

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM.

Vol. XX.—No. 213.

DECEMBER, 1906.

MONTHLY; ONE PENNY

English Trade Unionism.

(Continued from No. 212.)

Taking a rapid review of the English trade union movement two types of organisation stand out. First, the loose, general, semi-political, almost irresponsible kind. Always ready for a fight to improve conditions, and relying upon the enthusiasm of its members to carry it to victory. Strange to say, nearly every advance in the trade union world has been started thus. From the wage-earners' point of view, the adventurous spirits that led these industrial revivals and revolts deserve unstinted commendation.

Second: the solid, sectional, calculating sort, given to shrewd diplomacy, depending on their financial resources to carry their members through in any struggle for betterment. Of the two, the latter have always stood the test of time as to stability.

The "General Union of Labour," started in the early part of last century, assisted by Robert Owen, belonged to the first type, and though soon numbering over a million members, dwindled as quickly, and entirely disappeared. The "Chartist" movement absorbed its active workers—the industrial was swallowed up in the political. Again, the latter part of the century saw a revival of a somewhat similar kind, this time taking a sectional form. The "Gas Workers," the "Dockers," the "Railway Workers," the "Sailors and Firemen," and many other unions, especially among the unskilled workers, preaching political action as the main means of attaining improved social conditions, suddenly sprang into existence. But they all went strong for "direct action" in their first excitement, and gained immense advantages through the strike.

If, however, we look around now, what do we find after fifteen to twenty years' experience? That the wave of "new" trade unionism has nearly worn itself out. Even the Gas Workers,—that most militant and brainy of them all,—has gone down in membership, till it is hardly half what it was.

On the other hand, those unions coming within the second category, such as the "Amalgamated Society of Engineers," the "Typographical Association," the "Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners," together with the "Boilermakers," and the "Ironfounders," have all gone on slowly but steadily increasing their membership and finances. That this is not due entirely to the fact of their being skilled workers is proved by the Railway Servants, the Miners, and even the Labourers Unions, which pay benefits, standing their ground much better than those which do not. There has, though, been a serious shrinkage since these began to expend a goodly part of their energies in political affairs. Whether there is any direct connection between the stagnation of these societies and their political activities will probably require a longer period to prove. One thing, however, stands out quite clear. It is that those unions which attend most strictly to their internal affairs, husband and build up their finances, provide against the risks of their employment and old age, are also best able to protect and improve the trade interests, and so command the *continued confidence* of the members. In fact, they become so beneficial that those eligible to join find they cannot remain outside the ranks. Undoubtedly, the two great economic factors by means of which these unions are effecting a slow but sure revolution in the condition of employment for their members are the "unemployed" and "superannuation" benefits. These operate silently, even during quiet periods, in improving trade conditions of the workers, or at least in preventing a relapse. They also hold and increase their membership. The first prevents members being driven by *necessity* to undersell their labour in dull times, the second supplies the strongest possible incentive to continue their membership. Besides this, the latter

holds them together as probably nothing else could in trade disputes. A member reflects that if he traitorously returns to work, and forfeits membership, he has no security for old age. But if he stands with his colleagues in the union he knows he will be provided for when unable to work. Little wonder that these unions can even go through a defeat without a serious depletion of members, and within a very short period be again ready to resume the struggle.

So far, experience proves that political activity decreases the economic power of the unions. In spite of the last two years' wonderful commercial boom, during which the capitalists have made enormous profits, the trade unions have been so absorbed in politics that they have had no time to think of securing some of this increase. The officials are busy discussing the details of capitalist legislation in the House of Commons, and so cannot deal with such trifles as "shorter hours" or "higher wages" for their members. They have "bigger fish to fry"—the making of laws for the whole (capitalist) community! In fact, it is the old fable over again of the dog crossing the bridge and dropping the meat to grasp at the shadow, which looked so much bigger. Certainly it is less risky and much easier than the old methods. Besides it is much better pay, and all the glory of a public career. But it would seem that the "rank and file" are able to gauge it at its proper value, and unless the old "direct action" is again revived they will not respond and organise merely for the political glorification of the officials.

JOHN TURNER.

