. And he thinks his conscience is the Voice of God not just the conscious part of his super-ego, so he's all for the State resolving a few of his conflicts and providing his wife's false teeth.

Even to-day, in the Welfare State there are at least two obvious points in which the co-operation of the working-class can and must be achieved. Firstly, a concrete stand against war and conscription and

secondly an attack on the class distinction within working-class life. One of the greatest difficulties in revolutionary activity to-day is that the world is not divided into working-class, middle-class and upper class as is popularly supposed. The lower one goes in the social scale the greater the snobbishness to the neighbours. There are classes among the coloured men who live in the ports—in their own community they are graded according to their race as well as their manner of earning their living. There are classes among the prostitutes from the "common business girls" to those who are "run" and those who live with one man for six months or more at a time, and the classes and sub-divisions of the "respectable" working-class population are too diverse to enumerate. The supreme respectability of the working-man is only superseded by that of his wife. This extreme snobbishness does not arise from pride—it arises from the purely praiseworthy desire for self-respect. But it is one of the most important barriers to workers' control and we do not need to wait for an era more favourable to revolutionary activity to try to find a more desirable basis for self-respect. It is part of the dull slogging spade work that ought to be going on but isn't. At the moment the government is doing more to break down this snobbishness by introducing comprehensive social services than are the revolutionary movements.

We have got to recognise that to-day there is a slump in revolutionary anarchist activity and therefore to-day it is most difficult to be an anarchist, and the job of *Freedom* in these days is to keep up the morale of the anarchist forces; to concentrate on the attraction of the intellectual into the movement, but all the time to point out that although it is very pleasant discussing the latest Read-Reich-Neill ideas, the job of the anarchist is to get these ideas translated into the life of the ordinary man in the street by attacking to-day at those points at which his armour is most vulnerable and to carry on with that dull monotonous work until to-morrow when "in that great dawn to be alive, 'tis very heaven."

Fraternally, K. RANTELL.

## WHAT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR BAKUNIN...

DEAR COMRADES,

I cannot agree with most of your contributors to *Freedom* in their enthusiasm for the *Resistance* article on anarchism and especially with Gerald Vaughan's article, "We must Adjust". Indeed, I think it to be quite irresponsible and thus unanarchistic of the editors of *Resistance* to propagate their confused ideas all over the globe. For onlookers will say, "If the anarchists themselves don't know where they are going, can they expect us to follow them?"

Gerald Vaughan certainly has some novel ideas on what is the "realistic" approach to the so-called problem. It is he who makes the mistake when he contends that all Nationalism is counter-revolutionary. National culture and tradition have deep, historical roots which Kropotkin would not commend us for despising. And to-day we can see fast-approaching the all-powerful International State dominated by the U.S.A.

Are we willingly going to sacrifice our national independence for this and what it really means, war, and possible world-fascism? Real working-class internationalism, I maintain, resides in our wish that other peoples be free from our dominion over them. And he who would deny them their national liberty or withdraw from supporting them because they inscribe "Nation" on their banners is no anarchist, although he may be an internationalist—but then, so also is the Papacy, and who can deny W. Churchill that claim?

The more important mistake made by anarchists of Bakunin's day—according to Gerald Vaughan—was that they considered the social revolution to be inevitable due to, with other things, the increasing impoverishment of the working-class as Capitalism developed. G.V. denies the fact that this consideration has been borne out in practice. But then he lives in England and his thoughts do not

extend outside its confines. If he were an internationalist, he would know how others in other lands are experiencing poverty unto death. Let him think of Greece, India, China, Africa; let him ask our Spanish comrades who are daily tortured in Franco's prisons. They will tell him as to the effects of world capitalism. They ask for no "Messiah", but solidarity. And let us prove to them that the proletariat *does* still exist, and that we realise that our Social Security Scheme is built on their sufferings. I see no real problem presented to us to-day. The issue is quite clear. What was good enough for Bakunin is good enough for us. Let us learn from these earlier comrades and carry on their work where they left off. We don't need the misguidance of Burnham, nor the so-called wisdom of G. B. Shaw. What we do need is some proof that many of those who lay claim to the word "anarchist" are sincere in their hearts when it appears on their lips.

