

Civil Defence

DO OUR LEADERS SEEK OUR WELFARE?

MEN and women who have had some aim in life, and have tasted in some degree the fruits of achievement, look back over the past forty years and see constructive efforts checked and interrupted by two appalling episodes—the two world wars. Nor can one ignore the fact that the endeavour to live a useful, social, and fulfilled life was already before the second war increasingly being obstructed by near-war activities of a preparatory and defensive type. One cannot organise one's own life or plan constructive activities to improve the amenities of contemporary social living if the horizon is continually overcast by the possibility, the probability, of war.

Truisms, perhaps, but nevertheless one cannot hope to understand contemporary attitudes, the "mood of the masses", or whatever term is used to convey the prevailing mental and emotional climate, without taking account of the menace of war which has now become perpetual. More than any other factor it underlies the apathy, the frivolousness and indifference, and shallowness which everyone senses with a feeling of emptiness and defeat. War itself often brings a certain elation, partly from the relief from expectation and the grappling with the real thing, but partly also from the hope that it will be "the last time". Now, with the treaties still unsigned, the armies of occupation not yet withdrawn, the recruiting for Civil Defence and underlines once more the old anxiety, the threat of another war.

Does the Atom Threat change anything?

Some have argued that the production of the atom bomb has completely altered the terms of the problem, and that defence is quite impossible. The government have evidently decided otherwise, perhaps because they do not accept this view, perhaps because they do not know what to do and so go on doing the same old things.

Civil Defence is organised under the Home Secretary. There is the Civil Defence Corps responsible for communications, wardens, rescue work and ambulances; the Auxiliary Fire Service; and a Hospital Reserve Service. But there is also a Special Constabulary, ominously said to be necessary also in peacetime "to maintain order in an emergency". There can be no doubt that such a force constitutes one of the pillars of the status quo, to be used for repressive purposes if the ruling class were thrown on the defensive. Here we have a key aspect to the whole problem of "defence" and war preparation.

Peoples and Governments

It is generally conceded that the desire for peace is universal among the peoples of the world. It is the ambitious rulers of the opposing states in the cold war who seek world domination, are prepared to bathe the world in blood, and so on. Not that we doubt the general truth of such an assertion—only we would extend it to embrace all governments. The important point, however, is that whatever governments may wish, the people of

the world want nothing so much as to live in peace.

But do we ever find our way or any other government ever making any sincere overtures to the people of another state? Does their policy ever seek the welfare of the people as a whole? The answer is, No. While the British Government sees the rulers of Czechoslovakia winding up all political opposition, the British government votes for this Czech government for a place on the Security Council of the United Nations. Governments have more in common with one another (even when there is apparent hostility) than they have with the peoples of the world.

Those who see not alternative form of society are driven to accept the inevitability of wars and the necessity of Civil Defence. Yet such an attitude

provides an outlook so black—that of endlessly reiterated "Wars-to-end-Wars"—that it is surely time to re-examine the whole problem. We believe that no respite is to be expected from governments. War for them is an instrument of policy, disagreeable enough in itself, no doubt, but one which they are not unwilling to use. The way forward lies with a recognition of the fundamental longing for peace in ordinary people, and a refusal to take up arms and so add to the futility and immorality of war. Antimilitarism based on the desire for mutual support between peoples of the world provides the possibility of a more rational approach to the problems. Faith in the mass of people is a stumbling block for many. But the alternative vista of civil defence and war is even more intolerable. Such consideration leads to mutual co-operation and a changed attitude to the relationship of the ruled to the ruling.

NUTS

A Great Venture Ruined by Politics

THE groundnuts scheme has for long been so shrouded in official secrecy on the one hand, and been the subject of purely political controversy on the other, that it has been almost impossible to form a clear insight of what it is all about. Recently, however, a certain amount of light has been shed on the dark places and some kind of estimate can be made. The general picture which emerges is one of a grandiose and imaginative conception whose carrying out is being deformed by the characteristic social forces of our time, centralised planning and administration and an eye to political advantage and prestige.

The idea of making huge tracts of unproductive bush land in Africa yield substantial crops of edible oil and by-products in the way of cattle feed and husk products is a striking and progressive one. It provides an experiment in increasing the world's food output, and also makes a beginning of the gigantic task of making productive the limitless acres of Africa. As such it deserves close study, and can be seen as part of a trend in which gigantic agricultural projects are undertaken not by private individuals or enterprises, but by governments. The attempts of the Russian Five Year Plans to extend agriculture into Siberia, or the huge task of soil conservation undertaken by the U.S. government in the Tennessee Valley scheme, provide examples. Such projects are prototypes of the government sponsored economic enterprises of the future, and the achievements and defects of such schemes can be attributed to the administrative procedures which seem natural to governments.

Public imagination (whatever that is) has been caught by the fantastic disparity between estimated costs and the actual costs, between the acreages of the target and of the achievement. It is apparent that the original Wakefield Report was itself based on quite insufficient research, and was accepted

(after only two months' scrutiny) by the government without adequate checking. The report estimated the cost of clearing at £3 17s. per acre; the recently published report of the Overseas Food Corporation gives the actual cost at £15 per acre but estimates made by outside observers on the spot reckon the cost in some districts as between £60 and 80 per acre.

The misjudgment appears to have been due to an underestimation of the difficulties and consequent use of unsuitable machinery, which in any case seems to have been tested only in England, and which was quickly broken up by the appalling roots of the African scrub. Haste must also have been responsible for the lack of provision of repair stations and spare parts. Why were such misjudgments committed? Our time has not been lacking in examples of projects planned down to the last detail before being put into execution, yet the O.F.C.'s report declares: "The decision to proceed immediately and in headlong manner on an improvised basis has been amply justified by the valuable experience gained, by the acquisition of heavy clearing equipment and other materials which would no longer have been available in later years, and by the establishment during this year of an organisation with the requisite specialist branches and with a knowledge of the type and scope of the problems to be encountered."

The Labour Government proceeded immediately and in a headlong manner on an improvised basis with the comprehensive health services scheme (and have encountered similar difficulties), so that it

EMPLOYERS FIND CO-OPERATION PAYS

IT really is faintly amusing to sit back and watch the bosses tumble over themselves in their efforts to be ever-so-democratic—now that they find it pays.

From factory after factory all over the country the glad news is pouring in that post-war equivalents of the war-time Joint Production Councils are being set up—bigger and better than ever. Hearty and heartening news of the workers rolling up their sleeves and getting down to it is being pushed in the press, while stories of the nasty few who are not impressed are being relegated to back pages.

Now co-operation is a fine thing. We have always thought that it is better for men to co-operate than to compete. We have always known that the capacity to get together was one which, if tapped, would prove an incentive in itself, as well as representing a considerable saving in energy.

We were not, of course, the only ones to realise it. Years ago, the employers in many industries saw that instead of indulging in cut-throat competition with each other, they were going to defend their interests better by associating to fix prices at a profitable level. Thus monopolies and price-rings came into being.

But that was co-operation within one class—solidarity among the bosses, at it were. The "new" ideas which are going to rake in the elusive dollars are extending that same principle to a management-worker relationship and, because co-operation is more sensible, are showing results.