THE MOVEMENT IN LIVERPOOL.

The movement in Liverpool is forging ahead. During the summer months huge crowds have been addressed on the "Ideals of Anarchism," the necessity of direct action and the futility of political action. Sale of literature is increasing.

On Sunday, November 11th, we held two successful indoor meetings to commemorate the legal assassination of our Chicago comrades. Comrade Kitz, of London, our veteran propagandist, visited us, and being one of the pioneers of the Socialist movement in this country, gave great satisfaction.

The subject for the afternoon meeting was "Anarchism versus State Socialism," and Comrade Kitz told how working men who formed the Labour Emancipation League, afterwards became the Socialist League, with such men as W. Morris, E. Aveling, Belfort Bax, J. Lane, J. Turner, and David Nicol in its ranks.

The Socialist League, being non-political in character, did splendid Socialist propaganda work, and drew a number of thinking men to its standard. Russia showed the need for agrarian propaganda to prepare the Revolution, and the same was necessary in England. The Agricultural labourer must be organised and the landlords expropriated.

In passing, Kitz paid an eloquent tribute to the work the aliens had done for the English movement, and concluded his address by appealing to the audience to turn their eyes from the State and go in solid for the General Strike.

The evening meeting was devoted to the Chicago martyrs. Comrade Beavan in opening said that in keeping the memory of these men green we were also keeping in memory all the men of every country who had nobly sacrificed their lives on the altar of Humanity.

Comrade Kavanagh (undoubtedly the finest worker and open-air propagandist we have in Liverpool) argued that this meeting, and meetings all over the world, had proved that wherever thinking men abided that, as Spies had prophesied, "their silence was more powerful than the voices they strangled," and that where Grinnel (the State Attorney of Chicago) sought to sow the seeds of Hate, the immortelles of Love had bloomed.

Comrade Kitz showed how even the ecclesiastical authority had co-operated with the capitalist class, the jungle class, to crush the labour movement in Chicago. The trade unionists had tried to use constitutional methods to attain their end, but they were entirely futile—hence the strike and its tragedy. "The trial was an absolute farce," said Kitz, "because the law officers had predetermined to hang the prisoners, not because they were Anarchists, but because they were the champions of the people's cause."

Both meetings were highly satisfactory and well appreciated, giving good promise for the future.

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Monthly, One Penny; post free, 1½d.; U.S.A., 3 Cents; France, 15 Centimes.

Annual Subscription, post free, 1s. 6d.; U.S.A., 36 Cents; France, 1fr. 80c.
Foreign subscriptions should be sent by International Money Order.

Wholesale Price, 1s. 4d. per quire of 27, carriage free to all parts.

All communications, exchanges, &c., for "FREEDOM" to be addressed to

THE MANAGER, 127 Ossulston Street, N.W.

The Editor's are not necessarily in agreement with signed articles.

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Money and Postal Orders should be made payable to T. H. Keell.

NOTES.

"ALL IS INFAMY!"

The indictment of the capitalist system has many times been very forcibly drawn up. We have annual returns of how it kills and mangles its slaves for profit, while governments look on and raise no hand to save. Governments themselves being largely recruited from the rich commercial class, have no serious objection to legal murder that fills their own pockets. Consequently horrors accumulate upon horrors, and the indictment is never complete. From the horrors of the Congo we turn to the horrors of the Courrières mines, and from these to the Chicago jungle. From all this we turn again, thinking we have seen the lowest depth, and we find—what? The Chinese compounds with all their unspeakable and unthinkable depths of human degradation, vice and misery, perpetuated for nearly twelve months after the accession to power of the "strongest Liberal Government of modern times," with John Burns in the Cabinet! The Government excuses itself—that is all it exists for. But it was never truer than in this case that he who excuses himself accuses himself. The Government is guilty—with John Burns in the Cabinet, the man who two years ago in Hyde Park shook his fist at the mansions in Park Lane and denounced Beit as a scoundrel. Yet we are told that to overthrow this system, to end all these horrors by forcible means would be criminal. Then let us be "criminal"—in the eyes of the capitalist.

DISCIPLINE AND DESPOTISM.

