

# Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"I esteem the man who refrains from becoming a politician."

—ALEX COMFORT

## Industrial Conscription

THERE can be nothing half-hearted about modern war. In this totalitarian age, nothing less than the total mobilisation of all the State's resources is sufficient. Weapons must be where they are wanted when they are wanted and nothing can be left to chance.

Chance and the human element are out of place in the Total State. Human beings become just so much material, to be allocated to their uses as scrap iron, cattle food and timber are rationed by government departments according to quota. Ignazio Silone wrote in *The School for Dictators*, "... man himself has become a means—no doubt a more expensive one than a dog, but cheaper than a cow or a machine gun."

And it is as a producer or a user of a machine gun, or its equivalent military usefulness, that a man achieves significance in the eyes of the State. His own wishes and desires, the work he wants to do, the plans and dreams he has made for his own life—all this must be set at naught when the State commands.

The similarity of States in this matter has long been pointed out by anarchists, and the similarity of political systems when they achieve control of the State has been demonstrated time and time again, indicating that it is the State which controls the political parties on the fundamental issues. In this country, the similarity between the Labour Party and the Conservatives in practice has led to the effect to the situation where the population has no real choice at all. We

are, in fact, faced with a near-totalitarian set-up, complete with all the double-talk and double-think about freedom and peace, while the State organises our economy for slavery and war.

Military conscription has been woven into the pattern of British life. What Kier Hardie called "the badge of the slave" has been pinned on the breast of every young man in the land by Hardie's own successors in the Labour Party, and now their opponents, the champions of individual liberty, are about to extend that slavery to civilian occupations in peacetime.

Sir Walter Monckton, Minister of Labour, has already presented to the Cabinet his plans for the control of labour to meet defence needs, which are estimated at 500,000 more workers once the rearmament programme gets into full swing.

A new Order (the words find echoes in the mind—remember Hitler's "New Order"?) is in draft form, ready to be discussed at a meeting of the National Joint Advisory Council on January 23. There, the two sides of the Council, representatives of the employers and of the unions, will point out to Sir Walter any likely snags that may hinder the smooth working of his plan. The biggest snag of all, that the scheme is an unwarrantable interference with workers' lives, will be too big to be noticed by these defenders of our liberties.

We have discussed before the probable line this scheme will take. Until it is

absolutely necessary, full statutory direction is not likely to be used, but the way which is being planned will be just as effective in the first stages. It will operate by the workers being "steered" into what the State considers essential industries by compelling them to seek all jobs, when they are out of work, through the Labour Exchanges. The familiar green card, without which nobody could start a new job during the last war, will again make its appearance.

But, further than that, it is being proposed that a special force of labour supply inspectors shall be introduced to ensure that labour is not being wasted.

These inspectors will be given powers to check up on all workers in employment and if they consider any can be spared by their firms, to "steer" them into arms production.

The many workers who, through shortages of raw materials in the clothing, textile, furniture and other "non-essential" industries, are at the moment on short-time, will be the first to be sorted out by the inspectors. It is, we suppose, a measure of the progress of our time that while arms production is the essential occupation, the making of clothing is regarded as unessential.

Final details of Sir Walter Monckton's

scheme will no doubt be made public before very long, but we may be certain that however they may be modified by his discussion with the National Joint Advisory Council, the modifications will be in the direction of greater efficiency rather than more allowance for the human element. The workers' own supposed representatives on the Council, the union leaders, have announced their intention of working amicably with the new Government, and if that friendly co-operation entails giving the green light for industrial slavery—well, that's just too bad—for the industrial slaves.

The workers should realise by now that they are on their own. All those who, with brainless optimism, looked to authority for better things, should now be under no more illusion. The authorities of our own creating are leading us into the slave state. But we should do well to remember that it is not the slaves who depend upon the state, but the state which depends upon the slaves.

## "The Containment of China"

THE alleged building, by the Chinese Communist Government, of a military road to the Indo-Chinese border has provoked "grave warnings" from the politicians and publicists of the West. China must be clearly shown now that... this, that and the other will not be tolerated. The interests of world peace demand that a firm stand be taken now, that the expansionist ambitions of the new state be firmly checked, etc., etc. We know it all, we have heard it down the history books.

Not having seen the newspapers of the other side, we may perhaps speculate on their line. The Western imperialists, foiled in their criminal attempt in Korea, are looking hungrily on Indo-China as a jumping-off place for their next onslaught against socialism and the working-

class. But the ever vigilant government of the Party (inspired by J. V. Stalin) has already enlisted the enthusiasm of the Chinese people in building a military road to contain the expansionist ambitions of imperialist militarism. And so on.

With wearisome repetitiveness,

the rivalry between the power blocs continues to grind out the same kind of superficial logic. But the practical outcome is that a new source of anxiety is presented to the newspaper-reading public. The horizon is limited once more to the immediate future, the attainment of the cycle of slogans, preparedness, firmness in intervening in Korea, or somewhere else, rearmament. The forest of slogans, of anxiety, of war shadows, intervenes between us and the attainment of a rational way of life, of human aspirations, of happiness.

### One Danger After Another

China is doubtless a danger—as Russia is a danger, as Hitler Germany was, as Imperial Germany was (Russia of the Crimean War, Napoleonic and revolutionary France, the commercial Dutch, the Imperialist Spaniards). But the naming of the danger becomes less important than the continual living under threat. We have often pointed out that it is the same, perhaps worse, for the populations of the "enemy".

But, for diplomacy, danger spells bargaining power. "We'll help you in your troubles, if..." And for home consumption, danger means rearmament, the means whereby the wheels of industry are kept turning, the means of harnessing patriotism in the service of suppressing criticism, silencing discontent. (It is the same, only worse, for the populations of the enemy.)

### Chiang Kai-shek

Meanwhile, the papers forget about Chiang Kai-shek. Once the butcher of the Chinese Revolution, then the buddy of Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt, he is now the puppet of America in Formosa, and his Nationalist troops a reserve of material for use against China—or the workers, if need be. Doubtless, Chiang-Kai-shek's activities figure more prominently in the press of Communist China.

### The Game

Once more, through the anxiety, the fear, the excitement, one sees the advantages which the perpetual division of the world into power blocs confers on the institution of government and authority. The fear from outside is still the main instrument of ruling at home just as it was when the history books tell us that "the King sought a foreign war to divert the people's attention from the discontents at home".

In the process, every endeavour for improvement is sacrificed to the immediate need, the containment of the current danger. Meanwhile our lives run out.

## FOREIGN COMMENTARY

### IS AMERICA A DEMOCRACY?

THE document issued by the Superintendent of Schools in the State of Indiana, headed "Teaching American Democracy in our Schools" (the full text of which was printed in FREEDOM, 1/12/51) provoked Bertrand Russell to write a particularly stinging reply which he entitled "Using Beelzebub to Cast Out Satan" (*Manchester Guardian*, Nov., 1951). A belated reply has now been published from a Mr. William Henry Chamberlin, who is among other things, a prominent contributor to the columns of the American *New Leader*, already described by us as a Lib-Lab journal which is so worried by the Communist menace that it uses a large proportion of its space digging up Communist plots, and as a result aligns itself with the most reactionary forces in the world to-day.

