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EDITORIAL

We, the Editors of "Proletariat," are very modest young men, in that we don't for a moment anticipate that this publication shall disturb by so much as a ripple the immemorial tranquillity of the University mind.

How should it? In the first place, nobody will read it. What normal student would read this serious and portentous stuff while he has his "Shop Soiled"? In the matter of providing fit mind fodder for the student intellect, we cannot hope to compete with our crudite contemporary.

But even supposing a student should be found to read the following articles, he will not, of course, believe a word of them; because any hint of insecurity in the *status quo* breeds fear, and fear breeds that blankness of mind in which belief cannot flourish.

When we were young and foolish and full of holy zeal, we would have set ourselves no less a task than the conversion of the whole of the University to the Cause of the Revolution. We are old and wise now, and, as we have said, modest withal. We know that to convert this University would be a more than Herculean labour. The Plymouth Brother who set himself to convert the College of Cardinals would have had a likelier task.

The University is inconvertible because it is one of the principal buttresses of the *Status Quo*. You can't convert buttresses or any other inanimate thing; you can only convert living organisms. The University, being a buttress, is necessarily dead. Dead, that is, in respect to its ostensible function, which is the pursuit of truth. Having excepted a few genuine scholars in the Science schools, we hold that the University does not concern itself with seeking truth at all, but rather with establishing states of mind in the community which make it easier for the ruling class to rule. Of course, this is not a deliberate and diabolic plot on the

part of the Chancellor or the Professorial Board. It may be that each member of the staff, and even each student, poses to himself as the Perfect Scholar. It is none the less true that the University does in fact establish not truth, but a tissue of lies, having an illusory splendour and attractiveness, with which to cloak the real, the brutal truth. You mustn't see the truth, you know; if the truth were once faced squarely, it would shatter society.

The University is dead because it is cut off from the working class, which is the living heart of Society. The English school, for instance, has no real blood flowing in its veins; it prefers the waters of the Pierian Spring. It cleverly diverts the eyes from suffering humanity by teaching that skylarks are more beautiful than men. The Philosophy school performs a similar function. It sets out to describe the world in all its nakedness, but finding such nakedness repulsive, turns instead to a logomorphic universe of its own creating, and says: "See, what a brave new world!" And the Commerce school!—a solemn place, the Commerce school, a cathedral, where the high priest and his acolytes intone the praises of the system as seen through Beaverbrook-Rothermere spectacles. Hush! not a word of doubt; doubt is a sin.

Well, that's why we modest fellows don't hope to convert the University. But a voice cries: "Why the devil do you publish, then?" A legitimate question, sir, which we will answer as soon as may be. We publish "Proletariat" because we have knowledge of a few low working-class fellows who have crept into this University on scholarships, and we want to save them from being engulfed in that insatiable bourgeois maw. We want to rally them together to try if there is not some way of connecting this University with the proletarian heart of society, and pumping some life-blood into its hardened arteries. A hopeless job, perhaps, but probably a little more useful than a weary acquiescence in the Great Illusion.

THE WORKING CLASS

No student of society will deny the existence of social groups; this is sufficiently indicated by the variety of institutions of a commercial or a cultural character. But the existence of a social **class** is a different matter, and, in fact, the multiplicity of groups is taken by many theorists as a decisive argument against the class theory of society, against the recognition of a struggle between two classes, one dominant and the other rising, as society's outstanding feature.

Now it is obvious that society may be divided in all sorts of ways, but such divisions may be of very small social importance. Any function or acquirement whatever might be taken as the basis for division. For example, we speak of the "educated classes," but it must be admitted that there is no social unity among the persons commonly called "educated" and that they mix in various ways with the "uneducated." The commonest division is according to income or property; the rich are contrasted with the poor. Now, of course, riches and poverty have considerable relevance to the state of society, but to make that division the basis of social theory or practice is to overlook the fundamental fact of **production**, and, poverty being a relative term, to open the way to mere wrangling. Such divisions also over-emphasise the characteristics and the fortunes of individuals. Social theory does not begin until we recognise that society is not a resultant of individual "wills," or a field in which goodwill and illwill are exercised, but is a thing with characters of its own, acting in specific ways under specific conditions.

The contrast between the two outlooks is illustrated in the main views current in the Labour movement about the workers. According to the revolutionary view the workers are regarded as the best class in society—not best because of their breeding or of their peculiar "personalities," but best from their social position; nearest to social realities, most "socially necessary," and forming the material and the motive-force for a new society. On the other view they are regarded as the worst class in society, as requiring to be improved and uplifted, and so not as a class in the sense of a unified and active social force, but as a number of unfortunate individuals. This is the outlook of the "reformist" section of the Labour movement, and it implies a mere tinkering with social problems, as against a radical treatment of them.

What is required if social problems are to be dealt with in their own character (and this is recognised by the militant workers in the course

of, and, indeed, as essential to, their activities) is the complete rejection of the politic of **philanthropy**. This is a politic of brainlessness, of "good intentions" taking the place of theory; though it may certainly be said that wealthy "philanthropists," and the press in praising them and upholding an ethic of altruism, know very well what they are about. We read not long ago of the death of Beit, the "millionaire philanthropist"; his millions show where his philanthropy began. So the posthumous benefactions of the financier Rhodes prove his solidarity to the last with the system that had upheld him and his desire to perpetuate the conditions under which such philanthropies flourish. Again, the benefits bestowed by Carnegie on Scottish students may, among people who are taken in by altruistic talk, withdraw attention from the brutalities inflicted on Pittsburg workers. But the workers, who have learned to be specially suspicious of those who offer them gifts, may claim to have come much nearer to a social theory than their warm-hearted helpers and improvers.

The confusions of the "social worker" are apparent in the various schemes for providing work for the unemployed. Such schemes are remarkable as carrying the suggestion that a man who gets "relief work" to do is still somehow unemployed. His work is not quite work, and what he receives is not quite wages, and thus the payment to him of less than the regular wage, or, indeed, of any sort of pittance that will keep him alive, is justified. Actually this is nothing but wage reduction. And the social objective of such schemes, even if their well-intentioned agents are ignorant of the fact, is, while reducing discontent, to prevent the organisation of the unemployed and the establishment of solidarity between them and the employed.

The recognition of working-class solidarity and the part it plays in society is, of course, very far from the understanding of charitable bodies which want to "do well" and help those in need. But, in order to do well, it is necessary to take account of economic realities, of the conditions of production and not merely of the resulting distribution. It is necessary to have enough theory to see that "charity," giving a particular man what he lacks, may not improve social conditions in general. And it is desirable to have at least considered the class theory of society, and not to take for granted a solidarist doctrine according to which society is constituted by all (exploiter and exploited alike) standing together for mutual aid. This doctrine is opposed to **class** solidarity, and, until those who assume

it have shown the class theory to be false, they do not escape the imputation of working to break up the solidarity of the exploited class.

The same considerations apply to scheme of "vocational guidance." Here the attempt is made to place individuals in suitable occupations, without reference even to the continued availability of such work but, more important, to the fact that these individuals will be working for employers or, at least, it is considered sufficient to assume that what benefits employers will benefit employed, and *vice versa*. The test of success in guidance is that the individual is satisfied with his work, and the question is not raised whether workers should be satisfied with the conditions of their employment—or, again, whether an individual's satisfaction may not be gained at the expense of his fellow-workers. The fundamental assumption that there is a certain job to which a person is fitted is, under conditions of modern industry, simply a basis for subjecting workers to a *direction* which must serve the wants of the controllers of industry, the possessing class.

The test of successful guidance, from the employers' point of view and, it is presumed, from that of "society," is increased efficiency.—But, where there are employers and employed, increased efficiency, by reducing costs of production, increases profits; and, since each unit of labour is more productive, there is less demand for labour, and, consequently, wages are lowered and unemployment increased. These consequences must follow so long as there is a competitive price for labour, i.e., so long as there are employers and employed. In practice, then, "guidance" discovers who can be most speeded up, who is most amenable to suggestion and most easily "satisfied." In theory, it assumes social investigation to back it up.

The same general points may be made in regard to a great amount of theorising within the Labour movement. The main issue is whether we should start from the working of actual social forces, in which case we see that "helpfulness" is in the interest of the dominant forces, that it works for the prevention of discontent and, in general, for the weakening of the suppressed elements, or from the notion that some scheme or other would be "worth trying," that, so far from our action being limited by social conditions, social conditions depend upon our choice. It is against this kind of view that Marxists are inveighing, when they reject ethics. But actually the doctrine of goodwill is no more acceptable as ethics than it is as politics or social theory.

This applies to the campaign for socialisation, in which the class issues are largely neglected

and the solidarist factor of "goodwill" allowed to creep in. Socialisation, in the first place, is put forward as a scheme, not as a programme of action; it is a result to be arrived at, and not an activity to be undertaken under existing conditions. And, appearing thus as something to be done for the workers and not by them, it has to be classed with philanthropic schemes in general. Like them, it implies that existing social conditions admit of the necessary "adjustments"; i.e., it neglects the dominance, the political power, of the possessing class. Moreover, it is a distributive or consumers' theory—a theory of *sharing*. In effect, it contemplates the realisation of Socialism within capitalism; it assumes the solid society which can bring about "desirable" ends; it neglects the class war, recognition of which is essential to the recognition of the workers as a class, of their organisation as the proletariat.

Socialisation appears, then, as an example of social philanthropy, and, like all proposals of this sort, it is of no effect in improving the position of the workers (i.e., their fighting position, but equally their "lot"), but rather makes it worse. It is of such socialisers that Marx and Engels say in "The Communist Manifesto":—

"Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to phantastic ones, and the gradual, spontaneous class organisation of the proletariat to an organisation of society specially contrived by these inventors. Future history resolves itself, in their eyes, into their propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans.

"In the formation of their plans they are conscious of caring chiefly for the interests of the working-class, as being the most suffering class. Only from the point of view of being the most suffering class does the proletariat exist for them."

Proletarian organisations have certainly developed considerably since 1848, and the advocates of socialisation take some account of them; but in its relation to the actual movement of society, socialisation is as Utopian as the systems that Marx and Engels criticised.

In order to understand the conception of the workers *as a class*, we have to consider history, i.e., the nature and development of society. Indeed, the main proof of the existence of the working-class is the working-class *movement*; the activities, political and economic (though the latter, since they affect the state of society, are really political also), entered on by the workers, the organisations they have formed (unions, councils, internationals, Labour parties

—even though these bodies have not done what many workers expected of them, and have been used, by Labour misleaders, to foster political illusions), the rights they have won (of organising, striking, demonstrating, though these rights have continually to be fought for), their appearance as a political power—and, to complete the picture, the working-class theory (Marxism) which has been developed, and its success in giving an account of social relations and in predicting or, as Marx would have it, in **leading** social actions. For we cannot, on the Marxist view, limit ourselves to mere understanding of things; true theory is that in the light of which we transform things, and which we arrive at only by being active.

For Marxism, society is **organisation for production**; or, as we might say, it is co-operation. At different periods different **forms** of production are established, with definite relations, economic, juridical, etc., between productive **forces**. When developing forces conflict with established forms, we have a revolutionary period. But there is constant conflict in society so long as property (in each epoch some special form of property being characteristic of the dominant class) exists. The State exists to keep this conflict in check; it is the organ of the dominant force, that which is interested in maintaining the established form. Thus, as against the idealist theory of the State as representing the interests of society at large, Marxism, denying that there are any such interests while property and classes exist, regards the State as existing through struggle and for the purpose of repression; it is an organ of exploiters against exploited.

