

# PROLETARIAT

ORGAN OF THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY LABOUR CLUB.

A Minority Group Within the University.

Editor—Kenneth J. Coldicutt.

Assistant Editors—Joyce Manton and Wilbur N. Christiansen.

Business Manager—Colin Copland.

8 JULY 1935

Volume IV., No. 2.

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1935.

## STUDENTS OF AUSTRALIA UNITE!

**T**HE general crisis of Capitalism!  
 Fewer jobs for University graduates!  
 Decrease in University grants and scholarships!  
 High fees for students!  
 Restrictions on student liberties!  
 Attacks on workers' organisations!  
 Banned literature!  
 Decay of capitalist culture!  
 Growth of Fascism!  
 A World rushing towards the second round of  
 Revolutions and Wars!



**A**LL over the world—in America, England, France, China, Japan, Cuba; under Fascist terror in Germany and Italy—students are uniting in their own defence to fight against reaction, and to struggle for socialism.

We have the example of the National Student League of America, which unites thousands of students in splendid militancy; which can bring out 150,000 students to strike against war.

Australia is lagging behind!

The Labour Club in Melbourne, the Socialist Club in Sydney, the Radical Club in Queensland, are working for the achievement of Socialism.

Our comrades in Adelaide, Western Australia, and Tasmania are, at present, unorganised.

The Labour Club believes that the time has come for an Australian-wide organisation of radical students. We believe that the basis of this is provided by the influence of "Proletariat" amongst students and workers throughout Australia. This is shown by the following table of circulation in the Australian States and New Zealand:—

Victoria . . . . .	1578
Queensland . . . . .	756
New South Wales . . . . .	590
Western Australia . . . . .	156
New Zealand . . . . .	120
South Australia . . . . .	84
Tasmania . . . . .	74
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>3358</b>

**W**E invite contributions from these readers, from representatives of the Sydney University Socialist Club, and the Queensland University Radical Club, and from our other comrades, whether students or workers.

Give us news about your own activities.

Tell us your attitude to the proposed national organisation.

Give us your ideas on how to develop it.

Suggest a name for the organisation.

Suggest a new name for our quarterly.

The present name is quite inappropriate to a student paper. We want a name which will emphasise the student fight for better cultural and economic conditions, the fight of student and worker for the overthrow of a decadent society, and the achievement of Socialism.

**TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN STUDENT LEAGUE!**  
**STUDENTS OF AUSTRALIA, UNITE!**



# Student Notes

THE period under review in this number of "Proletariat" is one which augurs well for the success of the Labour Club's activities during this year. It is one in which the concrete programme of the Labour Club in matters of immediate student importance, and in matters of importance to students and workers alike, has quickened the interest of many more students in its activities. They are realising that the Club does, in fact, stand for their needs, that its policy of uniting student action with working class action is correct. Furthermore, a solid basis has been laid for the overcoming of the main defect in the Club's work in the past—the looseness of its organisation. Let us examine the history of this development.

## The Unity of Student and Worker.

The backbone of any student movement whose objective is Socialism, is its identification with the struggles of the working class. Whatever the individual opinions of members may be as to the methods whereby socialism is to be attained, it is clear that the lead must come from the class immediately interested in its attainment. Communist, Christian Socialist, Fabian Socialist, and Labour men meet here on common ground. Whatever the means adopted, the decision lies with the workers.

The Labour Club has demonstrated very clearly its practical recognition of this fact, by throwing its energy into the two biggest working class campaigns conducted in Melbourne during this period—the Sustenance Strike and the May Day celebrations.

Immediately upon the outbreak of the strike, Labour Club members took upon themselves the task of assisting in the collecting of relief funds. A meeting was organised at the University, at which one of the strikers, Mr. J. Munro, outlined the depths of poverty that had forced the strikers to take action. A few students attended that meeting for the purpose of provoking disorder. When a member of the Labour Club called upon the meeting to decide by show of hands whether the speaker should continue without interruption, these students were revealed as a minority. We can only apologise to Mr. Munro, on behalf of the Labour Club, for their hooliganish behaviour. The majority of those present came to hear what he said and to think it over. Their sympathy was with the men.

This question of sustenance work is one in which students should be only too ready to support the workers. The system of relief work is, in fact, a method of introducing lower paid work beside work at award rates, and attempts are constantly being made to use it to undermine the conditions of men who are in full employment. The scope of relief work is being extended to include work formerly done at award rates. In view of this, the action of the sustenance strikers, though provoked by the intense misery of their own conditions, appears to an objective

analysis as a solid means of stemming the tide of worsening conditions of work.

Worsening conditions for the worker now mean worsening conditions for the student to-morrow. Already there are graduates unemployed and others in positions whose remuneration does not repay the money expended in qualifying for them. In this, as in other things, worker and student are one.

Accordingly the Labour Club had made arrangements to carry on the campaign, both in the University and outside. But, there was no need for us to go into action. Before we could mobilise our forces, the solidity of the men had won the strike.

There is a lesson here for the future guidance of the Club. Despite all efforts there was delay in bringing the forces of the Labour Club to bear on the struggle. In this case it did not matter. On a future occasion the assistance the Club can give might be of importance to the result of a struggle. Organisation is essential to give direction to sympathy.

On May Day, also, the Labour Club felt the want of a sound organisational basis for its work. Owing to the lateness of the Easter Vacation this year, there was little time to prepare the way. Had the organisation of the Club been sufficiently solid, this would not have mattered. As it was, the position could be effectively explained only to a relatively small number of students, and consequently only twenty joined the demonstration. Had the organisation been such as to enable us to get into touch effectively with the whole body of students of socialist sympathies, the vast majority of them would have marched.

In the meantime, the fact that, for the first time in the history of May Day in Melbourne, a body of students, even though a small one, marched with the workers through the streets, making common cause with them, cannot be too greatly emphasised. It indicates first that students are awakening to the dependence of their cause on that of the workers, and second that the workers' movement in Victoria has reached a stage at which its ability to lead can draw students behind it.

May Day, 1935, marks therefore another milestone in the forward press of worker and student towards a common goal—real socialism.

## For Cultural Progress.

Owing to the pressure of more immediate business, the time which the Labour Club has devoted to the campaign for the free admission of books into Australia has been more limited than we could have desired. It is difficult to understand how any student can hold aloof from this demand. The work of the Book Censorship Abolition League, though certainly subject to some criticism, has already been effective to this extent, that the stringency of political censorship has been noticeably relaxed since it began its agitation.



Early in the term, the Labour Club and Radical Club together organised a meeting to discuss this question, in which the P.Q.S., I.R.S., and Historical Society also co-operated. Mr. W. M. Ball took the chair, and Messrs. Brian Fitzpatrick and Ralph Gibson spoke for the Radical Club and Labour Club respectively. At the conclusion of the meeting the following motion, moved and seconded by the secretaries of the Radical Club and Labour Club, was put to the meeting, and after considerable discussion passed by a big majority:—

"This representative gathering of the students of Melbourne University protests strongly against censorship of literature at present exercised in Australia. Such censorship, directed as it is, especially against political literature expressing radical thought, is one outstanding indication of the growth of reaction and the deterioration of culture. It is used to prevent the enlightenment of the people on questions about which our rulers desire them to remain in ignorance. This gathering therefore supports the work of the Book Censorship Abolition League, and demands that censorship should cease."

During second term, every effort must be made by the Labour Club to push this demand in the University. It is a matter of immediate urgency for students, and it is the task of the Labour Club, as a body which realises this, to take every opportunity of explaining the situation to other students and of discussing it with them. The University can play a big part in the fight against the book ban, and the Labour Club, in conjunction with any other societies willing to take up the question, must see that it plays its part effectively.

## This "Farrago" Business.

Towards the end of last year, students received the first indication that all was not well with "Farrago" finances. Several issues did not appear, and the explanation given was that money was owing to the printers, who refused to publish until they were paid.

This year, "Farrago" has been to all intents non-existent. Two negligible issues have appeared in the eleven-week term (excluding the pre-term Freshers' "Farrago"). On Monday, April 29th, the Labour Club pointed out in "Student Affairs"—the new fortnightly organ of the Club—that a situation had been reached in which students were entitled to demand from the Union an account of the money paid by them in Clubhouse fees, part of which was supposed to provide a weekly "Farrago." In this matter it became obvious almost at once that the Labour Club was in fact voicing the opinion of the majority of students.

On Tuesday, May 14th, an Open Forum was held under the auspices of the P.Q.S., at which the strength of student feeling on the subject became apparent. Then on Friday, 17th, the S.R.C. called a general meeting of students to discuss the question. After considerable inactivity on the part of the chairman, and attempts from various quarters to delay action as long as possible, the meeting forced the election of a student committee of four to investigate the

situation. The Treasurer of the Labour Club, Mr. C. Copland, was one of those elected.

This committee, we understand, has investigated the Union's finances, and has certain recommendations to set before the students at a general meeting which it is calling. One suggestion is that a plebiscite should be held on the desirability of "Farrago" continuing to exist. The Labour Club supports this proposal wholeheartedly. As it stands, "Farrago" is not worth having. The questions for students to decide are whether they desire a "Farrago" free from bureaucratic S.R.C. censorship, whether something better could be done with the fees they pay into the Union, or whether those fees should be reduced.

Moreover, this question of "Farrago" raises once more the question of S.R.C. reform. The S.R.C. should be a body representing the interests of students, in fact as well as in name. Over this business, past S.R.Cs. have been guilty of gross negligence in allowing the Union to accumulate a debt on "Farrago," and the present one, by taking no steps to acquaint students with the facts of the case; and, in fact, acting in such a way as to shield the Union from the criticism due to it, has acted in direct contradiction to real student interests. Such a state of affairs is the natural concomitant of a method of election as undemocratic and unsatisfactory as that at present in force. When, as it is, this is reinforced by the subordination of the student body to higher University authorities (including the Union), the possibility of the S.R.C. representing students in any sense practically disappears.

Thus two important issues are raised:—

1. Reform of the S.R.C. electoral system.
2. Giving to the S.R.C., thus democratically elected, full autonomous control of student matters.

These two points are essentially interdependent. Students should begin now to work for the realisation of both.

## Socialist Theory.

It will be obvious from what has already been said that the Labour Club has been active in the practical fight for worker and student demands throughout this term. But this fulfils only a part of its function. It has also, in meetings (one addressed by Q. Gibson on "You Can't Change Human Nature!" e.g.), and in study circles, given students an opportunity to discuss various aspects of socialist theory.

In two study circles, the Club provided students with the opportunity of discussing modern affairs from a concrete, material point of view.

Mr. Guido Baracchi, who has just recently returned from the Soviet Union, led a weekly study circle (3-4 Mondays) on the organisation and building of socialist economy in that country. Students did not avail themselves as fully as we could desire, of Mr. Baracchi's expert knowledge and brilliant exposition of this subject. All who believe in the desirability of socialism, whether or no they approve of the means employed to attain it in Russia, must be interested in what



is being done there now. All such people should have attended these study circles, and expressed their opinions. It is only by comparing points of view that we can reach unity in matters of theory.

At the same hour (3-4) on Fridays, Miss Joyce Manton led a study circle on "Events of the Week." The discussion was designed to unearth the fundamental interconnection of events all over the world in such a way as to make clear the position of the various countries in international politics. On several occasions, the conclusions reached by the circle have been confirmed by subsequent developments. Now that Miss Manton is leaving the University for wider activities, the Labour Club will miss seriously her stimulating intellect, her wide knowledge, and her comradeship.

In the second term, the Labour Club will hold one day-time study circle weekly. A number of subjects of cultural interest will be dealt with, each subject occupying a series of three or four study circles. Some of the subjects suggested are: "The Origin of the Family," "Historical Materialism," "Evolution," "The Development of Art," "Music," "Science Under Capitalism and Socialism," "The Film and Society," and so on. If you are interested in any of these subjects, you should attend the study circles, no matter what your attitude to the particular subject.

Guido Baracchi will probably conduct the first study circle, on "The Origin of the Family."

An important instance of the Labour Club's policy in appealing to the cultural interests of the students was the address on Monday, June 17, by Betty Roland, on "Dramatic Art in the U.S.S.R."

Miss Roland has an extensive knowledge and experience of the art of the theatre, and she made a special study of the Soviet theatre during her recent visit to the U.S.S.R. Her articles in various journals, including the Melbourne "Herald," and her lectures, have created very great interest. Hence it is not surprising that her description of the Soviet theatre gripped the attention of her large University audience, as she described the cultural regeneration that has given Soviet dramatic art a unique position in the world to-day.

In the new fortnightly news-sheet, "Student Affairs," the appearance of which was announced in the last issue of "Proletariat," the Labour Club has given space to reports of all matters of student interest, including interesting meetings conducted by other societies. It has also given space to brief discussions by students of the faculties and schools in which they are studying. These have pointed out the limitations which capitalist economy imposes on work in their courses, and have compared conditions in this University with conditions under the socialist economy of the U.S.S.R. Naturally they have been brief suggestions only, and leave room for a great deal of further discussion. The Labour Club would be very pleased to hear from anyone who has anything to add to what has been said either for or against the point of view put forward.

## Council Against War and Fascism.

The last issue of "Proletariat" was able to chronicle with great approval the decision of the Council Against War to become the Council Against War and Fascism. That decision has now been ratified by a general meeting of members, and the Council has affiliated with the V.C.A.W.F. The importance of these moves in the struggle against war in the University cannot be over-emphasised. They indicate two things—first, that the Council is thoroughly conversant with the nature of the struggle it has undertaken, that it sees Fascism not as an isolated phenomenon in certain European countries, but as a potentially universal method of coercing the working class and petty bourgeoisie into falling in with the war plans of their capitalists; second, that the Council has realised that effective work in the University can only be carried on as an integral part of effective work throughout Victoria, Australia, and the whole world—it has realised the need for united action.

In the meetings it has conducted this year, this principle has been put into practice in part. In the past, there has been a tendency for those who see clearly the implications of the fight against war to be rather intolerant of those who do not, but who are ready to agree on certain issues. This very childish attitude is being broken down, and there is every prospect of building the M.U.C.A.W.F. into an extremely efficient broad movement against war. But there is still a long way to go.

The development of the C.A.W.F. fortnightly "Students Against War" has reflected the development of the Council in this direction very accurately. At the beginning of the year it was the expression only of a minority group. It is becoming an organ which can be of inestimable value in developing and broadening the struggle against war. It should take up the task of explaining briefly from week to week the real basis of various aspects of opposition to war; and it should show simultaneously how people of varying views can unite effectively in the struggle against war. This, in the opinion of the Labour Club, must be the basis on which the C.A.W.F. will develop, and "Students Against War" can play a tremendous part in this development.

A very fine, and, potentially, a very effective step towards unity, is the questionnaire which the C.A.W.F. has been circulating among representative people from all walks of life—University professors, lecturers, and students, political leaders of all parties, church-men, business-men, and workers. By collating the answers received and analysing them the Council will obtain an excellent indication of where the points of agreement and of difference lie. It will know on what grounds united action can be built up now, and on what others further explanation of the position will be necessary. Carefully handled, this questionnaire can be the most effective means yet employed of building in the University a united anti-war and anti-fascist movement.

In the present period, when the intensification of inter-imperialist antagonisms, and the designs of capitalism on the Soviet Union, seem to be



leading to a second world war, infinitely more devastating than the first, it is vitally important that the movement against war and fascism organise and build its strength with the greatest possible speed.

The Council Against War and Fascism, working within the University, must devote all its energies to organising a mass student delegation to unite with workers in the anti-war demonstration of August 1. Last year, 65 students marched in the demonstration. There is no reason why this number should not be doubled, or even trebled, on this occasion.

The basis for a huge demonstration was laid at the highly successful vacation conference of the C.A.W. at Mt. Martha. The Council is assured of the active support of the Labour Club in organising for the march.

## Commencement.

The apathy of the student body in the face of the elimination of Block Parade from the Commencement celebrations this year is worthy of comment. It has been noticeable for some time that interest in this function was waning, and when it was cut out scarcely a voice was raised in protest. Five or six years ago things would not have been thus. But a change has come over the University. The proportion of "students" among those on the roll is increasing. The proportion of those who desire an opportunity for pornographic display before the citizens of Melbourne is decreasing. This is a matter of some importance to the Labour Club, for it is the result of no chance cause but of increasing financial stringency which forces students to work in order to qualify for positions. Naturally those affected are inclined to devote all their attention to work, to the exclusion of any other activity. They go to swell the already large passive element in the student body. But, from its very nature, this passive element can be counted upon, if roused, to side with the Labour Club.