Now Mr. Chamberlin is really shocked by Bertrand Russell making a comparison between political freedom in Nazi Germany and Russia and present-day America. What is happening in America, says Mr. Chamberlin, are examples "of occasional lapses into bigotry, stupidity and intolerance" and as for Bertrand Russell's assertion that "if by some misfortune you were to quote with approval some remark by Jefferson, you would probably lose your job and perhaps find yourself behind bars..." Why, writes Mr. Chamberlin, "Jefferson never stood higher in general American esteem. He is one of the patron saints of the Democratic Party." And even the Republican Party is fully in accord with Jefferson's thesis that the Government which governs least, governs best!

Bertrand Russell, in a spirited reply, concedes "at once that the reign of terror in America is far less severe than in Russia, but I will not concede that it is non-existent". And he points to the legal and severe economic penalties "which cause apprehension", and to the fact that prospective federal employees now have to prove innocence and not be proved guilty, not to mention the "vast list" prepared by the Attorney-General "of persons to be interned whenever, in his opinion, such a course seems wise".

As for Mr. Chamberlin's remarks about Jefferson, Bertrand Russell's reply is withering and must be reprinted in full because it includes quotations from Jefferson which, says Russell, "I could multiply indefinitely":

"Mr. Chamberlin's remarks about Jefferson surprise me. He mentions as if it were relevant, that Jefferson 'never stood higher in general American esteem'. Christ stands almost equally high, but everyone knows that it is dangerous to quote the Sermon on the Mount in war-time. As for Jefferson, I commend the following quotations:

"A little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. . . . It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government." (Letter to James Madison, January 30, 1787. The rebellion concerned was in America, not in Europe.)

"What country can preserve its liberties, if its rulers are not warned from time to time, that this people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. . . . The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants." (Letter to Colonel Smith, son-in-law of the second President, November 13, 1787.)

"The late rebellion in Massachusetts has given more alarm than I think it should have done. Calculate that one rebellion in thirteen States in the course of eleven years, is but one for each State in a century and a half. No country should be so long without one." (Letter to James Madison, December 20, 1787.)

"Every alien wishing to visit America has to declare on oath his disagreement with such sentiments. And I think that if Mr. Chamberlin were to state (without mentioning that he is quoting Jefferson) that the United States ought to have rebellions once every 150 years he would secure the attention of the F.B.I., even in Cambridge, Mass."

To Mr. Chamberlin's plea that even John Stuart Mill and Voltaire if they lived to-day would have recognised some exceptions to their "sweeping theories of absolute tolerance" in the case of the supporters of the powerful Russian military machine and all that Russia stands for, Russell replies, "I cannot agree that the first step in a war for liberty should be the surrender of what you say you are fighting for."

And this is where he displays, to our mind, an incomprehension and naivety which is so disappointing in a man of

his calibre. Does he believe that a war with Russia will in fact be "for liberty". And as a supporter of the last war did he not see that in the first place it was not a war for liberty, and secondly, that the outcome was simply a redistribution of power in the world and a widespread victory for totalitarianism? For to-day no country is untouched by the plague of growing intolerance, centralisation and preparation for war, and all that this implies in the regimentation of peoples.

AS a pendant to this controversy on American political freedom, we must quote from the report by the National Broadcasting Company's radio correspondent, Irving Levine, in which he said that:

"Special officers now are reading all letters sent out of Red camps by American prisoners.

"Before air-mailing letters to Pw's families in the United States, these officers look for information in letters. . . including any evidence the doughboy has succumbed to the Communist line.

"Not a word is cut out before mailing them to anxious families, but passages of interest are copied.

"Officers copy into individual files

### THEY STARTED THEIR OWN SCHOOL

A GROUP of parents at Eccles, Lancashire, were dissatisfied with the educational facilities in their district. They were "unhappy at overcrowding of candidates sitting for entrance examinations to secondary and grammar schools, since the Education Act of 1944 had produced a situation where nearly 80 per cent. of youngsters were denied further education because they failed examinations at 11."

So, 18 months ago, they rented an old chapel, each bought a £2 share, and they started their own school with classes limited to 15, which "will never grow beyond 25." They are now arranging to buy new premises for their school.

anything which indicates Communist indoctrination has taken effect. On the basis of these files, each released PW will be questioned on his prison-camp activity."

(*N. York Herald Tribune*, 3/1/52)

And an example of the American Way: The United Press report of the findings of the Supreme Court in the case of a man whose conviction, on a narcotics charge, they reversed because the evidence had been obtained by the use of a stomach pump.

"The general question considered by the court was how far the United States Constitution restricts a state in enforcing its penal code.

Justice Felix Frankfurter said: "We are compelled to conclude that the proceedings by which this conviction was obtained do more than offend some fastidious squeamishness or private sentimentalism about combating crime too energetically. It is conduct that shocks the conscience. . . .

"Illegally breaking into the privacy of the petitioner, the struggle to open his mouth and remove what was there, the forcible extraction of his stomach's contents—this course of proceeding by agents of government to obtain evidence is bound to offend even hardened sensibilities: They are methods too close to the rack and the screw to permit of constitutional differentiation. . . .

"It would be a stultification of the responsibility which the course of constitutional history has cast upon this court to hold that in order to convict a man the police cannot extract by force what is in his mind but can extract what is in his stomach."

This report does of course reveal that one can still observe an independence in the judiciary which is non-existent in the Iron Curtain countries and Russia. But it is the methods used for obtaining the evidence by "agents of government" which more than outweigh the comfort to be derived by "democrats" from an independent judiciary, for in Justice Frankfurter's words they are methods "too close to the rack and screw". If such methods are used in narcotics cases, to what lengths will the F.B.I. go, especially in politically critical moments, to extract information and confessions from political suspects? And one is even justified to suggest that in such cases the whole process of law will be by-passed. So much for the independence of the judiciary being a positive guarantee of the Government's respect for the Constitution.

# KROPOTKIN by Malatesta

(Continued from last issue)

KROPOTKIN was at the same time a learned man and a social reformer. He was possessed with two passions: the desire to know, and the desire to act for the good of humanity, two noble passions which can be mutually useful and which one would like to see in every man; without however being for all this one and the same thing. But Kropotkin had an eminently systematic brain and he wanted to explain everything according to the same principle, and reduce everything to unity—and often did so, in my view, even at the expense of all logic. Thus, he based his social aspirations on science since in his view they were none other than precisely scientific deductions.

I have no special competence to judge Kropotkin as a scientist. I know that in his early youth he rendered great services to geography and geology. I appreciate the importance of his book "Mutual Aid" and I am convinced that he could have made (with his vast culture and intelligence) a greater contribution to the progress of the sciences if his interest and activity had not been absorbed by the social struggle. Still, it seems to me that he lacked the something that goes to make a true man of science; the capacity to forget his wishes and prejudices in order to observe facts with an undisturbed objectivity. He seemed to be rather what I should willingly call a poet of science. He might have foreseen new truths by intuitions of genius, but these truths would have to be verified by other men; men

## A NEW NOVEL BY B. TRAVEN

WHEN, three years ago, we reviewed the film *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, which was based upon the story by B. Traven, we mentioned the mystery of this writer's identity and committed ourselves to the view of Erich Mühsam and Rudolf Rocker that Traven is "Ret Marut" who played a prominent part in the Bavarian insurrection after the first world war, edited an anarchist journal *The Tile Burner*, was sentenced to death, escaped and disappeared in Mexico. Our reader Helmut Rüdiger, wrote to declare that this theory was "pure fantasy", that Marut was never condemned to death and consequently never escaped and that there was no evidence to suggest that Marut was Traven. He also said that Traven himself, during the Spanish War wrote a letter to the *Solidaridad Obrera* of Barcelona, saying he was a Norwegian brought up in the United States. The mystery of Traven's identity cropped up again when his most celebrated novel *The Death Ship* was re-issued (Pan Books, 2/-, reviewed in *FREEDOM* for 14/10/50).