On this theory, the working-class or proletariat is produced by capitalist (industrial) society. It has historical predecessors—slaves, serfs, journeymen; but it occupies a special economic-juridical position, it has a definite **status**, viz., that it has to sell, and has nothing to sell but, its labour-power. This position leads on to class-consciousness and solidarity. The workers are brought together in the factory, and enabled to recognise the community of their interests and their collective strength; and being reduced to the basic social condition of **producers**, they can (allowing for the limitations imposed by their exploitation, and the divisions among them which the exploiters try to foster) have truly social and co-operative relations with one another. In particular, they are led to envisage the possibility of a society of producers and the abolition of property. They develop a producers' ethic, as against the consumers' ethic of the possessing class and its philanthropic supporters. But this is brought out only in the struggle against bourgeois forces; demands for

a better way of living may be framed to begin with in the consumer's fashion, but the workers' function as producers and the solidarity engendered in the fight lead them to the revolutionary point of view.

The special characteristic of the proletarian revolution is that it abolishes the last class-division and makes possible for the first time a truly social state, in which the co-operative motives dominate and acquisitive motives are broken up. But it is precisely the development of industry that makes this revolution possible, makes possible, that is, not a mere rising of the oppressed, which can be beaten down, or a vain experiment which cannot last (like those which have furnished ammunition to "objectors to Socialism," and which were already derided in "The Communist Manifesto"), but a thoroughly planned economy, to replace competitive anarchy and brigandage.

The possibility of this planned economy is shown in the present condition of affairs in Russia. In fact, it is an outstanding proof of the existence of the workers as a class that they, using working-class theory, can actually run society. Those who have accepted the view that everyone has his "station in life" to which he must keep and the duties of which he must perform (i.e., the hierarchical or theological conception of society), cannot believe that this is possible; those who are interested in opposing revolution spread all sorts of lies about Russia, with the intention of showing that it is governed not by a class but by a tyrannical clique, and that their rule is not successful, that they cannot build or plan. These pretences become daily more difficult to keep up, and at any time proletarian theory would have shown how the tales of tyranny should be taken.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, according to Lenin (The State and Revolution), "has to be a State that is democratic but only **for the proletariat and the propertyless**, a State that is dictatorial but only **against the bourgeoisie**." This rule of the proletariat, in alliance with the peasantry, occupies, as Stalin puts it (Theory and Practice of Leninism), "an entire historical period filled with civil and foreign wars, a period of economic organisation and reconstruction, of offensives and retreats, victories and defeats. This historical epoch is necessary not only to create the economic and cultural conditions for the complete victory of Socialism, but also to allow the proletariat, first, to educate itself and become a force capable of governing the country, and, secondly, to re-educate and transform the petty bourgeois strata in such a way as to secure the organisation of Socialist production." That this educa-

tion and organisation have gone a considerable distance, that the development of a characteristically proletarian economy is well on the way, is proved by the latest achievements of Soviet industry and agriculture. That the revolution led by the Bolsheviks was never the tyranny it is said to be, is proved by its success, by the way the masses reacted against the really tyrannical "Whites." Fairy tales, like that of Mr. Thomas Walsh, that "the great Russian revolution was engineered by 240 Bolsheviks in St. Petersburg who by terror were able to rule a nation of 140 millions," are put out of court by their own ridiculousness, though Mr. Walsh's sycophantic attitude to the employing class ("Contrast the lot of men in work with that of the unemployed and you will understand why employers can be more popular with the workers than the Communists"; Open Letter to Professor Anderson, p. 11) would in any case make us discount his dicta on social matters.

Corresponding to the absurd talk about Russia is the absurd talk about "unemployables." The same type of theologically-minded person, who cannot believe that the workers are capable of ruling, also cannot believe that any one could be "genuinely" unemployed, that the righteous could be forsaken, etc.—an attitude, incidentally, which implies a conception of cosmic beggary, or humanity as a mass of dole-drawers in a Universal Bureau. But again historical facts force the opposite conclusion, exhibit it, as in the case of Russia, in terms of **mass-struggles** which are incompatible with "idleness." This type of historical proof holds also against Proudhon, who imagined that the revolution was peacefully assured when some government admitted "the right to work"—which, as he saw, was a denial of the rights of property. Such admissions from such sources are valueless, except as a demonstration of the fraudulent tactics of governments.

The theory of the social priority of the class war, the struggle of the proletariat against capitalist dominance, is opposed alike from the solidarist or "monistic" point of view and from the "pluralistic" point of view in which society is regarded as a multiplicity of inter-related groups. There is certainly no limit to the number of groups we can discover, and Marxism, of course, admits that there are all sorts of remnants of older classes, forces and forms of production, and various transitional elements. But they are socially weak; they acquire force only in so far as they can ally themselves with one or other of the main contestants for power; and they fluctuate between the two. At one time the petty bourgeoisie (small farmers, shopkeepers, etc.) may be

fulminating against "extremists," at another time obstructing the policy of big business. But they can have no independent line. According to the theory of Lenin, conditions are most favourable for the working-class, when they have secured the neutrality or the support of the intermediate sections of society. But the social crisis tends to bring this about by increasing the solidarity of the workers and the "contradictions" (i.e., incapacities) of capitalism, though the desperate attempts to cover up these "contradictions," by means of War, Fascism and "White Terror," may for a time enlist the support of such sections.

It is clear, for example, that the "educated" class has no independent line, no solution for social problems; that it is not **politically** educated. It fluctuates between the other classes, though in the main it is subservient to the ruling class. Yet education, understood as scholarship, is itself of a productive character, and, in so far as it is achieved, creates a bond between the educated and the proletariat. This bond will be strongest where the political leadership of the militant workers is accepted, and schemes of "betterment" will correspondingly drop out of the picture.

In this connection it may be pointed out that schemes of "University reform," by way of increased Labour representation on the governing body, and so forth, are, like the Workers' Educational Association, **philanthropic** in character, and are inimical both to scholarship and to working-class education, which consists of education in the struggle. University reform, from the workers' point of view, will come by way of the development of organisations of those who work in Universities, and of contact between them and other workers' organisations. It will not come through the bringing to bear of outside influences, so that the brand of education offered may be of the most generally acceptable character possible. Such schemes are really solidarist and commercialist, and are of no advantage to the working **class**.

We are thus brought back to the direct class issues and to the relation of the workers to the State. Solidarism denies that the State is the organ of a class, but in so doing it upholds the dominance of this central power over other powers and organisations. The workers have had to fight, and still have to fight, for rights of organisation, agitation and demonstration—a fact which is sufficient to prove the existence of a ruling class. When this is recognised, it will be seen that all activities or proposals of a solidarist character, all schemes of "class-collaboration" or social unity, are for the bene-

fit of the ruling class and for the deception of the workers. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Arbitration, the **right to strike** being the clearest indication of the independent power of the workers, as contrasted with a state of subjection and servility.

Fascism, the open dictatorship of the propertied class, in its inception and even largely throughout its development uses the language of solidarism. It makes its appearance as a "Committee of Public Safety"; but its aim is clearly safety for capitalism. Thus the A.F.A. League bables about "honesty," meaning thereby the maintenance of existing property relations; seeking to cover capitalist reality, and, in particular, the **failure** of capitalist economy, by means of empty precepts. So Fascist movements like the New Guard propose to defend "the constitution" against "extremists," propose, i.e., to attack the working-class in its fight against penury and oppression and for political rights. The illusion of constitutional equality and civic impartiality is also kept up by the press; in relation to which Stalin says (Theory and Practice of Leninism), "Within the capitalist system there is and can be no true freedom of expression for the exploited, if only because the buildings, paper supplies and printing works necessary for the utilisation of this freedom are monopolised by the exploiters." And it is only an extension of this contention to say that "within the capitalist regime, there is and can be no real participation of the exploited masses in the administration of the country." Nevertheless, the agitation of the workers can bring them certain political rights, and it is when this degree of political power becomes dangerous to weakened capitalism that Fascist suppression (in the name of "the safety of the country") is resorted to.

With the opposition to the capitalist State is connected the workers' opposition to Nationalism (extolled by Fascists), their assertion of the international character of their class — which is but another example of the co-operation of **producers**, as against the divisions among acquisitive **consumers**, this again being one main reason why history is on the side of the workers. The acceptance by the Australia

Labour Party of the "White Australia" policy (like its acceptance of Arbitration) shows that it is not a proletarian party. Official "Labour" parties, indeed, also operate against "extremists"; their function is to pacify and disarm the workers. When elected to office they carry on government according to the usual forms and with the regular apparatus of police, judiciary, etc.; in other words, they carry on **capitalist** government, they uphold existing property relations.

Orthodox "Labour," then, whether it is showing how it can govern or inventing Utopian schemes of "socialisation," is diverting the workers' movement and concealing the true character of the proletarian revolution, which arises from the position of the workers as a **productive force** in relation to the disintegrating capitalist form of production. Only working class organisation, preparation to take over industry, to form a workers' State with real political activity for all workers, can prevent Fascism and war, and lead on to a classless society, exhibiting real solidarity. Such a society cannot exist until after the conquest of power and dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus the working class is the coming society, and must, like the Sinn Fein movement, form its own organisations and regard the capitalists as invaders of its industry, exploiters of its production. And in the formation of a productive, and necessarily international, society, it is for the educated, the thinkers, the active investigators, to be one the side of the producers.

The working-class becomes organised through the operation of capitalist industry, but only because of its struggle against exploitation in that industry. Thus organised, it is the protagonist of social equality against exploitation in that industry. Thus organised, it is the protagonist of social equality against **parasitism**, against hierarchy and privilege of every kind; and in its revolutionary struggle, exhibiting the "heroic values" of the producer, it is the one truly ethical force in existing society—the one force that can annihilate the decadent "values" of helpfulness, philanthropy and patronage.

— JOHN ANDERSON.

DICTATORSHIPS AND LIBERALISM

"Where there is talk of dictatorships it is necessary to explain just what interests of what classes find their historic expression through the dictatorship."

— Trotsky: "Whither England."

Let us talk of dictatorships. . . . To-day, the breakdown of parliamentary democracy is a commonplace of political knowledge. Even in countries where open Fascism does not exist "emergency cabinets," "coalition-crisis" governments betray an unmistakable Fascist content. In the U.S.S.R. there is a dictatorship of the working class. Germany seems to be headed for Fascism and/or revolution. What is the meaning of the breakdown of the parliamentary system?

The easy thing to do in an attempt to explain this process is to regard "democracy" as normal and dictatorship as abnormal. This is, of course, the obvious approach for bourgeois writers, who regard all bourgeois institutions as "natural" and institutions of every other period of history as "unnatural." The dictator rather than the dictatorship is studied. It is by some exciting individual apotheosis that a Mussolini or a Pilsudski gains possession of a government. Before the seizure of power the Fascist leader is usually represented by supporters of parliamentary democracy as a mountebank, buffoon, etc. This is very frequently so (Mosley, Hitler, Campbell), but if we are to fight against Fascism we must not underestimate its force. Fascism wears the motley to hide the mail.

In short we must look to the class character of the dictatorship.

Let us first look at the question historically. If we do, we find that parliamentary democracy originated in dictatorship. Let us amplify this. The feudal system of government was one which gave legal and administrative form to the economic supremacy of the land-holding class. However, feudal society carried within itself the slowly developing germs of capitalist society. (Every class society creates the weapon for its own destruction.) Trade grew up, with the opening of new trade-routes, the use of money, etc., and a new class of possessors was created (in England, the Burghers) whose economic development demanded a different form of government. Parallel with the rise of the trading class was the decay of the land-holding class. This decay was expressed politically in the change from a purely feudal form of government to the more integrated form of absolute monarchy or feudal Fascism. This was the political refuge of a class whose economic power was being undermined. (In

1630 the House of Commons was found to be three times wealthier than the Lords.) The "Forced Loans," "Benevolences," and courtier monopolies of the King were not the best conditions under which the growing trading class could carry on business. The destruction of feudalism became a historical necessity for the rising bourgeoisie. Parliament armed itself against the King—the war of classes had become too acute for negotiations. The victory of the revolutionary army made Cromwell the first bourgeois dictator in modern history.