## Against Provocation.

This fact was demonstrated very clearly in the one campaign of a negative nature which the Club has carried out—the campaign against reaction within the University. In this campaign the C.A.W.F. and Labour Club worked together. The two societies had suffered from the beginning of term from a campaign of interruption of meetings, interjections, and threatened violence. These provocations were carried out by bands of somewhat irresponsible hooligans, but it was perfectly obvious from their continuity and nature that they had been pre-arranged. This view was expressed by the Labour Club in a leaflet issued in connection with the interruptions to the meeting addressed by Mr. J. Munro. Almost immediately afterwards this view was confirmed by a Labour Club member, who overheard arrangements being made to break up a C.A.W. meeting, if necessary by violence. A list of "Public Enemies" was posted on the notice-board, and confiscated by the secretary of the Labour Club. It seemed that matters might take a serious turn, and in order to make it clear that the Labour Club did not desire disorder, copies of the leaflet

together with letters setting forth the Labour Club point of view were sent to the authorities.

The meeting named as the occasion for violent measures was the C.A.W. open forum of Friday, April 12, on "The Defence of Australia," addressed by Cliff Wright and Will Secomb. News of the threats had gone the rounds of the University during the week, with the result that there was a large attendance. The Philosophy Theatre was packed to the doors, and the place was buzzing with excited conversation before the start of the meeting. But the threatened violence did not take place. There was a certain amount of interruption, but nothing else. The reactionary element was there in full force, but the liberal-minded students were there in far greater numbers, and there can be little doubt that any attempt at violence on the part of the former would have recoiled on their own heads.

It was a definite victory for the tactics of the Labour Club and the C.A.W. We had been censured by the authorities for "taking the matter into our own hands," in denouncing the reactionaries and appealing to the students by means of a leaflet. We had been told that our actions would increase the antagonism of our opponents. But events proved that we were correct in our estimate of the attitude of the students as a whole.

That meeting marked the cessation of open attacks on the Labour Club and the C.A.W.

But the Labour Club realises that this is only a temporary respite.

## Organisation.

In the face of this situation, it is more important than ever for the Labour Club to eliminate all such organisational weaknesses as those noted above. And, in fact, the strengthening of Labour Club organisation is one of the most notable features of the activities of the Labour Club in 1935.

One important advance is the drawing-up of a policy for the Labour Club. This policy was evolved after several discussions in committee, it was printed in full in "Student Affairs" for May 13, it was discussed at length and amended at a general meeting of Labour Club members on May 22; and the final version, as ratified by that general meeting, is now printed in this issue in full.

As will be seen, it is a policy of action; it strives for socialism, and against war and fascism, by organising students in struggle for immediate objectives which directly concern students. In the campaign for these objectives the number of students supporting the Labour Club and its policy is bound to be greatly augmented.

The Club has drawn up a membership form which pledges members "to work for the achievement of socialism and for such immediate objectives as help towards this end." It is to be noted that members are not asked to bind themselves to every point of the policy, which is intended to give direction to the activities of the Club.

Co-operation on some, even on a minority of the issues presented, is sufficient. Is provision made for a question in which you are concerned? If so, you can and should be an active member.



"Proletariat" calls on all students in the name of the Labour Club to give serious consideration to this question and to **decide now**. If you come into conflict with the present economic system in any of its manifestations . . . high University fees, prospect of unemployment or unsuitable employment, etc., etc. . . . the Labour Club is the University organisation which caters for your interests.

Then, again, there is the fact that the influence of "Proletariat" amongst students and workers all over Australia, which has grown steadily with its circulation, has been greatly enhanced by its stabilisation as a regular quarterly magazine.

And this leads us to what promises to be the most important organisational step of all—a step which has for a long time been under consideration by members of the Labour Club—and that is, the formation of an Australia-wide student league, prepared to take part in united action for the achievement of socialism.

The worsening economic conditions of students, coupled with the decay of bourgeois culture, and restrictions on liberty, have lead to a strengthening of student movements all over the world, which work for socialism and fight against fascism and war, and for student rights and the betterment of the economic position of students. The lack of organisation of radical student movements in Australia cannot be allowed to continue.

The Labour Club has existed in the University of Melbourne for eight years. The Socialist Club in Sydney University is now in its third year. We have pleasure in announcing the formation of a Radical Club in Queensland University. We extend greetings to our Queensland comrades, and best wishes in their struggle for Socialism. In the Universities of Tasmania, Adelaide, and Western Australia, students of socialist sympathies are at present unorganised.

The Labour Club believes that "Proletariat" is potentially the medium for organising the radical students of Australia into a national student league; and this proposal is now for the first time broached in "Proletariat" — together with the suggestion of a change of name.

It has for long been evident that the name "Proletariat" is an unsuitable one for a students' magazine; and if our paper is to extend its influence amongst students, a more appropriate name must be found, although, of course, our desire to change the name does not mean that we have in any way abandoned our attitude that students must work for socialism in alliance with the workers.

Our plea for unity of Australian students, if successful, should have incalculable results in raising the level of struggle for the betterment of student conditions, against reaction, and towards the goal of Socialism.

—W. SECOMB.

## Proletariat Finances

**T**HE Labour Club set out this year to make "Proletariat" a regular quarterly magazine. So far, in issuing the April and July numbers, we have succeeded in our task.

If "Proletariat" is to consolidate its position as the leader of the struggle for socialism by Australian students, it is essential that it continue to be published regularly.

In the last 2 years, our circulation has risen from 2,200 to 3,350. But the size of the magazine has also increased. Our first issue consisted of 16 pages, plus cover, but this was rapidly increased to 36 pages, plus cover. In the process of building up the size and the circulation of "Proletariat," a debt has gradually accumulated which now amounts to £25.

Even with our present circulation, the publication costs 5d. per copy to produce, though all the work except printing is done voluntarily by students. Hence, it is necessary to sell directly, as many as possible of the total press run.

By temporarily reducing the size by 4 pages, and by certain other economies, we shall probably have a small credit margin on the current issue.

But, in the meantime, it is necessary to liquidate the accumulated debt of £25. If this is accomplished, "Proletariat" will be placed in a permanently stable position.

**Y**OU can help us in many ways.

Become a subscriber, and augment the present number of sixty subscribers. Send in a subscription for as many issues as you want, at 7d. per copy; 1/9 will cover 3 issues and postage. Back numbers are also available at 7d. per copy.

Extend the sales of "Proletariat."

Attend the forthcoming debate in Melbourne between Ralph Gibson, of the Communist Party, and Mr. Maurice Blackburn, M.H.R., of the Federal Labor Party, on the subject, "That Socialism can be obtained in Australia, but not by Revolution."

This has been arranged by the Labour Club in aid of "Proletariat" funds.

Above all, we appeal for donations, and guarantees. These will be acknowledged in each issue.

We are pleased to announce that we have already received the following donations to our—

### PUBLICATIONS FUND.

T. Gleeson . . . . .	10/-
"Subscriber" . . . . .	1/-
E. Ward (Kalgoorlie) . . . . .	10/-

Total . . . . . £1/1/-

We thank these generous comrades, and appeal to others to emulate their example.

Post all subscriptions and donations to—  
Business Manager "Proletariat,"

Clubhouse, University,  
Melbourne, N.3.



# World Student Congress

THE rapid rise of an organised student movement against war and fascism in Europe and America is a phenomenon of great importance. Formerly such movements were confined to students of oppressed nationalities and colonies. Students in the imperialist countries were drawn largely from the economically secure middle classes, and were staunch supporters of the existing order. Certainly, there were "cranks" in such places as Oxford, but these did not often overstep the limits of respectability, and usually a good job caused them to grow out of their youthful radicalism. The great bulk of students could be relied upon to preserve the tradition of the "old school tie."

With the development of the general crisis of capitalism and its consequences, war and fascism, commenced a change in the outlook of students. An uneasy feeling that "we are a doomed generation" is being forced on many students who see the world moving to a new era of war madness. With the rise of fascist reaction and terror, many of the rosy veils which hide the ugly reality of existing society have been torn down. The decline of culture in the latter stages of capitalism has turned the eyes of students on the country where Capitalism has been replaced by Socialism. In that country the student has no anxiety as to his future. He is supported by the State while studying, and is assured of an opportunity to use his knowledge to the full for the benefit of society. This attraction of the example of the Soviet Union has been a large factor in the radicalisation of students living under Capitalism. Efforts are made by the ruling class to divert the dissatisfaction of students into idealistic channels, the "ideal" which is most stressed being national and racial. A large number of the more backward students are deluded by these decoys, and are swept into fascist movements, in this way helping to bind themselves still more firmly to the existing order.

Serious students see nothing but decay and death in fascist measures of "upholding" existing society, and it is from these students that the movement against war and fascism has arisen.

In December of last year a world conference of students was held at Brussels, at which 380 delegates from 43 countries proclaimed their determination to fight against war and fascism, and declared their faith in the future of human culture. The delegates differed in political and philosophical opinions as much as in nationality; Socialists, Pacifists, National revolutionaries, Christians, Communists, and Liberals were united in the struggle for the rights of young men and women to life and self-expression. The conference drew up a manifesto addressed "To the Student Youth of the World. To the Mental Workers of a New Generation."

"WE men and women students who met in the last days of December in Brussels, and in comradely discussion and solemn decision created a strong tie for the coming times, call upon the millions who share the same fate as ourselves to engage in a common fight for a new future. We have joined hands across all continents and countries without distinction of sex and race, of nation and language, of religion and political views.

"Our common experiences have welded us together. We were born in the years of the war. Our fathers and brothers were torn to pieces by shells and rifle bullets. . . . Now our prospects, the prospects of student youth of the new generation, are the future battlefields, trenches and artillery. Of what use is it for us to study for an intellectual profession? Most of us are 'superfluous.' Present-day society, which is maintained in the interest of an insignificant minority, has no longer any use for us. . . . We want to be useful—we want to work together in the interest of society. And we, the student youth, the brain workers of the future, belong to the working people, and we recognise it. Therefore we ally ourselves with all sections of the working people, from whom the rulers have always tried to separate us. At the transition stage between two epochs, we want to march together with those who are called upon to be the builders of a new society. The present-day rulers realise that indignation is growing in our ranks. They are seeking to entice us away from the true path in order to divert us to that which they represent as a 'solution,' whilst they set for us the trap of fascism.

"But what does fascism bring the student youth? Let us compare what it promises with what it performs. Look at Germany, Italy, and Austria! This fascism wishes to degrade us to the position of body-guards of the big business men.

"In order to cloak the absence of any future prospects for the student youth, the reactionary obscurantists seek to play off one section against the other. Women and girls are excluded from all the free professions. They are looked upon as domestic animals, created in order to bring hungry mouths into the world.

"In addition, fascism means chauvinism, race hatred, national hatred. It means complete degradation of science and art. Fascism is the instrument of imperialism. Its natural element is war. War is the last way out for the ruling class. This is the tragic fate that fascism brings to youth. . . . We do not want war! We shall oppose it with all our forces, closely allied with the working people of all countries.

"We welcome the peace policy of the Soviet Union, which we wish to protect against all war provocation.



"We are united by the common will to save culture and science from black reaction and fascism, to support the oppressed peoples in their fight for emancipation, and together with all hand and brain workers to fight for a new social order of justice in which we shall find our proper place. Such a concentration of forces is capable of preventing war, and barring the way to fascism. Therefore, we wish to set up the unity of all hand and brain workers who are opposed to war and fascism, regardless of their political and religious views.

"We address this appeal to you, comrades, in all countries! Set up student committees against war and fascism on the broadest basis.

"Join the powerful international people's movement for peace and freedom.

"Long live the unity of the student youth, their fraternal alliance with the working masses against fascism, imperialism, and war!"

—W. N. C.

## Song to the Men of England

### I.

**M**EN of England, wherefore plough,  
For the lords who lay ye low?  
Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

### II.

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,  
From the cradle to the grave,  
Those ungrateful drones who would  
Drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood?

### III.

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge  
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,  
That these stingless drones may spoil  
The forced produce of your toil?

### IV.

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,  
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?  
Or what is it ye buy so dear  
With your pain and with your fear?

### V.

The seed ye sow, another reaps;  
The wealth ye find, another keeps;  
The robes ye weave, another wears;  
The arms ye forge, another bears.

### VI.

Sow seed,—but let not tyrant reap;  
Find wealth,—let no impostor heap;  
Weave robes,—let not the idle wear;  
Forge arms,—in your defence to bear.

### VII.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;  
In halls ye deck another dwells.  
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see  
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

### VIII.

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,  
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,  
And weave your winding sheet, till fair  
England be your sepulchre.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, 1819.



# Impressions of London

It needs only a few days in Vienna, or Paris, to discover that the city's gaiety is but a mask—a mask worn by the ruling class, behind which are eyes haunted by fear, and a mouth distorted with cruelty.

In sudden contrast, London appeals because of its quiet, calm solidity. The "colonial" (one grows used to the label) tends to be carried away in a feeling of pride at being British, and in his delight (or disappointment) at discovering that Westminster Abbey and Trafalgar Square and the Strand and Piccadilly (and even the Round Pond) are real, he is unable, for several weeks, to view London critically.

But at last the reality breaks through the dream. The colonial turns from guide-books and monuments, and finds himself staring at the slums, at Welsh miners singing in the gutters for pennies, at men with pleading eyes and bowed heads who wear medals—and sell matches.

To the North and West of London there are many large parks, but down in the East End one can walk for mile after mile, hour after hour, and see nothing but streets—every street like every other street, and every house like every other house. No garden, no flower, no patch of green, no tree, save once in a little churchyard, where the tombstones hold sole possession.

The 1931 Census showed that there are 59,559 one-roomed homes in Inner London, in 2087 of which families of from 6 to 11 are living. There are 220,632 two-roomed homes, in 4149 of which families of from 8 to 15 are living. The principal of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School in Deptford told us of the home life of some of the youngsters—two parents and eight children in a room ten feet square—their entire home; two parents and six children in a room seven feet by eight, sleeping all in the one bed, and using paraffin lamps; two children whose parents get 27/3 a week, and spend a pound of that in rent.

What of the "Slum Clearance Schemes" which have figured so prominently in newspaper headlines? Much work has been done, but despite this work conditions are worsening. The Medical Officer of Health for Deptford, in his Annual Report for 1933, states that: "The major problem that faces us is the question of overcrowding which continues in an acute form, and for which no solution has been found. . . . there is a possibility (if not a probability) that conditions may get worse, for, with the flow of time, families grow more numerous and larger, their children older, and overcrowding more inevitable." This is corroborated by the following extract from "The New Survey of London Life and Labour":—

The percentage living more than three to a room actually rose from 3.1 to 3.3 between 1921 and 1931. In the Eastern Survey Area the increase was more marked, viz., from 2.8 to 3.4 per cent. (Vol. III., p. 19.)

A recent inquiry by the Medical Officer of Health for Stockton showed that in one instance where families have been transferred to better

homes in England, their health actually deteriorated. It appears that the increase in rents (without which, under the present profit system, slum clearance is impracticable), left less money for food, with the result that the families were underfed. (Or, rather, more underfed than previously.)

How is it that the people go on living? Sometimes they don't.

A mother of three children, whose husband received only 14/6 a week transitional benefit, starved herself so that her family should not go short of food.

She complained to no one, but spent hours going round the shops to find the cheapest goods. Then she pretended to have had a meal so that her children should have more.

The effort proved too much. A few days ago she was found dead, lying near a gas stove.

An inquest was held at St. Pancras yesterday and a verdict that Mrs. Gwendoline Edith Hickley, aged 33, of Bolton Road, Hampstead, N.W., had committed suicide while of unsound mind, was recorded.

It was stated that there was not a sign of food in her stomach.

"It is likely," said Mr. W. Bentley Purchase, the coroner, "that this woman has starved herself to help to provide food for her children."

Mr. Hickley served for two years in the Army, being invalided home in 1916 with rheumatic fever.

—("Daily Herald," February 6, 1934.)

\* \* \* \*

NEW Year's morning in London! And a cold, thick, choking, pea-soup fog! Groping one's way past monotonous rows of lodging-houses, and dreaming of other New Year's Days spent in summer warmth on sunlit beaches, or out-back in the bush; one finds some comfort in the thought that there is no cheerful optimist to wish one "A Happy New Year!" And then, through the greyish yellow gloom, there appear these surprising words on a newspaper placard:—

## IT IS A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

New Year's night in London! The fog has lifted, and there is a certain still beauty about Trafalgar Square, but it is bitterly cold. And along the North Terrace is a crowd of shabbily dressed men, talking, cursing, joking, coughing, spitting. It is easy for anyone with a packet of cigarettes to mix with them, talk with them. "Where are you sleeping to-night?"