"S.L.H." in the *Morning Leader* has some satirical remarks on the scandalous treatment of the Portsmouth stokers, which are admirable in their exposure of the brutality and cowardice that exist behind the word "discipline." He quotes from Horace Smith, who said of it (discipline), "Nothing is so reluctantly abandoned by despots, whether kings, pedagogues, officers, or magistrates, as any oppressive cruelty, which they imagine to be connected with the maintenance of their authority." Who can deny this? We see it happening every day, and one dreads to think what the life of a stoker must be when to all the suffering his work entails,—the terrible death he faces in case of accident,—is added to the degradation and insult he must endure from the vulgar fools who call themselves "superior officers." As S. L. H. truly remarks, the barbarous sentence on poor Moody will "make the word discipline stink in the nostrils of the people."

PROGRESS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.

It is not always easy to follow the labarynthine reasoning of Social Democrats, and when we need a little light, as we often do, as to their aims and objects, and their methods of obtaining them, it is not always forthcoming. Take, for instance, the question of fighting the Trusts. On this matter H. M. Hyndman has the following in *Justice*, Nov. 24th: "Now we Social Democrats have no prejudices on this matter. We know quite well that Trusts are inevitable, and that they constitute an economic advance." And again: "The process cannot be checked under existing conditions. To try to prevent Trusts is sheer ignorance and foolish reaction. Moreover, denunciation of Trusts in themselves is as silly as denunciation of labour-saving appliances." This sounds conclusive enough, however mistaken it may be. But we are put in doubt again by the following from the same article: "Thus while we fight (*sic*) the Trusts on every occasion in every country, we do so not only to check their development or to break them up," but to show they are a means of working towards Social Democracy. We are still in doubt; but shall we not be in order in speaking of comrades Rockefeller, Vanderbilt and Carnegie as the great pioneers of Social Democracy?

Esperanto from an Anarchist's Point of View.

In a *revue* of the year's events now acted in Paris, the Chicago meat packers are represented coming to Paris to contract for the refuse of that city to use it for making "jungle." This crude satire pictures in a nutshell the state of things brought about by the never-ending extension of capitalist industrialism. The last vestiges of Nature disappear, and our food, housing, reading, amusements—all are made for us by large combines, who plant on us at "popular prices," jungle goods. Public opinion, criticism, art, everything is being brought under their control, and the intellectual level that had hardly begun to rise in the later nineteenth century is rapidly lowered again; for brains are only wanted for a small caste of cunning schemers and an overseer and manager class—the rest need to be mere brainless, ignorant, jungle-fed "men in the street," on the look out for betting news, gullible to an ever-increasing extent.

When municipalities and public bodies try to save some useful services from capitalist domination, competition forces them to establish these on similar lines—all artificial, wholesale made, calculated only to supply in the quickest way the average needs of average people, and the growing tide of uniformity is only hastened by such efforts.

There are, however, groups of people who resent this destruction of all individual features of life, and endeavour to return to Nature, to a real, full, and healthy life which breeds individualities, not machine-made people. Back to the land, co-operative fellowships, garden cities, the revival of handicrafts, the claims of free womanhood, art for art's sake and social art, antimilitarism, decentralisation—these and similar causes are dear to those who wish for human, not for industrial development. Anarchism, whilst not overrating the importance of these special movements, is in sympathy with all of them, but recognises that the whole present system, based on political and economic authority and monopoly must be overthrown before any good cause whatever can have fair play and free scope. Anarchism is thus the fullest and truest representative of all efforts towards free life in Nature's free surroundings. State Socialism merges more and more with the general State and capitalist efforts to provide some dull state of a semblance of well-being to the average people ground down to be mere figures or tools—"benevolent capitalism," the counterpart to the "enlightened despotism" of the eighteenth century, a fiction which the French Revolution exploded as thoroughly as the Social Revolution will that of capitalism-cum-State Socialism of our days. This system will break down by overdoing it: people will remember some day that they are men. Until then let us help to construct as far as possible organisms which show the working of freedom, and also save what we can of primitive beautiful Nature,—this will preserve some of us from slipping under the grindstone of uniformising industrialism, and will some day help larger masses to find their way back to Nature and happiness.