This month, Messrs. Robert Hale are publishing a translation by Charles Duff of another of Traven's novels, *The Hanged*. Of the author's identity, the publishers say:

"He has written many novels, but his publishers in all the principal countries of the world have never met him. All his royalties go through a Mexican agent, who has never seen him either."

"Perhaps the nearest he has come to identification was when Warner Brothers were filming *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* in 1946. When John Huston was adapting the novel for the screen, a little man in a tropical suit, worn and far too big, presented himself in the Reforma Hotel, Mexico City, with a card reading: Hal Groves, Translator. Huston engaged him as technical adviser, found many of his ideas valuable, and came to the definite conclusion that Groves was the elusive Traven. But when a show-down seemed imminent, Groves slipped back into the jungle and was not seen again."

perhaps with less genius or no genius at all, but who were more endowed with what is called the scientific spirit. Kropotkin was too impassioned to be an exact observer.

Generally, he would conceive an hypothesis and then look for the facts that would support it; which may be a good method for discovering new things, but it sometimes happened quite unconsciously, that he did not observe the facts that contradicted his hypothesis. He could not decide to admit a fact, and often could not even take it into consideration if he did not first of all succeed in explaining it, that is, if he was not able to make it fit into his system.

As an example, I shall recount an incident for which I was responsible. Between the years 1855-1889, when I was in the Argentine Pampas, I happened to read something about the hypnotic experiments carried out by the school of Nancy. I was greatly interested, but at the time had no opportunity of learning more about it. On returning to Europe, I saw Kropotkin in London and asked him if he could give me some information about hypnotism. He answered me positively that there was nothing in it; hypnotism was for him only an imposture or hallucinations. Some time later, I saw Kropotkin and our conversation again turned to hypnotism. To my surprise I found his opinion had completely changed; hypnotic phenomena now held interesting things for him and were worth studying. What then had happened? Had he learned some new facts? Or had he some convincing proofs about the facts he previously denied? Not at all. He simply had read (in a book by some German physiologist) a theory about the connection between the two hemispheres of the brain which, good or bad, could serve to explain the phenomena in question.

With this state of mind, which made him arrange things in this way in matters of pure science, in which there is no justification for passion to influence the intellect, one could foresee what would happen with regard to those questions which were close to his greatest wishes and dearest hopes.

Kropotkin professed the materialist philosophy which prevailed among scientists in the second half of the nineteenth century—the philosophy of Moleschott, Buchner, Vogt, etc., and consequently, his conception of the universe was strictly mechanistic.

According to this conception, Will (a creative power whose source and nature we cannot understand, just as, likewise, we do not understand the source or the nature of "matter" and of all the other "first principles")—Will, which contributes much or little in the determination of the conduct of the individual and of society, does not exist, it is only an illusion. All that has been, that is, and will be, from the path of the stars to the birth and decline of a civilisation, from the perfume of a rose to a mother's smile, from an earthquake to the thought of a Newton, from the tyrant's cruelty to the goodness of a saint, all had to happen and will happen as a result of an inevitable sequence of causes and effects of a mechanical nature, which allows for no possibility of variation. The illusion of Will being itself only a mechanical fact.

Naturally, if the Will has no power, if everything is necessary and cannot be otherwise, the ideas of freedom, justice, responsibility have no meaning and correspond to nothing real.

Thus, logically, we could only look at the things that happen in the world with indifference, pleasure or pain, according to our own sensibility, but without any hope or possibility of changing anything.

Thus, Kropotkin, who was very critical of the fatalism of the marxists, was himself a victim of mechanistic

fatalism, which is far more paralyzing.

However, philosophy could not kill the powerful will that was in Kropotkin. He was too strongly convinced of the truth of his system to give it up or even to quietly accept that it could be doubted: he was too deeply interested, and desired freedom and justice too much to allow himself to be halted by the difficulty of a logical contradiction and to give up the struggle. He got out of it by introducing anarchism into his system and making it a scientific truth.

He would be confirmed in his conviction by maintaining that all recent discoveries in all the sciences, from astronomy to biology and sociology concurred in demonstrating always more clearly that anarchy is the form of social organisation imposed by natural laws.

Though we could oppose him with conclusions taken from contemporary science, one thing was sure, if new discoveries were to destroy our actual scientific beliefs, he, Kropotkin, would remain an anarchist. But Kropotkin would not have admitted the possibility of a conflict between science and his social aspirations, and would have always tried to find a means, logical or otherwise, to reconcile his mechanistic philosophy with his anarchism.

And so, after having stated that "anarchism is a conception of the universe based on the mechanical interpretation of phenomena, which embrace the whole of nature, including the life of societies" (I confess I have never understood what this might mean) Kropotkin forgot his mechanistic conception as if it did not matter, and threw himself into the struggle with all the fire, enthusiasm and faith of one who believes in the efficiency of his will and hopes by his

## MORE ABOUT COLLIER'S

IN a remarkable article in our issue of December 29th, André Prud'hommeux commented upon the notorious articles in the American *Collier's Magazine* on "The War We Do Not Want." Further enlightenment upon the editorial standards of *Collier's* is given by their recent advertisement in the Paris edition of the *New York Herald Tribune* which reads:

"Learn . . . how passion influences fashion! When did men wear falsies? Women wear bustles in front? What started the boom in lacy black nighties? For delightfully frank comments on petticoats and prudery, slips and sex, read the lively, hilariously illustrated history of underclothes in this week's *Collier's*. And in the same issue meet the American airmen who will carry the A-bomb!"

## Literary Notes

# THOREAU'S "WALDEN"

THOREAU and his *Walden* were impressed on my mind by a curious concatenation of circumstances long before I was able to understand more than a little of what he was getting at. There was a gloomy, grimy greystone hall in a backstreet by the river at Marlow where, when I was a child of nine or thereabouts, they used to hold public lectures in the winter. It was in the period before the 'Talkies' had arrived, and there was still sufficient interest in such things to keep them going, though even then the attendance was dwindling to something well below the classic days of travelling lecturers.

An old man with a white mane was chairman, the lecturer was another old man with an ascetic grey beard; the first was Jerome K. Jerome and the second Edward Carpenter, and though their names meant little to me at the time, I can still remember them very well—rather as colourful oddities in small-town routine than as the authors of books I afterwards read and appreciated. But the subject of Carpenter's lecture was Thoreau, and even then, though I could not make head nor tail of much that was said, I was fascinated by the idea of the man who went away from society to build himself a house where he could be free and independent. I suppose it was a natural reaction of childish escapism, but *Walden* for a long time played an important part in my thoughts about parental and scholastic authority.