"Nowhere. Haven't got a kip. No luck to-day." "They tell me I ought to go out thieving, but no, I say it's not worth it for ten bob or a few quid, is it? It's not that I'd mind being shoved in quod, but once the police get your name you're gone, aren't you?"

Obviously, he's drifting into it, but what's the alternative?



"Yes, mate, there's the crypt of St. Martin's over here, and there's a place in Westminster Bridge Road. But you have to be early, and if you do get a place, there's hardly room enough to sleep in. A newspaper for blankets, and if you're not crawling with fleas by the morning then you're damn lucky."

"She's a decent sort, she is. The Almighty ought to reward her, all right."

"Maybe, but she's bloody late to-night."

At last, well after midnight, "she" comes, a lady of name unknown, with a basket of bread and cheese. The men file past in an orderly queue for a sandwich apiece, and a cigarette. Some of them have not eaten all day. And the late theatre-goers, returning to comfortable homes by bus or car, do they see? Or like Nelson, on the column far overhead, have they learnt to treat unwelcome signals with a blind eye?

"Whatever you do," says the lady of the sandwiches, as she walks among these men, "don't lose hope."

"IT IS A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR," says the "Morning Post." But, after all, the "Morning Post" is a paper for business men, investors, and holders of armament shares. Perhaps they're right.

\* \* \* \*

**S**TAIRWAYS—and doors. And behind the doors—who knows?

Occasionally, as though there had been a lamentable blunder in this strange game of adult hide-and-seek, you pass a fellow-lodger on the stairs. You nod to one another, and murmur, "Good evening," or perhaps remark that it is a little warmer. But you do not see the man, merely his outer shell, his mask, the door he presents to the world. And behind the door—who knows?

At times doors are opened for a brief moment, and you catch glimpses.

There is a knock on the door one evening, and the lodger in the next room peers in, very apologetically. He merely wants a match.

But you become interested in him, and learn that he is unemployed; that he comes in late at night and sleeps till late in the morning, usually—or late in the afternoon. But why not? When you're unemployed, there must seem nothing else to do.

Some weeks later he comes in again to ask for a book—something light. He appears to read not for any set purpose, scarcely even for amusement, but in the main because there seems nothing else to do.

And so, in time, after some months have passed, he becomes a regular visitor; his knock sounds on the door somewhere around midnight; he comes and talks for an hour or more. He talks in the unceasing, interesting way of a lonely man, careless of his subject, glad only to throw off some of his intolerable load of loneliness.

He has been unemployed for years now. Drawing fifteen shillings and threepence a week, and spending ten shillings of that on rent. Then

there are cigarettes, and drink, and sixpence for his club, and after that food. It would be easier, you may think, if he did not smoke, but he learned to do it in France somewhere between 1914 and 1918, and it is too late to unlearn it now. It would be easier, you may think, if he did not drink, but the only social life he can find is with men who drink. Can you blame him for spending his evenings with them? There must be little else to do.

At one period he used to spend fivepence a day on food regularly for weeks on end—a penny cup of tea and a fourpenny sandwich being his one meal for the day. Since then he has occasionally found work for short periods. But when he does earn a few extra shillings it is difficult to use them wisely. After the deadening monotony of the weary days, this little sum of money means a chance of escape—the one hope of a patch of brightness. A small bet on the dogs, perhaps, a careless night's drinking—it is not wise from the point of view of abstract wisdom—but a man is entitled to some sort of happiness, and there seems no other way of getting it.

"I'm getting fed up. Sometimes I wish there would be another war."

He has no love of war; in fact, he has a horror of violence. He knows all the arguments against war, but—

"You see, I look at it this way. It would be a way out."

The gift of life is his, but all he desires to do with it is to escape from it—to end it. You do not blame him, you do not wonder, for you can in some small way see things from his standpoint, and you know that there must seem nothing else to do.

\* \* \* \*

**M**OSLEY, in the Kingsway Hall, swaying a large middle-class audience with clever demagoguery—vague talk of "a new world idea," "a new national unity," "a revolution, not of one class or another, but of the nation as a whole"—and violent attacks on the socialists, and on the "alien elements in the city of London." Along the aisles stand his Blackshirts, who, later, at Olympia, were to treat working-class interruptors with such brutal violence, that three Conservative M.P.'s who were present were forced to write to the "Times" (June 8, 1934), to declare that:—

We were involuntary witnesses of wholly unnecessary violence inflicted by uniformed Blackshirts on interrupters. Men and women were knocked down, and, after they had been knocked down, were still assaulted, and kicked on the floor.

"I am watching with great interest the progress of the Blackshirt movement in Britain. Sir Oswald Mosley is a very able man, and he is making considerable headway. It may be that the time has come for a new system of government in England." So says Mr. Lloyd George, according to the "Daily Mail," of February 1, 1934. But an Irish seaman tells me that the danger is that people will look at Mosley, and turn their backs on Westminster. "If there is to be an



English Fascist dictator, he won't be a strong man in a black shirt; he's more likely to be a former Labour Party leader. That would be a typically British way of doing it."

\* \* \* \*

**"STOP THE FARCE OF THE HUNGER MARCH! Women and Babies Suffering to Make Moscow Propaganda. YOU WILL PAY THE BILL."** So ran the headlines in the "Sunday Dispatch" of February 4, 1934. But the workers of London, as the days went by, read in the "New Leader" and "Daily Worker" of the gallant march of thousands of men and women from every corner of the land. An army was marching through Britain—an army that left no flames in its track, save the flames of heightened enthusiasm for the workers' cause. Despite the opposition of the Labour Party leaders, everywhere the local Labour Parties, trade unions, and co-operatives rallied to the support of the marchers. Meanwhile, the capitalist press continued its attacks. Listen to the "Daily Express":—

"... this wearisome and useless march. . . in fact, they are only giving all the rag-tag-and-bobtail of the metropolis the chance to make a row. . . ." (February 23, 1934.)

And then, immediately after the arrival of the contingents in London, and on the evening before the opening of the National Congress of Action that had been arranged as the climax to the march, we heard of the arrests of Tom Mann and Harry Pollitt, on the charge of using "seditious language" in speeches made five days previously. (This was ten days after Mr. Baldwin's declaration that: "There are things which we in England, though we have been called a nation of shopkeepers, esteem far more than money, and those are freedom of speech and liberty of conscience. Without these things, life to an Englishman is not worth having.")

On the next day, Saturday, February 24, the National Congress of Action met. In the evening I visited some friends in the East End, who had attended it. They spoke of the intense enthusiasm that had been shown, and, what was better, gave me a delegate's ticket to enable me to attend the final session on the following morning.

South through the Sunday morning fog, over Tower Bridge, and into Bermondsey Town Hall. More than a thousand delegates are here already, and they keep pouring in until the hall is full. Old men and young, women, girls, marchers with rucksacks and red scarves, students, intellectuals, manual workers, women marchers—it was an impressive gathering.

**"EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED UNITE AGAINST THE NEW SLAVE BILL."**

**"WE DEMAND WORK AT TRADE UNION WAGES."**

**"WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE AGAINST FASCISM AND WAR."**

These and other slogans were displayed on the walls. The speeches rang with a simple sincerity that raised them to a high level. Perhaps this was due to the recent events in Austria, perhaps to the inspiration of the Congress itself, perhaps to the fact that the speakers represent

a new militant leadership rising from the rank and file to challenge the old respectable-bureaucratic leaders who are betraying the struggle of the workers.

At the end of a speech a worker strides on to the platform and holds up his hand for silence. There is a sudden hush.

"Comrades, I have an announcement to make. I wish to introduce to you, with their greetings, Comrades Tom Mann and Harry Pollitt."

What a roar! Spontaneously the Congress has risen to its feet as one man, spontaneously clenched fists are raised in greeting to the two leaders, who have come forward wreathed in smiles; spontaneously there swells forth the stirring strains of the International, sung as I have never anywhere else heard British people sing it, sung from the depths of the spirit. No one who saw that greeting and heard that singing could any longer lack faith in the future of Britain, in the power of the British workers to "build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land."

The two leaders, who were out on bail, spoke shortly and to the point. "Our objective is not to have a display," said Tom Mann, "it is to achieve something." And Harry Pollitt asked the delegates to go back to their homes remembering that they have not only been fighting for immediate needs, but that they are the men and women who will have to tackle the task of re-organising the whole of the social and industrial life of their country.

At one o'clock the Congress ended, and the delegates filed out and formed up for the two hours' march to Hyde Park.

I took the Underground to Oxford Circus, and came into Oxford Street just in time to see the contingent from Tottenham. There, packs on their backs, were the men and women who had marched from Scotland. Above their heads waved red banners, emblazoned with fighting slogans:—

**SCOTLAND TO LONDON AGAINST THE SLAVE BILL.**

**WE MARCH AGAINST STARVATION. AGAINST HUNGER AND WAR.**

**UNITE TO SMASH THE SLAVE BILL.**

Young men mostly, many mere youths, but old men too, and women and girls—a few of Britain's millions of unemployed. Behind them came file after file of London workers. And then came the students—hundreds of them, youths and girls—singing and shouting. Their red banners bore the names of the Oxford University Labour Club, the Federation of Student Societies, the Oxford University October Club, the London School of Economics Marxist Club, the Reading University Socialist Group, the University College Banned Anti-War Movement, and other student groups.

**STUDENTS WITH WORKERS. STUDENTS JOIN THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE.**

**SCHOLARSHIPS NOT BATTLESHIPS.**

**Hunger for millions, and millions for war. Not a man, not a gun, for imperialist war. One, two, three, four.**

**Who are we for? We are for the working class, DOWN with the ruling class!**



So ran their slogans. Behind them, more workers, file after file, shouting and singing.

This is only one of many processions converging on the Park, where political leaders and rank-and-file workers, employed and unemployed, intellectuals, students, workers' wives, and even the little Pioneers will speak from many platforms to one of the biggest crowds the Park has seen, in united resistance to the attacks of their common enemy, the National Government, representing the ruling class of a system that has had its day, whose logical outcome now can only be Hunger and Fascism and War.

An army is marching through the streets of London. Many of these men marched through these streets twenty years ago, in neat khaki, to the waving of national flags and the cheers of all. What a difference now! Here is an army with a new, nay an old, discipline—the live, creative discipline of the working class itself. Here is an army with a new, nay an old, flag—

the red flag stained with the blood of working class martyrs. Here is an army with a new, nay an old, faith—the faith of man in life itself, in his power to surmount all obstacles and take his part in building the classless brotherhood of the future.

A small army as yet, but a live army in the deepest sense of the word, and live things possess the property not only of being able to struggle, but also of being able to grow in the course of the struggle.

\* \* \* \* \*

Behind the mask of solidity of the British ruling class, as behind the mask of gaiety of the Continental ruling classes, are a mouth distorted with cruelty, and eyes haunted by fear. For often, it is said, these well-groomed aristocrats, these overfed business men, and these placid statesmen turn uneasily in their soft warm beds, and wake with a start in a sweat of fear, as though they had heard the sound of an army marching.

—L. P. FOX.

## “Soviets To-day” Banned

“SOVIETS TO-DAY,” an official organ of the “Friends of the Soviet Union” (F.O.S.U.), has received kindly attention from our democratic government. The Railways Commissioner has gracefully prohibited the transport of the magazine on the Victorian Railways, refusing to give reasons for doing so. This official tyranny is by no means an isolated instance of restriction of the democratic liberties of the Australian people. We all know that political and literary classics of working-class interest are banned by the Customs Department at the instigation of the high priests at Canberra. However, there is no censorship on literature published within the Commonwealth, and so to make up for this “deficiency” other methods had to be adopted, including postal bans on the workers' publications, now reinforced by the Railways Commissioner's action. To regard this as merely an isolated example of official arbitrariness, would be to miss the main reasons that prompted “the powers that be” to adopt these measures.

Elsewhere in this issue we explain that the economic crisis which was ameliorated in 1933-34, passing then into the stage of depression, is showing no signs of developing towards prosperity; but that the depression is likely to last with the probability of passing into a crisis once again, with concomitant effect on the standard of living of the majority of the people. This, coupled with the possibility of war in the immediate future, makes it expedient for the guardians of the capitalist regime to bring into operation repressive governmental measures, not only against working-class organisations, but also against publications which by no means could be classed as “seditious,” but which are designed to

counter-balance and expose the calumnies of the daily press against the workers' and peasants' state.

The circulation of “Soviets To-Day,” almost 20,000 monthly, is due to the growing sympathy of the Australian people towards the Soviet Union, and to the outstanding technical and literary quality of the magazine. Is it surprising that our capitalist government has selected this magazine for persecution?

However, the working-class and all those to whom the liberties of the people are dear, will not let the government have its own way.

The workers of Australia, heartened by the magnificent victory they won in the Kisch-Griffin campaign, will struggle again to secure another victory, perhaps not so spectacular but no less important. The news comes from Sydney that the editors of “Soviets To-Day” have issued out of the High Court a writ against the postal authorities claiming £5000 damages. This legal action, as in the case of Kisch, is to be reinforced by protest action of the workers, and for this purpose a broad committee has been set up to which the Labour Club has sent a delegate.

The whole of the campaign will have the most enthusiastic support of the Labour Club. But we appeal to the general student body to support our struggle against this concrete fascist act of our authorities. We warn the students to struggle before it is too late, and to strangle the monster of fascism while it is still in the womb of our “democracy.”

—R.



# "You Can't Change Human Nature"

THE statement that you can't change human nature is made often, and generally without reflection on what it means. On the one hand it serves as the implied basis of much theorising about "fundamental psychological causes" in social affairs. Human nature, or public opinion, or the general will, is a sort of ultimate behind which you cannot go. On the other hand, the statement is regularly used as an argument against the possibility of socialism—and indeed against any fundamental change in the social system in which we live at the present day. You hear that there will always be one class in society subjugating another, because men are by nature self-assertive. You hear that there will always be wars, because war is the product of human greed. The world is therefore necessarily one of class-domination and war.

We therefore have two good reasons for clarifying the statement by a little reflection. In the first place, such reflection will give us a proper insight into the part that the ideas, emotions, and impulses of men play in the development of society. And in the second place we will be able to see, on the basis of this, whether there is anything inherent in human nature to prevent the establishment of a socialist society. These are the reasons for the discussion that follows.

## You Can't Change the Fundamentals of Human Nature.

It must be pointed out first that there is one sense in which the statement is just a truism. For example, it is human nature to believe that a chair is a solid object in a world of solid objects. It is human nature to feel the emotion of fear or of anger. It is human nature to desire the company of other human beings—particularly the company of those of the opposite sex. In a word, there are certain fundamental characteristics of human nature which we all regard as relatively permanent. If you mean by "changing human nature," eliminating any of these characteristics, then—at any rate over brief historical periods—human nature can't be changed.

It is these fundamental characteristics which provide the inherited basis of a man's make-up—they are the raw-material that he derives from the biological past of his race. William McDougall distinguishes a number of innate instincts, which he considers to belong to human beings as such, and which give rise to the various impulses and desires of men. There is a tendency to gregariousness which drives men to form into groups, a tendency to escape from danger (with its emotion of fear), a tendency to fight (with its emotion of anger); there are self-assertion and submission, a sexual instinct, a parental instinct, curiosity, and so forth. This is the sort of thing to which I refer when I speak of the fundamentals of human nature. Such instincts have

been passed on through the ages, some of them appearing in animals a long way down the evolutionary scale.

Even these fundamentals are not fixed from eternity. In the course of evolution there have been differences in different species, and even in man himself some slight changes have undoubtedly occurred. But such changes occur only very gradually with the development of species, and therefore do not really concern us. They are of significance only over tens of thousands of years, so that in dealing with the period of written history we can afford to neglect them. When you say that you can't change human nature, and you mean this fundamental make-up of human nature, you are, for practical purposes, accurate.

## Human Nature Does Change.

Is there, then, any objection to be made to the statement? Certainly there is, and for this reason. When the statement is made, it is not meant to be restricted to these obvious facts which I have pointed out. It is surreptitiously extended to mean much more. Under cover of these general truths, it goes on to assert that you can't change the particular sorts of desires, and the emotions for particular sorts of objects, that happen to exist at the present time. For example, because parents instinctively protect their children, it is concluded that the family is an eternal institution. Because men by nature assert themselves, the institutions by which one class holds down another follow from fundamental psychological laws. Here there is clearly no necessary connection between premise and conclusion, and I think it can be shown that any connection that is claimed is severed by the facts.