There is no need for our purpose to trace the various stages which led to the substitution of the dictatorship of the burgher class, to the institution of limited monarchy, democracy, etc.; we will content ourselves with the statement that the same process may be observed after the French revolution and the dictatorship of the third estate. Capitalism prefers the political form of parliamentary democracy because it presents the perfect illusion of freedom to the masses—while affording real freedom to the exploiting class. The revolutionary cry: "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," was translated in practice by the victorious bourgeoisie thus: Liberty, to buy and sell; equality, as freedom from hierarchical restrictions on commercial exploitation, and fraternity, as the grateful subservience of the working class towards their new and more grasping masters. So ran bourgeois revolution through dictatorship to "democracy."

With this historical sketch we are able to approach the bourgeois dictatorships and quasi-dictatorships of to-day with an entire lack of surprise. Those liberal-minded optimists who regard human and especially British history in terms of the orderly progress of democracy, liberty, etc., should be sent back to school. In times of crisis the fundamental interests of fundamental classes come to the forefront of the political arena. At the time of the English Civil War and the French Revolution, the fundamentally opposed classes were the land-holding aristocracy and the trading bourgeoisie. In the present world crisis the fundamental classes are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—the capitalist class and the working class. The fundamental interests* of the exploiting class lie in the perpetuation of the existing

*By "interest" here I, of course, mean class interest organised as such. No account is taken of personal motive. An individual repudiation of the ideals of his class does not alter either his function as a member of that class nor the historic function of that class itself.

state machinery to police their expropriation of surplus value. The fundamental interests of the producing class lie in the abolition of all classes. In a capitalist crisis the very existence of the ruling class depends (Henry Ford, the I.L.P. and Major Douglas notwithstanding) on lowering of wages, and a systematic attack on the working class. In Australia this capitalist program (the Premier's Plan) has been prosecuted by "Labour" governments (including the N.S.W. government), but it is not surprising that, in countries, e.g., Germany, where the organisation of the workers is of such a kind that mass resistance to the attack can be made, a more or less open dictatorship should replace democracy. Democracy in a class society may be nothing more than the right of the workers to choose the administrators of their subjection, but even this is removed when a declining and desperate class demands a closer organisation of its interests and a regimentation of the masses as a condition for its survival. Bourgeois democracy belongs to the happy period of rising capitalism, of expanding markets, of *laissez faire*, The Open Door and Free Trade, of the ability of the capitalist class to make periodical bribes to the masses. To-day, with the last stage of imperialism and parasitism upon us—of capitalism with its back to the wall—the comparative laxity and uncertainty of the democratic form have to be replaced by a more direct and reliable organisation. The bourgeoisie are coming to regard democracy as a luxury they can ill afford and they are taxing it away by the sumpter laws of Fascism. So it was with the declining feudal aristocracy. Read Hobbe's "*Leviathan*," and Wyndham Lewis' "*The Art of Being Ruled*," and seen then if rotten ruling classes do not talk the same language.

The State: Thus far we have treated the fascisation of the State from a standpoint more historical than theoretical. However, if we wish to understand clearly the effect of this historical process upon the policies of working class political parties we must also consider the two main theories of the State which are current to-day. According to the Marxist, the State itself is the product of the **irreconcilability** of class antagonisms. If class interests were objectively **reconcilable** the State would not have come into being. It belongs to a special and limited period in the evolution of society, and will pass with the advent of the new classless society. On the other hand, as the contradictions of capitalist society increase and sharpen, as a necessary element in its evolution, the State authority and organisation develop and tend to separate more and more as a distinct entity outside society. The function of the State is the creation of order which

legalises and perpetuates class domination by moderating the collisions between classes.

According to this theory the Marxist holds that any "evolutionary," constitutional "Socialist" or "Labour" party acquiring a parliamentary majority **must** operate the **existing** state machinery for the purpose for which it was designed, i.e., it must play capitalism's game. The Third International and the Communist parties of the world alone cling to the lesson of the Paris Commune of 1871 that the working class **cannot** use the existing state machinery for its own ends.† In the light of the Marxist conception of the State the working class through its leader the Communist Party moves towards a seizure of power and the establishment of a dictatorship. This involves a scrapping of much of the existing State machinery together with a general radical modification in the direction of a fusion between executive and authoritative functions. This was the line taken by the Bolshevik Party of Russia and history has thoroughly shown its correctness. We will waste no argument here with a defence of the U.S.S.R. The Marxian view of the State enables us to place the dictatorship in the U.S.S.R. and the dictatorship in, say, Italy in their historical setting. The one is a dictatorship of the ascendant working class (N.B.—Not of Stalin) acting on the widest possible basis not only through the Communist Party itself, but also through the Trade Unions and the Soviets. The other is the dictatorship of "the prematurely rotten and corrupt Italian bourgeoisie," (N.B.—Not of Mussolini) acting on a basis that must be constantly narrowed. The dictatorship of the proletariat in the U.S.S.R. is slowly losing rigidity and it will cease altogether with the disappearance of distinct economic classes, i.e., with the "withering-away" of the State. The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in Italy has changed none of the fundamental relations of production—has, in fact, sharpened the constantly growing contradictions of capitalist society and must continue till a working class revolution overthrows it. "Fascism," said Clara Zetkin, the veteran German revolutionary, "is the punishment of the workers for an unfulfilled revolution."

Now, what of the other main theory of the State? This represents the State as in some

†Take one case only, housing. Lenin, in *The State and Revolution*, writes: Expropriations and occupation of houses take place by direction even of the present State. The proletarian State from the formal point of view will also "direct" the occupation of houses and expropriation of buildings. But it is clear that the old executive apparatus, the bureaucracy, connected with the bourgeoisie, would be useless for the carrying out of the orders of the proletarian State.

way divorced from society in general ("standing over against society") "as the **reconciler** of class antagonisms" or more beautifully, "as the adjuster of group relationships." This theory is held in various forms by liberal, labour, and social-democratic parties over the whole world whatever their local names. More significantly, this is also the official theory of Fascism—with the addition that the democratic **form** of the State is abandoned. The "Socialist" parties of the world which base their political policy on this "reconciliation" theory of the State look with equal disfavour, at least theoretically, on the dictatorship of the proletariat and on Fascist dictatorship. This is, of course, due to the amiable habit of looking at the **form** of a particular government and ignoring its class content. Collaboration with the capitalist class in counter-revolutionary intervention against the workers' government is openly admitted and even preached by the "pure" and "democratic" parties of the Second International.

Now we come to the crux of the whole position. We wish to point out that in **practice** "labour" and social-democratic parties actually prepare the way for Fascist dictatorship. To do this we must first refer to the inability (granted the willingness) of "labour" and social-democratic governments to effect a working-class program. To take a recent case. Before the present great capitalist crisis social-democratic governments were the rule rather than the exception. With the coming of the crisis the leaders of these parties one and all rallied to the support of the terrified bourgeoisie. Excuses of the leaders for their apostasy from the lip-worship of Socialism varied only in the degree of their hypocrisy. Cant-phrases such as Equality of Sacrifice (for whom?), Reconstruction (of Capitalism) Reform, or the words of Kautsky: "We cannot nationalise Bankruptcy," showed the attempt of these "leaders of the working class" to convince the rank and file of their parties that in a time of crisis class interests become magically resolved and that socialism can only be introduced when capitalism is strongest! Thus, by the nature of the organisation of these parties the leaders are able to administer a modified Fascist policy at a time when the revolutionary organisation of the working class has become an urgent necessity. The dissentient rank and file are left leaderless, bewildered and disillusioned until, in ever-increasing numbers, they come under the banner of organisations which do organise the everyday struggle against capitalism. Yet the gentlemen who lead the old "labour" parties still cling with passionate demagoguery to their claim to be "champions of the working class" on the grounds of some phantom battle against "the

banks" (Mr. Scullin) or a newspaper bout with the leaders of open Fascism (Mr. Lang). Let us take the classical case of Mr. Lang. He has been charged by certain people and newspapers with being a revolutionary. He is represented as the bitterest foe of the New Guard. I think we must absolve Mr. Lang from these accusations. Mr. Lang's record as a revolutionary is a very strange one; it includes the batoning of the unemployed at Bulli and Sydney, the shootings at Aberdeen, Bankstown and Newtown, the reduction in wages for railwaymen, etc., by 22½ per cent., the imposition of the 1/- in the £ unemployment tax, the curtailing of payments for education, and the reduction of unemployed benefits! If Mr. Lang's non-payment of certain debts are to be taken as evidence of revolutionary aims, no doubt Mr. Hoover's debt moratorium will make the President of the U.S.A. liable to deportation. Rentier groups **within** the capitalist class all over the world are fighting one specific measure of capitalist reconstruction. Mr. Lang has been very scurvily treated by the bourgeoisie for his services rendered. If they are not careful he may turn Communist! Mr. Lang as the enemy of the New Guard! Has Mr. Lang taken action to disband the New Guard? Instead of organising the workers in their fight against the Fascist thugs, Mr. Lang's government has been most vicious against those who defended themselves against the attacks of the New Guard.

To take one case only: the Lang police **co-operated** with the New Guard as **strike-breakers** against the Seamen. Mr. Lang has up to the present fairly successfully made use of the New Guard's attack on "democracy" to divert the workers from the main issues. Mr. Lang's record in the service of the bourgeoisie is at present greater than that of the body of distressed business men and declassed elements known as the New Guard. He has fulfilled a semi-Fascist programme of attacks on the working class, he has used the New Guard as a foil for these activities, has allowed it at the workers' fight against capitalism into a fight same time to develop and has sidetracked the for "democracy." Is not this the historical role of the social-democratic government? The social-democratic party at the last elections asked the workers to support Hindenburg, "symbol of the constitution," while Hitler organises the capitalist class, supported by "declassed" elements, for a bloody Fascist dictatorship. The Communist Party alone organises to defeat Fascism. It does so because it recognises in Fascism not an attack on "democracy" but an attempt to change from one form of the bourgeois State to another, more effective, more ruthless form. Because of this it realises the folly of asking the working class

to cling to a **form** of the bourgeoisie State which the bourgeoisie themselves are abandoning. To do this is to betray the workers as Lang in N.S.W. and Bruening in Germany have betrayed them.

The old bourgeois "socialist" parties with their weakness, their vacillation and their

hypocrisy belong to the scrap-heap of history. The only remaining method for the emancipation of the working class is the method forged by the party of Lenin—the communist organisation of the revolutionary working class.

— H. ALWYN LEE.



FILIPPO BUONAROTTI AND SOCIALIST DICTATORSHIP

In a letter to his American friend Wedemeyer, Karl Marx wrote in 1852: "As far as I am concerned, I do not take the credit of having discovered either the existence of the classes in modern society or their struggle with one another. Long before me, middle-class historians had described the historical development of this struggle of the classes, and middle-class economists had delineated the economic anatomy of the classes. The new contribution I made was to demonstrate: (1) that the existence of the classes is bound up merely with certain historical stages in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle leads necessarily to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship is itself only the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society" (see "Neue Zeit," vol. XXV., part II., p. 164).

We may concede in full the claims that Marx has here made for himself. But, in connection with the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, certain claims have also been made on behalf of two other persons.