Since then I have read the book fairly regularly, at intervals of several years, and each time, though by now the myth of Thoreau's rebellion has shrunk down to the rather meagre proportions of the reality, and the trimmings of transcendental philosophy have worn as thin as they were to wear in Thoreau's own later thinking, it seems to me a singularly impressive book. This is not only for its very sensitive observation of natural phenomena, but for its almost prophetic resistance to the materialism that was even then permeating American life, the subordination of man to material ends rather than the subordination of material ends to human fulfilment. As Thoreau said: "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those

activity to obtain, or contribute to the obtaining of that which he wishes.

In actual fact, Kropotkin's anarchism and communism were the result of his sensibility before being a question of reasoning. In him, his heart spoke first, then came the reasoning to justify and strengthen his heart's impulses.

What constituted the depth of his character was his love for mankind, his sympathy for the poor and oppressed. He really suffered the miseries of others, and could not bear injustice (even if it favoured him).

At the time of our association in London, he earned his living by contributing articles to scientific magazines and lived in relatively comfortable circumstances. Still, he felt remorse at being better off than most manual labourers and he always seemed to want to excuse himself for his little comforts. He often said in speaking of himself and of those in similar circumstances to his, "If we have been able to learn, to develop our intellectual faculties; if we have access to intellectual pleasures, and live in not too bad material conditions, it is because we, through the chance of birth, profited by the exploitation to which the workers are subjected; to fight for their emancipation is for us therefore, a duty, a sacred debt which we must pay."

It was through his love for justice, and as if to atone for the privileges he had enjoyed, that he had given up his position, neglected his studies, in which he was most interested, to dedicate himself to the education of the St. Petersburg workers and to fight against the despotism of the Tsars. Always carried away by the same feelings, he later joined the International and accepted the anarchist ideas. Finally, from among the various anarchist tendencies he had chosen for himself the anarchist communist programme which, based on solidarity and love, goes further than justice itself.

But naturally, as it was possible to foresee, his philosophy was not without influence on his way of conceiving the future and the struggle that had to be waged to attain it.

Since, according to his philosophy, all that happened must happen, so also the triumphant outcome of the anarchist communism he desired was as inevitable as a law of nature. And this removed for him all doubts and concealed from him every difficulty. The bourgeois world was fatally destined to collapse; it was already disintegrating and revolutionary action served only to hasten its downfall.

His great influence as a propagandist besides being due to his talents, rested on the fact that he showed things to be so simple and so inevitable, that his enthusiasm was immediately communicated to his listeners and readers. Moral

difficulties vanished because he attributed to the "people", to the mass of workers all the virtues and all the abilities. He exalted with reason the moralizing influence of work, but he did not sufficiently see the depressing and corrupting effects of misery and enslavement. And he thought that it would be enough to do away with the privileges of the capitalists and the power of the rulers, for men to immediately love each other like brothers and to concern themselves with the interests of others as they would for their own.

In the same way he ignored the material difficulties, or he easily dismissed them. He had accepted the idea, then current among anarchists, that the accumulated products of the earth and industry were in such abundance that for a considerable time it would not be necessary to bother about production; and he always said that the problem of the hour was that of consumption, that for revolution to succeed it was necessary to satisfy immediately and fully the needs of all—and production would follow the rhythm of consumption. From this view sprang the "take as much as you like" idea which he popularised and which is by far the simplest way to conceive communism and the most likely to please the multitude. But it is also the most primitive and the most really utopian idea. And when it was pointed out to him that this accumulation of products could not exist because business men get others to produce the quantities they can sell at a profit and that, perhaps, at the beginning of the revolution it would be necessary to organise a rationing scheme and to invite intensive production rather than inviting the taking of as much as one liked (which, in fact, would not be possible), he began to study the question at first hand and came to the conclusion that indeed abundance did not exist, that in some countries people were always threatened with famine. But he reassured himself by thinking of the great possibilities of agriculture, aided by science. He took as examples the results obtained by a few agriculturists and a few learned agronomists in limited areas and drew from these results the encouraging conclusions without taking into account the obstacles represented by the peasant's ignorance and resistance to what is new, as well as the machinery required for a general acceptance of the new ways of cultivation and distribution.

As always, Kropotkin saw things as he would have wished them to be, as we all hope they will be one day. He took as existing or as immediately realisable that which must be won only by long and tenacious efforts.

Basically, Kropotkin conceived Nature as a kind of Providence through which harmony ruled in all things, including

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## FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

- by Henry Miller . . .
- The Air Conditioned Nightmare 15/-
- Sunday After the War 10/-
- The Wisdom of the Heart 10/-
- The Colossus of Maroussi 1/6
- Books in My Life (out February) 18/-
- by Kenneth Patchen . . .
- Beyond the Mountains 7/6
- See You in the Morning 8/6
- Outlaw of the Lowest Planet 8/6
- ★
- Scottsboro Boy Heywood Patterson 16/-
- The story of the Scottsboro case by one of the victims.
- The World Scene from the Libertarian Point of View 2/6
- The 21 contributors to the symposium include Albert Melzer, J. G. Pradas, George Woodcock and David Wieck.
- Heavens on Earth Mark Holloway 16/-
- Illustrated account of American utopian communities.

Obtainable from 27 red lion st, london, W.C.1

## WILL NEW TOWNS EVER GROW OLD?

IN his "Letter to Posterity", on the radio last week, Lord Beveridge, addressing the people of the year 2052, told them about Newton Aycliffe, one of the New Towns, where he is Chairman of the Development Corporation. "By the time you get this letter," he said, "Newton Aycliffe will be an old town."

Well, we hope it will, but the Reports of the 12 New Towns just issued by the Stationery Office indicate that five of them have not yet completed any dwellings at all, that Aycliffe, Crawley, Harlow and Hemel Hempstead, each set up in 1947, have completed 168, 190, 187 and 292 dwellings respectively, that Peterlee, set up in 1948, has completed 26; Stevenage, set up in 1946, has completed 36; and Hatfield, set up in 1948, has completed one house.

It is one of the bad features of that very capitalist civilisation which Thoreau criticised in its younger days, that it should have so largely eliminated this custom of mutual aid among equals and replaced it almost completely by wage labour, so that the poor farmer can no longer look for the co-operation which he could expect almost automatically in the earlier days of settlement.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

# Freedom

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## MALATESTA'S DARK LANTERN

JOURNALISM has acquired the reputation of being an activity little compatible with truth or honesty of purpose, and few would claim that this reputation was ill-deserved, least of all by political journalism. It used to be thought that the "prostitution of the press" was a specifically capitalist phenomenon, a natural by-product of the making of money. But it is, unfortunately, undeniable that the socialist press, whether on a national scale or on the small, struggling level of particular propaganda lines, is also infected by a certain unconcern for the truth and a disregard for warmth and human qualities which are of the essence of human relationships in real life. Nor is the anarchist press wholly free from this journalistic taint.

This is not the place to discuss the causes as far as the capitalist press is concerned: but the journalistic disregard for the truth and the normal canons of behaviour in human intercourse is a sufficiently serious canker in the field of left-wing ideology, to merit some consideration, albeit brief.