Besides these great currents of human development, the roads to authority and to freedom, there existed always some inventions set on foot by simple-minded people who knew the short cut to human perfection. They were mostly to such a degree ignorant of real life and indifferent about it, that some vague uniformity of general bliss would be the thing they aimed at. The millennium dreamers are one of their purest expressions, and to their ranks belong the inventors of universal this, universal that—of *universal languages*, for example. Only collectors of eccentricities noticed them thus far, and I am greatly surprised to see the Anarchist press of most countries containing notes showing that a number of comrades are interested in some lately invented artificial languages—*Esperanto* and *Neutral*—which seems to me to involve a loss of valuable energy on a sidetrack which leads far away from our ideas.

If they only intended to make propaganda among those interested in *Esperanto*, I should say nothing further, though people absorbed by a fad are usually, for the time being, least accessible to serious reflection on another subject. But some comrades seem to hold strong ideas on the importance and usefulness of *Esperanto*, etc., in general, and about this I should like to argue with them. I am quite aware that *Esperanto* is not to supplant nor destroy existing languages, but only to serve as a convenient means of communication; still I maintain that it does more harm than it can possibly do good.

* * *

Language to me is a beautiful product of Nature, and an illustration of that real Anarchy of Nature which we see in all Nature's manifestations around us, and to which man alone, that superwise poor victim of the authority fetish, still objects. Those who study the past of a group of kindred languages, and observe how by association and mutual attraction by-and-by more settled groups of sounds or forms are formed, whilst each member of these groups may either follow voluntarily the so-called law which governs them or may be more attracted by another group and join that group, etc.,—those, then, who follow these phenomena, too long to describe here, see in reality a reign of peaceful Anarchy where there is continuous life and development on the lines of unfettered attraction and free conviction. Dialects in their endless variety, preserving so many valuable relics of the past, make each language resemble the picturesque scenery of a mountainous country with its pleasant change of hills and valleys, forests and meadows, with rare flowers preserved in out-of-the-way spots. Modern book language is a half natural, half artificial product (influenced by historic events,

the boundaries of States, the predominance of a capital, etc.); it represents just the limits within which it is feasible to make people speaking kindred dialects accept a common literary language. Thus the many French dialects are just sufficiently near to each other that literary French is an accessible and welcome means of communication to all; in the same way Italians and Spaniards accept the Tuscan and Castilian as their literary language. But this imposes too great a sacrifice on the dialects of the South of France and the East of Spain, and we see two new literary languages struggle to the front in these territories: the Provençal and the Catalan languages—time will show with what success. This is the natural way of development, and, as always, it is towards local autonomy and decentralisation. Small languages come more and more to the front, and the treasures hidden in dialects are carefully collected and preserved. Here, again, Nature puts a limit to the State, and everyone knows on which side our sympathies as Anarchists are.

These small nationalities are, it is true, like the country people who hardly know the literary language, often very much behind in political and religious matters: a reason for this is that it is their way of defending themselves against the encroachments of the State, which strives to abolish them entirely. Once this continuous dread is removed, they will become useful aids to progress, and the reserves of strength which they keep will relieve the task of the townspeople, who are nervous and energetic, but physically degenerated. This quite modern race of men, the town dwellers, may be the first who will fight for freedom, but they have already become unable, I fear, to reap the fruits of the fight. For this, reserves of strong and healthy people only will be apt, I believe; and these are those who still are in contact with Nature, enjoy its beauties, their local life, their local language, etc.

Present day industrialism is making havoc among the natural riches accumulated by ages, never to grow again. All that is beautiful or useful is made money of as quickly as profitable. We become poorer each year. Forests are preserved here and there only, as specimens, as reservations, or are reduced to the form of parks; of parks, again, part is given to the builder and some enclosed pleasure grounds only remain. These commercial habits, everything being mercenary, and the increase of population hold out sad perspectives of the future, and this alone ought to make us anxious for the coming change.