What is the Motive?

What we are interested in, however, is the motive behind this embracing of a fine principle. Is it all being done for fine reasons or base? Is it a desire for the welfare of the worker which motivates

"The supersition of almost all nations has been so horrible that, did not the monuments of it survive, it would be impossible to believe the accounts of it. The history of the world is the history of fanaticism."

VOLTAIRE.

managements—or is the secret in the last paragraph—the motive "to rake in the elusive dollars"?

Put like that, the reason is obvious. The purpose is purely and simply to increase output, and in the good old reformist way, the bosses are only too willing to make concessions and innovations which cost them nothing when it is proved to them that they not merely cost nothing but show a handsome profit.

One Leeds engineering firm, for instance, has increased its turnover from two million pounds in 1947 to six million in 1949, and has shown an 18 per cent. increase in production per man hour. And it has done this by setting up a works council through which the workers are told "why" certain decisions are taken by the management; by developing a sense of pride in their work among the workers and eliminating the feeling of insecurity by ensuring a constant pressure of orders; and by establishing an apprentice school where lads get a craft training before they go into the works. Simple, isn't it?

At this particular works, the workers pay is now 30 per cent. more than two years ago and prices of the finished goods (diesel electric generators) have been reduced by 25 per cent. But since production costs are down 10 per cent. and turnover is up by 200 per cent., we may take it that the shareholders are being well looked after, too.

Other factories are doing similar things, some doing more, and of much of them we can approve—the efforts to make workers "feel that they matter", for instance. It is our own view that workers do not realise just how much they do matter; do not realise that they are the important section of industry when it comes to production, and that the bench-workers and technicians between them could run the whole show.

Managements as a whole represent the shareholders, and their function is to see that profits are provided. We could well enough get on without that function, and since the whole point of the present democratisation of industry is to boost output since "Britain" needs dollars, we see it as merely a means to perpetuate capitalism at the (eventual, if not present) expense of the worker.

(Continued on page 4)

PEASANTS SEIZE LAND IN SOUTHERN ITALY

Direct Action Forces Government to Move

LARGE numbers of peasants in Sicily and Southern Italy are squatting on uncultivated big estates. It is, for instance, reported that on the fifteenth of this month, 1,000 peasants headed by a mayor, marched singing to take over 10,250 acres of uncultivated land in Palermo province. The police did nothing to stop them.

The *Observer* (20/11/49) reports that this month's direct action has "forced the Government into speedier rhythm than its political prudence hitherto allowed. Special land distributions to peasants in Calabria have been promised by the Government without waiting for passage of the national reform, while in Sicily landlords are reduced to attempting to buy off invaders."

"The Sicilian regional Government has voted the earliest transference of some tens of thousands of hectares of big landowners' property to peasant families—without awaiting the passage of the land reform acts in the national and regional parliaments."

sponsored scheme. But before the problem can be tackled in a rational and co-operative way, it must be regarded by both Europeans and Africans alike as a joint enterprise for the purpose of increasing the natural wealth of the soil. Such an approach only becomes possible when it is untrammelled by all the political scheming and centralised direction which characterise the government-initiated projects of our age.

ANARCHIST.

A Great Mexican Revolutionary

Magon: Anniversary of His Murder

The revolutionary tradition of the Mexican workers is well known, but little seems to be known in this country of the actual causes of revolt, or of the personalities thrown to the fore during the years of struggle. One of the most inspired and inspiring of Mexican Anarchists is Ricardo Flores Magón, who, for want of proper medical attention, was allowed to die in an American prison.

TWENTY-SEVEN years ago, in November, 1922, the body of Ricardo Flores Magón was delivered by the American Government, with their compliments, to the representatives of the Mexican Government. It was the end of a life devoted solely to fighting the social evils of his day, an epic life which followed the pattern of pre-1914 revolutionaries and which, though contemporary anarchism has moved away from the 'violent' solution, can offer certain lessons of faith and courage rarely paralleled.

But a picture of Magón's life must be preceded by one of Mexico at that time. At the beginning of this century, the country had been governed for thirty years by the dictator Porfirio Díaz, during which time the liberal Reform Laws introduced by his predecessor, Juárez, had been either repealed or ignored. The church had re-acquired extensive areas of land and property, re-assumed its control over the system of education. The division of social classes had become more pronounced, the peons being driven back to their feudal servitude while the power of the landowners and commercial class had greatly increased. Some of the most influential families had death rights over the peons and families, even to the extent of the 'right of the first night'. Eight hundred families owned two-thirds of the land: the millions of peons not even the sites of their miserable shanties. To his friends, Díaz gave the most influential government posts. To his enemies came assassination and the beginning of the now common 'killed trying to escape'. The free press and any vocal opposition was silenced. By the twentieth century Díaz was so consolidated in his power as to seem the natural and legitimate authority.

At this stage in the history of Mexico, the Liberal Party was formed and it soon embraced many of the frustrated elements of unrest and dissatisfaction. Although, at its inception, it was based on a constitutional programme of such reforms as limitation of the power of the clergy and challenging the perpetual re-election of Díaz, it quickly came under the influence of more radical elements. Ricardo Flores Magón, his brother Enrique, Librado Rivera and many others, began to give it a more proletarian and peasant character. Soon the constitutionally minded Liberal Party was having its meetings raided by the authorities, its leaders jailed, its literature confiscated. A series of strikes coincided with these events. Workers were killed as Díaz's *rurales* tried to restore order. In a moment the apparently established tyranny of Díaz was seen to be nothing more than a superstructure of laws, ministers and soldiers, and quite apart from the essential life of the country.

Revolutionary Beginnings

This, then, was the setting of the early life of Magón. Coming from a middle-class family he began his revolutionary career in his student days and with such effect that in 1892, at the age of twenty, he had his first spell in prison. But prison, and similar forms of legalised punishment, as to-day, usually serves only to confirm the principles and ideas of those imprisoned. So it was with Magón. The next ten years of his life were a succession of prison sentences, periods of exile across the American border, inspiring minor uprisings and circulating clandestine literature. When, in 1903, he fled to Texas to continue publishing his paper *Regeneración*, he had become the directing influence of a group known as *Magonistas*.

In America, despite an attempt by Díaz's agents to assassinate him, Magón and his comrades drew up their programme

in the form of a manifesto. In examining this document (calling for an eight-hour day, abolition of debt peonage, distribution of the land by the State) which to-day might be that of a party of Social Democrats, one must remember certain factors. First, that the Liberal Party was still tied to the Reform Laws and the belief in justice through legislation, and from these ideas Magón was not yet freed. Secondly, that the particular nature of the dictatorship made even the mild proposals of the *Magonistas* revolutionary. Thirdly, they needed the support of the dissidents who could see no further than Juárez's Reform Laws.