Of course, all controversy, all argument, might be said to foster the desire to score points from an adversary, and so to encourage the over-simplification of issues, the coming down or suppression of aspects which "do not suit one's book." But this narrowly partisan spirit has not always existed in discussion, and has been rightly regarded as vitiating its purpose—the advancement of the truth—at many periods in the past.

In scientific discussion, too, a high standard of discussion, in general, remains the rule; although recent years have provided many occasions when scientific ideals have been corrupted by political needs and loyalties.

Socialists are often suspicious of an idealist attitude to the truth. Marx was so determined that his viewpoint should prevail that he was not content to try and make it approximate to the truth, but used every kind of device to assist it and detract from his opponents' opinions. With Lenin the idea that the truth was less important than that one's own people should wield power became current in wider socialist circles than the Third International, and provided still more ground for journalistic corruption.

Finally, too, there is the idea of authority as a corrupting agent and a brake on the advancement of truth; especially when it is allied to the idea that readers are incapable of thought and need only slogans and exhortations. Such ideas are, of course, absolutely hostile to anarchist conceptions, but the article by Malatesta on Kropotkin shows how they can nevertheless operate in the anarchist movement.

Malatesta's article does, however, much more than point out a well-concealed danger—that of Kropotkin's very eminence and merits conferring vitality on his inevitable errors—it is also in itself a model of journalism at its very highest.

Malatesta's standpoint, in this question is, we believe, the standpoint of anarchism: it is also the standpoint *Freedom Press* has sought to take for many years—since, indeed, Tom Keell refused to allow his love and respect for Kropotkin to make him turn *Freedom* over, in 1914, to a pro-war position. Kropotkin's eminence and service to anarchism is of the highest: and as a man he was of the first rank. But

# THE COMMUNITY OF WORK BOIMONDAU

In his recent article, "Communities in Relation to Society" (*Freedom*, Dec. 15, 22 and 29), Mark Holloway mentioned that, "In France, since the war, there has been an interesting series of communities centred round small factories which are owned by the people who work them." We reproduce below, by permission of the author, Mrs. Thelma Edge, a condensation of her unpublished report on the most celebrated of these experiments, the Community of Work Boimondau, from which it will be seen that there are some features of the "Communitarian Movement" in Europe which are of great interest from an anarcho-syndicalist point of view—and some which we should find most unpleasant.

MARCEL BARBU, the founder of Boimondau, grew up in surroundings of poverty. His father's trade was the making of watch-cases; when business was good the family had enough to eat, when business was bad they had just enough to keep them alive. Throughout the troubled years after the first world war, Barbu was in and out of work, often near starvation, alternating between bitter resentment and profound bewilderment. Why should he and others like him be compelled to lead such a tightrope existence?

The years passed, he found steady employment in a watch-case firm at Besançon, he married and had children. Some of the bitterness passed, and the bewilderment changed to reflection. He had suffered and seen others suffer, and he could not forget it. But why had it been like that? What was the matter with society? As an employee in a privately-owned firm, Barbu could hardly help observing that while he and his colleagues got enough to live on, but no more, the directors got enough to indulge in a great many luxuries. Was the unbalance of society due to the selfishness of the capitalist? One thing at least was clear: the only safeguard for oneself was to become a capitalist; but why not a benevolent capitalist, with profit sharing and the participation of his workers in the management of the business? He discussed the idea with his friends in the factory, and found half a dozen who were willing to work for him if he started up on his own. So he began to save. By 1936, after pawning all but the barest necessities of clothes and furniture, he had just enough money to buy a few machines. With his friends he launched his own enterprise.

The concern prospered, and before long it employed a hundred workmen. But Barbu had been born with the talent for reflection, and this is a restless gift. Even now, with the prospect of building up a successful enterprise, run on benevolent lines, with a secure future for himself and his family, he was dissatisfied. He was beginning to see that society's predicament was due to a conflict between masters and men. Irresponsibility and lack of loyalty both in masters and men had provoked this situation and benevolent capitalism was not enough. Only through common study of the problem and common effort to solve it could the inherent mistrust be overcome. In his own concern the men were content; but Barbu was not. He determined to try and evolve an organisation in which the lack of confidence could not arise. But the evolution of unorthodox methods of running a factory entails effort from everybody, and it is simpler to go comfortably on as before under a kindly employer. Barbu found, as many reformers have found before him, that the people he wanted to help were just the ones who firmly opposed him. This phenomenon

that in no way entitles his views to remain unquestioned, or absolves us from forming our own independent judgment.

But Malatesta shows, too, how one can differ from another's opinion without losing respect for him or affecting one's personal relationship. (Those who have read the chapters on Kropotkin's war years in George Woodcock's and Ivan Avakumovic's biography, will not cavil at Malatesta's calling him a pathological case.)

Altogether, this brief critique by Malatesta, is a mint of productive reflections. Not least, one feels here that besides the great and well-recognised contributions of Kropotkin to anarchist and world thought, there is the richness of Malatesta's utterly dissimilar contribution—which nevertheless, as he himself affirms so delightfully, points in the same direction. It is to be regretted that Malatesta's ideas are so little known in the English-speaking movement. The bright and benign light of Kropotkin should not obscure the riches of anarchist ideas from other sources. Nor should his thought become an "authority" which limits the activity of criticism and originality.

brought a lot of trouble on his head. Not only were his own employees suspicious of him, but he was soon up against local vested interests. Both, from different viewpoints, regarded him as a dangerous revolutionary. Then came the outbreak of war. Tensions increased, the firm suffered financially, and finally in 1940, Barbu decided to pay off the workmen and close down.

Nevertheless, he had learnt an important lesson: that it is a mistake to try and impose a new system from the top. If a new system is to be valid it must meet a need, and that need can only be met by being defined by the people concerned. In other words, men in need must define their problems and then themselves work out the solution.

Barbu and his wife took a few machines with them and moved south to Valence—a small town south of Lyon in the Rhone valley. At Valence they rented a garage, installed the machines, and got down to work. In all, their machinery and stock were worth at this time about £1,000.

During the years at Besançon, Barbu had not only learnt a lesson, he had begun to see yet more clearly into the problems of human relations in his factory. He saw that all his progressive ideas on organisation and education were not enough. They were part of a necessary mechanism, but the main-spring had been left out. This main-spring was the dynamic inherent in a group. The organisation of a factory was geared to fulfil a production pro-

gramme—neither more nor less. But it was possible that in limiting the purpose of the men and women involved in this programme there was inevitably a limitation of their potential effort. If the purpose of the group was widened to include the development of whole men, the fulfilment of all their potentialities, might not that fully engage the power that was otherwise lying around half-used? What was the use of wage incentives and more leisure hours unless they were for something? And how best make the effort to discover what they were for, than together? Work was not a necessary evil, it was a necessary good, without which the community of peoples could not live. Man's labour contributed to the community, and the better the man, the better his work. The community should reward him not only for his work but for himself; and the community should help him not only to produce goods, but to fulfil himself. To begin at the beginning, therefore, with the factory group was to see that group as the embryo of a vital circumstance within which the growth of each person was challenged and encouraged.