No one would doubt that within the last two or three thousand years—a period in which there has been practically no change in inherited fundamentals—the outlooks, the ideas, and the aims of men have changed to a considerable extent. Even the most ardent upholder of an unchanging human nature would agree to this. He would also admit that such changes are not brought with him from the womb, but are due to different environmental conditions at different periods. The environment—both social and material—of the modern man is very different from that of an ancient Egyptian, and he therefore has a different set of ideas, values different things, has different moral standards, and so on.

A certain amount of such environmental influence is, at any rate, generally recognised. The real question at issue is how far the basic inherited characteristics extend, and how much of human life is left to be moulded by environment. What I want to point out is that the theory which extends the unchanging character of human nature to cover the customs and opinions of any particular period, conforms neither to psychological principles nor the facts of social history.



Psychological principles provide us with a general distinction which will make the position clear. The general distinction is that between a desire in itself and a desire for something in particular. The same sort of desire may be directed towards various objects. Fear, for example, may either be fear of a lion or fear of getting the sack. Desire to kill may be either a desire to kill someone in a far-off country, or a desire to kill someone who has been oppressing you all your life. This means that, while fear and the instinct to fight may not change, the fear of inevitable social forces, and the desire to fight Germans, say (or Japanese or Americans—as the case may be) may quite well be transformed or vanish. People by nature will love and hate, but this leaves open the possibility that what they love and hate may vary greatly.

Now the most general facts of social history are sufficient to show that such changes in the direction of the instinctive tendencies of men have frequently occurred. Take gregariousness. Men tend to form into groups, of which all members have certain interests in common. But such groups have been of many sorts. They have been spread over areas which vary from the village to the nation. And within each village, or within each nation, various types of social classes have been formed — at one time, slaves and slave-owners; at another, landlords, serfs, guildsmen, and journeymen; at another, wage-earners, small farmers, salaried workers, big business groups. This is but the barest outline of the transformations of social groups.

If in the past self-assertion has, in fact, meant self-assertion at the expense of others (domination), this is due not to the fundamental nature of the instinct, but to its direction. Now, in this instance also, the direction may be shown to be conditioned by the socio-economic circumstances of a given epoch. Ancient Greece was a slave holding society, and Aristotle thought that slavery was something that followed from the nature of man. Now slavery is no more. In its place you have the domination of the owner of the factory over the man who comes along and asks for employment. Moreover, within the classes of modern society, there are historically observable phenomena, the concentration of capital and the domination of the big over the small capitalist, which gives a dominating direction to the instinct within the same social class.

Under social systems dependent upon private property relations, domination of class by class is an integral part of the social structure, and the instinct of self-assertion takes on a dominating direction which differs from one epoch to another in accordance with changes in class relations.

We can look in the same way on our instinct to fight. The question to be asked in any particular case is: What have you to fight for? If it is said that war is the outcome of human greed, we must ask: What is the object of the greed? Is it that you want more land for your serfs to till? Or more markets in which to sell your surplus goods? Or is it that you are greedy for freedom from domination by a ruling class? Here are the differences which are of

importance in historical development, though the tendency to fight remains the same throughout.

Finally, a striking example may be seen in the development of religion. We hear much of the fundamental religious instinct. And yet, within the historical period, men have worshipped the primitive gods of the elements, national gods such as Jehovah, the feudal Lord of feudal Catholicism, the personal God of Protestantism, with whom each individual may have personal contact. Further, we now find large numbers of people who do not worship any God at all—a fact which seems to indicate that the religious “instinct” itself is not one of the fundamental characteristics of human nature, but is rather the result of certain forms of environment.

These few examples serve to show the extent to which human nature has changed in the development of society. In each period men have experienced their own particular desires and emotions, and this has destroyed their historical perspective. Each man believes his own feelings to be universal and eternal.

## YOU Can't Change Human Nature.

We have shown that human nature does change. We must now proceed to a further point. It still remains true that you—or I or anyone else—can't change human nature at will. This is sometimes what is thought to be maintained by socialists, and the denial of it lends strength to the “human nature” argument against socialism. Such a denial, however, is not an argument against socialism—it is only an argument against utopians. A utopian is one who has an idea of what human nature ought to be, and then goes right ahead, like a bull at a gate, trying to make it conform to this idea. To see whether this sort of change is possible, it is well to answer the question: When do changes in human nature occur?

These changes, we said, are due to what a man gets from his environment, not to what he inherits. The objects of his interests change with a changing environment. When do the big changes of environment occur? We must not forget that most men, for most of their time, have always been occupied in producing the means whereby to live. Hence the kind of production that has been gone in for has been a predominating factor in a man's environment. As methods of production change, so do the environments of men. It is this which provides us with a clue to an important truth—viz., that the big changes in human nature occur with the changes in the methods of producing things.

The outstanding example of this is to be found in the changes that have occurred in the last few hundred years. During this period the main thing necessary for producing has changed from the land to the factory—this is the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Prior to this the customs and ideas of the feudal lords and of their serfs do not seem to have undergone radical change for centuries. It was only when the lords or their successors became big business men, and the serfs were driven off their land and drifted into factories, that old customs and beliefs were swept away and new ones arose. The old village group is replaced by the more cohesive fac-



tory group, the village interests by the new interests of town and city. The cohesion of family life becomes loosened, people become protestants or atheists, the virtues of thrift and charity take the place of feudal chivalry. These changes were not brought about by a few idealists—they arose with the development of industry.

## The Change to Socialism.

We have revealed two true senses and one false sense of the statement that you can't change human nature. You can't change its fundamental characteristics—that is true. You personally can't change it—that is true. But that the customary beliefs and desires of any period do not change—that is radically false.

What, then, of the change to socialism? I think it will be clear that this allows for the two senses in which the statement is true. Firstly, it requires no more than a change in the direction of the fundamental impulses of men. The tendency for men to form into groups will still be there; the change is in the nature of the group. These groups will no longer be various classes in the community which are out of sympathy with each other. There will be a group spirit throughout the community. The ultimate aim of socialist development — "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"—is rendered possible just through the development of such a community-wide group spirit. In small groups we all unselfconsciously abide by this maxim at the present time. The change that occurs is that this is to be rendered the spirit of the community.

But, you will say, what about our self-assertiveness? There will be no one outside the social group over whom we can show our superiority. The changes in self-assertiveness that have been mentioned so far are changes from one form of domination to another. Here we seem to be trying to do away with domination altogether. The mistake in this line of thought is that it is assumed that there is no way of asserting oneself except over people in a lower social class. Socialism does not mean a submissive contentment with a status quo. There are the difficulties of eliminating anti-social elements, of the building up of socialist industry, of fighting for scientific and cultural progress; all these must be overcome. There are a hundred new directions in which this impulse can flow.

But what, you may object again, of our tendency to fight? How is it possible that socialism means peace? The reply, as before, is that people fight only for what they want. There is never a mere lust for blood. Before you can get a man to kill, he must be persuaded that there is something desirable to come of it. The less men's desires are thwarted, the less they will fight. Now the simple fact is that socialism will remove two of the main obstacles to men's desires. It will eliminate the situation in which groups of monopoly capitalists thwart each other in the desire for further lands and markets to exploit, and will thus remove the motive for international war. Further, when socialism is achieved, it will remove the motive to fight against an oppressing ruling class, and thus take away the basis of

class war. The instinct will remain, and will be called into action if the need arise. While there is anything worth while fighting for, heaven forbid that that instinct should atrophy.

We see then that socialism does not conflict with the fundamentals of human nature. It can also be shown that it is no mere utopian conception, but is something which can naturally develop on the basis of a productive environment. That this is the case can be seen from the development of the capitalist method of production. Factory workers form a type of social group that has been unknown before. Modern large-scale production is socialised production. It breeds unity of interest and community of spirit. These socialised workers have before them factories which they can work, but which the owners are unable to work without lowering working conditions or sacrificing their profit. The productive basis for socialism is already there. It needs only to break the chains that bind it to become the basis of a new socialist humanity.

For when these chains are broken, the group spirit of the factory, which we can see already under capitalism, will have room to develop freely. The changes that such a development will bring are in their details incalculable. But it is clear that we have here a real material basis for the redirection of our innate self-assertion, our pugnacity, and all the other tendencies of our nature.

The change in human nature involved in the establishment of socialism thus keeps within the limits which we set, and the contemplation of it is thereby justified. We have, however, omitted the most direct and powerful argument of all. It is that in one part of the world—the Soviet Union—such a change is taking place before our eyes. Here in fifteen years humanity, in the words of Hindus, has been uprooted. We have the development of community spirit, we have the spectacle of men turning to assert themselves over difficulties which confront the human race as a whole, we have a government using every means in its power for the preservation of international peace. Here is a striking verification of facts about human nature which we have been led on more general grounds to believe. A study of the facts of human development in the Soviet Union will provide many of the details which have been omitted in our brief review.

What has been said must vitally affect our outlook on human progress. A fundamental pessimism must be the attitude of anyone for whom the statement that you can't change human nature is a sincere belief and not a mere comfortable formula to excuse the existence of appalling misery and poverty. Pessimism, too, must shadow the man who hopes to change human nature in accordance with his own ideals. The Christian moralist who works for the gradual elimination of human sin must, in his less religious moments, feel the gravest doubts of his achievement. It is only through an understanding of how human nature can change with the development of industry, that we can realise what possibilities there are for the progress of mankind.

—Q. B. GIBSON.



# HOW TO GET A BETTER S

## MY VIEWS OF CHANGE.

By LEWIS WILKS

(Presenting An Independent View.)

Change is a word which, despite its common use, and the preciseness of dictionary definition, must convey an entirely different meaning to men who differ as to the philosophies which condition their lives. For the purposes of this article, I submit that a satisfactory definition would view change as meaning evolution to a better set of conditions for humanity.

The first thing that must be noted is that change, as it is here postulated, must be evolutionary, rather than revolutionary. A revolution is an attempt at change, which aims at overthrowing the existing moral and philosophic basis of the life of society, and this overthrow must be accomplished by force. This means that a revolution is an attempt, by violence, to change the practice of the community, and then to educate the members of the community to live in accordance with the new practice, which the revolutionaries, always a minority, have inaugurated. Evolution, on the other hand, attempts to change by education the moral and philosophic basis of life, and then to adjust the practice of the State to this changed basis. Revolutions, because of their pragmatic nature, usually are a big jump, but the jump is always a high, rather than a long one, and when all the fuss is over, when the smoke and powder is grey and cold, when the blood of patriot and self-seeker, of revolutionary and reactionary, has fused, congealed together in the same gutters, little has been accomplished. This last statement, it may be urged, should be modified in the light of what has occurred in Russia since 1917, but this I deny. Although the tremors of the quake have not ceased, and the extent, or quantum, of the change cannot be reckoned, the direction or quality of the change is capable of being readily perceived. The Russian revolution did one good thing—it ridded Russia of both an hereditary aristocracy and incipient capitalism; but in the place of this it made Russia, and the Russians, the slave or slaves of an interested bureaucracy. Russia is the slave of the two or three million members of the Communist party, rather than of the sadistic minions of the Tsarist regime. This is certainly all indicative of improvement, but I submit that this improvement is of the slightest, in relation to what should have been accomplished. Russia has certainly been freed from the control of capitalists, but it is still hemmed in by the base materialism which is common to Communist, Fascist, and Capitalist states. All that men desire in any of these politics is a Ford car and £10 a week: all thought of the humanities has died—the individual is nothing in the U.S.S.R.—he is submerged by the worship of the proletariat; in Fascist countries he is lost in the glow of the state, and in Capitalist countries he is sacrificed to profits and the machine.

Thus, the first argument against violent revolution is that it accomplishes little in changing anything but superficialities—no basic change can be thus accomplished. In the U.S.S.R., for example, bloodshed and strife have overthrown the control of capitalists, but the hand of bourgeois capitalist philosophy is still heavy on the people. The second and third main arguments against the use of force to accomplish a change may be coalesced. In revolutions, whether while the actual alteration is in progress or after its consummation, there is always blood—more blood than humanity can spare—spilt, and this is of itself offensive to anyone with an individualist or a humanitarian nature. This blood-letting, accompanied as it is by persecution and repression, has another and greater evil effect—it breeds hatred, contempt, and a desire for revenge among the inhabitants of the state, and it is impossible for mutual distrust and fear to be the basis of anything, let alone of the most important of human institutions. Because of the restricted space available it is impossible for me to indicate arguments against this view. They do exist and will probably be advanced by other contributors to this symposium, but I do consider them to be of far less weight than those I have advanced in favour of my contention that revolution is both unproductive and undesirable.

If we discard violent revolution as the medium for accomplishing our change, we must carefully consider what form our evolution is to take. I submit that the only possible mode of advancement lies in a seeking of the democratic ideal. In the path of Christian philosophy or humanism (both words are unsuitable to describe the basis of the democratic ideal because of their present distorted usage), lies humanity's only hope of salvation. We must seek the still elusive goal of democracy—true democracy, not capitalistic "aristocracy" hiding behind a pseudonym. The only way in which this goal can be reached is by education. The type of education given in the democracies of to-day is the type which must be pursued to its logical goal. In both the fascist and communist philosophies the truth is presumed to be known, an ultimate postulate is treated as discovered, and all that is taught is conditioned by this presumed truth. This is in reality an attempt to put into practice Plato's politic ideal, but the barrier which Plato saw, in his later life, to the practicability of his ideal, the impossibility of finding philosopher-kings who could arrive with certainty at the knowledge of what was best for the whole people, anywhere but in heaven, is, I suggest, equally insurmountable to-day. The democratic ideal depends, on the other hand, on an education of the whole mass of mankind to an understanding of humanity. This would be productive of an educated public opinion, when men would see that the happiness of each of them is bound up with the happiness of their neighbours, that there is more in life than mere material prosperity, than the mere hoarding of riches.



# AL ORDER—A SYMPOSIUM

The education which is to accomplish this must, at the same time, show men another goal. This goal is state control of production, which, by cutting out control of industry for private profit, by overthrowing the mis-shapen idea of the sanctity of private property prevalent to-day, will enable each man to enjoy a sufficient material comfort to reach the viewpoint which is the ultimate goal of the democratic ideal. This is to be achieved by the educating of public opinion to an intelligent use of the ballot. Thus I think that change, as defined earlier, i.e., evolution to a better set of conditions for humanity, can be only obtained by education towards the democratic ideal, and that to be successful in realising this aim, the materialistic bourgeois capitalism of the machine age, and that mis-shapen burden—the modern development of the postulate of private property—must both be jettisoned.

—L. WILKS.

## SOME THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION.

By RON. SUSSEX

(Of The Student Christian Movement)

[The writer craves indulgence for the shortcomings of this article. It had to be written under pressure, in all too short a time, and can claim to be no more than a collection of thoughts.]

**C**HRISTIANITY is first and foremost, not a social programme, but a gospel—good news about reality. Its basis and centre is God the Father, Creative Spirit, in Whom we live and move, and have our being. In the beginning, God—and the Christian Gospel is that this Spirit at the heart of things, this soul of the cosmos—is not only Truth, Wisdom, Power, but Perfect Love. God values and loves everything He has created, and so loves all men, without consideration of rank or wealth or gifts. Above all, God is to be thought of as "Our Father," a God to Whom persons are dear.

Man is then a son of God, and made in the image of God. Every human spirit is immeasurably precious in the sight of God; it is not His will that one of them should perish. Christ, the supreme revelation of God, welcomed to his friendship, lepers, prostitutes, social outcasts, political parasites, offscourings of humanity, as well as leaders in Church or State; no differentiation of treatment, because all were children of God. That is what God is like: he that has seen Jesus has seen the Father. The common man, the wage slave, is as dear to him as politician or plutocrat: they are His children.

The corollary to the fatherhood of God is a family relationship—the brotherhood of man. This grows naturally out of man's life with God: truly human life, life of the Spirit, must

develop through union with God, its source. Now, life with God brings to man an increasing knowledge of, and desire to do, His will; but since that will cannot be made real on earth, except in social relationships with other members of the family of God, the Christian life becomes the basis of a great fellowship of creative love and service, which aims at making the love of God operative in human life. Other human beings, when viewed through the mind of God, assume immeasurable worth: all are children of the Father. So mutual love becomes the law of life, and the fellowship which springs from it is the only type of brotherhood which can endure, because it alone is based on reality, and allied with real power of the universe.

**T**HE social objective of Christianity is then the actualising of the love of God in human relationships. This can be achieved only in so far as men obey His rule, in utter devotion to which consists the distinctively human life. The ultimate realisation of this rule or kingdom on earth means the establishment of a society in which human life, itself potentially God-like, shall perfectly mirror the glory of God. It will mean—if I may quote the Master of Ormond—"a co-operative commonwealth of human talent, functioning for the good of all, and for the glory of God, and creative of all that is beautiful, true, and good."