As was to be expected, the manifesto of the *Magonistas* had little effect. It was too extreme for the main body of the Liberal Party and the plight of the peons was such that they had little time for political programmes and promises. Indeed, this realisation, and Magón's growing distrust of a legally constituted change by a directing Authority, was gradually leading him to anarchism. The immediate disillusion, however, manifested itself in two armed revolts in which the *Magonistas* crossed from the United States in an attempt to force the issue. But when they were defeated and had once more to retreat across the frontier, the American Government was waiting for them. Only Magón himself escaped. The rest were imprisoned in Texas.

A Faith in Force

Before proceeding further it would seem necessary to explain Magón's faith in, and use of, arms. Many of his proclamations were crude calls to the peons to 'Pick up your Winchester', emphasising only the economic aspect of the social struggle. At this stage of his development, his *Magonistas* might be seen to resemble a band of present-day communist guerrillas. Yet, in his favour, the suffering of the peons and the impossibility of escaping this visible urgency for action must not be overlooked. Pacifism would have seemed an intellectual luxury. Nor had he lived through World War I and drawn from the abortive Russian Revolution many of the lessons we have since gained. And there was the long line of Mexican revolutionaries, from Hidalgo to Juárez, which must have made him feel that some improvement at least could be achieved by force.

But Magón, now a fugitive, was not long at liberty. Connivance between the Mexican and American authorities soon had him safely in jail. It was during this particular sentence that he approached his maturity as an anarchist. Sentenced by an American court for revolutionary activities in Mexico, he was able to see himself a victim of an authority far greater than Porfirio Díaz. When it came to challenging, as a legitimate institution, a national or State government, there was a solidarity among such governments of which he was now becoming aware.

To the peons, he wrote, "What you need is your daily bread—and this no government can give you. No government will be able to give you immediate possession of the land for the law defends

"THE timorous pale with fear and the conservative are scandalized when they hear our words; but tomorrow the timorous and the conservative will applaud them. The timorous and conservative who to-day adore Christ were they who yesterday condemned and crucified him as a rebel. They who to-day are rearing statues to men of genius, persecuted them yesterday, loaded them with chains or threw them to the bonfire. They who tortured Galileo, and forced him to retract, glorify him to-day; they who burned Giordano Bruno alive; to-day admire him; the hands that tugged at the rope which hanged John Brown, were the ones that later, in the Civil War, broke the chains of slavery; they who condemned, excommunicated and degraded Hidalgo, to-day venerate him; the tremulous hands that lifted the hemlock to the lips of Socrates, to-day are penning tearful defences of that Titan of thought."

RICARDO FLORES MAGÓN.

the 'right' of those who are withholding wealth." And, "Bandits! That is what the defenders of law and order call us. Why? Because while we are teaching our brothers in misery that all should be for the benefit of all, we are also inviting them to take possession of that all."

After a two-year sentence, Magón was released in 1910. His liberty coincided with the revolt against Díaz of the bourgeois Madero, a revolt which, to Magón, seemed to be the opportunity for which he had been waiting. The revolt became a revolution with many sections throwing up their own leaders, such men as Zapata and Pancho Villa, as well as Magón, conducting independent operations. But these sections were dwarfed by the main movement of Madero. A wealthy landowner, with only the vaguest idea of the social and political problems of the time, he became the puppet at the head of the 'popular' movement. The old Liberal Party, a frustrated bourgeoisie, misguided peasants and workers, soon increased the power and scope of this movement. A landslide in favour of Madero set in. Magón, now freed from jail and directing his own little revolutionary effort, found many of his followers drifting over to Madero with the idea that the revolution was best served by supporting the 'popular' movement.

Betrayed

Soon afterwards, Madero negotiated a peace treaty with Díaz and ascended to power. Magón was left with only a handful of comrades and the bitter knowledge of the betrayal. The revolution, for which all his life he had worked and suffered, had come and gone with but little visible change. (A soldier, some time afterwards, said to John Reed, "At the end of the first Revolution, that great man, Father Madero, invited his soldiers to the Capital. He gave us clothes and food and bull-fights. We returned to our homes and found the avaricious again in power.")

Daring Ideas

Magón's hopes, suddenly frustrated, turned to the possibility of a limited experiment in anarchism. To remain inactive was to remain disillusioned. With the aid of members of the I.W.W. and numerous free-lance adventurers it was decided to seize Lower California, a mountainous peninsula, and provide the world with an example of the practicability of anarchism. Lower California was a barren, impoverished and under-populated province of Mexico, though the American Government held certain military and naval bases which meant that opposition could be expected from both states.

To-day, such optimism would label Magón a fanatic. The idea of trying to slice a strip of land from a nation state would seem the height of idiocy. Yet it is a reflection of his faith and courage, the obsession, no matter what the danger may be, to see his vision born and taking shape. And to-day we are hardly fit people to judge such actions for the nature of our present monolithic society is such that it is difficult to imagine men acting with a similar fury to achieve their ideals and retain their independence.

At first the *Magonistas* met with some success and there is much evidence that behind their lines the revolutionaries of

the 'Socialist Republic of Lower California' went a fair way towards achieving their object. Unfortunately, their ranks contained many filibusters and opportunists, so that discord and division appeared and increased. Magón had yet to learn that man, as well as his society, had to change. A man was not necessarily an anarchist because he fought for anarchism. Also there was increasing opposition from the American Government who realised that the activities of the filibuster separatists fighting with the *Magonistas* might give rise to another Texas case.

In face of such opposition Magón and his followers were forced to surrender and they were taken back to the United States to serve sentences for violating the neutrality laws of that country. Fuller details of the Lower California experiment are difficult to obtain, only a little literature, and that in Spanish, being available. But there seems no doubt that, for the few months they resisted, the *Magonistas* came very near to the realisation of their anarchism.

Once more in prison, Magón continued his activities through many smuggled proclamations. It was also an opportunity to set his ideas in order, analysing his failures and studying the theoretical aspect of the struggle. The previous twenty years had been a furious sequence of revolutionary activities and prison sentences. Now he saw that direct action by the workers and peasants, a refusal to fight on the part of the common soldier, might well achieve what armed insurrection had failed to do. He accepted his own detention philosophically. If he could pass on his ideas and faith to those outside, then the prison walls had failed to confine him.

No Compromise!

His personal courage never faltered. As soon as he was released after this

particular sentence, he was back in the struggle. Now the whole world was at war. He saw that the solution to the problems of Mexico was tied inextricably to that of the rest of the world. In 1918 he committed the crime of 'espionage'. The American government sentenced him to twenty-one years for publishing an internationalist manifesto while that country was still at war. This call to all mankind to unite in brotherhood was his last free action. Although not yet fifty, he was suffering from tuberculosis and a weak heart. Ill-treatment and unhygienic conditions affected his sight so that he was almost blind. With unexampled serenity, he wrote: "If my sufferings and my chains serve to accomplish the unification of the proletarian organisation then I bless my sufferings and I love my chains."

Though in prison his influence continued to be great. Many of the strikes of Mexican mineworkers were led by *Magonistas* and he had many sympathisers in the urban areas. Ironically, now that he was safe in an American prison, the new Obregonista Mexican Congress voted him a life pension. He responded with: "Money torn from the people by you would burn my hands."