Before long, Barbu had inspired half a dozen young men to join him and his wife in a garage workshop making watch cases. They were a polygot half-dozen—a sweet-maker, a garage hand, a sausage-maker, a turner, a hairdresser and a baker. Each one had to be taught the use of the machines and it was not until June 1941 that production was well under way. To anyone outside it would have seemed a crazy concern: packing cases and piles of books served for chairs, and as they worked they discussed their philosophy of life, they tried to work out how they felt their enterprise should be run, they sought to probe deeper into the source of conflict in society.

But in this atmosphere of idealisms, Barbu's group had its feet well on the ground. They recognised that it was no use discussing how to organise a factory that never came into existence. To bring a stable economic enterprise into being was the first thing to do. And by 1942 the venture had grown amazingly. It now contained a hundred families, the garage had been exchanged for a more spacious workshop, the assets had become the property of the whole group (the value of which was to be paid to Barbu over a period of years), a system of organisation had been established, and guiding principals laid down.

At the outset the little group of workers, "decided to learn to know each other, and to eradicate all that was likely to divide them." At this point they felt that it was necessary to get clear in their minds what moral principles they held in common. Although they were all of different political and religious opinions, came from different backgrounds and had different experiences of life, it should not be impossible to agree together on certain simple ethics which they could set down and accept as a common guiding moral minimum. This is the moral minimum they agreed upon: "You will:—love your neighbour; not take life; not take your neighbour's goods; not lie; be faithful to your spoken promise; respect the person and liberty of your neighbour; respect yourself; fight—and first within yourself—"

against all the vices which reduce man, against all the passions which keep men in bondage: pride, avarice, self-indulgence, envy, greed, anger, laziness; you will remember that there are values superior to life itself: liberty, human dignity, truth, justice."

Further than this it was decided that certain principles should guide them in the development of their community structure, and these were summarised under the heading of "The communitarian society" which:

- has a family structure,
- is a morally progressive society,
- is freely engaged in the research towards an ideal system of which it admits the possible existence,
- is truly at the service of man, and puts all at the service of men.

The emphasis on "family" and the measure of strength in "families" is significant of another stage in their thinking. They saw that the love and common effort which bound families together was a power that could grow outwards to fructify the common effort of the families whose work brought them together. Thus the vitality of the group depended upon the vitality of the family. Whatever served to strengthen, develop and enrich each person—man, woman and child—within the family should be sought after, and whatever weakened, reduced and impoverished them should be rejected. Furthermore, the rift between family life and working life, aggravated by the industrial revolution, must be overcome.

These decisions and principles were not left in the air as fine thoughts. Out of them grew the structure and organisation of the community. This stood on five main pillars: collective ownership of the means of production, equal distribution of the fruits of work, co-operative direction of the enterprise on a basis of unanimity, a social organisation for intellectual and spiritual development, and the payment of every member not only for his professional skill but in addition for his quality as a person—that is, recognition of the total human value of each individual to the community. Out of these, two have come to be the most significant in the communitarian movement—the principle of unanimity on all major decisions, and salaries assessed according to total human value.

The General Assembly meets twice yearly. In these meetings the head presents his recommendations on policy or alteration of rules for unanimous acceptance or for rejection. If his recommendations are unanimously rejected he may veto the decision, and it is then the business of the Assembly to give or withhold confidence in him on this issue. If it is withheld he must retract or resign. The Head and his deputy are elected for three years. The General Council, an advisory and guiding body, is composed of the departmental heads and eight elected members. There is a Commission of Control "composed of three members who have access to every department and are responsible for upholding the integrity of the community's life"

The Tribunal is made up of eight members who must include a departmental head, a foreman and a charge-

Continued on p. 4

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## KROPOTKIN by Malatesta

Continued from p. 2

human societies. And it is why many anarchists repeat this typically Kropotkinian phrase: "Anarchism is natural order."

One could ask oneself, I think, how nature, if it is true that its law is harmony, has had to wait for anarchists to come into the world and has still to await for them to triumph in order to destroy the terrible and murderous disharmonies from which Man has always suffered. Should we not be closer to the truth in saying that anarchism is the struggle against the disharmonies of nature?

I have particularly dwelt on the two errors which—to my way of thinking—Kropotkin made: his theoretic fatalism and his excessive optimism, because I believe I have observed the bad effects they have had upon our movement.

There have been comrades who took the fatalistic theory seriously (and which they euphemistically called determinism) and as a result lost all revolutionary spirit. The Revolution, they said, is not made; it will happen in its own time, and it is useless, unscientific and even ridiculous, to want to bring it about. And with these good reasons, they withdrew from the movement and went about their own business. However, it would be a mistake to think that this was a convenient excuse for withdrawing from the movement. I have known many comrades with fervent temperaments, ready to take any risk, who have sacrificed their freedom and even their lives in the name of anarchy, though convinced of the uselessness of their actions. They did so through disgust with present society, or for revenge, or in despair, or

for the love of the grand gesture, but but without thinking that in these ways they would serve the cause of revolution and consequently without selecting the target and the right moment and without thinking of co-ordinating their action with the actions of others.

On the other hand, those who, without bothering with philosophy, have wanted to work to hasten the revolution, have thought the problem much simpler than it really is; they did not foresee difficulties and were insufficiently prepared . . . and as a consequence when the moment was ripe for perhaps doing something practical, we were impotent. May past errors serve as a lesson for doing better in the future.

I have finished.

I do not think that my criticisms can diminish Kropotkin's personality. He remains, in spite of everything, one of the purest glories of our movement.

They will serve, if they are justified, to show that no man is free from error, not even if he has the noble intelligence and the heroic heart of a Kropotkin.

In any case, anarchists will always find in his writings a treasure of fertile ideas and in his life an example and an incentive in the struggle for wellbeing.

[This article was first published in Italian by *Studi Sociali* (Montevideo April 15, 1931). An English translation appeared in *The Road to Freedom* (New York, December 1931) but for our purposes it has been necessary to drastically revise the translation because of the many inaccuracies it contained. The present translation, whatever its other shortcomings, is an accurate translation of Malatesta's thought.—EDITORS.]

ONE of the subjects which the present wave of demands for increases is bringing to the fore once again is that of equal pay for women.

For nearly forty years women have been agitating for equal pay for equal work. Year after year, T.U. conferences have passed resolutions endorsing the idea, and so have gatherings of the Labour Party. Even the Labour Government paid lip-service to it in principle, only asking the women to be patient until such time as it is possible to introduce such a "revolutionary" concept without disturbing the national economy.

Needless to say, there is no indication of a return to "normal"; our economic situation is now one of permanent crisis (come to think of it, it nearly always has been!) and in the present inflationary period all the economic arguments are put forward against the women. But the longer they wait, the less likely they are to achieve their aim.

All the approval for equal pay has been given to it in principle, and it is indeed difficult to think of any possible objections that could be made in principle.

In a broadcast in the "Taking Stock" series last week, two men and two women discussed the matter and it was interesting to hear how the women concentrated on the "principle" and "justice" angle, while the men stressed the economic.

And it was undoubtedly the economic arguments which were the weakest, the men at one point trying to have us believe that in some way wages were connected with need. But we have yet to meet a boss who pays wages according to the needs of his employees instead of according to their value to him!

It is no doubt true that if all women were given wage increases to bring their wages in line with men doing the same job, it would help the inflationary trend. Prices of commodities would have to go up to cover the increase of productive workers, and taxation would have to be increased—or subsidies reduced—to pay the Civil Servants and teachers. But, in fact, the effects would be so slight compared with the effects of the re-armament drive that they would hardly be noticed.