LOUIS AUGUSTE BLANQUI (1805-1881)

Thus, in his "Out of the Past," p. 60, R. W. Postgate, the English socialist historian, writes concerning the method of revolution of the stormiest petrel of French revolutionary movements in the nineteenth century, Blanqui, as follows:—"It is what we should now call the dictatorship of the proletariat, of which Blanqui (not Marx) was the first formulator and public advocate." Postgate adds that he makes this claim "with hesitation and subject to correction," and, indeed, it cannot be substantiated. Postgate himself admits that Blanqui's "advocacy (of the dictatorship of the proletariat) is to be dated in the eighteen-sixties," whereas, in his "Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850" (see S.L.P. edition, p. 70), Marx had already "formulated" the idea as early as 1850.

Prior to that date, Blanqui's closest approximation that we can discover to the clear-cut idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, was made in 1838, when he began to organise in

Paris the secret society known as the "Societe des Saisons." In the catechism answered by every new member of this society we find a significant phrase: "Q.: Immediately after the revolution, can the people govern itself? A.: The social system being diseased, heroic remedies are needed to bring it to health. The people will need a revolutionary power for a time" (see De la Hodde, "Historie des Societes Secretes," p. 217). The difference in content between the vague phrase "revolutionary power" of "the people" and the sharply defined formula "dictatorship of the proletariat" does not need to be stressed.

To repudiate exaggerated claims made on behalf of Blanqui is not, however, to deny that he contributed anything to the gradual working out over a long period of the complete idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary, we may agree with the German historian of socialism, Max Beer, that "from Buonarotti the line of democracy, dictatorship and communism leads in the directest manner to Louis Auguste Blanqui, Karl Marx and Vladimir N. Oulianoff (Lenin). The dates are 1793-95, 1848, 1917" (see "Labour Monthly," July, 1922, p. 49).

The mention of Buonarotti brings us to the claim of Max Beer that this man was "the real originator of the socialist dictatorship," a claim which, provided we again remember that this "socialist dictatorship" is not yet precisely the dictatorship of the proletariat as understood by Marx and Lenin, we may, perhaps, concede.

FILIPPO MICHELE BUONAROTTI (1761-1837).

The "originator of the idea of socialist dictatorship" must of necessity be a significant figure for socialists, and Max Beer assigns to Filippo Michele Buonarotti the foremost place in the annals of pre-Marxian revolutionary communism. Loved by the young Buonaparte, venerated by Robespierre and Marat, made a citizen of France by the National Convention, chosen as his collaborator by Gracchus Babeuf, and revered by advanced minds of the July Revolution (1830), like Godefroy Cavaignac and Blanqui, as their master, Buonarotti had no

enemy or detractor throughout his long revolutionary career and must have been a man of unique greatness of character. His book, "Conspiration pour l'egalite," became the Bible of revolutionaries between 1828 and 1848, and is of singular charm, which grows upon us with repeated reading. Beer likens it to the reading of Tacitus and Plutarch (see "Labour Monthly," July, 1922, pp. 47-48).

In body and mind Buonarotti was cast in the noblest Italian mould, and impressed all his contemporaries as "combining heroism with complete self-abnegation." Louis Blanc, who had seen Buonarotti in his last years, describes him as grave of demeanour, of great authority of speech, of a countenance ennobled by meditation and austere living, with a large forehead, pensive eyes and proudly arched lips used to discretion. No amount of disappointment and suffering disturbed the serenity of his mind, which had its source in a pure conscience and stainless character; death had no terrors for him; the energy of his soul raised him above the anxieties and miseries of a life spent on the stormy death-dealing seas of revolution (see Louis Blanc, "Histoire de dix ans," fourth edition, Brussels, 1846, vol. IV., pp. 129-130). He loved the people, but he was conscious of his shortcomings, and he desired a dictatorship "of the virtuous and wise" as a preparatory stage to complete democracy.

Born at Pisa on November 11, 1761, of the same family of Buonarottis whence had sprung the great artist Michelangelo, he early displayed "great literary talent, audacity and energy of character," and obtained an important office under the Grand Duke of Tuscany. But, embracing the cause of the Great French Revolution on its outbreak in 1789, he was persecuted and had to leave Italy. Settling at first in Corsica, he published there his "l'Amico della liberta italiana" and became a close friend of Napoleon Buonaparte, who was then (1791-1792) serving as an officer in Corsica and was an ardent revolutionist. On the proclamation of the French Republic in September, 1792, Buonarotti went to Paris, where he associated himself with the most advanced revolutionary leaders and undertook political missions on their behalf. He became the trusted friend of Robespierre, and, outstripping him in social questions, embraced social democracy. After Robespierre's fall and the rise of the Directory, Buonarotti organised secret societies for the overthrow of "the usurpers" and re-establishment of the Constitution of 1793 "as one of the means to the political and communist education and organisation of the masses" (see Max Beer, "An Inquiry into Dictatorship," "Labour Monthly," July, 1922, pp. 48-49).

According to Beer, Buonarotti was the first social democrat to see the importance of conquering political power and of instituting a temporary dictatorship as the most effective means to a socialist reconstruction of society. Men like Leclerc and Roux, or Hebert and his followers, were ardent social reformers and communists, but deprecated political democracy and dictatorship. Adherents of the latter, on the other hand, such as Robespierre, Marat and Saint-Just, never attained a real appreciation of social reform and communism. Buonarotti, however, with his broad mind, grasped the meaning of both movements. He therefore joined the Babeuf conspiracy, which had both political and social form objectives.

THE CONSPIRACY FOR EQUALITY.

The insurrectionary organisation known as the Conspiracy for Equality (1795-1797) included several members "of great talent and republican virtues," whose principal object was to restore the Constitution of 1793 and to supplement it with economic reforms. They were aware of faults in that Constitution, finding them "particularly in the provision which declared property sacred," but believed political democracy to be the best means to social equality (see Buonarotti, "Conspiration pour l'egalite," Brussels, 1828, p. 91). Appealing to Rousseau, Morelly and Mably as their authorities, they set up as their ideal of government a complete democracy, which would take measures to spread education and to prevent extremes of wealth and poverty arising in society. The publicist of the organisation, but not, according to Beer, its greatest leader, was Francois Noel Babeuf (1762-1797), who, from his agrarian agitation, called himself Gracchus. Another leading member was Augustin Alexandre Darthe, a lawyer who had participated in the storming of the Bastille, but the mind that inspired the conspiracy was Buonarotti's.

The organisation grew rapidly. By May, 1796, it numbered 17,000 Parisian members, it had many friends in the Paris garrison, and it also had branches in the provinces. Its strongest centre was the Societe du Pantheon, which had its headquarters near the Pantheon in Paris and of which Buonarotti was the chairman. The suffrage being restricted to the propertied classes, who supported the Directory, the Constitution of 1793 could be restored only through overthrowing the Directory by force. A secret committee was accordingly set up to prepare the insurrection, and then the question naturally arose as to the precise form of government by which the Directory should be replaced.

REVOLUTIONARY DICTATORSHIP.

Buonarotti tells us (see "Conspiracy," II., p. 253) that, in the matter of the form of the revolutionary authority, the secret committee was convinced that it was impossible as well as dangerous to appeal at once to the people to elect a legislature and a government according to the Constitution of 1793:—

"From all the events and circumstances of the last years," he writes, "the committee concluded that a people so strangely at variance with the natural order was hardly capable of making a useful choice, and therefore stood in need of some extraordinary means which could put it in a position of effectively, and not fictitiously, exercising the full powers of its sovereignty. From this mode of thinking arose the idea of replacing the existing Government by a revolutionary and provisional authority, which should be so constituted as to withdraw the people for ever from the influence of the natural enemies of equality and imbue it with the unity of will which was necessary to the adoption of republican institutions. As to the question of the prospective authority, three propositions were brought forward. One was to reinstate those members of the Convention who had remained true to the people; the second was to create a dictatorship of one man, after the ancient Roman example; the third was to establish a new body which should bring the revolution to its happy termination. . . . (After the first proposition had been negated), the secret committee discussed the question of having the insurgents of Paris nominate a provisional authority which should be entrusted with the government of the nation. . . . Some members of the secret committee argued in favour of a magistracy of a single person; others preferred a new body, composed of a small number of tried democrats. The views of the latter prevailed."

As a result of its deliberations, the secret committee accordingly adopted the following provision:—

"The care of carrying on the revolution to its termination, and securing to the republic liberty, equality and the Constitution of 1793, will be entrusted to a national assembly composed of one democrat for each department, nominated by the insurgent people on the recommendation of the insurrectionary committee."

Beer claims that this form of revolutionary authority would have meant a "soviet" (we think he strains the word a little), elected by the revolutionary elements of Paris, with the secret committee at the head. Buonarotti himself observes concerning the question of revolutionary dictatorship:—

"The experience of the French Revolution . . . sufficiently demonstrated that a people whose opinions have been formed under a system of inequality and despotism is hardly capable, at the beginning of a regenerative revolution, of choosing by its suffrage the men who should direct and consummate that revolution. Such a delicate task can only be entrusted to wise and courageous citizens. . . . who have freed themselves from the common prejudices and vices, who have left the lights of their contemporaries behind and, despising riches and vulgar honours, have consecrated their lives to the immortal cause of securing the triumph of equality. At the beginning of a political revolution it is perhaps necessary, even from pure deference to the real sovereignty of the people, not to care so much about getting ballot papers counted, as for letting fall with the least possible arbitrariness the supreme authority into the hands of wise and strong revolutionaries" (see "Conspiracy," pp. 132-140).

Beer maintains that this view of Buonarotti's had a far-reaching effect on the communist movement, and "indirectly on German communist theories."

REVOLUTIONARY POLICY

The following fragment of a draft, reproduced by Buonarotti (see "Conspiracy," II., pp. 301-3), is not without interest:—

"(1) The individuals who do nothing for the motherland cannot exercise any political rights; they are aliens to whom the republic grants hospitality. (2) Doing nothing for the motherland means not to perform any useful labour. (3) The law considers as useful labour: agriculture, shepherd life, fishing and navigation; mechanical and manual arts; retail shopkeeping; transport of passengers and goods; war; education and scientific pursuits. (4) Nevertheless, the work of instruction and science will not be regarded as useful unless those who pursue it get a certificate of citizenship. (6) Aliens are not admitted to public assemblies. (7) The aliens are under the direct supervision of the supreme administration, which can arrest them. (10) All citizens are armed. (11) The aliens must, under penalty of death, surrender their arms to the revolutionary committees."

In these revolutionary measures it is not difficult to find a strong analogy to the modern communist policy of disarming and disfranchising the bourgeoisie and arming the proletariat.

REPRESSION OF THE CONSPIRACY.

Among the members of the secret committees was a Captain Grisel, who betrayed the conspiracy by disclosing the plans and date of the proposed insurrection to the Directory. The War Ministry, Lazare Carnot, ordered General Buonaparte to dissolve the Societe du Pantheon and arrest the leaders of the secret committees. The arrests were made in May, 1796, and in March, April and May of the following year the trials took place, not in revolutionary Paris, but at the provincial town of Vendome. Babeuf and Darthe were condemned next day; Buonarotti and others were sentenced to transportation. Some years later Babeuf's eldest son killed Captain Grisel.

Buonarotti was not transported, but suffered imprisonment at Cherbourg, rejecting the offer of an important post in the government made to him in 1801 by Buonaparte, now First Consul. On his liberation in 1807, he resumed activities in revolutionary movements, living in the south of France, in Switzerland (whence he was banished), and in Belgium (where in 1828 he published his book on the conspiracy).