In 1922, the war against Germany over, he petitioned the American government for a temporary release to consult a heart specialist. The Procurator General, in reply, pointed out that Magón had not yet repented of his crimes and that such a reprieve might have a favourable effect. But Magón preferred the last few months of his life to be spent with a guilt-free conscience. He knew it meant death when he wrote: "Repent! Me repent! I have never oppressed a single soul. It is not I who have taken advantage of the sweat, the anguish and the toil of anyone. So this seals my destiny. I shall become blind. I shall be willing to die within these walls. To seek pardon signifies that I have abdicated from my anarchist ideals, and I have not retracted from these. I affirm and shall believe until I die that true fraternity and social justice must come through anarchism."

On November 21st, 1922, the body of Ricardo Flores Magón was delivered to the authorities in Mexico.

CHARLES HUMANA.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

A Letter to the Press by A. S. Neill

A NEWSPAPER report this week states that the chairman of East London Juvenile Court said to a man who refused to allow his eight-year-old son to be punished at school: "You have no say in the matter. There are occasions when a child is all the better for a thrashing. If they deserve to be thrashed, they must be thrashed."

The alarming feature of this report is that apparently the law office, not the education office, controls education. It is obvious that the chairman is ignorant of child psychology, that he is dictating a system of revenge and hate that is condemned by practically every psychologist and child therapist in the country. I grant that I have no notion of why the boy was to be punished, but I know that corporal punishment never cured anyone of anything; I know that hate must breed hate, and, rationalise it how we may, thrashing is hate writ large, and every

beaten child knows it.

One distressing feature of this case is this . . . that, thirty years after Homer Lane in his *Little Commonwealth* proved that the only way to cure children was by love and self-determination, a juvenile court should have to advocate an ancient barbaric code. And I should like to know the chairman's answer to this question: Why is it that most countries in the world have abolished corporal punishment in school, and seem to get on well without it? The most embarrassing question I get fired at me when I lecture in Scandinavia or America is this one: "Why does Britain retain beating of children?" Next time I can answer with at least partial truth . . . Because children are under the control of those who don't like children and don't understand children and don't understand that beating a child in England and beating a Jew in Hitler Germany are the same thing, differing only in degree.

A. S. NEILL.

—AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT—

'Dead Men Tell No Tales'

THE authoritarians' cry for the continuation of capital punishment is undoubtedly strengthened in their own minds by the latest news from America, where within nine days of each other two innocent people have been released from murder sentences.

Mrs. Maude Cushing Storick was sentenced for murder and 26 years later has been found to be innocent; and Louis Gross has been released after serving 16 years false imprisonment on a murder charge. In both cases their release came only as a result of the coincidence of their case being taken up by an outside party years afterwards—in the case of Louis Gross, a campaign had been begun by a mystery-story writer which led to the uncovering of the events that caused him to waste his life behind bars (and he goes out to a T.B. sanatorium).

The film "Call Northside 777" was based on a similar real-life drama of another person who served long years of a life sentence before the accident of his

case being investigated by a reporter proved him not guilty.

It was announced that Mrs. Storick would probably receive no compensation, as the State made no provision for it. Like many another she would go out as she came in.

We hope no self-satisfied British newspaper reader will be too complacent with the thought that "these things happen in America". The reason we do not have more such cases here is very plain: dead men tell no tales and their stories are soon forgotten.

The States where these exposures of so-called justice come to light have no death penalty. Whether they admit it or not, this is the real concern of the anti-abolitionists when considering the question of the death penalty. Their mentality is the same as those soldiers who said, "If you knock down a native, turn back and run him over again to make sure he's dead—he can't claim compensation then."

INTERNATIONALIST.

Learning to play the Zither?

But don't forget that you've already learnt to read.

Alex Comfort's *THE PATTERN OF THE FUTURE* 6/-
(Four Broadcast Talks)

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The Glass (Stories and Poems) No. 3 1/6

Journal of Sex Education. Oct.-Nov. 1949 2/-

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

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Two Bold Gestures

FOREIGN COMMENTARY

FROM Stockholm comes the report (11/11/49) that four young French students, self-styled "world citizens" and followers of Garry Davis, "world citizen No. 1," invaded the French Embassy to demand recognition of conscientious objectors in France.

They sat on stairs inside the embassy and threatened to stay there until Jean-Baptiste Moreau, French conscientious objector, was freed from prison in Paris. Embassy officials thought otherwise and the students were, in the words of one of them, "evicted forcibly." They returned a second time with the same results except that the expulsion "was somewhat more violent than the first one."

Solidaridad Obrera (Workers' Solidarity), the Paris organ of the Spanish C.N.T. in exile, publishes a report from Genoa of a raid alleged to have been made by three young Italian anarchists on Franco's Consulate in that city. They set fire to the Consul's office and substituted a red and black flag on which appeared the words "Neither God nor Master," for the red and yellow falangist flag over the entrance to the Consulate. One of the youths, aged 20, whose name is given as Eugenio de Lucchi, was arrested and made the following statement to the police:

"I am an anarchist and I took part in the action to register my protest at the crimes being committed by Franco. I am indifferent to the fate that awaits me as I am satisfied that I have done my duty. To-day, our flag has been hoisted on the Consulate building; to-morrow it will fly all over the world."

The Capitalist Press of Genoa, such as *Corriere del Popolo*, interprets this gesture in a not unfriendly manner. One point of view is that it is an "anti-Franco protest motivated by the recent shooting of anarchists by the police in the streets of Barcelona." Another interpretation is that it was a protest against Franco's demand to the Italian authorities for the extradition of a number of Spaniards at present in camps in Italy. Whilst yet another suggests that the youths were hoping to find in the building a Spanish anti-fascist, Domingo Diaz, who had mysteriously disappeared.

Cynics will say that neither of these incidents, in Stockholm or Genoa will change things. That is possibly only too true. But in a world so brutalised by brutality on a vast scale, in which the individual resigns himself to his own helplessness in the face of the magnitude of the problems that beset the world, these gestures, by young people, not for the glorification of the State and the Leader, but against the State and for its victims, are sparks of hope. Particularly when

one bears in mind that the young Italian, de Lucchi, was born when Mussolini's regime was in complete control of his country and the worship of the fatherland and its leader were inculcated in the minds of all the Italian youth. That some young people are able to react to this totalitarian poison is in itself significant and important.

WHEN WILL THEY MAKE UP THEIR MINDS?

DO you remember what the politicians promised would be done to Germany after "unconditional surrender"? Occupation for 50 years, complete demilitarisation, de-industrialisation, etc. . . in fact, Germany would be wiped off the map. And do you remember what *Freedom's* predecessor, *War Commentary*, always pointed out: that these were just slogans? Only four years after the cease fire, politicians on both sides of the iron curtain are calculating how best Germany can be used in the next war. And this is reflected in the present chaos regarding dismantling of German factories. The recent Paris agreement calls for a slow-down in dismantling and the way this new decision affects at least one factory in Berlin is described by the *Manchester Guardian's* Berlin correspondent (15/11/49):

"Dismantling squads restarted work at the Borsig engineering works on Nov. 1 and since then numerous protests have been made against what is generally considered to be a particularly unfortunate decision in view of Berlin's political and economic situation."