But human life has an eternal pattern: it is fully realised only in an eternal life process which transcends the limitations of human being. The social function of Christianity is emphatically more than the pursuit of humanitarian reform, or the satisfaction of individual self-expression. Social and industrial adjustments are part of it, but only part: its true function is social redemption. Human life, whether individual or social, is not an end in itself, and its true values cannot be preserved except through a conception of man, which looks beyond death.

**W**HEN faced up to this great religion of love, capitalist democracy stands condemned. It denies to a large section of the community, even the basic animal necessities of food and clothing. It treats labourers as "hands," and labour as a chattel. It has betrayed humanity by refusing to the labouring classes security of employment and livelihood, and adequate social provision against sickness, accident, old age, and death. Its production is for profit, not for consumption, and it will destroy needed commodities rather than sell at a loss. It has distorted moral values, and set up an idolatry of economic success. Its plutocracy is godless and anarchic: its political organisation defies economic realities: it breeds strife between class and class, nation and nation. Capitalist democracy must go.



Humanity, however, has to live in the house economic while it is being rebuilt. To pull it down over our heads is folly. Yet there is urgent need of reform, and that quickly. The social machine must be made to serve real human welfare, and emancipate the human spirit. Control of currency and credit could be transferred from the banks to the community, and made to subserve more truly the needs of industry and commerce. Industry must be re-organised for service, not for profit; and the key industries at least—food, textiles, transport, power, and public utilities—be under public ownership (not necessarily State management). Working hours must decrease, and wages increase; education for leisure must be properly planned. Are we devoted enough to get these things done?

These are external remedies at best, environmental: they will stand or fall by the character of man himself. Christian wisdom bids us clean the inside of the cup: a radical change of heart is needed if man is to be redeemed. There is no guarantee that the new collectivism will be necessarily more Christian than the old individualism. If man is to be dragged into compliance with social rule, or sacrificed to the collective, the Kingdom of God will be as far from realisation as ever. Even if socialism does not come, Western States may evolve some despotic "étatisme" which will value human personality no more than the old capitalism. That must be guarded against. It is from within the heart of man that sins and troubles come, and it is there that the battle between love and hate must be fought; for man has the Kingdom of God within him. Hence Christianity.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY METHOD.

By K. J. COLDICUTT  
(Of the Labor Club)

**I**T is essential to realise that a better social order cannot be obtained merely by a mental synthesis of various desirable features of a future society, even if that mental process is followed by active struggle for our ideal society, whether by "changing the hearts of men," by an intellectual appeal, or by revolutionary methods.

Such a Utopian approach to the problem must be rejected. We must strive to understand the world in order to change it, or rather, to understand the world by struggling to change it. This is the scientific method of Communism, the method known as historical materialism. Society must be seen as a process of conflict, as an evolutionary development produced by certain driving forces. Thus, when the Communist speaks of a "better" social order, he uses the word "better" in no idealistic sense, but rather as a synonym for "progressive."

The primary motive force in all social and political change has been economic; the social system is a product of the mode of production

and exchange; all major social changes have resulted from the class-antagonisms arising out of the mode of production and exchange of a given society.

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

**E**XAMINE the growth of capitalism. Feudalism, which preceded capitalism, was characterised by petty industry, under which individual households produced sufficient for their own needs. Peasants were bound to the land by feudal ties. The rising class of traders and manufacturers required for its existence a large class of "free" wage labourers, entirely divorced from the means of production, and with only their labour power to sell.

Hence, feudal class relations and the petty restrictions on trade imposed by the feudal lords became increasingly irksome to the manufacturing class, and the bitter class-antagonisms between bourgeoisie and aristocracy found their solution in a series of bourgeois revolutions; in England, in 1644; in France, in 1793; and in Germany, in 1848.

Freed from feudal bonds, capitalist industry went ahead by leaps and bounds. The necessity for constant improvement of productive technique acted as an unprecedented spur to science. The development of the steam-engine, the spinning-machine, the power-loom, and the steam-hammer, raised productive powers to undreamt-of levels. The phase of **Manufacture** was replaced by that of **Modern Industry**.

The peasants, released from the land, flocked to the towns, and became "free" wage labourers. The ever-increasing tempo of profit-making caused increasing exploitation of the workers, regardless of age or sex. The appalling conditions of the workers after the Industrial Revolution are too well-known to require repetition here.

In spite of the suffering of the workers, capitalism at this stage was a robust, progressive system. Its function was to industrialise the world, and it proceeded to do so with increasing speed. Capitalist culture then was a virile thing. Scientific discoveries multiplied as never before. Bourgeois writers saw no limits to the benefits to be conferred on humanity by the machine.

**Y**ET, as early as 1825, occurred the first of the economic crises which have since followed one another in approximately ten-year cycles; crises born of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. First, the contradiction at the base of all the contradictions of capitalism, that between the socialised production involved in the factory system, and the individual ownership of the means of production, and individual appropriation of the products.

Second, the contradiction between socialised production within the factory, and the anarchy of competition between different capitalist groups, leading to instability.

A third contradiction arises from the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, which necessitates constant expansion of capital, and increased pro-



duction in order to maintain profits. But the capitalist market cannot expand nearly as rapidly as production; there accumulates a surplus of commodities; the rate of profit falls below the necessary minimum, and there occurs one of the periodic crises of capitalism. We have the familiar paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty, with millions of workers unemployed.

Products are wantonly destroyed, and machines thrown out of production, until the commodity surplus is removed, then there recurs the familiar cycle of recovery, boom, crisis, and depression. In the 19th century, however, after each crisis, recovery occurred at a higher level of production. The end of the 19th century saw the growth of **monopoly** through absorption of small capitalist groups by large ones, by amalgamation, and by the increasing domination of the banks over industry. It was the era of **finance-capital**.

The capitalist world market was becoming saturated. It became necessary for capitalism to maintain its existence by exporting **capital** instead of **commodities**. There began a widespread development and exploitation of dependent economies, then a frenzied "grab" for territories, notably in Africa.

Capitalism had entered its last phase of **Imperialism**. After a century of comparatively "peaceful" expansion ("peaceful" from the point of view of the bourgeoisie), capitalism moved towards **War**. The inter-Imperialist antagonisms resulted in the **First Round of Wars and Revolutions**.

The capitalist world underwent a brief post-war crisis of an unusual character—a crisis of underproduction. There followed the period of recovery and boom. But despite the facile optimism of the capitalist, that prosperity was to be short-lived. The production of most capitalist countries was never to regain the pre-war level. The period from 1913 onwards marked **The General Crisis of Capitalism**. In 1929, the capitalist world entered into a crisis far more destructive than any previous one, since it was an ordinary cyclical crisis, super-imposed on the general crisis of capitalism. Capitalist economy is at present stabilised at a depression level. There is no prospect of the boom which has followed every previous capitalist crisis. On the contrary, capitalism is likely to enter into an even more disastrous crisis.

Capitalism is on the down-grade. Bourgeois culture is decadent, science is restricted, bourgeois "democracy" is vanishing, and capitalism seeks desperately to retain its hold by fascist dictatorship. The more desperate capitalist groups seek a way out in war, and especially against the Soviet Union. Capitalism has fulfilled its historic function. **Capitalism must be abolished.**

**SOCIALISM** must, and will be, substituted for it. Why socialism? Because, as we have seen, the whole trend of capitalist development is towards socialism, as is shown by organisation

within the factory, the growth of monopoly, and of state-control. In a period when production is barely sufficient to provide for the needs of mankind, class divisions are logical, but when productive technique is capable of supplying abundantly all our needs, class society is an intolerable anachronism.

The classless society, by removing the fundamental contradiction between socialised production and private appropriation, will eliminate all the other contradictions of capitalism. Socialism will end economic crises, hunger, and unemployment. By smashing Imperialism, Socialism will remove the curse of war, and pave the way to International Socialism. Socialism will mean a cultural renaissance, and the emancipation of mankind.

**T**HIS classless, Socialist society, is to be obtained **only** by **Revolution** and the **Dictatorship of the Proletariat**.

It is useless to talk of the wickedness of the doctrine of class-struggle. The class-struggle is not primarily the result of the teachings of Communism. The class-struggle arises from the realities of capitalist society, and it is not to be eliminated by denying its existence, or by schemes of class collaboration, which all history shows to be absurd.

Capitalism itself brings into being, organises, strengthens, and goads to resistance, the class which is to overthrow it.

The communist merely correctly interprets the facts of class society, and acts accordingly. He knows that capitalism will not die peacefully or allow itself to be legislated out of existence; he sees that no ruling-class has ever relinquished its hold without a vicious and reactionary struggle. Moreover, the growth of Fascist repression is showing that it is absurd to imagine that there is any choice in the matter of revolution.

Above all, it is dishonest sophistry to draw any parallel between the destruction involved in revolution, and the holocausts of the Imperialist Wars that are inevitable so long as capitalism exists.

The existence of a conscious revolutionary party will greatly minimise, rather than increase, the loss involved in the inevitable class-conflict.

**W**HYY must the revolution be succeeded by the Dictatorship of the Proletariat? Because Socialism cannot be established overnight. The administrative machinery of capitalism will still remain, and it will be necessary to substitute a form suited to a Socialist society.

The machinery of production will have to be built up. Bourgeois prejudices will still remain to be overcome. Finally, the remnants of the bourgeoisie will never relinquish hope of regaining that which has been lost, and they will struggle long and viciously against the new order.

Hence, the necessity for the supremacy of the proletariat, in order to stamp out, ruthlessly if necessary, any attempt to defeat progress and the transition to a classless society.



## “River-Bank”

I FELT pretty gloomy when I boarded the train for Mooroopna. Here was I going to a “one-horse” town miles away from anywhere, whilst all my friends were busily engaged in their free time, organising meetings, study classes, conferences and campaigns, imbued with the one idea of strengthening our forces and making our student movement into a real mass movement, capable of taking part in the fight for socialism. However, money was tight, and having passed my finals I had accepted the position of temporary resident medical officer at Mooroopna Hospital for a couple of months. I satisfied myself that I would at least be able to improve my theory. Little did I realise that I would hardly glance at the books which made my bag so heavy.

Mooroopna, by the way, as I found out when I arrived, is only two and a half miles from Shepparton, the largest and most important industrial centre in the rich Goulburn Valley.

In my first week on duty, one thing above all struck me. A sprinkling of patients—one or two in each ward—all came from the same address. Besides their names, written on their bed cards, were the two words, “River Bank.”

I had not been there long before I noticed that many of the admissions into the infectious ward—both children and adults suffering from diphtheria—also lived at that same place.

Young Don Watkins was admitted in my second week. His body and limbs were covered with sores, whilst his skinny arms and legs, and fat, protuberant abdomen, showed obviously that his resistance was lowered owing to malnutrition. “Where do you live?” I asked Don’s father. “River Bank,” was the reply.

During my third week old Mrs. Masters arrived from the same place. She was filthy and too weak to walk. On examination, a huge penetrating ulcer was seen on her back. Her scalp was infested with vermin.

It was at this stage that a report appeared in the local press, in which the health officer declared that the conditions prevailing on the river bank were worse than any slums in Melbourne.

I got in touch with some bush-workers, who promised to show me around the river bank camps.

The following Sunday I walked into Shepparton to keep my appointment. It is a beautiful high road, raised some twenty to thirty feet above the river-flats, where giant gums and dense scrub are visible in all directions, with here and there small billabongs and pools, left after the recent floods. Smoke was rising from one or two places, and if one looked closely small clearings and roughly-made hovels were visible, standing on the few comparatively dry spots. Picturesque, yes! but devilishly unhealthy for people to live in. I found out later that during flood times the workers living on the flats have to camp temporarily on the high road, much to the annoyance of the authorities. The borough council

cannot allow the river bankers to live on the healthy dry lands of Shepparton owing to sanitary and building regulations—or is it because they are ashamed of having such poverty in their midst? Nevertheless, they are talking about building a monkey-house in Shepparton, to house and feed monkeys; taking the monkeys out of the trees to live in a house, sending humans back to the rivers, back to the prehistoric times when their ancestors first emerged from the trees to follow the rivers—back, in fact, to the lowest stage of savagery.

I arrived at Shepparton, where I met my two friends, who provided me with a bicycle. The three of us rode off to inspect the camps. Everywhere it was the same—misery, degradation, and poverty of the worst kind. There were not even the simplest of conveniences or sanitary arrangements.

Some families received sustenance, others small pensions, whilst a few had full-time jobs, but were unable to find houses with sufficiently low rents. Most of them were at or below the poverty line, and some were actually starving.

“There is one family in particular that I want you to see,” one of my friends said to me. “Watkins is the name. Jim was crossed off sustenance for playing a leading rôle in the sales-yard strike last year, and they’re in a pretty bad way.”

My mind flew back to young Don Watkins in the hospital. Despite his poor condition he was about the brightest kid in the ward. “Any relation to Don Watkins?” I asked. “Don, yes that’s his son,” was the reply. So Don was the son of Jim Watkins, a striker, crossed off sustenance, and Don was starving.

The Watkins’ hut was much the same as the others. Hammered together out of old kerosene tins. It was raining when we arrived and water was coming in from all directions. When Don was home he shared a double bed with his parents and baby brother. The only other furniture was a chest of drawers, a couch, and a few old boxes which sufficed for table and chairs.

I asked them how they bought their food. “I make a few bob selling wood in the town,” Jim said. “Sometimes ten shillings a week, sometimes five, or even less — it all depends on if they’re wanting wood.”

Bread was their chief article of diet. Meat and butter were eaten only when they had the necessary money. Eggs, vegetables, and fruits they never saw.

So that’s why Don was starving. His diet consisted of too much bread, that’s why he had a fat tummy. His skinny arms and legs, his dry unhealthy skin were due to lack of necessary proteins and vitamins.

Lack of vitamins here! just outside Shepparton, the most important centre in the Goulburn Valley, with its dairy farms and orchards—fresh fruits, fresh milk, fresh butter and cream. Lack of proteins, with fat flocks and herds in their



thousands, with an abattoir and butcher shops full of red meat.

Is it the fault of the river bankers that they live in such poverty? Is it the fault of Jim that he and his family starved? No, it is not their fault. Whatever they say it is not their fault. It is the fault of a society which allows one man to do nothing and live in a luxurious mansion, and another man to do nothing and live in a hovel on the river bank. It is the fault of our capitalists, who steal from the worker the fruits of his labour, who are plundering and destroying the human race the whole world over, except in the land of the Soviets, where socialism rules.

From that time until I left Mooroopna three weeks later, I had one of the busiest times of my life. My two friends and I left the river bank and cycled back to Shepparton in the driving rain. We were all silent and thoughtful. Before I left them to go back to the hospital, we held a council-of-war.

"The first step towards getting rid of conditions like that is to expose them," one of the bush-workers said.

"But how? What's the best way?"

We talked of trying to get an article into the "Advertiser," Shepparton's weekly newspaper. We were doubtful about the prospect.

"The capitalist press would never print such an exposure of working class conditions," I said.

"There's nothing like having a shot at it anyway," was the workers' opinion.

We agreed that I should write the article, because my position as medical officer could be expected to make it carry some weight. The letter was sent off the next day.

Imagine what I felt like two days later, when the "Advertiser" came out with large headlines right across the front page:

DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS AMONG  
RIVER-BANKERS.  
MALNUTRITION, ILLNESS AND LACK OF  
SANITATION.

FAMILIES EXIST IN HOVELS.

Almost word for word, the article I had written was reproduced; all the details of malnutrition appeared, and also my account of the condition of one family in particular (the Watkins—though I did not mention them by name). More surprising still, the method I suggested for remedying the position was also published, with only a few alterations.

"The State governments see nothing that they are not forced to see, unless pressure is brought to bear on them. . . . The duty of bringing this pressure to bear falls on the people of Shepparton and district. The workers and farmers are themselves finding it difficult to carry on, and in the near future may find themselves in the position of the river-bankers. Better relief rates are also in the interests of the business people. It is their fight as well as the fight of the unemployed.

"These families are entitled to a rent allowance and relief rates equal to that of their brothers in Melbourne."

I soon learnt the effect of the article on the people of Shepparton. Wherever I went they started to talk to me about it.

"My word," said a builder, "things sound bad down there at the river. All the boys were talking about it last night."

"It's about time something was done to stop conditions like that," said the barber when I went for a haircut.

And so it went on, workers, farmers, and small shopkeepers all roused to extreme indignation about the brutality of the whole business. At meetings held on the river bank and in halls, the demand was put forward that an allowance for rent, such as is given to the unemployed in Melbourne, should also be given in Shepparton. The bush-workers' paper had a whole section on the question; a deputation was organised to put the demands before the Council; the workers began to prepare to get out a petition to be circulated right throughout Shepparton.