When we see the economists and politicians accepting so easily the expenditure of £5,000 millions on re-armament, which can benefit nobody but the arms manufacturers, we find it difficult to take seriously the concern they pretend at the prospect of the relatively

## Equal Pay For Equal Work?

few millions involved in giving women equal pay for equal work.

For, in point of fact, it is not many women who can be said to do equal work with men, anyway. In nearly all productive capacities, there are distinct fields of operation for each of the sexes. In the clothing trades, for example, makers-out and cutters are nearly always men, machinists and finishers women, pressers can be either. Heavy assembly-line work is usually done by men, light assembly by women. Typists are nearly all women—and so on.

It is in relatively few professions and grades of occupations that women can be said to do the same work as men. In Parliament and the Civil Service, teaching and the law, as shop assistants and bus conductresses and in a few other occupations, division of labour is such that there is no great overlapping.

But, as in all arguments about money and wages, on this point one can get bogged down in endless talking—as obviously the economists have—about details, which will get us nowhere, because it ignores the fundamental question of rightness of the wage system in the first place.

If we accept capitalism, we must accept all that goes with it—all the inequalities of poverty and privilege, wage systems and wars. It is futile for women to point to one tiny aspect of the whole problem and think that by dealing with that their lives are going to be fundamentally altered for the better.

Feminists cry that this is a man's world, dominated by men for the benefit of men. But there are many millions of men who get no benefit from it at all, who cannot be said to dominate anything, who are just as dissatisfied and frustrated as any woman. All that women can hope for in their demand for equal pay is to remove the small anomaly of that extra little bit of exploitation where they are penalised in employment because of their sex. But that will not end their exploitation.

In their struggle for emancipation—political and economic—women have undoubtedly made great advances. They won themselves the vote—and what a lot of use that is! In the economic field they have advanced from being merely the slaves of slaves—they are now slaves in their own right.

In this matter, women rather take the position of those nationalities fighting for their "own" government—the Scottish nationalists, for example—who ignore the unsatisfactory nature of society in those countries which have governments of their own nationality, because their narrow aims fall far short

of a better form of society altogether. They just want men of their own nationality to exploit them instead of somebody else!

But it could not have been much help to the German people that the Nazis were Germans—in fact just the contrary. It does not help the English to have an English government. And it will not help women to have equal pay for equal work, which only means equal exploitation.

Far better for the energies of men and women to be equally devoted to the task of combatting the wage system in itself, in fighting against capitalism and its attendant exploitation altogether, to add their strength to the building of a

better world in which people are not divided because of colour, class, creed or sex, but in which all have equal access to the means of life and the things they need.

Nevertheless, if the women are prepared to make a fight for equal pay, we wish them luck. If they are determined they will get it, and they will then find that it is no more real use to them than the vote—for which they put up such a militant struggle forty years ago. But in the struggle they may learn a thing or two which will be of real use to them when they become ready to play their full part in the social revolution.

P.S.

## Meter Reader's Strike Against Snoopers

LOTS of moral indignation has been gushed at us from the Press following the strike of meter-readers of the London Electricity Board.

Without consulting the men, supervisors were appointed to go on their rounds with the meter-readers, to check up on the number of houses covered each day. The men naturally objected to this, and the Board published a statement in which it claimed that it had come to light that the meter-men were sitting in cafés when they should have been working, were going to the cinema during working hours and even going home at mid-day.

The L.E.B. covers a very wide area and employs 700 meter-readers, which does not seem a very exorbitant number in view of what must be a colossal number of meters which have to be regularly read. Further, there are practically no workers to-day who do not have breaks for tea at least twice a day. We are sure that the office boys of the L.E.B. do not hurry over their's! Just as we are convinced, through the promptness with which electricity bills, reminders and final notices are presented, that the meters are being read in good time.

Just over half the total number of readers are on strike in protest against the introduction of what they justly describe as "snoopers". We are informed that the Board is employing retired electricians at £11 per week to perform this function, and want to send out one snooper per reader.

The men, however, see in this move something more than just a check-up. They claim the Board is seeking to prove one in three of the meter-readers redundant and to speed-up the work of the other two to cover more meters.

The men have set up a strike committee under the chairmanship of Mr. W. ("George") Hall, who issued a statement saying:

"We feel that the Board is endeavouring to use one or two cases of alleged malpractice to speed up our work with a view to creating redundancy and also establishing for the first time in our industry the principle of snoopers, a method practised by the worst type of employers to cover up their own shortcomings of management."

## Food Production

SINCE the days of Kropotkin, FREEDOM has been declaring that this country could and should provide very much more of its food at home, an idea which, through economic necessity is gaining widespread support to-day in many circles for a variety of reasons. (The makers of Ferguson tractors had a full-page advertisement in the *New Statesman* last week, beginning with the challenge, "Is Britain's economy 76 years out of date?" and ending with the exhortation "Grow more food in Britain). The big landowners, for equally obvious reasons are plugging the same line. Lord Hungarton, in a letter to *The Times*, put the case convincingly enough, thus:

"When will the people of Britain realise the true position regarding the world's food supplies? Probably only when there is a scarcity on the table.

"Very definitely food production is not keeping pace with the increasing population. In far too many countries, including our own, there is still a drift from the land, and this will be stopped only by making work in agriculture as financially attractive as in other industries. Many countries, including Australia and Argentina, are becoming industrialised as Britain did over a century ago. The people in these countries are consuming a greater proportion of their home-produced food year by year, which means less and less for export. We cannot dictate how these countries shall be run, and the only way we can obtain more food from overseas is to encourage them to produce more. This means higher prices. The world economy has changed enormously during the past 50 years.

"Let us deal with our own problems in the best way we can. Unfortunately,

at the present time food production in this country is, in my opinion, steadily declining. Every one in agriculture will heartily agree with Lord Waldegrave when he says: "Our land can produce much more of our feeding-stuffs." I am a farmer born and have to obtain my living from the soil. In my opinion, there are still millions of acres in Britain which could be ploughed up and be much improved by growing a crop or two, and then reseeded to grass."

Yet another peer, Lord Cardington, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, speaking at a dinner of the Warwickshire Farmers' Union last week, said:

"I should not think there is one present in this room who can put his hand on his heart and say that his farm is producing as much as possible as economically as possible. I am ashamed to say that I cannot say this about my own farm."

## A WORK COMMUNITY

Continued from p. 3

hand, three workers and two married women, one of whom must be a mother. They may nominate a special section of three to consider cases needing specialist understanding. All internal differences are settled by the tribunal and judgments must be unanimously accepted by the prosecutor and the defender. The community has no written code. The judgments of the Tribunal are made "in accordance with the moral minimum and the rules". Common sense must be their guide.

The election of all these bodies is yearly, mandates are renewable, and the procedure is one of double confidence—that is members must be accepted both by the head and by the families. The list of successful candidates is proposed to the General Assembly for their unanimous ratification or for rejection.