"This evening, a Borsig director said

ELECTORAL FARCE IN PORTUGAL

AFTER his recent visit from his good neighbour, Gen. Franco, that new friend of democracy, Dr. Salazar held a general election, and for the first time in twenty-three years Opposition candidates took the field. This, however, gave the Doctor no sleepless nights, and his National Union Party was returned with a big majority, which is hardly to be wondered at since there were 120 Government candidates and eight from the Opposition. He was nevertheless, taking no chances, and excluded from voting, among others, all persons with views opposing Portuguese independence and all those with "ideas contrary to social discipline."

that the factory could still do a great deal for Berlin. He hoped that it would soon be possible to re-employ perhaps 2,000 to 3,500 men who used to work in the factory in 1947. He is confident that the plant can work as efficiently as it did when it was first reconstructed after being dismantled by the Russians in 1945."

When will they make up their minds?

THE PROBLEM OF SOUTHERN ITALY

TROUBLE is brewing in Calabria in S. Italy. The conditions in which the people live there almost defy description. The *Messaggero*, a right wing daily, published in Rome, prints a report by its special correspondent who visited the village of Cutro and found it "deep in mud and filth". The inhabitants were "consumptive, women and children with sores, surrounded by crowds of flies."

"I never saw so many flies anywhere. The children are covered with them and no longer rebel. The houses of Cutro are narrow sheds, with such a stench that no one can stay in them in the daytime."

"Cutro has one village pump for its entire water supply. These poor people rarely see bread, meat never. A handful of beans is the mainstay. Ninety per cent. of the inhabitants are illiterate, infant mortality very high, and the population seems in a state of coma due to under-nourishment and disease. It is false to call these people Communists. They feel they have reached the limit of endurance. Their looks are a prayer for help, not a menace, and their hearts are still good."

No government will solve the problems of S. Italy. All they can do is to send troops and armoured cars to "pacify" the people with their machine guns and to surround whole villages such as Cairo, Strongoli, Papanico where over 200 arrests were made.

Calabria is in the hands of forty-six families which themselves are interrelated. The Baraccos own 67,000 acres, the Berlingeri 56,000, the Gallucci 17,000 and so on, whilst the ecclesiastical properties total some 55,000 acres.

At the beginning of this month, what the *Manchester Guardian* called a "truce" and what is locally called an "armistice" was arranged in Calabria. Under its terms, 12,000 acres of uncultivated land have been released for cultivation immediately and 3,000 acres for eventual cultivation. "Agricultural labourers in Britain," writes the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, "would be astonished to hear that another section of the 'armistice'

has raised the Calabrian labourer's wages per from 3s. 6d. to 6s. 6d., while those at present engaged in gathering in the chestnut and olive harvest have had their wages raised from 3s. 6d. to 5s. a day. In Northern, Central, and Eastern Italy the minimum daily wage for an agricultural labourer is 10s. Calabrian landowners have further agreed to negotiate a collective wage agreement not later than November 20."

The latest reports (16/11/49) state that, "The recent large-scale occupation of Southern Italian estates has moved the Italian Government to palliatives in the shape of expropriation of 112,000 acres of land in Calabria (with compensation) for the benefit of landless peasants, who will be settled in new areas within five years. The Cabinet announces that a bill will be ready in January."

"Four big landowners who own 56,000 acres are mainly concerned, but almost all owners of more than 750 acres will be affected and partially expropriated. The landowners are, of course, very worried, but what must remain a matter of lasting surprise to the Northern Italian is that these Southern landlords should have no part at all in the life of

the villages on their estates, allowing conditions to continue as in the nineteenth century before the unity of Italy."

A GOLDEN BOOK FOR STALIN

THE French C.P. have announced that they are preparing a Golden Book for presentation to Stalin on the occasion of his 70th birthday next month. The names mentioned so far of the contributors to this Golden Book are the usual ones of Communists, and fellow travellers among the French intellectuals. But *l'Humanité* also publishes a poem by a "young Haitian poet studying in Paris" which will be included in the Book and includes such gems as:

"I sing thee for I know thou are by my side
Everywhere in the world where men are crushed under the heel."

and ends—
"I speak of thy mouth as irreducible to falsehood
as gold to rust"

I speak of thy valiance without blemish
I sing of the millions of doves with which thy hands are peopled

Glory to thee comrade of all the peoples
Glory to Josef Stalin
our capital
the most precious!"

"Millions of doves" may people his lands but there are atom bombs in his moustaches!

LIBERTARIAN.

Communists & Lawyers

Now in Jail

NOW that the eleven communists are convicted and they with their lawyers to boot are all safely locked up in the hoosgow, by how much has the "spectre of communism" been abated? The communists presumably look at the news from China, listen to the top brass of the armed forces wrangle over the futility of lethal gadgetry, and chortle like the villains in the old gas-light melodramas.

They have been convicted of conspiring to advocate something—and even though the something they were said to have conspired to advocate was the overthrow of a government that keeps the headline writers busy with the mutual accusations of its component parts against each other—still it is hard to see how it can be a crime for anyone to conspire to advocate anything. Even their own hearty approval of the law on which they got snagged, when it was used against their Trotskyite competitors, doesn't make their conviction under the Smith Act commendable, any more than the cases

where bootleggers got blinded by drinking the denatured alcohol they were peddling, made denatured alcohol a good drink.

The stunt by which their lawyers were sent to jail along with them may have been calculated to channel any sympathy that would have gone their way towards the lawyers—and the legal fraternity somehow is one toward which sympathy does not flow readily, any more than it does toward dentists or morticians. Like them, lawyers are called upon ordinarily only in an hour of need.

The lawyers, it seems, are locked up for making it as difficult as they could to convict their clients, and there is a popular impression that that's what defence counsel is for. If it is henceforth to be the practice to lock lawyers up for doing that sort of thing, when their clients are accused of less popular crimes than gypping widows, it may become difficult to get lawyers to put up a very vigorous defence. Old Judge Jeffries made a name for himself punishing the jury; Judge Medina may immortalise his name in a new verb to medinise, meaning to lock up the lawyers for placing obstacles in the way of convicting their clients.

The hysterical proceedings on the part of both court and defendants dramatises if it does not burlesque the irrationality with which capitalism copes with communism and with which communism grapples with capitalism. The big issue in the case is not communism, but the issue that the communists cannot consistently stress: Can it be a crime to conspire to advocate anything, even things as vicious as either communism or the capitalistic exploitation of man by man?

Industrial Worker (Chicago), 21/10/49.

THROUGH THE PRESS

ENTHUSIASTIC

Since recruiting for the new Civil Defence started in Chigwell, Essex (population 35,000), two men have applied for enrolment.

Evening Standard, 17/11/49.

LOOKING AFTER THEMSELVES

Just one atom bomb, properly aimed, would knock out Washington, says a Government report. It made two requests—a radar warning system and dispersal of Government buildings with departments two miles apart.

Daily Express, 18/11/49.