The remainder of his life continued closely bound up with socialism until his death in 1837. He lived long enough to transmit his experiences and ideas to the revolutionaries who were to act from 1830 to 1848. "His 'Conspiracy pour l'egalite,'" says Beer, "is at once the best commentary on the most vital problems of the French Revolution in the years 1792-1794 and the best introduction to modern communist tactics."

— G. BARACCHI.

THE NEW REALISM

Every great work of art is a challenge to that familiar array of platitudes which the little man calls his philosophy of life. The popular work of art, on the other hand, is generally a representation of those platitudes, consciously or unconsciously pandering to his established conviction that art should be a panegyric on the world and himself in particular. Though in this age we are suffering from a veritable glut of new ideas most of us are content to treat them, as Samuel Butler says, "like bad sixpences and we spend our lives in trying to pass them on one another." We may be introduced to them through no wilful act of our own, but we steadfastly refuse to remain on speaking terms with them. We are by nature fearful of anything which might disorder or disturb our intellectual stock-in-trade, and ideas are disagreeable bedfellows. We would rather lie down with the king of beasts himself than with the veriest tweeny-maid of an idea. This is the reason why the great artistic works have produced so little effect on the human race, and until we reach that stage where we prefer the true to the agreeable, our great artists will be but faint voices crying in a wilderness of banality.

Few of our critics realise this, and rarely can they be induced to believe that there are prophets of the present day as well as of the past. For the critic, say Professor Raleigh, is best typified by a picture of a lady in a hobble skirt laughing at a lady in a crinoline. There are some among us who are pathetically proud of the fact that they can be called advanced thinkers, though they do not always know that their advancement has very little to do with the process of thought, but a great deal to do with their parasitic capacity for battenning on the thought of others. These are little to be preferred to the hobble-skirted critics, for though they reject the easy platitudes of the commonplace mind, they are so familiar with the new and the unknown that their very familiarity becomes a form of indecency. The critic who can be called truly creative and a cause of creation in others must be willing to receive newcomers with politeness and respect—neither to turn his back rudely nor effusively embrace. In criticism as in life the ordinary social virtues cannot be ignored with impunity for "it takes two to speak the truth, one to speak and one to hear."

An infant among new literary movements, what is usually described as Proletarian Art has not yet been accorded the customary civilities, for although we may agree that the basic principle of all art is an unhesitating accept-

ance of the realities of life, and the one blasphemy, a distortion of those realities, nevertheless the writer who is desperately in earnest thereby commits an act of indelicacy which we find it difficult to forgive. He is the death's-head at the feast. And when he further insists on revealing underground currents of social passion which may whirl us we know not where he doubles his offence. This new school of writers is a reaction against the introspective literature of our time. The highly sensitive and cultured characters of such a novelist as Henry James to whom most of our writers are directly related live lives of self-centred seclusion totally oblivious to the workaday world around them. An introspective blood-corpuscle, to quote Butler again, would be of very little use to the human body. Humble and not-so-humble working men and women, these writers assert, cannot be expected to take any deep interest in the complicated relationships and psychological reactions of their superiors. Individual problems, the personal experiences of separate egos may be of value at other times, but the living human experience of the workers is chiefly of another sort. Therefore Proletarian Art attempts to give vivid representations of social passions. The aim of such a literature is to reflect the forces conflicting in a revolutionary period, to look at life from the point of view of the masses—which is not the point of view of well-meaning sympathisers interested in what the Americans call uplift.

This is no place to attempt to deliver judgment on a small band of enthusiasts among whom are to be found such men as Upton Sinclair, Michael Gold, Ernst Toller, and a number of writers in Germany, America and Russia. But that we may see that such a literature is born of a passionate indignation, a hatred of social injustice which may often go hand in hand with a love of humankind (for the hatred of evil is not altogether incompatible with a love of good, as some sages seem to suggest), it were well to take a concrete example.

The flame that burns in Ernst Toller's plays is not an artificial flame fed with the dry chips of literary ambition. It is the flame that has nourished actual revolt. Toller, one of Germany's younger dramatists, has had no academic career. He was a leading representative in the Bavarian Soviet Government brought into being by the revolution of 1919; and when the Republic was overthrown, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in the fortress of Niederschœnenfeld, where he wrote his play *Masses and Men*. Toller is a product of that

four years of blood and disillusion which now we are pleased to call The Great War; and after serving for a year in the trenches he was invalidated home where he attempted to organise the German youth for peace. His first play was written in gaol after he had made his fruitless gesture against war by leading the munition workers' strike in 1918, hoping thereby to call a halt to the insane and merciless butchery of fellow-workers across the frontiers.

As may be expected, the plays of Ernst Toller do not make pleasant reading and comfortable people who do not want to grapple with ideas which are probably foreign to them would do well to avoid them. Whether we take the *Machine Wrecker*, *Masses and Men*, or *Broken-brow*, in each we find ourselves in a grim world, for Proletarian Art is tragedy—there is no room for true comedy, only for the tragic ironies of life. Humour is born of detachment, the detachment of an onlooker who can laugh at the strange antics of human beings without feeling called upon to take an active part in their living drama; but Toller has attempted to identify himself with the proletariat which is too concerned with the struggle of life to be able to see the humour of it. To Toller life is a conflict between the individual and the mass, and human beings become "puppets dimly aware of the compelling fate that governs them." Like all proletarian writers, he attempts not to show the characteristics which divide men from men and make for individuality, as do many literary artists to whom we have grown accustomed, but to show the characteristics which help to mould men into groups, and to portray or symbolise the passions and aims of those groups. We can only become individual again, such

writers says, when class passions and hatreds have disappeared, when the class culture of to-day has been replaced by the human culture of to-morrow.

In *Masses and Men*, which he describes as a fragment of the social revolution of the twentieth century, Toller gives a series of impressionistic pictures designed to express the realities which lie behind all revolutionary activity. The actors are not individuals but groups of workers, farm labourers, soldiers and bankers. No attempt can be made to describe a play which has its stage in the mind of man, where the spirit of the masses takes bodily form and for good or for evil dominates the lives of men and women. But no one who reads it can fail to be impressed by the fiery enthusiasm of the writer or fail to realise that, however crude it may be, however horrible, here is something thrown into artistic form by the volcanic energy of a mind that knows what it is to be but a fragment of that nameless, formless thing which cries: "The Masses count, not men," and looks forward to the time when all shall "live in love and work at will."

It is not easy for one who knows how to value the works of the Dantes and Shakespeares of this world to understand writing of this sort, much less appreciate it. But the attempt must be made, if we are to realise the significance of the times in which we live, for here we have writers whose aim is to place the stamp of proletarian ideals on the culture of the world. We may resist them if we will, welcome them if we can, but if we ignore them we will do no service either to reality or art, which is the expression of that reality.

— H. W. RHODES.



GERMANY'S CRISIS

The social struggle in Germany is of decisive world significance. The capitalism of that country has completely collapsed, and its collapse marks the end of the post-war period of restoration and strengthening of capitalism. It marks the beginning of a new revolutionary wave.

The restoration of capitalism in Germany was never more than a desperate gamble, bound sooner or later to fail. Fantastic demands were made upon Germany by the victorious powers. The Dawes plan, enforced by international social democracy, resulted in the most merciless slave-driving of the German masses. Then came the ironic contradiction of

capitalism; long before the demands of the victors were met, it was found that world markets could not absorb the huge excess of exports forced on Germany. Actual collapse was warded off by a large influx of American capital, which artificially balanced the reparations budget; but with the Wall Street crash, this palliative disappeared, and the full burden of the Young plan began to be felt. The crisis became more acute when German liquid short-term loans began to be called in. With the ebbing tide of loans arose the danger of a depreciation in the currency, and vast quantities of gold and foreign currencies had to be sold. Following on this development came a wave of bankruptcies and bank crashes.

Realising that Germany's collapse would produce violent repercussions, the finance Powers hastily formulated the Hoover plan. France alone hesitated, being committed to the reparations policy and desirous of steering a lone course in European affairs. Nevertheless, the plan was adopted, and results quickly followed its acceptance—but not the results expected by bourgeois politicians and economists. The chief effect of the plan was to draw attention to the desperate plight of German capitalism, so that some 150 to 200 million pounds—more than twice the amount granted by Hoover—was withdrawn from Berlin. The failure of the famous Danat bank followed, and an acute crisis was only evaded by the concerted action of the leading German banks in guaranteeing the debts of the bankrupt concern. So the famous Hoover plan, which was to mark “the end of the depression and the beginning of a new era of prosperity,” brought Germany to the verge of complete bankruptcy.

It was on this basis that an international situation of the greatest importance developed. The great Powers saw in Germany's desperate need for loans the opportunity of wringing further political concessions from her. France secured the stoppage of battleship building by Germany and the renunciation of the Austro-German customs union. But the most far-reaching concession, extorted by all the Powers, was the breaking of economic relations between Germany and Russia, the surrender of the Russo-German Commercial Treaty, the suspension of Russian credits and an economic blockade of the Soviet Union. To these conditions the German bourgeoisie submitted, and one of their leading organs, the “*Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*,” justified it as follows:—“Russian policy has kept us aloof from the Western policy of our English neighbours who must be aware that Polish tanks cannot hold back Bolshevism from Central Europe.” Thus Germany purchases the aid of Imperial finance-capital by taking a key place in the anti-Soviet bloc.

What is the way out for the German working class? A mere change of government is useless. The Fascists, like the Bruening government, will have to respect the dictates of international finance. Despite their huckstering against capitalism and their attacks on the Versailles treaty, the Fascists are steadily becoming less and less open in these attacks. (Hitler has declared that he will be satisfied with a revision of reparations.) The gap between the Nazis and the Bruening government is being reduced steadily, and their propaganda is taking on a more puerile and deceptive form. Not demonstrations against the German middle-class, but public meetings against Stalin; not

attacks on emergency decrees, but anti-Semitism—that is what the Fascists offer their supporters. Supported by wealthy German junkers, they are becoming more and more a part of the capitalist machine, more and more reconciled to the needs of German capitalism. But what of the rank and file of the Nazis? It is clear that Continental Fascism is a movement of the ruined and disillusioned, and that a vote for Fascism is just as much a vote against mass unemployment and wage cuts as a vote for Communism is. And it is in the acceptance of Fascism by broad masses of workers and peasants that the danger lies for the sponsors of Fascism. The class-struggle reappears within the ranks of the Fascists, whose leaders cannot control their own forces. On the surface, Nazi and Communist propaganda have the same character, voicing similar demands and protests. In the factories the bulletins issued by the Fascist faction could be taken for Communist ones. These facts are important, because they show that the gap between the rank and file of Fascism and Communism is by no means great, and it will be quite easy for masses of workers to shift their allegiance to the Communist party on the slightest sign of compromise by the Nazis.

What is the role of the social democrats? They have disarmed the workers, and by underestimating the strength of the Nazis have fostered the growth of Fascism. At present they support a dictatorial government on the plea that they are saving Germany from a dictatorship. It is clear that such a position must lead to constant betrayal of the working classes. The Socialists habitually acquiesce in measures diametrically opposed to everything they have ever stood for. Boasting of democratic principles, they vote for dictatorial decrees, claiming to be pacifists; they vote for new cruisers; at all times they support the Bruening government in its anti-working class deeds. Lately their anti-Soviet propaganda has become a menace to the working class movement. Even the I.L.P. realises this, as witness Carman in the “*New Leader*”: “The leaders of the German Socialist Party have finally turned from the socialism they once professed to the politics of middle-class opportunism.”