Important organisms in the life of the community are the *Neighbourhood Groups*. These are groupings of five or six families each, who meet once a fortnight to discuss common problems, and to give opinions on any specific questions asked by the head. Meetings take place in members' houses, and the lively and outspoken discussions are meticulously recorded and sent in to the head every month for him to read. He meets the leaders of one group in council each month, and in this way is kept in intimate contact with the families of every member. Also, and very importantly, by this system of family meetings absolute freedom of expression is encouraged and made possible in the informal atmosphere of home. A sense of confidence is built in the knowledge that grievances need not be kept back and no victimisation, or loss of prestige or popularity is risked by speaking one's mind.

Attendance at discussion groups, lectures and sports is paid for. There is a contact assembly on the last hour of of the working week at which details of activities and programmes are discussed, the head recounts matters of interest, the health of sick members is reported upon, new members are introduced, and questions are asked.

(To be concluded)

## Special Appeal

Jan. 1st—10th.

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1952 TOTAL TO DATE £33 14 9

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\* Readers who have undertaken to send regular monthly contributions.

## COMMENT

## Drink in this Age of Anxiety

HOW much pleasure can be derived from a glass of cooled beer, a bottle of Burgundy wine, or a nip of whisky! Yet for millions of people they have ceased to be sources of real pleasure and enjoyment and have become instead an uncontrollable necessity, an addiction as terrible as drug taking, with consequences as tragic.

In this country, statistics of proved drunkenness for 1950, recently issued by the Home Office, show an increase of one-third on the previous year, but though the number of proved cases has been increasing since 1946, the 1950 figure of 47,717 cases, including 670 where methylated spirits was drunk, is still less than for 1938 when there were 54,518 "proved offences" including 973 methylated spirit drinkers.

Comments by social workers and others on these increases are to the effect that it seemed "a symptomatic trend of worrying times". A probation officer said that the habitual drunkards formed the hard core of the convictions list. They were often elderly people living alone or in poor circumstances. It was not easy to find a practical cure for them. He added that he was much concerned about the increase in "escapist" cases and suggested a parallel with the increase in matrimonial and domestic crime.

The cases of alcoholism, as opposed to drunkenness, in this country cannot be very numerous. Consumption of alcohol is actually decreasing and the number of consumers is presumably increasing. Considerably different is the situation in France where there has been a steep increase in alcoholism in the last five years. This was revealed in a debate in the House of Deputies on the Budget of the Ministry of Health. What the deputies were concerned about was alcoholism. [Alcoholism is the persistent consumption of alcohol in excess of what can be usefully absorbed by the body.] In the course of the debate it was stated that the consumption of alcohol per head in France had doubled during the past seventy years, and that whereas in 1945 the number of people suffering in some degree from alcoholism was 375,000 the comparable figure for 1950 was one million. There were 6,000 cases of alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver found in 1950, 3,750 people suffering from this disease entirely due to alcoholism were admitted to mental homes

and 1,950 with cirrhosis due partly to alcoholism. In fact, the general situation in France was back to pre-war level.

In America the situation seems hardly better. According to the chairman of the Co-ordinating Committee on Alcoholism, there are 595,000 "problem drinkers" in New York State alone. The Committee in its report converts the untreated alcoholism in America into terms of money—based on the fact that those in New York State, for instance, lose on an average 22 working days a year as a result of their drinking habits—and shows that this will "cost the nation \$1,400,000,000 (about £500 million) this year."

HOW to tackle these problems is, to our mind, outside the realm of legislation, though of course in the French Assembly the need for legislation of some kind was recognised on all sides. Apparently a start was made in this direction at the end of the war, which as the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent points out, included "an unsuccessful plan for a progressive reduction in the number of cafés, but this broke down as a result of interested opposition so that little remains of that effort except a ban which, of course, cannot accelerate the effect of wind and weather on the very numerous advertisements painted on sides of houses up and down France long before the war. The Académie de Médecine recently made a formal protest when the sale of drinks of the pastis type was again authorised."

To ban the sale of certain drinks only encourages its illegal sale, which is what happened in France, and the Government therefore took the realistic view that it might as well legalise the sale and draw revenue from it! One is reminded of the lengths to which bootleggers would go in America during prohibition by the news of the recent imprisonment on drug charges of one Irving "Waxey" Gordon, notorious "beer baron" of the prohibition era, one of whose exploits as a bootlegger was to rig up pipes to convey beer through the New York sewers!

To legislate for the banning of the sale of alcohol is therefore no solution, if indeed such legislation could be passed in France in view of the very large voting strength represented by wine growers, which no politician in his senses

could afford to ignore. There are more than one and a half million growers in France and with their wives, not to mention the café proprietors and their wives, few deputies would risk their seats to put forward any drastic proposals which might threaten such powerful interests.

More realistic, instead, is the view of the American Committee referred to above which does not seek to prevent alcoholism but to attempt a cure for its victims. In its report it deplored the lack of hospital and clinic facilities for problem drinkers and called attention to the need for modernising the New York State's public health laws in so far as they affect these drinkers. "Action by individuals or by groups," the report says, "has shown us in New York State that many chronic alcoholics can be restored to normal self-respecting and productive living.

"Our present ineffective and often inhumane state penal laws and our inadequate state public health programme need to be revised and supported by modern medical treatment, constructive case work, group therapy, and guidance for the alcoholic and his family by adequate equipped and trained agencies."

Is there a direct connection between the increase in alcoholism and drug-taking and the Age of Anxiety in which we live? Would an anarchist be justified in saying that in an anarchist society (where the money factor would not act as the brake to increased consumption of alcohol it obviously represents in present-day society, but where each took according to his needs)—alcoholism would more or less disappear as a serious problem? One's instinct says that in a rational society—in which people's lives are not haunted by insecurity and by the continuous threats of wars; where the tempo of life will permit one leisure and the development of one's creative abilities; where the relationship between men and women and between parents and children will be free relationships... somehow one feels that in such a society drinking will be a pleasure to be enjoyed leisurely in the company of one's friends, and not as the only way of escape from the tomorrow which haunts so many with its ever-increasing weight of problems and anxieties.

R.

## MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

#### OPEN AIR MEETINGS

Weather Permitting  
HYDE PARK  
Every Sunday at 3.30 p.m.  
TOWER HILL  
Every Friday at 12.45 p.m.  
MANETTE STREET  
(by Foyle's, Charing Cross Road)  
Every Saturday at 4.30 p.m.

#### INDOOR MEETINGS

at the  
PORCUPINE, Charing Cross Rd.  
(next Leicester Sq. Underground Station)  
Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m.  
JAN. 20—Geoffrey Ostergaard on  
SYNDICALISM IN ENGLAND  
INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS  
Every Wednesday at 7.30 p.m.  
at the CLASSIC Restaurant, Baker St.  
(Near Classic Cinema)

#### NORTH-EAST LONDON

#### DISCUSSION MEETINGS IN EAST HAM

at 7.30  
JAN. 23—S. E. Parker on  
VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE  
Enquiries c/o Freedom Press

#### LIVERPOOL

DISCUSSION MEETINGS at  
101 Upper Parliament Street,  
Liverpool, 8  
Every Sunday at 8 p.m.

#### GLASGOW

INDOOR MEETINGS at  
Central Halls, Bath Street  
Every Sunday at 7 p.m.  
With John Gaffney, Frank Leech,  
Jimmy Raeside, Eddie Shaw

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