UNGRATEFUL MANNY

Mr. Shinwell was a guest at the banquet, invited by the Lord Mayor. He need not have gone there if he did not wish to go. But having done so, the last thing he should have done subsequently was to criticise publicly the fare provided by his host. "If that was a banquet," said Mr. Shinwell—"give me fish and chips."

But if turtle soup, pheasant and vegetables, sweet and coffee, wines and cigars do not, by Mr. Shinwell's standards, constitute a banquet, to one of more modest tastes, like me, they constitute a very acceptable substitute. Such a meal should be eaten with pleasure and remembered with gratitude, especially in these days.

Evening Standard, 16/11/49.

HE'S BEEN HAD

I happened to pick up *Picture Post*, dated March, 1949, and read with disgust your article enticing young men into the 'New Regular Army'. I fell for this line of talk myself and ever since I've been sweeping corridors or rolling bandages. Where are all those different trades they promised me? In my opinion the army of to-day is nothing but a racket which could quite possibly unsettle a young man for life. I hope this may save others from the mess I've got into myself.

Picture Post, 19/11/49.

French Doctors Ordered to Act as Police Informers

RECENT legislative propositions in France underline an aspect of the State which anarchists have long stressed—its increasing tendency to destroy human relations between individuals. For many people in this country, where the State wears a relatively benign mask, the purpose of centralised administration is thought to be the facilitation of social living. Without dilating further here upon its purpose, we can say definitely that its effect is most certainly not to achieve this facilitation. In the totalitarian countries the opposite is achieved; every man, woman and child is expected to act as an informer to the State against his fellows. Children who denounce "deviations" on the part of their parents are, in Russia and Russian-dominated central Europe, rewarded and praised for their patriotic devotion to the State and the Party. This is an extreme example, though it is one which finds application to huge areas and huge populations. Its effect is to break up trustfulness between a man and his fellows, and surround him with a wilderness of doubt, deception and suspicion. Similar trends, though in lesser degree, are being initiated in the less developed bureaucratic administrations of the West.

In France, according to an article in *Le Libertaire*, the French anarchist weekly, a new law is being prepared whereby a doctor or midwife is required to report within 48 hours any case of abortion to the police. They do not have to give the name or address of the case, but the object is clearly to facilitate the tracking of such cases by the police. Hence if a charge follows, the doctor or midwife are clearly partly responsible for it, and French doctors have not been slow to point out that the law is a serious infringement of medical secrecy, and several public associations of doctors have denounced it as such.

Now medical secrecy is no unimportant matter. Without the understanding that what one tells the doctors is confidential, a him is impossible, and there is no more jealously guarded tenet of medical ethics than this of secrecy. In addition, there is the very practical consequence of the pro-

posed law that it will have the effect of making women seek the aid of the doctor too late or not at all, and so will increase the death rate from abortions and the subsequent disabilities which may arise from them if untreated. This, too, the French doctors have pointed out. The State however is unconcerned either for the socially desirable and ethical relationship between a patient and his doctor, or for the health of women as a whole. All it is concerned with is increasing the population and placating the religious vote. *Le Libertaire* forthrightly condemns the proposed law.

The Situation in England

The State comes out of this situation somewhat better in this country. Here, it was made clear by a judge in the Nineties of the last century that it was no part of the duty of a doctor to inform against a woman who summoned his aid after a so-called criminal abortion (that is one intentionally brought on). The judge went so far as to stigmatise such an action as "monstrous and cruel". The result has been that although the law is fairly relentless in pursuing the abortionist, it never proceeds (or only in the most exceptional circumstances) against a woman who knowingly effects the termination of her own pregnancy. This represents a remarkable phenomenon for the written law expressly states that it is a felony for a woman to attempt to end a pregnancy, whether that pregnancy is real or only supposed! In effect the judiciary has declared this law a dead letter, because it foresaw that the attempt to enforce it would introduce complications in the relationship between patient and doctor, and would result in the concealment of abortions and militate against adequate and early treatment.

An Insidious Trend

In this respect the law is far more humane in England than in France. Nevertheless the trend whereby the State seeks to interfere in personal relations is at work here, too, though in an insidious way which perhaps illustrates the way in which in this country the State achieves its ends without openly violating the principles for which individuals and the

English people as a whole have fought in the past.

At the present moment, the State secures information about suicides without directly violating the professional secrecy of the doctor. Up till a year or so ago, if a doctor was called to a suicide, and wished to send the case into hospital, he arranged with the hospital himself, and the ambulance would call without any official legal channel being invoked. This being so, it was possible for a doctor to assure a would-be suicide that no legal or police consequences would flow from his attempt, or from his invoking medical aid. Obviously, this was as it should be.

This desirable situation is now changed—but in a most undesirably insidious manner. When a doctor rings up the hospital he is advised to secure an ambulance by dialling 999. The ambulance men are under orders—emanating from the Commissioner of Police—to inform the police of any such attempted suicide. Now the police say that this is so that they can inform the relatives, but in practice it also means that the unfortunate would-be suicide, already sufficiently tortured in mind, has to deal also with a uniformed policeman at his bedside with all the additional anxiety of wondering whether he is to have also the pain of local publicity and gossip and then advice, censure, and possibly punishment from a magistrate as well. And all this, as like as not, after he has been assured by his doctor (honestly and out of his experience of the old methods) that no police consequences will follow. Once again the unwanted and unwarranted interference of the State will have the effect of destroying the confidence so desirable between the patient and the doctor, and then of ensuring that many suicides will refuse to seek medical aid, or seek it too late, with inevitable increases—of an avoidable nature—in the mortality from suicide.

So far, the mechanism whereby the police get their information about suicides admitted to hospital—that is, through the order that ambulance men shall act as informers—is not generally known, and so has not received any official opposition. It either from the doctors or anyone else. It is an insidious incursion of the State into the relationships between individuals.

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The Poppy Racket

Therefore the King proclaimed, "O hush to-day,
Parrot and owl, even you, my poet-linnets!"
The English, who have never much to say,
Were silent for two minutes.

THE sorry pageantry of Armistice Day, with its silence and its noise, its pomp and poppies, seems to-day even more of a hollow mockery than ever. When it became Remembrance Day and had to commemorate the Second as well as the First World War, the authorities with admirable sagacity transferred the festival to the Saturday and Sunday preceding the anniversary of the Armistice.

Not only does this spare us the solemn silly talk about the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month", but it also ensures that the two minutes' silence does not interrupt production as it would on a working day, while by selling the poppies on the preceding Saturday, the well-meaning old ladies who rattle the tins, can be sure of collaring you in the street and fastening a bit of wire and cotton into your unwilling buttonhole.

Commander H. Pursey, M.P., has just made public his open letter to Sir Ian Fraser, M.P., the President of the British Legion, in which he alleges that, "The Legion's Poppy Day Appeal has become the greatest charitable scandal of the century, and their Tory Party war pensions campaign is the worst party political 'racket'." There are, says Comdr. Pursey, over 800 organisations cadging money from the public on behalf of the ex-Serviceman, with funds of over £20,000,000. He quotes the fantastic membership figures which are claimed for the Legion; the "titled dignitaries and brass-hats" which form its National Executive Council; and gives the low-down on the House of Commons Branch

of which much has been made in Legion propaganda. "Except for some private junketing by the officers for certain representatives of Fleet Street, presumably to give them a nebulous story, there have been no branch activities. In fact, when a list of members was required, one could not be found."