And what of the Communist Party, to whom the social democrats are losing most of their support? With the decay of the middle parties, the field is left clear for the historic battle between the Fascists and the Communists, who claim that only the proletarian revolution can break the chains of Versailles. Their fight is a fight against capitalism itself, clearly defined and uncompromising. They are the sole bulwark against Fascism, and the only true leaders of the German revolutionary working class.

— SAM WHITE.

THE DEPRESSION AND THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

Two great events have overshadowed all others during the last three years. The first is the great economic depression, the second is the Russian Five Year Plan. Either event by itself would have compelled attention; the one by its sheer magnitude, the other by its total difference in character from anything previously known. But the two are vastly more significant from having occurred at the same time. The operation of the Five Year Plan commenced in October, 1928; the first signs of the great world depression were observed in May, 1929. They have gathered momentum together, and left their impression simultaneously on people's minds. It will be the object of this article to convey in figures the contrast between these two sides of the word-picture.

The most obvious point in the contrast is in the degree of activity displayed. On the one hand, under capitalism, we see everywhere idle factories, unused material, crops rotting for want of a market. On the other hand, not the severest critic of the present Russian system and of the Five Year Plan would deny the tremendous activity they have involved. The setting-up of great steel-works in the Ural Mountains, the flinging of railways over the Siberian desert, the construction of the largest dam in the world over the river Dnieper, the introduction of 100,000 tractors in a few brief months—these and similar achievements have only been made possible by an activity which in capitalist countries has been manifested only in time of war. Such shortage as there has been in Russia has been of a totally different kind from that which has spread through other countries. It has been due to the absence of a fully-developed machinery of production and the need for setting aside current income to create that machinery. It has not been due, like our "shortages" under capitalism, to the incapacity to use the machinery of production already created and ready to hand. All existing machinery, all available natural resources, have been used to the full.

The first corollary of this contrast is to be seen in the unemployment figures of the Soviet and the capitalist worlds. It is estimated that in capitalist countries there are at present over 50,000,000 unemployed, with, say, three times that number of dependents. There are reckoned to be 10,000,000 unemployed in America alone. In Germany practically half the working population is either unemployed or on short time. In Australia the proportion of workers unemployed is about one in three. But in Russia, since the end of the second year of the Five Year Plan, unemployment has virtually

disappeared. Mr. C. M. Lloyd, of the London School of Economics, wrote in the "New Statesman," on 10th October, 1931, after his return from the Soviet Union: "Every able-bodied Russian, of course, is fully occupied." This statement is confirmed by all those who have reported on conditions in Russia in recent months. The only dissenting voice is that of Senator Lynch,‡ who claims that there are 1,500,000 unemployed, and that this figure is given by the Soviet Union Official Year Book itself. Yes, dear Senator. It is given by the Soviet Union Official Year Book of 1930, and relates to the position on 1st January, 1929. By employing the same research methods one could prove that the population now unemployed in Australia is not a third, but a tenth!

Senator Lynch, if correctly reported, also volunteered the information that wages in Russia were 3/- a day. Not even out-of-date Year Books could be made to yield this figure, which must have been drawn either from divine inspiration, or from the archives of Riga correspondents. The kindest explanation of the statement is that the author mistook roubles for francs or lire when translating them into terms of shillings. The "Economic Review of the Soviet Union," 13th October, 1931, gives the average monthly wage of workers in census industry as about 88 roubles for the first quarter of 1931. Since then wages are estimated to have increased by about 20 per cent., and we can count eight roubles to a pound instead of ten. This would leave us with an average figure of over £13 a month. There are some who question the accuracy of these estimates and think that real wages are not over double their pre-war value but only about 70 per cent. above it. Senator Lynch might have joined the 70-per-centers and left himself with an arguable case. As it is, he has so clearly spoilt his effect by exaggeration that we need not trouble with him further. We must also remember the extent in Russia of the so-called "socialised wages," the equivalent of our social services, the payments to the worker on account of death, education, pensions, etc. The two capitalist countries in which these services are most highly developed are England and Germany. In England, at the beginning of 1930, social services amounted to about 14 per cent. of the total wages-bill, in Germany of about 11 per cent. Sherwood Eddy, in "The World To-Morrow," December, 1930, tells us that the corresponding figure in Russia for the same period was 27.3 per cent. This is because

‡See "Herald," Saturday, 26th March.

"socialised wages" have been expanded to include free medical treatment, cheap housing, free electricity and other benefits. Other much larger estimates than Mr. Eddy's have been given. Moreover, since the beginning of 1930, Soviet treasurers and economic planners have been greatly expanding social services, while Mr. Snowden and Dr. Bruening have been mercilessly hacking them down. Thus the discrepancy to-day would be much greater than indicated by the above figures.

These gains have not been registered at the expense of longer hours of work. On the contrary, hours have been shortened to a degree that the capitalist world has never known and could not have imagined. Before the Revolution, a 10 or 12 hour day was the rule, but one of the first acts of the Revolution was to proclaim an 8 hour day for all workers. On the tenth anniversary of the Revolution, a promise of a 7-hour day was held out, a promise which for the great majority of workers has now been fulfilled. Now the first steps are being taken to reduce the daily hours of work from seven to six. A 7-hour day, with a 5-day week and one day off in five (which is the normal regime of the Russian worker at present) is equal to an average of 39 hours work every seven days, or what we would call a 39-hour week. A 6-hour day, with the same 5-day week (which is the regime for miners and young workers) would be the equivalent of a working-week of only 33½ hours. Before the Revolution the Russian workers' hours of toil were comparable to those of the Indian or Chinese. The latter still work from 10 to 15 hours a day (unless they live in one of the Chinese Soviet Republics). The Soviet worker, however, now fixes his own hours of work for himself and has made them the lowest in the world. Let us bear this fact in mind next time the Arbitration Court discusses the hoary old question whether hours of work should be 44 or 48.

These advances are all the more striking when we remember that over half Russia's national income has been put into the building of the great works of construction involved in the Five Year Plan. It was an old capitalist argument that under Socialism, as there would be no incentive to saving, the machinery of production would gradually decline and disappear. Never has any theory proved so utterly false in the light of events. The saving by the Soviet Government out of "socialised" profits has beaten all records of individual saving out of private profits. The investment in State industry in 1928-29 was 1,680 million roubles; in 1929-30 it was 3,600 million roubles; while the estimate for 1930-31 was 5,500 million roubles. This is against a figure of only 650,000,000 roubles for 1925-26. Thus the great

improvement in Russian standards of living has coincided with a rapidly increasing diversion of income into satisfying future rather than present needs.

You may ask how it has proved possible, in the midst of a productive effort that has called for big sacrifices, to raise standards of living and shorten hours of work at one and the same time. The answer is that it is the natural and logical result of the right use of machinery. Machines have been introduced in capitalist countries in the last few decades which, if fully and intelligently operated, could have led to a tremendous general rise in standards of living simultaneously with a marked reduction in hours of work. In the brown coal industry at Yallourn, for example, work that used to take 200 workers 80 days to do now takes 45 workers one day to do. Less than one-quarter of the workers can do it in one-eightieth of the old time. This is only an extreme example of the general rapid improvement in all branches of mechanical science. But under our present system the capitalist no sooner introduces his new machine than he makes it **take the place** of human labourers in order that the latter may no longer require wages. This means that the additional possible product is cancelled out, and that the toil of those labourers who remain cannot be lightened. The workers, however, once placed in control, have no further intention of allowing machines to drive them out. Let them obtain a new machine with three times the productive power of the old and they will **add** this mechanical power to their own; either for the purpose of producing larger quantities, or working shorter hours, or both. Such are the blessings of machinery when it is employed for service and not profit. And such is ample explanation of the facts given above.

But the full contrast between Capitalism and Sovietism is not seen until we begin to examine the position of the peasantry. Throughout the capitalist world the farming populations have been among the hardest-hit victims of the depression. In the holocaust of 1929 and 1930 the prices of agricultural products fell with exceptional rapidity, and the growers of foodstuffs and raw material like wheat, wool, rubber, cotton, copra, found their income heavily reduced. Many Australian farmers have tried to get back to "prosperity" by employing labourers for nothing but their "keep," and many labourers have been sufficiently desperate to accept the terms. But in Russia the sickle — or should I say the tractor? — has been as hard at work as the hammer, and has produced no less remarkable results. The last few years have seen a wholesale transformation from the old, primitive system of cultiva-

tion, under which the land was divided into strips and patches, and often worked with nothing better than wooden ploughs, to the new collective system, under which all the land of a village is thrown together and worked with efficient, up-to-date machinery. A few years ago there were not more than 5,000 tractors in the whole Soviet Union; but now one factory alone, the giant Stalingrad tractor works, is turning out over 100 tractors per day. This machinery has not resulted, as it would have done in capitalist countries, in driving millions of small peasants and farm-workers out of employment and compelling them to wander from village to village begging for bread. Being under collective control, the machinery has been used to benefit human beings and not to drive them out. The increase in the productive capacity of the land under "collectivisation," an increase varying from 10 to 50 per cent., has meant a corresponding increase in the amount of raw material available for industrial purposes. The peasants, noting these increases, have now for the most part joined enthusiastically in the movement to which they were once so strongly opposed; and well over two-thirds of the peasant households of the Soviet Union are now members of collective farms. Thus the view sometimes expressed, that the countryside has been bled for the benefit of the towns, and that the country-worker has suffered in proportion as the town-worker has gained, is seen to be absurd.

Nor does the improvement extend only to land that was under cultivation before. Vast areas of virgin land have been reclaimed by the Soviet Government, placed under the control of the Soviet "Grain Trust," and made to yield the fullest possible amount by the most scientific methods. The largest of these "State farms"—the "Gigant," in the North Caucasus—is about 90,000 acres in extent, and many of

them exceed 40,000 acres. Such are the extensions of cultivation now being carried out in the Soviet Union while the capitalist world tinkers with output restriction schemes.

In every domain of social and economic life the same contrast is to be found. The Soviet workers have just celebrated the laying down of the Turkestan-Siberian and other great railway lines at the very time when our "experts" are spending their greatest ingenuity in devising plans for cutting down railway services. The Soviet Government has quadrupled its housing expenditure in five years, while in Melbourne, during the same period, house-building has declined and finally almost ceased. The schools increased their attendance by 10,000,000 between 1924 and 1930, and are still being rapidly developed, when outside the Soviet Union the only remaining plan of "education" is to cut teachers' salaries, refuse admission to new teachers, close down schools, and put up fees. In all departments capitalism can still find only one "remedy" for poverty—to produce less. Communism has found, and is trying, a new remedy—to produce more. There is no limit to output under Communism, except the actual physical powers of production, which are being daily increased.

To some extent the choice between capitalism and socialism can now be made on the basis, not of theoretical argument, but of actual results. In Russia there is a system, not of complete communism, but of a nearer approach to it than has ever before been tried. In the rest of the world capitalism still reigns. On the one hand we find security, a rising standard of life and reduced hours of work both in the countryside and the towns. On the other hand we find the want, the suffering, the starvation of countless millions. On which side ought the students of the world to be?

—RALPH GIBSON.



THE CRIMES ACT AND THE UNIVERSITY

According to the newspapers, Mr. J. G. Latham, Attorney-General of the Commonwealth, has prepared a Bill with the following content:—The Communist party to be declared an illegal organisation; membership of the party to be punishable by 12 months' imprisonment; seditious speeches and writings to be punishable by six months' gaol. "Sedition" means red propaganda.

The object of the legislation is to prevent the dissemination of Communist ideas among

the people, the feared result of such dissemination being revolution and the institution of a State similar to that in existence in Russia, i.e., a Dictatorship of the Proletariat. What exactly do the Communists say? They hold that the form of society is based on the methods of production and distribution of man's material needs, and that the form has undergone several changes since verifiable history began (the slave system, the feudal system, the capitalist system); that these changes occur suddenly—by revolution—and that the next change is to

a Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the building of a socialist State.