About this time I had a visitor at the hospital. "I want to speak to you," said a hot and bothered looking individual, "I'm the sustenance inspector for this district."

"Yes?"

"I see you wrote an article in the press."

"Yes."

"Well, a number of the statements you made weren't true. You should know perfectly well we don't leave people to starve here. Any family not getting sustenance is getting a permissible income."

"The statements I made in the paper were quite true. At this minute I can name at least one family which is neither on sustenance nor getting a permissible income. One of the children is in the hospital now, starving."

"Then why don't I know about it? I'm the person who should be told about such cases, if they exist."

"Very well, I'll tell you about the case now. The man's name is Watkins."

"Watkins? Why, he's the fellow who caused all the trouble on the sales-yard strike. Yes, he's off sustenance."

"Look here, I don't care whether he led a strike or not. His family's starving. That's what concerns me."

"Oh!—yes. All right, I'll have another go at him."

Then he abruptly changed the subject. Before he went I said I would let him know of all the other families which were getting neither sustenance nor permissible income.

From that time until I left Mooroopna I was constantly in touch with workers and small shopkeepers.

"I heard the other side of the story yesterday," my builder friend said to me one day. "One of the bosses says its the river-bankers' own fault that they're living where they are. He says a few have full-time work and don't even bother to rent a house; that it's their own fault they're living like pigs."

"And can your boss point to one single available house in Shepparton with a rent low enough for the river-banker to pay?"

"I don't know. I'll ask him that one."

"I know a few of the river-bankers are demoralised. That's bound to be the effect of living in such conditions. But from what I've seen," I



said, "all I can say is, hats off to them for keeping themselves as decently as they do. The children are clean and intelligent even if they are pale and thin."

"It's not right, no matter what way you look at it," cried the worker.

"No. And the worst of it is, the bosses haven't finished by a long shot. Do you know they're preparing to absorb unemployed in industry, and ration the work on a lower scale of wages."

"Is that so?" he said aggressively. "Well, there'll be hell to pay. We've had enough cuts already; the bastards needn't think they're going to drop us again."

We then talked about how to fight against worsening conditions and how to get better ones.

"The trouble is," he said, "when we go out on strike they starve us into going back on their own terms."

"But not if you control your own strike and organise your own relief committees. Look at Wonthaggi. There was no bureaucracy in charge of that strike, and it was successful."

"Perhaps you're right," he said, and asked me to come and continue the discussion with some of his work-mates in the week-end.

"Do you think we need a revolution?" one worked asked.

"Did you get any nearer socialism last time Labour was in office?" I returned.

"No, but I think we should give them another chance."

"Listen!" I said, "even if Labour was sincere and passed a law abolishing capitalism, do you think they would get it through? Why, while the workers would be home by the fireside the capitalists would let loose their fascist gangs and police-force. Instead of waking up under socialism, we'd wake up under fascism."

Later we got talking on war and fascism. All were in complete agreement.

"War's no good to us."

"We don't want fascism here."

Then the bundles of working class magazines and books I had brought from Melbourne, and which I hadn't had time to read, came in handy. "War, What For?" "Kisch's Message to the Workers," and "Soviets To-day" were handed round. All the workers saw that the demands of the unemployed were indirectly their demands.

"We're in with you on that," they said.

At the time I left Mooroopna, Watkins was back on the job. Also—easy victory!—the whole of the unemployed of Shepparton had been promised rent allowance. The first rural unemployed in Victoria to get it.

**NO MORE NEED FOR THE RIVER-BANK!**

"The bosses don't know where they stand these days," my bush-worker friend said to me as I left. "Trouble is popping up in the most unexpected places."

"There's more to come," I said cheerfully, my head full of the immense possibilities of future united action between students and workers.

—A.J.

## Blue Blouses

**D**URING the last few years there has been an enormous growth in the revolutionary theatre movement, both amateur and professional. The workers are coming to realise more and more the truth of the slogan, "Art is a weapon." Particularly can this be seen in the development of the agitational troupe known variously as the agit. prop., the open platform, the Blue Blouses, and the poster show. These troupes, usually quite small (the Chicago Blue Blouses, for instance, number seventeen), present dramas dealing with the daily struggles of the workers, and designed especially for performances in the open air, for instance at factory gate meetings, at election rallies, at strike and protest meetings. The members of the troupe all play in the ordinary blue work-shirt; to portray a capitalist a high hat is worn; a policeman wears a policeman's hat and carries a baton, etc. Two advantages are to be found in this—the audience readily enters into the spirit of the play, and the troupe is able to pack all necessary properties into a suitcase before moving on.

The type of incident dealt with can best be understood from a brief description of some of the themes worked out by the Blue Blouses. The Young Workers' group in Sheffield, for example, wrote a sketch about a local strike of newspaper setters, which they played with great success

while the strike was in progress. During a textile strike the Manchester troupe spent every week-end in the cotton towns of Lancashire, playing a special sketch on the issues of the strike, as well as giving their usual repertoire. Again on August 1st they performed three sketches dealing with the immediate war danger. Especially strenuous is the work during an election campaign. The Red Radio in London has found that on such occasions there is such great demand for their services that they have had to play three or four times a night, in many parts of the city. The Chicago Blue Blouses have produced a dramatisation of Heinrich Heine's poem, "The Weavers." Special attention is given in the U.S.A. to the colour question. Negroes and whites come together in the theatre movement. Plays are written pointing out that the class unity of the negro and the white worker is all important, and that racial hatred is deliberately fostered by the capitalist in order to split the labour movement. There are few troupes in any country which have not produced sketches demanding the release of Thaelmann, the leader of the Communist Party of Germany, demanding the release of Tom Mooney, demanding the release of the Scottsborough Boys, attacking imperialism, attacking fascism, and popularising the Soviet Union.



NATURALLY the type of question dealt with by the agit. prop. brigades in the U.S.S.R. and Soviet China is rather different. Here, too, their work is arranged for the most part on the basis of variety programmes, skits, recitations, songs, dances, and specialty numbers, unified by a common purpose, at the core of which is an agitational slogan. But here the agitational slogan is directed towards the problem of socialist construction. Special brigades tour the country playing a most important part in persuading the peasant to join the collective farms. The troupes give artistic expression to some current political or state campaign, such as the revolutionary holidays, elections to Soviets and factory committees, the conclusion of collective agreements, sowing, and harvesting, the struggle against waste in industry. Nor is their work limited to art programmes; it consists also in holding and organising talks for education of the Soviet citizens, collecting suggestions for greater efficiency, organising socialist competitions, enlisting shock workers, and so on.

Lately, the rising cultural level of the worker in the Soviet Union has made it necessary for the agitational brigade to reach a higher plane of political, ideological and artistic work. An interesting result of this necessity is the growing use of scenes from plays written for the professional drama. One group, for instance, in a sketch, called "I am with you," utilised extracts from "The First Cavalry Army" and "The Last Decisive Struggle," by V. Vishnevsky and "Dreilprestov" by Afinoginov. The production in three parts (yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow) describes the revolutionary hero in three situations—civil war, socialist construction, and the future war between socialism and capitalism. The main characters appear in all three parts.

In other countries the full artistic possibilities of the form have not yet been reached. There is some difficulty in getting really good material—the technique is so completely new that the writer who would work for it must unlearn all he has learnt about dramatic writing.

There is a continual search for the best mediums of expression. In Holland and the U.S.S.R. particularly, the ballet is being developed. It is proving difficult to prevent the dance from falling into a mere pantomime, but the best of the troupes are doing excellent work along these lines.

In most countries the mass chant is being developed. Some reports speak in glowing terms of the mass chant to which a large and enthusiastic audience thunders the appropriate reply. Others, however, consider it a very dreary sort of thing. With this view the present writer is inclined to agree. A chant is, in itself, usually rather monotonous, and to render it effectively a measure of training is required which it is impossible for the Blue Blouses to put into one short item—their work is so varied and so much at the mercy of day to day developments that frequently only a few days are available for practising a programme.

Other Blue Blouses are making an increasing use of technique, which gains for their performance the name of "the poster show." Here the almost complete absence of gesticulation and pre-

cision in scenery are combined with an outline which is as emphatic as a poster drawing.

HOWEVER, the form is still in its infancy, and the technique for the most part remains crude. Yet the reception accorded the agit. troupes is excellent. Some leaders of the movement consider that it is due to the obvious sincerity with which they play, and to the slogan at the core of the performances. Others, while admitting the validity of this argument, contend that the element of novelty and surprise is of enormous importance. An Australian who recently returned from Europe saw an open platform performance in Trafalgar Square. She says that the effect of seeing a group of people come up and suddenly start to act a sketch is electrifying; the passer-by stops to examine this strange phenomenon; before he realises what is happening, he finds himself wrapped up in the action, anxiously awaiting the next move; in the short space of half an hour he is presented with some dominant note of the contemporary class struggle, and finds himself sympathising with the militant worker. Obviously the form has huge propaganda possibilities. Man's essential delight in play acting can be used to attract those who would otherwise remain apathetic. Nor is this last statement mere theorising, just an estimate of the probable result. All troupes have found that after a performance members of the audience approach the actors and enter into discussion with them, showing a desire for more knowledge of the movement and of militant workers' organisations.

Great as has been the success of the movement, it is essential that the Blue Blouses remember that the better the art the more effective the propaganda. The form has great possibilities, and it should be the aim of every troupe to make true the proud boast of one of them that "small forms are great art."

—EILRIA.

**MARCH  
AGAINST  
WAR  
AND  
FASCISM  
AUGUST 1**



# THE SUSTENANCE STRIKE

**M**ANY struggles of the workers for better conditions, against wage cuts, and in general against the class enemy, have been defeated for various reasons.

Time and again the main reason for defeat has been that the workers have been divided over some political or other question raised by the agents of the capitalists within their ranks for that express purpose. The real object for which the struggle was commenced becomes obscured by these side issues. The division in the ranks of the workers leaves the way open to the capitalists to further their attack and so gain a victory.

A long line of bitter experiences in this direction has led to a tactic being developed by the working class which is being employed with ever greater success as the struggle against Capitalism develops. The united front tactic has already defeated innumerable attempts to divide the ranks of the workers during the struggle, and drive them back defeated. It is leading to ever-increasing unity amongst the workers. It is the means whereby the French workers have prevented the development of fascism in that country. Countless illustrations could be given of its value to the working class.

It is neither complicated nor confusing, but so clear and simple that even a child could understand it.

It means that the workers, recognising a common need, sink their political and other differences and unite on common ground to struggle for that which they all want, or on the other hand against that which threatens them all alike.

If we understand the united front to mean this, if we understand it as a tactic used by the workers in their struggle against the capitalists, we can draw many helpful lessons in the united front from the everyday struggles of the workers. It is with just such a lesson that we are concerned here.

The recent struggle of the Victorian sustenance workers can be acclaimed as a victory for the unemployed. But, before we proceed to an analysis of the strike to show how the united action of the workers, which was the main characteristic of the struggle, affected its development, a brief explanation of the events leading up to the strike, and the position of the unemployed prior to it, is necessary so that we can more fully understand the significance of certain facts appertaining to the strike itself.

## Organisation and Struggle.

Prior to the strike the position of the unemployed was that they had been robbed of many of the concessions gained as a result of the first big dole strike. Further, that the rise in the cost of living had not been met with any increase in the amount of sustenance granted to them, but on the contrary the hours of work which they received were reduced. The unemployed could not live on what the Government was giving to them prior to the strike, and they were prepared

to struggle for an increase in the dole. The only existing unemployed organisation was the Central Unemployed Committee, an organisation which had never led any previous struggle of the unemployed, an organisation which had maintained its continuity partly because its secretary was appointed by the Trades Hall Council Executive, and it was the only unemployed organisation which the Government would officially recognise, which meant that all deputations had to go through it; and also because it had a central apparatus and information bureau based on official Government regulations, to which other organisations did not have access. Along with this central apparatus a number of scattered local branches constituted the Central Unemployed Committee. Conferences of delegates from the local branches were held at intervals, ostensibly for the purpose of determining the policy of the organisation. But, where decisions of conference were not in line with the ideas of the Trades Hall Council Executive, such decisions were ignored by the secretary, who refused to give effect to them. However, despite the fact that this organisation was extremely weak, and that it was controlled by a bureaucracy, it was the only medium for co-ordinating any state-wide action of the unemployed. A few weeks prior to the strike, two militant branches had been active in influencing other branches to fight for a militant policy. The contact established between the branches as a result of this, made it possible for Fitzroy and Carlton, when the strike started at Fitzroy, to force the secretary to call a conference, by threatening to call a sub-conference if he refused.

The conference was called, and at it were represented not only areas where Central Unemployed Council branches existed, but also areas where organisation had developed spontaneously with the possibility of a strike became apparent.

The will and inclination of the whole of the unemployed was clearly indicated at this conference, and is expressed in the resolutions which were carried; firstly, for a general strike, secondly for the control of the strike through democratically elected strike committees.

The Trades Hall Council Executive, through the secretary of the Central Unemployed Council, did everything possible to prevent the declaration of the strike. Apart from mere arguments against it, they threatened to refuse the unemployed the financial and moral assistance of the Trade Union movement.

When all attempts to prevent the strike proved failures, they supported it because the threats which they had used were not threats from the workers in the factories and trade unions, and had the Trades Hall Council Executive carried them out they would have had to answer to these workers for putting forward on their behalf something to which the workers were entirely opposed. Having declared in support of the strike, they conducted the negotiations with the Government on behalf of the strikers. A resolution carried by the Central Unemployed Council conference,



that two delegates from the Central Strike Committee be included on all deputations to the Government, was ignored. When the final offer of the Government was made, the Trades Hall Council attempted to get it accepted by the Central Unemployed Council conference, but in this they were defeated, and the recommendation of the Central Strike Committee, that the offer be placed before mass meetings of the unemployed for acceptance or rejection, was adopted by the conference. The Central Strike Committee was the concrete expression of the determination of the unemployed to conduct their own strike and decide themselves whether or not they would accept the Government's offer, and its very existence prevented the Trades Hall Council Executive from betraying the strike by accepting on behalf of the unemployed any offer from the Government with which the unemployed themselves were not in agreement.

Both the Central Unemployed Council conference and the Central Strike Committee reflected the unity of the rank and file. On these central organisations, Communist, A.L.P., and non-party workers worked in harmony for the development of the strike to a successful conclusion. Frequent attempts by elements acting as agents of the bureaucracy to disrupt and hinder the activities of these organisations failed miserably.

Prior to the strike, all kinds of differences existed amongst the unemployed. Feeling between Fitzroy and Collingwood was high over events of the past. There were those amongst the unemployed who supported the Central Unemployed Council, and those who condemned it as an incorrect form of organisation. Different political opinions were held by various individuals amongst the unemployed. These differences still exist after the strike. But 17,000 unemployed workers sank these differences for over two weeks while they struggled for an increase in the dole. And, they gained that increase.

## Lessons of the Strike.

Since the conclusion of the strike, responsibility for the victory has been claimed by at least two of the three political groups who shared the leadership of the struggle.

The A.L.P. claims that by using its position as a strong corner party in Parliament, it wrung from the Dunstan Government the concessions which were granted to the unemployed. The Trotskyist counter-revolutionary group led by N. Gibson, masquerading under the name of "The Workers' Party," claims that its independent leadership was responsible for bringing victory to the unemployed.

These opinions are based not upon any searching analysis of the strike, seeking to reveal to the workers the lessons to be learned from their own practical experience in the everyday struggle against Capitalism, but are based, on the one hand, upon an attempt to maintain the prestige of a treacherous political party in the face of a growing suspicion of it by the workers, and, on the other hand, upon an attempt to hide the true character of a counter-revolutionary group. Much could be written regarding the rôle of the A.L.P. through its agents the Trades Hall Council and

the Central Unemployed Council Executive, and also of the Trotskyists in this strike. It has been indicated already, however, that rank and file members of the A.L.P. as delegates to the Central Unemployed Committee conference and Central Strike Committee, repudiated the official leadership of the A.L.P. during the course of the strike. Immediately we take a truly working class view of the strike, the most important factor in the whole situation, and the main cause for the victory at once becomes clear. This is, the action taken by the workers to improve their conditions. To separate the leadership from this action and attribute to it the power to wring concessions from the Government, is to stamp one's opinions with the seal of bourgeois idealism, which sees separate factors in a situation as fixed entities; or, in other words, to confuse the issue and serve the forces of reaction.