"The Legion's funds are over £3,500,000, with an annual income of nearly £1,500,000 of which £1,000,000 comes from the unjustifiable street tin-rattling" and cadging campaign of the Poppy Day Appeal. Less than £1,000,000 of the £1,500,000 income, however, is distributed. The question that arises is, therefore: "What happens to the undistributed £500,000—or one-third of the total income? The Cost of Service is £203,041; but, even if this is omitted, with the Appeals Administrative Expenses (£90,651), the total expenses are £263,083, that is over 5s. in the £. Legion hot-gospelers claim that all poppy money goes to the ex-Serviceman, and that all the expenses are covered by membership and affiliation fees. This is just plain nonsense! Membership fees are retained by the branches and affiliation fees only go to headquarters. These amounted to only £74,385, or less than one-third of the total expenses, which left £188,693 to come out of the poppy fund, or other charitable money subscribed by the public.

"During the last two years, the Legion has been overspent by £250,000. ... Among the reasons for this lamentable situation are such unnecessary expenses as £100,000 for new offices in Pall Mall—one of the most expensive sites in London—in which to do less work; the mammoth, national organisation and staff, and 'jobs for the boys' at £1,450 for the General Secretary, £1,100 for the Poppy Day Appeal Organiser, and £1,000 for the Pension Officer, plus high expenses.

"Yet the organisation is supposed to be a voluntary association for the rank and file, mainly run by the voluntary effort of branches. But the Hull Branch salaries list, alone, is over £1,100 per annum. On the other hand, rank and file ex-Servicemen in need—for whom the money is cadged—are treated in the most cavalier and parsimonious manner ..."

The most nauseating of the disclosures made in the letter from Comdr. Pursey, who is a former vice-president of two British Legion branches, relate to the Poppy Manufacture "rackets", of which he says:

"Disabled ex-Servicemen poppy makers in Legion workshops, are paid 1s. 10d. and hour, and for a 44-hour week, a maximum wage of £4 0s. 8d. I have the Legion pay tickets.

"Wives and children go to the factory to get poppies to make up at home, and these wives work until the early hours of the morning making them—under slave labour conditions—in order to bolster up the low wages of their husbands.

"Women National Health Service patients in three ex-British Legion sanatoria, at Preston Hall, Maidstone; Douglas Hall, Bournemouth; and Nayland, Suffolk, make poppies at the rate of 150 an hour for 3d; 300 in two hours for 6d. a day; and 1,500 in 10 hours for 2s. 6d. a week.

"Yet disabled men poppy makers at Preston Hall, Maidstone, have been given redundancy notices because no further contract for poppies can be obtained from the Richmond factory. The reason is to save money on disabled men, while exploiting patients and wives in making poppies. Moreover, there is work done by fit women at Preston Hall which should, instead, be done by disabled men.

"Women Xmas cracker makers in Legion workshops are paid 1s. 5½d. an hour, and for a 40-hour week, only £2 18s. 4d.

"Women patients stick together paper hats for Xmas crackers, a messy job, at the rate of 20 an hour for 3d.

"Moreover, although for years, thousands of poppies and crackers have been made by others than disabled men, the boxes have all been labelled: "Made by Severely Disabled Ex-Servicemen", when in fact, disabled men may never have touched them!

"This label scandal was stopped, because I drew attention to it in the House of Commons, and the whole stock of several thousands of boxes, at Preston Hall, was burnt. Yet, at the same time, appeals were being made to the staff to collect salvage!"

A pleasant note is struck by the revelation that wooden crosses planted in Gardens of Remembrance are made from Argentine corned beef boxes, and that "old soldiers in need of clothes are given chits to go to second-hand shops for an estimate for a second-hand suit and a pair of boots."

There is no space to quote the whole miserable story given in Comdr. Pursey's letter in which he shows that, "it is plain to every rational person, that the Legion has largely become a Tory Party appendage". He concludes that there is no reason why the public should continue to subscribe a single penny to the Poppy Day Appeal.

Next year, when you are approached by a dear old lady with a tray of poppies and a sweet smile, remind her of the 3d. an hour woman patients, or the 360 men at the factory at Richmond "doomed to make only poppies for the remainder of their lives."

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

SOCIAL CREDIT:

Clara Cole Replies.

CONSIDERATION of space prohibits me from answering Gladys Bing in full (see *Freedom*, 29/10/49)—Eds.—but there is one accusation that I must protest against: that Anarchists advocate only a "nebulous freedom in vacuo."

I walked with and worked with the unemployed, and was imprisoned for putting them into empty houses, meanwhile always emphasising that this help was not sufficient to obtain emancipation or freedom from want or war.

The greater aim does not preclude present help in daily time of trouble by Anarchists.

I will credit Major Douglas with sincerity of purpose.

CLARA COLE.

Editor's Note:

Further to this same point, we would refer Gladys Bing to the article on Magón on page 2. That Anarchist did everything but only "advocate a nebulous freedom in vacuo."

THUS SAITH THE PREACHER

THE trouble with the world to-day is that people are losing their Faith! Faith in something or other has been a feature of society for centuries, and now people just won't believe in anything, without some reason for believing in it.

Hardly anyone believes in God nowadays. Except in some primitive communities, even the fanatically religious have to cut themselves off from life, or thought, or both, to keep their religion. Some people do not even believe in the divinity of rulers. How terrible!

Faith is dying out, and being replaced by wild, impatient, aimless discovery. That blighter Galileo started it all, then there was Columbus, and Newton, and Darwin, and Freud, and—er—all that rabble, killing faith right and left.

People are still scared of the unknown, but instead of calmly pretending to know, they must go frantically finding things out. Someday they may even understand things, then where will the church be? Where will all authority be, relying as it does on dupes?

Only one way, comrades, can we prevent the advent of anarchy. We must keep the remnant of faith alive and restore its greatness. Discovery must be punished by death. And then, instead of all this hectic uncertainty, we will have blissful ignorance and soothing slavery for ever and ever. Amen.

D.R.

FREEDOM THE AMETHYST INCIDENT AMMUNITION IN THE COLD WAR

THAT stalwart of the Silent Service, Commander Stephen King-Hall, struck a discordant note in the public rejoicing to welcome home the survivors from the Yangtze incident. He said: "The hysteria so easily worked up about H.M.S. *Amethyst* is another symptom of the unhealthy state of public opinion. Heaven forbid that I should sink to the senility of growling from an armchair in a Service club that the Navy isn't what it was, but I must express my astonishment at the spectacle of the Board of Admiralty going to Plymouth to greet the *Amethyst*."

"It was reminiscent of bobby-soxers crowding a Waterloo platform to acclaim an arriving transatlantic film star. The officers and men of the *Amethyst* behaved during their Yangtze ordeal in accordance with the best traditions of the Navy. No more can be said: no more should be said."