Fraternally,  
LES GRIFFITHS.

## EDITORS' VIEWS ON THE ABOVE ON PAGE 2

# Anarchist Activities

## CENTRAL LONDON MEETINGS

THE winter season of discussion-lectures at Endsleigh Gardens has continued since September with only one break (at Christmas) and with varying numbers in attendance. The character of the meetings has always been intimate, fairly informal, with the aim of allowing the maximum time for questions and discussion.

The group responsible for the meetings can hardly be said to be organised at all, and the continuity and standard of the lectures are proof that projects can be maintained efficiently without hard and fast organisation. Speakers are contacted, chairmen fixed and the literature organised without any leaders or discipline, and yet the work gets done. Admittedly, we have an advantage over many comrades in the provinces in that in London there is a good number of speakers to call upon, but we always find that if, for some reason, the speaker does not turn up, the audience is quite capable of keeping a meeting going with questions and discussion on a wide range of interest. Another way in which we are fortunate is in having a room in which we have been able to meet regularly for some years now, whereas some of our groups have had landlord-trouble.

In the subjects of the lectures we have tried to be as varied as possible, and have ranged from factual deliveries on Ireland, the Middle East and the Peckham Experiment, to such deep (for most of us!) discussions as John Turner's "Synthesis".

As was to be expected, the largest attendances were for Alex Comfort on "Can We Modify Human Conduct?"

and Herbert Read on "Existentialism, Marxism and Anarchism". On both occasions our limited space was crammed and many latecomers were unable to get in. While we welcome these audiences, we cannot help feeling a little sad that so many people who are obviously aware of our activities, only turn up when our more well-known speakers appear and very often lectures put on especially to deal with practical subjects which have been raised in discussion are poorly attended. Also we feel that the opposition which appears on these occasions (Trotskyist, S.P.G.B.'ers, etc.) does so because it satisfies the ego better to score a point off the eminent!

What we are really lacking in London, however, are comrades to carry on to a vigorous outdoor propaganda. We have practically no enthusiastic outdoor speakers, nor is the paper sold on the streets as it should be. These are activities which can be carried on with very little strain on our free time if the work is spread over a number, and it is work which must be done if our ideas are to have any impact at all in the Metropolis. In the past Anarchists have been well to the fore at Hyde Park and other pitches where propaganda is made. What are the chances of a recovery this coming summer?

## ANARCHISM IN OXFORD

AN anarchist group of undergraduates was formed in Oxford last year by John Larkman, and since the Summer Vacation a number of interesting informal discussions have been held, with members of the group taking turns to preface the

discussion with a short talk. Subjects have included "Anarchists and War"; a study of the rôle of the anarchist under the stress of wartime compulsion. The general conclusion reached was that the rôle of the anarchist in wartime did not differ from his peacetime struggle.

Undergraduates unsympathetic to the anarchist case led a discussion on "Objections to Anarchism" which focused a good deal of attention on the elementary problems of propagating anarchism.

This year, despite a far from encouraging attitude on the part of the authorities, a libertarian forum was launched, with a regular programme of meetings attracting larger audiences. This is known as the Heretics' Club (the name coming from Cambridge, where a similar club has existed for some time) and the inaugural meeting, addressed by Philip Sansom on the case for anarchism, attracted nearly 200 students. The club now has about 130 members—only a few of whom are anarchists, however—and represents the only platform for anarchism in the university, where Conservative, Labour, Communist and even Fascist ideas find expression.

Other speakers have included Stuart Morris on "The Pacifist and Conscript", F. A. Ridley on "The State and Religion", and Norman Haire on "Our Moral Code and its Defects". The last title was originally worded "Our Sexual Code..." but the authorities objected!

Lastly, a tribute must be paid to the club's Secretary, Geoffrey Ostergaard, who has worked really hard to ensure the club's success. We hope the group will remain as a permanent expression of Anarchism in Oxford.

## Special Appeal

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