This strike marks a turning-point in the history of unemployed struggles in this State. All previous strikes of the unemployed have been of a more or less sectional character. Never before has such unity as existed during this strike been witnessed. It was this factor out of all those comprising the whole situation which was most far-reaching in its effect. This was the main reason why the strikers were victorious. At least one lesson to be learned from the strike is simple and clear. It is a lesson for the whole working class. The unemployed were confronted with a concrete issue. They forgot various differences and formed a united front against the Government in the struggle for their demands. They have given the whole working class of Australia an illustration of the effectiveness of the united front tactic. Imperialist War and Fascism are concrete issues confronting the whole working class, and the struggle against them is a struggle for the united front. The support of the united front proposals and the struggle for the united front of the whole working class against the capitalist offensive is a duty which devolves upon every class-conscious worker.

J. SCULLIN  
(Central Strike Committee).

**WANTED  
A NEW  
NAME  
FOR  
Proletariat**



# The Engineer and Capitalism

IN any modern industrial economy the engineer occupies a position of great strategic importance. His control over the basic technical services on which civilisation depends, bestows on him enormous power to help or to hinder any political movement which seeks to effect fundamental changes in the social economic structure. In "normal" times this power is latent, emerging into the open at times of civil strife.

During the period of imperialist economic expansion which marked the closing years of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century, the engineering profession gradually improved its internal organisation, and came to occupy a position of considerable honour. Writers ranging from Macaulay and Dr. Andrew Ure to the Babbitts of twentieth century America sang the praises of the technician. The engineer belonged to the aristocracy of labour. Never having had urgent practical cause to question social or economic fundamentals, the vast majority of engineers could be safely trusted to support their capitalist masters in any of the periodic economic or war crises that might occur.

To be sure, the position of the engineer even at this time was not without its minor drawbacks. From time to time sentimentalists were apt to accuse him of having caused widespread unemployment by the "too rapid" introduction of labour-saving devices. But the journalistic leader-writers were ever at hand to console him with the thought that the Empire was founded on the steam engine, and to explain away unemployment in terms of the wicked unreasonableness of the labour unions. Again, with the development of the era of imperialist monopoly in pre-war days, the sales problem became one of ever-increasing difficulty. Advertising, with its appeal to public snobbery, to fear of ill-health, and to technical ignorance of the products bought, became the special care of a new species of pseudo-"expert"—the sales manager—who rapidly became the petted darling and all-wise oracle of industrial managements. This change, of course, was effected at the expense of the technical staffs, who declined relatively both in salary and status. They were in no position to do anything in the matter, however, their occasional timid protests being safely embalmed in the harmless obscurity of annual presidential addresses.

Then came the war, the culmination of imperialist rivalries, a war whose military history was written in terms of mass supply of munitions. More than the men of any other profession, engineers helped to make the world safe for hypocrisy and imperialist super profits, so that when the Treaty of Versailles revealed a world unfit even for hoboes to live in, discontent became outspoken. The immediate post-war crisis resulted in considerable unemployment among engineers, some of whom began to assume an irreverent and critical attitude towards the mandarins of the bourgeois economic world. But the post-war crisis proved of relatively short duration, and during the period of temporary

stabilisation there was comparative silence. Then came the most devastating crisis the world has ever known.

## The Engineer in Europe.

WHEN the German bourgeoisie could no longer squeeze sufficient surplus value from their workers to pay the annual reparations bill, and the industrial collapse began, the engineers were particularly hard hit by the decay of industrial employment.

Their savings, with those of other professional men, disappeared in the post-war inflation. Some were tempted by the Nazi demagoguery against "interest servitude," Jews, and "The Marxist System." But the majority were repelled by the anti-intellectual, machine-wrecking, chauvinist vulgarity of this party, and contented themselves with the Centre Party or the Social Democracy, hoping against their better judgment for a reformist solution. In any case, in common with other technicians and professional men, they failed to realise the nature and the danger of fascism, or the methods necessary to combat it; and so they were helpless in staying the Nazi seizure of power, they were ineffective in combatting a system which is a negation of intellectual and industrial progress, a system under which the chief outlet for the engineer is in the aeroplane, armoured car, tank, and munition factories, or constructing military roads and bridges; in short, in furthering the war plans of a desperate capitalism.

MEANWHILE French engineers reorganised the steel mills and munition factories of Czecho-Slovakia and Poland, developed the oil-fields of Roumania, and drove roads through Moroccan wastes bought with the blood of the Foreign Legion.

THE years immediately preceding the crisis witnessed a large-scale invasion of England itself by cheap American capital. Particularly was this so in the electrical field. Chains of large power companies were bought up. The British General Electric, almost the last of the large independent manufacturers, was forced to adopt strict rules with regard to the nationality of shareholders and their backers in order to prevent control passing completely into American hands. Four of the largest electrical manufacturing companies, with the usual strings of subsidiaries, were united under American financial control to form Associated Electrical Industries Ltd. This, of course, was merely an example of a general and completely inevitable trend. For the technical staffs of these companies monopolist amalgamation meant unemployment for junior men, postponement of promotion for those already employed, while the greater profits due to improved technique and the huge economies of large-scale operation were absorbed in the payment of dividends on inflated capital values.

For all that, the position was not without its compensations. The adaptability of the British ruling classes to new conditions is well known.



When one engineer contractor, having made a huge fortune, entered the peerage, the Herald's Office produced for him a coat of arms including a jackhammer and an air compressor. Thus the profession gained greater recognition. The idea is obviously capable of considerable extension. The black putty used to hide surface blowholes in castings, the palm grease so useful in obtaining international munitions (and other) contracts, the sawdust piles which went to fill the wartime shipments of shells for Russia, these and other similar products of capitalistic engineering firms, perfected by years of research, may yet be raised to their rightful place as heraldic emblems of the British aristocracy.

## in America.

**E**VEN more luminous than the British was the American scene. War profits had made American magnates the creditors of the world, and had enabled American engineers to equip their country's industries with a productive technique far superior in general efficiency to any known elsewhere. The prestige of the engineer was consequently very high, and on the boards of companies together with the representatives of the great financial houses, it was by no means uncommon for the technical staffs to have fairly strong representation.

By means of abundant cheap loan capital, the export market was extended into every country on earth, and into the future by a universal expansion of time-payment schemes. The bourgeoisie of other lands were lost in admiration. From Britain and Australia came the industrial missions of business men and trade union bureaucrats. They visited great industrial engineering works, such as General Motors, Western Electric, and the Baldwin Locomotive Plant, looked at the workers, talked with the managers and listened to pious speeches at dinners given by the local Chambers of Commerce. Well satisfied, they did not press their enquiry into the matter of unemployment, for which, in any case, no accurate figures were available, but returned to explain to their eagerly expectant countrymen that the secret of America's prosperity was the lamblike co-operation there existing between Capital and Labour.

In the land flowing with bunk and money the engineer occupied his own high pedestal. With a condescending smile he accepted the homage of journalists and social philosophers, adjusted the halo they placed on his brow, and pushed on with the job of making America 100 per cent. American.

**T**OWARDS the end of the "boom" American capitalism elected to power its first and only engineer President, Herbert Hoover. This eminent mining engineer was an exception among his kind. He had made money. He had also lost some of it when the Soviet expropriated certain properties in which he was interested. As a result of a life of hard work and meditation he had come to hold a firm, serene belief in the virtues of rugged American individualism, and to realise beyond all shadow of doubt that only by rigid economy and strict avoidance of all interference with business could governments best serve their

country's interests. Knowing these eternal truths it was but natural that, while chief of the great Department of Commerce, he won for himself a place among the immortals by spending far more money than any of his predecessors had ever dreamed of spending to foster the interference of American exporters with the business of everybody else. Elevated to the Presidency as a reward, he launched a series of fact-finding commissions which tackled the job of waste reduction and industrial standardisation with a thoroughness worthy of so great a cause. By this time unemployment had reached threatening proportions, though no one knew what the real figures were. Both the newspapers and the technical press were beating their propaganda tom-toms at their loudest to drown their own uneasiness. As late as January 6, 1929, E. A. Filene could write in the New York "Times," in praise of scientific and engineering achievement: "Mass production and mass distribution, the fruits of research, will give us great material prosperity, but the by-products of this new scientific era are the most important. For one thing, business depressions and crises will be made more and more unlikely. Leading business men, bankers, and statesmen the world over now recognise that these depressions, resulting in irregular employment and great unemployment, are not inevitable, but are due to bad business thinking and bad financial thinking. By straight thinking—based on scientific research—they can be largely prevented.

The "General Electric Review" (April, 1929) had a full reprint of a sermon preached by no less a person than Owen D. Young, in the Park Ave. Baptist Church—a sermon entitled "What is Right in Industry?" He explained that a generation ago large-scale capitalism was like an early automobile—crudely built and dangerously driven. But that, with the accumulation of years of experience (and profits), big business, like the modern auto., was bearing society's burdens with swift, sure safety for all towards an industrial millenium; and thus the merry story continued in journal after journal. Meanwhile the tireless, fact-finding engineer-President was explaining how much more efficient and prosperous industry could yet be if only the more backward manufacturers would bring their plants and production processes up to the level of the most advanced. Among other surveys, he set up his fact-finding theodolite to observe the great high level stock market reservoir, filled to overflowing by the Wall Street water jump. But before he could focus his telescope, the pump choked and the bottom dropped out of the stock market with most disconcerting suddenness. For a while he tried to deceive himself and the nation by pretending that nothing of real importance had happened. Later on he tried to shore up the tottering financial structure with huge credit props manufactured by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Being made of paper dollars they soon collapsed, and America's first engineer-President departed from the White House to the music of nation-wide bank crashes.

**T**HE collapse of the constructional industry had meant extreme hardship for architects and engineers throughout the country.



In the "Engineering News Record" for February 4, 1932, William Green of the American Federation of Labour, bemoaned the fact that in the building trades unemployment had risen to no less than 62 per cent. With total unemployment well above the twelve million mark, many American structural workers turned their backs on capitalism, and went to help the Soviet Union in the great constructive enterprises of the first Five Year Plan. John Calder served as Director of Construction at Stalingrad. Campbell, Arizona agricultural engineer and the operator of a 100,000 acre wheat farm, advised the Soviet Grain Trust. Colonel Hugh Cooper, builder of the Mussle Shoals Dam, and one of the most eminent civil engineers in America acted as consulting engineer on the construction of Dnieperstroy. A majority of the 10,000 foreign workers in Russia were Americans during this period.

## and in Australia.

In general, the reaction of the Australian engineering profession to modern economic developments has been a pale reflection of the attitude of corresponding sections of the petit-bourgeoisie in England and America. There has been the same rallying call to the technical professions demanding that they take a larger share in the economic affairs of the country, the same assumption of a judicial air and rolling-up of sleeves preparatory to tackling the problem, and the same feeble, anaemic retreat when investigation threatened to uncover the bitter realities of the class situation. When, late in 1929, the crisis began in earnest, the technical press in general ignored it, hoping for an immediate recovery. But by March, 1930, it was no longer possible to pass by on the other side. In that month the "Journal" of the Institute of Engineers, the most powerful body of professional technicians in Australia, burst into eruption. "The Institution of Engineers, Australia," proclaimed an editorial note, "Knows No Politics," and the "Journal" proceeded to prove it by printing a mighty blast from the pen of Henry Braddon, M.L.C., ex-manager of Dalgety's, who rang the changes on the eternal theme, "Costs of production must come down." Needless to say, this meant a reduction of costs at the expense of the worker, but nowhere throughout the article did Sir Henry consider it necessary to state his basic assumptions. The crisis, in other words, was a fundamental collapse of capitalism, and only a hypocritical liberal-bourgeois or a social-democratic politician would pretend that minor readjustments could restore the profit level without a wholesale reduction of the workers' living standards.

**I**N the subsequent months, all forms of opinion, except, of course, the Marxian, were reflected in letters to the editor of the "Journal." The believers in the recommendations of the British Economic Mission, in "co-operation" in industry, in lower tariffs, in more standardisation and fewer loans, made the air thick with their incantations. In Jan., 1931, a fact-finding commission of the type so popular with the Hoover administration was set up, and published some of its discoveries as prettily coloured charts in the January issue of the "Journal." Among other

things, these charts showed that manufacturing industry tended strongly towards the increase of large productive units at the expense of the small. In 1911, for instance, the proportion of the total number of factories employing over 100 men was 3 per cent., while in 1929 it was 44 per cent. After payment for materials, fuel and light, Australian manufacturing industry in the year 1928-29 spent £91 millions on salaries and wages, leaving a surplus of £77 millions for "miscellaneous" items. Unfortunately, no attempt was made to separate the latter item into such factors as insurance, taxation, maintenance, and depreciation on the one hand; and rent, interest, and profit on the other.

The chart dealing with Australian railways showed that, had it not been for capital charges, the railway systems of Australia, enormously over-built though they are, would have yielded handsome surpluses. Another chart showed that in the period 1911 to 1929 the public debt per capita nearly trebled, the effective real wage allowing for unemployment (in spite of Labour governments and social "reform") was no higher in 1929 than in 1911, and the (admitted) unemployment percentage increased from 4.7 to 23.4. The latter figure, of course, later surpassed 30 per cent., and the real wage per capita decreased at least another 10 per cent. As for productivity by quantity per capita per year, due to the huge rise in unemployment, the effects of rapid technical progress were neutralised, and there was apparently no nett increase.

These charts were of more value than the usual statistical comparisons of one year's figures with those for the previous year, because they revealed long term trends. Had the committee continued its work it might have occurred to some member of it to examine the distribution of the national income or the trend of the fixed capital burden per head of the workers employed in industry, and really useful information might have resulted. But, alas! for pious hopes and good intentions, after the January issue of the "Journal," no further charts appeared. A few expressions of encouragement from members were published, but the activities of the committee ceased. Nothing further was heard of the enthusiastic proposals for extension of the work and "co-operation with other interested institutions," which were such a feature of the January issue.

The full story of what really happened has not been revealed to this day. But over two years later, in May, 1933, A. J. Gibson, of "All for Australia League" fame, who was chairman of the Advisory Committee that selected the charts for publication, threw considerable light on the matter. In his presidential address to the Institution he explained that "As an Institution, we were unable to carry the financial burden of an organisation which would have enabled us to proceed with this work in the manner that appeared to us to be necessary, and we were also unable to arouse sufficient interest in the general business community to help us financially (!) and otherwise to carry the matter forward." After explaining the usefulness of such effort and the great need for such an organisation he proceeded: "Needless to say, the Committee was told that it was working rather outside its sphere, and



what the cobbler should 'stick to his last.' While we might be most excellent people, as engineers, plumbers, and mechanics, it was hardly to be considered that we should have any understanding of social or political economy, and that we could and should rely on the advice of those whose particular study it has been."

Having thus related how the Advisory Committee was put in its proper place by its masters, he proceeded, in the usual style of a Presidential address, to review and eulogise technical progress, without explaining how its possible benefits could be secured for the masses of the people. His reference to the decay of democratic institutions, the increasing measure of world unrest, the tax on books, and the folly of politicians succeeded one another like the chapters of the book of Lamentations. He quoted Omar Khayyám, reviewed Douglas Social Credit and Technocracy, rejected them both, and ended with a confession of helplessness: "I can offer no solution of the problems I have sketched for you," said he, but hoped for great things from "the generation that has followed me." Even more significant was his expression of fear for the future. "The machine may be kept running for a while by the adoption of this expedient or of that, but the rate curves both of our production and our unemployment indicate that the sooner we set our minds to the task and begin the evolution of our ideas and our methods, the less the likelihood of a violent disruption of our social system by revolution of one kind or another."

It would be easy to multiply instances of this kind. Whenever capitalism throttles technical progress, every writer in the engineering world humbly concludes that it must be technical progress and not capitalism that is at fault.