These views were first stated by Karl Marx and later extended and amplified by Nikolai Lenin. Marx, a pupil of Hegel, based his views on an intensive study of history and political economy, and spent a life-time of research both practical and academic. By many eminent men—Benedetto Croce, for example—Marx is considered the greatest thinker of the nineteenth century. Harold Laski, Professor of Political Science at London University, says that, though some details of Marxist theory may be disputed, Marx's main conclusions are undeniably right. Lenin was the man who directed the Russian revolution and laid down the present lines of development of the Russian State, which alone among modern states, offers a confident hope of indefinite material and cultural advancement to its citizens.

Surely it must be admitted that Communist theory has intellectual standing and is as worthy of complete investigation and discussion as any other theory. Can the Commonwealth parliament, by an *ex cathedra* pronouncement, make that theory false? Is not free speech, discussion, and admission of all literature on the subject the only sane way of arriving at the truth? Communism is in the air to-day as Liberty, Fraternity, Equality were in 1795, and no legislation can prevent this.

Russia to-day is Communism in action. The Russians are human and as likely to be guilty of self-adulation as the British. Their journals and books cannot escape from being classed as red propaganda any more than the "Argus" and the "Times" can escape from being capitalist propaganda. Does the Commonwealth parliament propose to prohibit the entry of Russian works? Are we to be denied the vital literature produced in a country of 160,000,000 people? At present we do not see their cinema productions, the most artistic in the world; their famous dramatic art is rarely seen here; surely their literature cannot well be ignored, or we shall sink into greater depths of provincialism.

Perhaps Mr. Latham's objection to Communism is based on its anti-religious nature, its insistence on the infinite capacities of unaided humanity. He may be like the Russian nobleman mentioned by Cardinal Neuman in "Recent Position of Catholics in England." It appears that 80 years ago there was a movement in Russia to introduce a constitution like that of England. At a meeting convened to consider the proposal, this nobleman divulged the startling discovery that the English constitution is founded on a blasphemy—that "the King can do no wrong," an attribute that could

only belong to Almighty God. However, it is unlikely that the religious aspect would worry Mr. Latham, who is a Past President of the Rationalist Association.

Is a violent revolution inevitable? Marx said that in England, the national habits of free speech and reasonableness might make violence unnecessary. But the best way to make violence inevitable is to deny free speech and drive revolutionary activity underground. Violence breeds violence, white terror breeds red terror. No debate ends peaceably if fisticuffs are introduced. Moreover, is revolution always to be condemned? Would the Commonwealth parliament undo the English and French revolutions? Would they restore the Czars? Abraham Lincoln said, in an inaugural address: "This country and its institutions belong to the people who inhabit it; should they grow weary of the government, they may exercise their constitutional right to amend it or their revolutionary right to overthrow it!" Shall we be gaoled for agreeing with Lincoln and not with Latham?

No additional legislation is required to prevent mere gratuitous violence. The law provides amply for that, without the prohibition of free speech and similar intellectual coercion. Men should be punished for what they do, not for what they think, and without communication of thought there can be no true thought at all. Truth can prevail over falsehood only if given a fair field. Free discussion will expose the lies and fallacies of propaganda, which, if driven underground, escapes criticism. This is the basis of the ordinary Australian law. The opposite point of view was adopted by the Romanovs. The Czarist government censored and suppressed books, raided houses, seized their inhabitants and prosecuted people merely for being members of radical societies. It deported hundreds to Siberia, and exiled hundreds more. Where are the Romanovs to-day? Repression has been successful only in rare circumstances. The Japanese, some centuries ago, cleared themselves of Christianity by murdering the Christians and closing their shores to foreigners—a policy hardly possible in this era. Communism is a growth of all capitalist soils, not a bizarre extravaganza introduced from without.

Yet an Australian government announces its intention to imitate Czardom. What is the urging force? If this government was composed of successful business men or farmers, ignorance would be the excuse. The cabinet, however, includes a University graduate, presumably an intellectual. The only basis for this ridiculous proposal is that the government must please its supporters. Instead of leading the multitude, of carrying out its boast of not

pandering to the mob, it says, "Give us your votes and intellectual liberty can go hang and free speech can become a thing of the past. Those who dare to think differently to you shall go to gaol."

In conclusion, I ask the University opinion. It is time that it be given. If the University does not raise its voice against the suppression of such small freedom as we have, to what quarter shall we turn?

— DR. G. P. O'DAY.



WHAT DOES A SOCIALIST MEAN BY EQUALITY?

Review Article.

What the anti-Socialist, or the Conservatist, thinks of equality was expressed by Mrs. Marion Pickett in an impromptu address to the A.W.N.L., according to the "Herald," of 28th May, 1931. "In every town in England," she is reported to have said, "we now have conservative clubs for women. It is the women who must combine to fight ignorance, which manifests itself in two ways. Socialism is doing duty for the Communists, teaching that man has the right to live. Man has not the right to live; he must create to live. The Communist has the idea that the worker must rob and destroy to live. The second fallacy they are trying to teach is that all men are born equal. They are not equal; you have only to look at your own children to see that." It is not reported whether anyone present asked her the question: "And if society is so organised that many men, however willing, cannot obtain work to live, what then?" But in his book, "Equality" (Allen & Unwin, 1931), R. H. Tawney, of the University of London, answers not only this question, but also explains what Socialists mean by equality.

The book is based on the Halley Stewart lectures given by Tawney in 1929. The Halley Stewart trust was founded at the end of 1924 "for research towards the Christian ideal in all social life." If the quality of the work done through the trust maintains the level reached by Tawney in his lectures it should have an extremely valuable influence. Though events have moved so fast since the publication of these lectures in book form just over a year ago, the conclusions which Tawney arrives at seem to be in no way invalidated by subsequent happenings, disastrous though these may have seemed to the Socialist cause. To those advocates of Socialism whom the events of the past 12 months have driven into the Communist camp, Tawney appears simply as another of the "ineffectual Social Democrats"; he has been dubbed by some as "typically bourgeois," because of his immediate aims and the tactics he suggests to achieve them. However, Communists and Socialists alike must remember that Tawney was not preaching for the

converted so much as for those who still have not the slightest understanding of what Socialism means: to wit, the people who still think that Socialism means dividing up all the wealth of society equally between its members.

To these people Tawney points out that the present order is functioning badly because it still clings to the ideas of private enterprise and competition as fundamental to this or any other economic system. By historical analysis Tawney shows that such ideas were valid and rational in the conditions of Europe a century, or a century and a half ago. In an age when capital was widely distributed in many hands, what was retarding the increase of both material production and social welfare was the existence of privileged ranks and classes. In the whole of Europe privileges (which gave economic advantages) were guaranteed to different classes by law. The great achievement of the French Revolution and the liberal movements which followed, was to sweep away these legal privileges and to create a democracy of property owners who were also producers.

These were the conditions of the century between 1750 and 1850, and if the doctrines of free enterprise and competition were generally valid then, why should they not be equally valid to-day? Simply because the conditions of that period no longer exist. In that age the majority of people in every country, except perhaps England, possessed their own capital for production. In the present industrial era the majority of those engaged in production in every "advanced" country are wage and salary earners. In other words, a privileged plutocracy has replaced the aristocracy of legal privilege. This being the case, Tawney points out that an economic system based on the worn-out principles of free competition and private enterprise cannot function efficiently under the changed conditions. It will not and can not function efficiently because trusts and combines are progressively narrowing the field of private enterprise and eliminating competition. The new industrial order needs as a base not competition, but co-operation. Then why do not wage-earners and owners of capital co-operate instead of fighting incessantly?

Tawney replies that the necessary willing co-operation can never be achieved in a society which makes a religion of inequality, and in which the disparities of individual wealth and income are so glaring. Such co-operation can only be achieved by the achievement of economic as well as political, civil, and social equality. This means more than lopping away the grotesque differences in individual incomes; the claim of the wage-earner to a voice in the control of industry must also be granted. There must be an end to dictation by the owners of capital of the terms on which they will employ or dismiss workers. Tawney does not advocate that everyone should immediately receive the same income; he would consider it rational that incomes should vary within definite limits, according to function—that is, according to the responsibility and importance of the task. This principle is recognised in Russia at present, although the Communist philosophy envisages the ultimate disappearance even of this differentiation. Nor is the Socialist, as interpreted by Tawney, precluded from that ultimate purpose. What he does say is that to preserve society it is necessary that there should be a continuous movement towards economic equality.

But, exclaims Mrs. Pickett, men are not born equal, and never will be equal! The Socialist, Tawney points out, has never claimed that all men are equal; every man's personality is as valuable to himself as any other man's is to him. The Christian means the same thing when he says that all men are equal in the sight of God; but most people fail to understand what he means, and dismiss this proposition as something that has no concern with everyday life anyhow, as it is only religion. Any Christian society, then, that refuses to recognise the value of human personality, and persists in regarding human beings simply as a means of production instead of a something of value in themselves, is not only inhuman, but utterly false to those ideals which it hypocritically professes. The Picketts who would deny that man's right to live is absolute unless he works, absolutely ignore the fact that society will not permit many millions in the world to-day to do any work. The only logical conclusion for the Picketts is to put all the unemployed against a wall and shoot them because they are a burden on their fellow men.

If, as Tawney says, the only way for society to regain its economic health is a continuous movement towards economic equality, how is this program to be achieved? Tawney points out that there has already been a softening of the grosser features of inequality in England through the provision of social services, and steeper taxation on the higher incomes to pro-

vide for these. Further, the power of the owners of capital to dictate the working conditions has been restricted by factory legislation, arbitration and wage-fixing machinery. The power of capital to exploit has also been limited by the growth of statutory companies whose profits are limited by law. More than a quarter of the capital of registered companies in Great Britain belongs to statutory companies. Tawney, therefore, believes, as does every Socialist, that the objective may be achieved by the continuation of the same policy. At this point the Communist hoots with derisive laughter: "Socialism by constitutional methods, after the continuous betrayal of social democracy by its leaders!" Undoubtedly the policy has received a check in the last two years, but these can be ascribed to quite definite factors, the ignorance or fear of which has led to the "betrayals." In the first place, the policy of deflation since the return to the gold standard meant that the holders of fixed money claims were taking a larger and larger share of the national income. While revenue receipts fell there was no corresponding fall in the claims of bondholders, and budgets were balanced by cutting expenditure on social services. Banking and financial institutions were able to force governments to take this step. People all over the world are just beginning to realise the power of banking institutions in this respect. Tawney, and every other intelligent Socialist, realises that, if their program is to be achieved, a forward policy must be adopted. "An intelligent policy," says Tawney, "will start from the centre, not nibble at the outworks. The first requirement is, clearly, to master the key positions of the economic world, whence the tune is piped to which the nation dances. Banking, evidently, is one, for it determines the economic weather more directly than any other; transport a second, and power a third; while the coal industry, in England the sole source of power, is a fourth, and land and agriculture a fifth." When these things have been nationalised, says the Socialist, the socialisation of all industries can be a piecemeal process as necessity or opportunity arises.