But what Commander King-Hall forgot is that the whole incident plays an important propaganda rôle in the Cold War, and has been used to arouse a suitable mood of patriotism and bellicosity in this country. There has been no similar publicity given to the cases of British merchant ships fired on and detained by the Nationalist government in its diminishing waters of Southern China.

The question the public should be asking is: "What were British warships doing up the Yangtze?" It is worth recalling, in this connection, that the civil population of Hong Kong was estimated in June last to be 1,860,000, of which about one-half per cent. (i.e., less than 10,000) was British and 99 per cent. Chinese.

EMPLOYERS FIND CO-OPERATION PAYS

Still the Same Set-up

(Continued from page 1)

We should not be fooled or side-stepped by any of this. Production to satisfy the dollar market is not production to satisfy our needs, and it is not in the interests of the workers now or at any time to boost production for the employers.

Some may say that workers' participation is a move in the right direction, but in fact that is a doubtful point. Such collaboration with the employers presupposes the rights of employers. The revolutionary view-point is that employers have no rights; that they have usurped control of industry from the producers; that they exploit producers for their own profit; that they will only pay lip-service to workers' rights while circumstances enforce it and will take the earliest opportunities to curtail them again.

Industry remains still the same old set-up. The motive is still the profit motive, and the answer is still—workers' control. Instead of intensifying our work in the mad scramble for markets, our aim must be still the complete taking over of the means of production in order to satisfy the needs of all instead of the greed of the few.

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MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY

OUR immediate surroundings are the concern of every one of us, yet the existence of local government, like national government, takes all responsibility for our neighbourhoods out of our hands and creates only apathy and unconcern.

Governments always claim—all the arguments for their existence are based on the claim—that they are necessary because people could not organise their social lives themselves. And, of course, "public morality" is based on the assumption that we cannot organise our private lives either.

The Interlopers

The arguments of government, however, put the cart before the horse. There was a time in our history—in the days of medieval free cities, for instance—when control of municipal well-being was in the hands of the people directly concerned, and when the national governments, just beginning to be born, were regarded as the interlopers they are and were resisted as such. But through brute force and the help of the Church, central government has won the day—with what results we are all only too painfully aware.

In fact, it has been the growth of centralised control which has created apathy. Responsibility for our national affairs is jealously held by the Government at Westminster, and what they don't want—and it is not much—is taken by our City, Municipal or County Councils. We are left with nothing to do but supply the money to keep them all, through taxes and rates, and to do as they tell us.

And when people have taken action to solve their problems themselves, as

in the squatters movement for example, the result has been an outcry from the authorities and the immediate use of the force of the law to eject the homeless, and to put their names back on the endless waiting list—while houses remain empty, or used as offices.

The Trees

But that responsibility, even in the hands of children, does lead to constructive results, is shown by a recent news item in *Reynolds News* (13/11/49): "As fast as Crawford (Kent) Council planted ornamental trees alongside their roads the children of the neighbourhood methodically destroyed them.

"But that is an old story now. "The Highways Committee hit on the idea last year of inviting the children to plant the trees themselves.

"The experiment was such a complete success that we are now getting ready to invite the children along to plant out 50 trees in five more roads," said a council official."

In other words, put responsibility for the amenities of our neighbourhoods in the hands of those who are going to enjoy them, and the apparent apathy and destructiveness which authorities try to conquer but in fact create, will disappear in favour of civic pride and community.

The Bomb Sites

Another matter which urgently concerns all of us but is taken out of our hands—or, rather, was never in them—is the business of dealing with the ugly reminders of bombing in all our big cities—the bomb sites. And there is some nonsense being spoken about these in Parliament.

During a second reading of his Bill for tidying-up the bomb sites, Aneurin Bevan admitted that the Exchequer had no cash to spare to pay for the necessary work, but thought that volunteer forces could be enrolled by municipalities. This is a good idea. When the war started there was no lack of volunteers to fill sandbags, or man Civil Defence, but once again we come up against the question of responsibility.

Bomb sites are all private property. Theoretically, we can be prosecuted for trespass if we enter one, and when municipal responsibility is strenuously denied the people in the things in which they would benefit most and directly—as in housing—is it to be expected that they will feel enthusiastic about giving their labour to improve someone else's property? This appears a mean attitude—but property ownership itself is a mean business and irresponsibility breeds meanness anyway.

Morality

One of the points raised to stress the need for cleaning-up the bomb sites is that bombed-out buildings are being used for "immoral purposes". What a comment on our civilisation that is! Does Mr. Bevan think that couples use such uncomfortable, draughty, semi-public places for their love-making through choice? Let the housing situation ease, let the young—and old, for that matter—have the privacy they need and these "offences against the law and public morality" will disappear.

The authorities have only themselves to blame for lack of civic interest. The property system they defend has robbed the vast majority of us of the right (legally) to take decisions regarding even our own homes—which are not our own. When the institution of private property is abolished, and a people's commune co-ordinates the direct control by the community, we shall all be interested in beautifying our neighbourhoods. Until then we remain apathetic and frustrated, but there is plenty that could be done to-day.

P.S.

Meetings and Announcements

UNION OF ANARCHIST GROUPS: CENTRAL LONDON

INDOOR Lecture-Discussions every Sunday at 7.30 p.m. at the

Trade Union Club, Great Newport St., W.C.2 (near Leicester Square Station).

November 27th Speaker: John Hewetson
"SEXUAL MORALITY AND EDUCATION IN SOVIET RUSSIA"

December 4th Speaker: Albert Meltzer
"ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN PRACTICE"

December 11th Speaker: Louis Adeane
"SHELLEY'S VIEW OF SOCIETY"

December 18th Speaker: Sybil Morrison
"THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CONSCRIPTION"

January 1st Speaker: Tony Gibson
"CHILDHOOD AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION"

January 8th Speaker: Philip Sansom
"ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM AND TRADES-UNIONISM"

GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP

INDOOR MEETINGS every Sunday at 7 p.m. at the

CENTRAL HALLS, 25 BATH STREET, GLASGOW.

Frank Leech, John Gaffney, Eddie Shaw.

MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST GROUP

OPEN DISCUSSION MEETINGS held fortnightly

NEXT MEETING:

Sunday, November 27th, at 7.30 p.m.

Enquiries: Ring Royal 4669

COLNE & NELSON DISTRICT

Discussion Group

to be held fortnightly.

Sunday, December 4th, at 3.0 p.m.

at

Twisters and Drawers Club,

Cambridge Street, Colne (Lancs.)

HAMPSTEAD

Discussion Meetings commence again at 5, Villas-on-the-Heath,

Vale of Health, Hampstead, N.W.3

on Tuesday, 6th December, at 7.30 p.m.

Discussion opened by Louis Adeane on

"Types of Responsibility"

13th December: Discussion opened by

Pat Cooper, on

"Liberty"

All are Welcome

CENTRAL LONDON P.P.U.

Friday, December 2nd, at 7.30 p.m.

"Pioneers of Freedom in Education"

Tom Earley

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