## The Engineer in the Service of Socialism.

We have reviewed the activities of the engineer in France, Germany, England, America, and Australia. There is one factor common to all capitalistic countries with which we have yet to deal. The engineering and statistical details of the magnificent progress of Russian industry have been almost completely ignored by the technical press. The "conspiracy of silence" in this regard is quite as complete as that enforced by the daily newspapers, both capitalist and labour, regarding any aspect of Russian affairs which is in danger of favourable public interpretation. A few small pictures of leading enterprises, an occasional general vague review of the progress of some particular Russian industry, and, very rarely, a detailed article describing an individual plant, make up the list of information published. Generally, though some of our engineers have heard of Dnieperstroy, and a few have a hazy idea that Magnitogorsk is a steel works somewhere in the Urals, the very names of most of the greatest industrial enterprises in Europe are quite unknown to the vast majority. The machine building plants at Uralmastrov, and at Kramatorsk, with an annual output of 120,000 and 180,000 tons of heavy machinery respectively; Solikamsk, where the first of four mines produces 2,500,000 tons of raw potash salts per year; Chelyabinsk,

the world's largest tractor plant, whence 40,000 sixty horse-power ten-ton tractors annually roll off the assembly lines; Karkov turbine works, bigger than that of General Electric at Schenectady; Bobriki chemical plant, producing in its first section 100,000 tons per year of synthetic nitrogenous fertiliser, 51,000 tons of firebrick, and an ultimate power output of 400,000 kilowatts; the Kibinogorsk apatite mine beyond the Arctic circle, which now yields 1,200,000 tons of crude apatite per year; the Baltic-White Sea Canal, built in 20 months through 140 miles of Karelian lake, forest, and rocky hill country; Stalinsk, where the largest steel works in the world save one, rapidly increasing in size, employs with its adjacent auxiliary enterprises, 180,000 workers; Nizhni Tagil, which makes 55,000 large railway waggons per year; Amo, Stalingrad, Gorki, the Moscow ball-bearing plant—all of these works, and literally hundreds of others of lesser rank, would have been big news in the technical journals had they been built in any country but Russia.

There is no need to await the end of even the second Five Year Plan to tell the plain facts of the situation. Already our technical cadres are beginning to see how great is the handicap placed by present economic relationships on engineering progress. Everywhere they see tractors replaced by horses, and inventions bought up to prevent their practical application, since cheapened labour power makes it more profitable to use the old machines.

In Australia they see an ever-increasing proportion of heavy industrial plants dependent on large government relief works for orders. When, in addition, they realise that Russia, with nearly twice the steel output of Great Britain, and a larger tractor output than the U.S.A., is now industrially by far the most powerful nation on the Eurasian Continent, a rapid rise in their interest in applied Marxism is certain. Among the younger generation, on whom A. J. Gibson rested his faith in his presidential address, are a very small minority to whom their profession is but a means of social and economic self-aggrandisement. Of the social climber type, they are perfectly satisfied with the unshakeable political dogmas dictated by their class origin, for the simple reason that they have never examined them. Sunk in complete political illiteracy, they are ripe for fascism to the point of putrescence. But the overwhelming majority recognise the necessity for fundamental social change. They are mildly contemptuous of the economic, political, and journalistic screech-owls that hoot their weird way around the somewhat shaky spires of the bourgeois economic temple. Capitalism has prepared them well for a Marxian propaganda attack framed in true dialectic fashion, not in terms political, but in terms of the facts of their own immediate industrial environment. Every day more of them are overcoming caste snobberies so carefully fostered, in the name of staff esprit de corps, by their employers. Marxism is teaching them to throw in their lot with the workers, the only class that can free them from their economic bonds, and offer them the chance of redeeming their profession from the record of these long years of futility and disgrace.

—"A QUEENSLAND STUDENT."



## BOOK REVIEWS.

# The Capitalist Crisis

"THE NATURE OF CAPITALIST CRISIS," by John Strachey, 1935.

(Our Copy from Rawson's, 169 Exhibition Street. Price, 16/-.)

**A**MONG the multitude of things which the world economic crisis has produced, not the least spectacular has been the veritable torrent of literature which has been poured out, jammed tight with suggestions of how to "dodge," "fight," "stem," "weather," "overcome," and "conquer" it. There has also been some talk about turning corners. From this turbid mass have emerged a few—very few—really good books. John Strachey's "The Nature of Capitalist Crisis" must be placed among them.

Strachey sets out to show that crises, with their accompaniments of waste, starvation and war, are inevitable under capitalism, and that if we realise this we must brush away the sanctified illusions which impede clear thinking, and set to work to abolish capitalism before it abolishes us.

His analysis is a deduction from the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall; the law which Marx enunciated as being the fundamental law of motion of capitalist society. Marx applies this law as an explanation of capitalist crisis in Volume III. of "Capital." Briefly stated, its application is this: When the rate of profit falls below a certain necessary minimum, as it inevitably tends to, the system jams, and large masses of capital and labour stand simultaneously unemployed. This condition continues until restorative measures are applied to the rate of profit, after which the cycle of recovery, boom, crisis, starts over again.

"The Nature of Capitalist Crisis" is thus mainly a re-statement of Marx's theory of capitalist crisis considered in the light of recent experience. But as Strachey goes right to the basis of Marxian economics, and in doing so throws a great deal of light on all phases of contemporary social and economic thought, we cannot afford to pass over his brilliant exposition simply by saying: "Marxism re-stated—'nuff said!" His analysis deserves the closest examination.

## Bourgeois Evasions.

Strachey deals first of all with representative theories of the crisis put forward by amateur and professional bourgeois economists. Major Douglas and the inflationists tell us that we have not enough money; Dr. Hayek and the deflationists tell us we have too much. J. A. Hobson and his school say we invest too much; Dr. Hayek, again, says we don't invest enough. The casual observer might justly remark that there appears to be some disagreement between these gentlemen. Strachey begins the sorting-out process by pointing out the basic fallacy in the Douglas analysis: We, the ultimate consumers, do not need enough money to buy all the products of industry, but only enough to buy those produced for consumption. Then he shows that the real difference between the inflationist and deflationist schools of capitalist economists is one of means

and not of ends. Both aim at restoring the rate of profit, though one says we should do it by raising prices, while the other says we should do it by direct wage-cutting. "All the capitalist economists wish to cut down the individual consumers' purchasing power, because only so can they restore the rate of profit." (P. 89.)

This brings us to an important conclusion. A capitalist crisis is, to the capitalist class and its theoreticians, a catastrophic fall in the rate of profit. "Recovery" is a restoration of the rate of profit; "prosperity," a buoyant rate of profit. The "amateur" economists (Douglas, Hobson, etc.) believe that "prosperity" consists in a plentiful supply of consumable goods, readily available to consumers. Therefore, they say, the obvious thing to do when we have, on the one hand, large masses of goods going to waste, and, on the other, thousands starving, is to issue more money or raise wages so that these goods can be bought.

"But," say the professional economists, "if you hand out gratuitous cash or increase wages you will raise costs, stop investment, and reduce profits; and profits are the life-blood of industry." Profits and plenty are thus contradictory. "At the end of our argument we have come upon the fact that there is an extraordinary antinomy between profits and plenty. The measures which will maximise profits will minimise plenty: the measures which will maximise plenty will minimise profits." (P. 101.)

"A direct attempt to produce plenty without a change in the ownership of the means of production wrecks itself at once, since it takes no account of the fact that plenty will destroy profits, and that profits, so long as the means of production are privately owned, are a necessary condition for any production at all." (P. 104.) However, Douglas sees the crying paradox of capitalism and tries to explain it. The professional economists can show where his analysis is wrong, but can offer no satisfactory one in its place. "He is wrong; they are merely impotent." (P. 38.)

## The Labour Theory of Value.

Having established the central rôle which profit plays in the capitalist economy, Strachey goes on to show why the rate of profit should fall periodically and plunge the system into chaos. He first of all answers the question, what is profit?

The labour theory of value, as set out by the classical economists, and given its full significance by Marx, was abandoned by the capitalist economists later on in the nineteenth century because it failed to account for profit. The price at which a commodity sold was obviously above the amount of its cost of production, which was paid out in wages. Marshall tried to get over the difficulty by saying that the additional amount was the amount which had to be paid



to the capitalist to compensate him for the "sacrifice" of "waiting" and allowing his capital to be used in production instead of spending it. Thus the relative prices of commodities represented approximately the relative human "sacrifices" which had to be undergone in order to produce them, and similarly an individual's income represented the "sacrifices" he had undergone relative to those of other people. These were the logical implications of Marshall's theory of "real" costs, but they would not stand even the strain of common observation.

The present "orthodox" theory of value abandons all pretensions to an objective basis. It is entirely subjective: prices represent nothing more than lists of preferences. "To assume that the scale of relative prices measures any quantity at all save quantities of money is gratuitous metaphysics." (Prof. Lionel Robbins: "The Nature and Significance of Economic Science," P. 56.) A system of economics based on such a theory can tell us nothing save certain effects of the "higgling of the market." "This is the condition of complete, if convenient, impotence to which equilibrium economics has been reduced by the abandonment of the attempt to find a factor common to commodities which will render them commensurable; by the abandonment, that is to say, of any objective theory of value." (P. 161.) "Political economy, in the hands of the masters of the classical school, was a virile science. It provided conclusions intensely important for action. Contemporary capitalist economics, on the contrary, is an impotent, a gelded science, unable to form any opinions whatsoever upon the issues which chiefly concern us." (P. 163.) It can, however, in the hands of capitalist economists who make a special branch of study outside the main body of their science in the attempt to analyse the phenomenon of crisis, form highly significant opinions on issues which concern the capitalist class (e.g., the Premiers' Plan).

It was Marx who rescued the labour theory of value just when it was being tossed aside as being unable to give a palatable explanation of profit, and Strachey, after showing the muddle into which capitalist economics has brought itself by the abandonment of an objective theory of value, proceeds to an exposition of the labour theory of value as understood by Marx. This exposition should be read by all who wish to understand the theory and its implication.

There is something extraordinary about the labour theory of value. Any Economics I. student knows how silly it is (that is, if he or she wants a pass), and can point out, with profound economic acumen, how labour spent in digging purposeless holes and in building useless bridges creates no value. Only "unenlightened" persons like Quesnay, Adam Smith, Ricardo (who were, by the way, among the foremost intellects of the 18th and 19th centuries), and "fools" like Marx, with his "obstinate," "stupid," "dogmatic" followers, ever believed that it did. Yet, in spite of this devastating "criticism," many persons who are neither "unenlightened" nor "fools" ardently support the theory. Surely there is something wrong!

Strachey goes right to the heart of things, and explains exactly what the labour theory of value

was meant to show. He quickly brushes aside the fatuous criticisms about hole-digging and bridge-building by pointing out that both the classical economists and Marx spoke only of "socially necessary" labour as being value-creating. And whether labour applied was socially necessary or not could only be known by the price at which the commodity sold. If a commodity was to be produced at all, a certain minimum price was necessary. This necessary minimum price was determined solely by the return necessary to compensate for the labour used in producing the commodity. Variations in supply and demand caused the actual price to fluctuate around this level. It would be meaningless to say that they determined the level itself. The labour theory of value was never meant to foretell actual market prices.

When the classical economists enunciated this theory, they were thinking of a society in which men produced their own commodities and exchanged them. Marx concentrated on applying the theory to the social relations of capitalism, under which individuals no longer made their own commodities and exchanged them, because the capitalists had monopolised the means of production. The capitalist purchased labour-power and sold commodities embodying labour-time equal to that required to produce the commodities necessary for the workers' sustenance, plus some in addition, which the capitalist was able to extract from them because of his monopoly position. This extra labour-time was the source of profit, or surplus value, which went to the capitalist.

Thus is answered the question: What is profit?

**"It is from this monopolisation of the means of production, and not from any mysterious power to create value supposed to be possessed by their capital, that the capitalist employers derive their power to extract profit."** (P. 181.) Marx never contended that the labour theory of value was a theory of market prices. Market prices are the only phenomena that interest the capitalist economists. Marx's theory, to them, is an abstraction. So it is, but it is a very significant abstraction. Marx used it "to reveal the economic law of motion of modern society." **Marx's theory of value was meant to serve mankind: the capitalist economists' theory of price is meant to serve capitalism.**

### The Law of the Falling Rate of Profit.

The labour theory of value, as Strachey takes particular care to point out, lies at the very basis of Marxian economic theory. From it follows logically the law on which Strachey bases his whole analysis—the law of the falling rate of profit.

As labour alone creates value, and therefore surplus value (profit), the rate of profit must depend, other things being equal, on the ratio of variable capital (capital used in purchasing labour power) to constant capital (machinery, raw materials, etc.). This rate is reckoned on the total capital, variable plus constant. But as capitalism advances and develops productive technique, the amount of labour used to produce a given amount of commodities falls. This is what technical progress means. But this cuts away the source of profit (socially necessary labour),



so that to increase the total amount of profit, as distinct from the rate, total capital must be increased at such a rate as to maintain an increased aggregate amount of variable capital. This process cannot go on forever, as the amount of labour available over a considerable period is fixed. This causes wages to be raised temporarily above the value of labour power, and so reduces profit by reducing the rate of surplus value. At this stage, further accumulation of capital results, not in an increased aggregate amount of profit, but in a decreased aggregate amount. This brings the system to a stop, and it will only revive when accumulation becomes profitable again. This necessitates wage-cutting, writing down of capital values, and actual destruction of surplus products. All in an attempt to restore the rate of profit.

The contradictory nature of capitalism becomes apparent when we realise that the very measures which must be taken to lift us out of one crisis prepare the way for the next. Wage-cutting is essential to allow the rate of profit to revive and make accumulation profitable—to “increase investment” as the orthodox economists have it. But accumulation, or investment, means building up productive power in the shape of factories, improved machinery, etc., and some of this productive power must be used to increase the supply of consumable goods. When these consumable goods come on to the market they cannot be sold because the cutting down of consumers' incomes, which was necessary to restore the rate of profit, has left the consumers too poor to buy them. This brings the system to a stop again, until sufficient capital has been destroyed, and wages cut again to allow accumulation to proceed once more.

It is this “two-faced law” which makes crises inevitable under capitalism. “Capitalism is continually menaced by the Scylla of its inability to

sell its products, and by the Charybdis of a collapse of the profitability of production.” (P. 331.) If it misses the rock it founders in the whirlpool.

### The Marxist Solution.

It is quite impossible, needless to say, in the short space of this review, adequately to explain Strachey's analysis. All that can be given is the briefest outline, and those to whom the conclusions put forward here seem lacking in explanation are asked to refer to the book itself for an exhaustive exposition of many points which here can only be mentioned.

The historic rôle of capitalism, Strachey points out, was to industrialise those parts of the world in which it arose. But as soon as production was put on a mechanical basis the law of the falling rate of profit began to close in on it. This rôle is now completed; capitalism, to-day, is an anachronism, and scientific progress no longer increases profit, but is the nightmare of the profit-makers. Capitalism is now a fetter on human development. The usual profit restoratives (and some unusual ones, because of the character of the present crisis—an economic crisis superimposed on the general crisis of capitalism), have brought to capitalism some slight alleviation of the present crisis; but they are, at the same time, preparing the way for its further deepening. Capitalism will not die peacefully. Unless, by concerted action, we abolish it and set up a social organisation which will allow the productive forces to be utilised to the full, capitalism will plunge us into wars and fascist barbarism. This is the warning Strachey sends out. We must dispel the pious illusions of high wage-paying planned capitalism, and take the only course which holds out hope for mankind—the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.

—E. E. WARD.

## “AUSTRALIA IN THE WORLD CRISIS, 1929-1933.” The Alfred Marshall Lectures, by Douglas Copland, Professor of Commerce in Melbourne University.

**B**ECAUSE this book contains no theoretical material of value, its laboriously compiled tables, statistics, and graphs lack interpretation. The most profound theoretical point made is as follows:—

“We must distinguish between the failure of a long period policy and the breaking-up of short period prosperity. The latter is the normal operation of the business cycle, the former a special long period influence that might increase the oscillation of the cycle.” (P. 23.) This is nothing more than a tardy, confused, and partial, bourgeois admission of the inevitability of crises so long as capitalism lasts, and further, a guarded recognition of the special character of the present crisis—what we Marxists describe as an ordinary cyclical crisis superimposed upon the profound general crisis of capitalism.

Likewise, the Professor's “theory” regarding the crisis in Australia is a pitiful joke. He makes the extraordinary statement that “Australia was still a dependent economy in 1929” (p. 24). Now, while it is obvious that, especially in the last two decades, Australia has been a field for the investment of large masses of foreign capital,

it is equally obvious that the development of Australian industry, the overseas investment of Australian capital, and the possession of exploited colonies (the Mandated Territories), have converted her from a colony (i.e., a “dependent economy”) into an imperialist power, albeit of secondary importance. However, like a good apologist of capitalism, Copland shuns any reference to imperialism. Basing himself upon this original assertion, he throws the blame of the crisis in Australia mainly upon overseas influences (see the first lecture in particular). This reminds one of the theory of the origin of life, which suggests that life came to the earth from another planet. The Professor's avoidance of any reference to the crisis as being due to the anarchy of capitalist production is by no means an accident. It is quite in keeping with the methods of all bourgeois economists, who are thereby enabled to confine their “explanations” of the crisis to the sphere of consumption, and hence “justify” the maintenance of capitalist profits by attacks on the conditions of the working class. We shall develop this point subsequently.

\* \* \* \*