This is the constructive policy that Socialism offers, to bring health back to the body economic. But the horrified reader might say: "These are the things they have in Russia!" "Quite so," the Socialist would reply, "and is not Russia making enormous progress, while the rest of the world stagnates?" In truth the kind of economic order that Tawney envisages is somewhat similar to that in Russia, but the tactics he would advocate to achieve it are not those of Communism. In spite of all the obstacles of a biased press, the pressure exerted by "big business" upon politics, in spite of

ignorance and prejudice, the Socialist still believes that his tactics are the sounder and that they will prevail, provided that a strong forward policy is adopted instead of a policy of temporising and opportunism to gain the fruits of office. A Socialist policy would only be carried out if there was actually a convinced public opinion in its favour, and such a public

opinion could only be created by a bold policy which would clarify the issue. For those who do not know what Socialism really means, or for those who do not think that Socialist tactics are superior to those of the Communists, Tawney's book is strongly recommended.

— H. BURTON.



HOW MELBOURNE LIVES

A Descriptive Report of Impressions Obtained by a Labour Club Sub-committee.

Of the 1,000,000 or more people living in this city of ours, over 700,000 are estimated to belong to the working class. In our attempt to make people realise the conditions of life in the capitalist community of Melbourne, we shall concentrate on these; for they are the great majority, and it is on them that society depends. If we adapt the figures of the 1921 census to the present population of Melbourne, we can say that, of these 700,000 working-class men, women and children, about 300,000 are actually in employment or seeking it. Of the others, about 30,000 receive old-age pensions, and the rest are dependents of wage-earners. At the present time, about 30 per cent. of those 300,000 workers are unemployed, and more are working only part time.

Of those workers who are still in employment a good majority, probably about 70 per cent., are unskilled, and therefore earning, if men, the basic wage or a little more, and if women or under 21 years of age, considerably less. Women and young workers make up quite a good proportion of the total number of wage-earners. In factory employment in Melbourne, for example, one-third of the employees are women; while, if we can adopt all Australian figures for Melbourne conditions, the proportion of workers under 20 amounts to 19 per cent. of the total. The wages of these women and young workers, however, though below the basic wage, are generally used only to supplement a family income. The basic wage itself at the beginning of the year was about £3/10/6 a week—that is, assuming regular employment, £183 a year. This is a considerable drop from two years ago. In the Railways, for example, the fall in the money-wage from November, 1929, has been from £4/9/- to less than £3/10/6—a fall of 29.2 per cent. Ten per cent. of this is due, of course, to the real wage reduction decreed by the Arbitration Court, the rest being due to a reduction in the cost of living figures, a reduction which many housewives declare to be unjustified. However this may be, let us see what

can be done by the average family on £3/10/6 a week at the present time.

First of all, the man must work for eight hours or more a day, leaving evenings, Saturday afternoons, and Sundays free. As a reward, he can keep himself, his wife and his children fed, clothed and housed after a humble fashion, go to the pictures on Saturday night, and possibly have a holiday now and again. He has had little education—leaving school at the age of fourteen; he has in many cases become so accustomed to the economic grind that he has no interest left for things more worth while. His children, if under 14 years, will be obtaining a smattering of education in an overcrowded school where, school-teachers tell us, there are often up to 70 in a single class. At 14 they will leave school and if possible find work, so that the family income may be extended. Such an existence seems to us to leave the worker not only short of material things, but also of all means of pursuing the higher ends for which man lives.

As for skilled workers, though the margins they obtain in excess of the basic wages have frequently been decreased within the last year or two, they still obtain considerably more than the basic wage. A man who earns £4 or £5 a week can live more comfortably, and has greater opportunity for the development both of himself and his children. But for skilled workers as well as unskilled, the inevitable emphasis on material things is immensely increased at the present time by the constant danger of losing them. The spectre of unemployment is ever at hand.

In fact, as we mentioned before, the great extent of unemployment at present prevents the majority of workers from keeping the standard of living we have been describing. This is due firstly to the fact that the wages of those still in work are usually shared by unemployed members of the family, and at times by relatives and friends. Secondly, there is the unemployment-relief tax on wages, amounting, in the case of a basic wage-earner to 1/3 a week. Thirdly, statistics show that unemployment itself is distributed. At any one time

there are about 30 per cent., but actually a much larger number than this pass through periods of temporary employment. And to be unemployed even temporarily means lowering one's standard of living very considerably. Fourthly, the large amount of unemployment makes it easy for employers to obtain their labour at below award rates; in other words, it encourages sweating. Though sweating is worst in the clothing trade, we have been told by a prominent member of the Anti-Sweating League that it is extending into all branches of industry, especially in all contract work where it is carried out by sub-letting. Young women in sweated shops in the clothing trade now receive, according to him, 42/6 a week, where some months ago they received £4/10/-, and he quoted many other cases where such drastic reductions have been made. The Vigilance Committee of the League mentioned above vouches, after personal inspection, for the existence of much Sunday and night work. We see, then, from all these causes that unemployment means not only a mere sustenance allowance for many, but a lowered standard of living for the majority.

Let us trace this standard downwards as it falls. Starting from £3/10/6 a week of which up to £1 goes straight away as rent, we do not have to progress far before the means of satisfying even material wants begin to fail. The holiday relaxation may go first, then perhaps the pictures. Then might come removal to a dingier house, or the buying of cheaper food and clothes, or the going of the housewife in search of work, or doing without medical attention. There are many routes we can follow in this journey to the bread-line, but they all lead in the same direction. Soon we come to the level at which the whole family income is £2 a week, or what is considered equivalent, an individual's 10/- a week.

We have not passed by so many in descending to this level. There are still 48,000 families to consider, and on an average this means about 200,000 individuals. We know this because of the State sustenance allowance granted below this level. This consists of orders for different kinds of food at certain stipulated shops, which amount in the case of an individual to 5/- a week, in that of a man and his wife to 8/6, and 1/6 extra for each child up to the eighth. Other form of relief also are granted below this level. The Unemployed Girls' Relief Organisation, which covers about 2,000 of the unemployed women of Melbourne, grants, in return for a day's work or so, 7/6 plus 5/- grocery order to those girls who have no family to live with, and 7/6 to those who have. The Women's Benevolent Society also gives a certain amount of relief to women in the form of

cash allowances, while Church charities do some work among the destitute.

Now let us see what havoc is wrought at this sustenance level in respect of the three primary essentials of life—shelter, food and clothing. Working-class house rent now ranges from 15/- or so for a house with any slightest degree of comfort (or a good deal more in some suburbs), down to 10/- for anything inhabitable—houses below this level being generally inhabitable, as has been actually admitted in one instance by a house-agent. Clearly, even 10/- a week would be an impossible sum for most of these families, even when they have sold most of the furniture. The result is often that more than one family will crowd into a house. More often, however, families live on in houses without paying rent—whence evictions and attempted evictions. The housing difficulty also confronts single men and women, and those youths and girls who have deliberately left home to obtain the larger allowance. It is hard to obtain the barest room below 7/- a week. Unemployed girls can eke out their 12/6 allowance by sharing such a room between two or three of them; but men with their 5/- worth in ration tickets are usually forced either to live in unemployed camps, or put up rudimentary hovels of their own or crowd together in large numbers in single houses, often practically stripped of fittings and furniture.

Though below the £2 level most of the money is spent on food; this also becomes poorer and poorer as we descend to sustenance bedrock. A doctor states that the sustenance allowance not only contains insufficient fresh food to provide the required vitamins, but actually that the 8/6 allowance for married people means one day of starvation in the week. As an example of sustenance diet, let us look at the weekly menu of half a dozen single men who combined to share rations. It consists of meat for two days, bread and dripping, rice, oat-meal, eggs, tea and sugar—no fresh fruit or vegetables, milk or butter. This might be supplemented occasionally by a free cabbage or so from a Church charity, or a free tea at a mission, where religion and stale sandwiches are served up in the order mentioned. As for the third necessity—clothes, the general position is that your old ones have to last, though they are supplemented to a certain extent by the second-hand clothing distributed by charitable organisations, sometimes at a nominal price, such as a penny for a pair of socks, two-pence for a coat, etc.

To such depths is it possible for material conditions to fall in Melbourne. And it is to such low conditions that the large increase in disease at present has been chiefly due. The most obvious evidence that insufficient food,

overcrowding, and the lack both of recreation and of work have led to such an increase, is to be found in the overcrowding of hospitals. In special hospitals, the number of in-patients is now about 19,000—an increase of 79 per cent. in 10 years; while in metropolitan general hospitals the increase in that period has been 69 per cent. The result is that patients are being discharged before properly cured. At the hospital for infectious diseases at Fairfield, for example, the increase in the number of patients since 1922 has been from 294 to 562; and the medical superintendent has stated that nearly every ward in the hospital has cross-infection, and that patients, instead of being detained until free from infection, are discharged as soon as they recover. In the asylums also there are now 500 patients in excess of accommodation. The insufficiency of relief, due to those overcrowding and also to the fact that invalid pensions of 17/6 a week have now often to be distributed over whole families, only helps to make the health conditions worse. It is significant of the fears of the authorities concerning these conditions that the chairman of

the board of management of Fairfield hospital mentioned as early as last October that another epidemic of disease would probably occur this year.

It might be argued, however, that, despite this state of affairs we have been describing, there is for the old man, at any rate, the secure harbour of the old-age pension. He will get his 17/6 a week, at any rate. But what a miserable reward for a lifetime of toil! Even for husband and wife together it comes to only 35/- a week, about half of which must be swallowed up in rent if they are to end their days in a reasonably decent house of their own. Where an old-age pensioner has to support a wife who is not yet eligible for a pension, the struggle to live becomes more bitter than ever. Sometimes the pensioner is forced to become a drag on the earnings of the younger generation; sometimes—still worse—he is forced to contribute to these earnings from his own meagre grant. The best one can say of such a pension is that it is a fitting terminus to a life's journey through the sordid conditions described throughout the report.



CONFERENCE, EASTER, 1932

For the first time this Easter the Labour Club went into the claims of Communism and clarified the points of difference between Communist and Parliamentary Socialist. The problem was represented in concrete form by the personalities of Ralph Gibson, M.A. (Manch.), and Esmond Higgins, M.A. (Oxon.), who led the two study circles where most of the discussion was done. Here we saw two brilliant students of sociology, both previously allied with social democratic policies, neither driven by material conditions to revolutionary activity, and yet both adopting from the sheer force of intellectual conviction the Marxist-Leninist theories and policies. Every discussion hinged round these questions: Is the Leninist theory of the state valid? Is there an imperialist war-danger? What is the function of social-democratic (Labour) parties?

In the study circles, Comrades Gibson and Higgins analysed the history and present condition of the U.S.S.R. The various organs were seen to be fundamentally different from those of the Capitalist state, so demonstrating Marx's doctrine that, when the working class sought to rule, it would have to express its will through an entirely different political machinery from that employed in the past to express the will of capitalists and bankers. The political system rests on a basis of Soviets—organisations of workers based on trade-distinctions, not geo-

graphical area; this painlessly disfranchises capitalists and landlords, and facilitates the withering away of the authoritarian state into a machinery for supplying needs. The judicial system and the political system are both on a basis of election with recall, so securing the utmost democracy. The Red Army is purely a citizen army, used as a training-school for technicians and local representatives of the Communist Party. That party has an all-pervading influence, although its unofficial connection with the state machinery will facilitate liquidation of dictatorship.

The theory of Anarchists and the Capitalist press that Russia is only a super-State capitalism was gone into. It is true that careful accounting is insisted on in the factories, and what is called "profit" is required, particularly from "luxury" trades like brewing. This "profit," however, is not an exploited surplus; it is merely a device for ensuring that the workers of a factory produce more than they consume. The surplus is put into expanding the industry, or improving conditions, or in collective accumulation of capital for new and vital industries. Differential wages were a practical necessity of this stage in the dictatorship; although possibly a kind of surplus, they were continually readjusted as technical education spread, and the strictest equality between members of the Communist Party