Local life means not giving up of international feelings. Only a man who himself has some originality and individuality left can feel the right interest in the different ways and manners of other nations; the average town-bred people who, having seen some natives in a circus and some poor "aliens" in the streets, fancy they know everything and need no further instruction—it is those who are brainless enough to sip the national hatred which the capitalist press find it profitable to instil into them. The best means towards fraternal international feelings, besides the propaganda of ideas and staying abroad, is to learn foreign languages, and thus to get real access to the intellectual life of other nations. This could easily be done, if the pedagogic fraternity did not make the thing look so extremely difficult; these people who live by making other people lose their time, true to their principle that you must waste years to learn what you could learn in months! The principal languages are, indeed, so very near to each other: an Englishman knows already half of the French and most of the German words; an Italian knows beforehand most of the French and part of the English words. All Russians are eager to learn French; those of small nationalities mostly learn one of the principal languages from childhood, etc. The difficulties are greatly overrated because it is to the interest of Governments and capitalists to keep the nations separated and in the state of mutual distrust created by mutual ignorance.

Here, then, popular movements set in—from University extension, French People's Universities, German evening classes for workers, etc., to schoolboys' international letter writing, even to the exchange of postcards; and instead of helping these movements, which require some serious work after all, the spirit of nervous superficiality, incapable of strenuous efforts, cries for a short cut, a universal language. "Have your boots soled while you wait!" "Learn a universal language while you wait!"—that all comes from the same source: some people are already beyond being capable of serious efforts. Poor victims of our system, but it is not for us to be weak because they are weak.

Modern industrial life must have ground them down to the aesthetic level of people to whom the music of the barrel organ, that musical *Esperanto*, combining so many instruments, is equal to the music of a fine instrument. Looking at *Esperanto* one sees a mixture of French, English, Russian and other words, distorted as passing through the lips of dozens of illiterate persons and the spelling books of an equal number of schoolboys could not distort them more,—all this written in a clumsy orthography with three kinds of c (c, ç, and circumflex c), two kinds of g and h (g, circumflex g; h, circumflex h); etc. If an Australian native would begin to talk French offhand, he would underlay the characters of his own language, and the product, if not very well sounding, but rather the contrary, would at any rate have some idiomatic charm of its own. But in *Esperanto* all that is absent; it is the most ugly thing on earth—other artificial languages excepted—and if it does not make dogs howl when spoken, I do not know what will, or what dogs have come to! The *Neutral* is said to sound like ancient French spoken by a nigger.

Artificial universal languages, like discoveries of the philosopher's stone, are never met with alone; there are always two or three of

them about. *Esperanto* claims to be more simple than *Volapük*, and *Neutral* claims to be more simple than *Esperanto*. There are two developments possible: either further languages are invented, more simple than *Neutral*, until we arrive at no language at all, namely, that old language of monks centuries ago, found in old books,—a few hundred words expressed by gestures of hands and fingers,—and with that a corresponding reduction of brainwork must come. Or *Esperanto* may predominate, and then it will be perfected by the introduction of an infinite number of words which the original inventors could not think of; these words are likely to be supplied in different countries in a different way, maybe at the same time, and this would end in English, Spanish, Russian *Esperanto*, etc.; in short, in the absence of a real universal language. Of these possibilities the former is more likely to happen. All such innovations are shortlived, and those who are under their spell often drift from one to another. I have no doubt that there are some who learned *Volapük* and *Esperanto*, and are now studying *Neutral*, and there is no question that somewhere somebody is already pondering over a fourth idiom, and so on.

If the fraternal interest which men of various countries begin to feel for each other had been purposely misled by their enemies, a better way could not have been chosen than to divert it to the barren desert of an artificial language, which leaves them in ignorance about each other, and only unites them in stammering an idiom created from the broken remnants of half-a-dozen languages—gives them "jungle" for meat indeed. If State Socialists did this as a step towards the unique centralised State, which even they no longer believe in, I think we should just laugh at them. But to see Anarchists, of all people, interested in spreading ugliness and deformity, and defiling a beautiful product of Nature, content to play with the broken remnants brought under artificial rules, this is something to feel sorry for.

The final reason given is, of course, the apparent immediate usefulness of the thing. We have not always been opportunists! Moreover this is an illusion. Suppose Anarchists are persuaded to adopt it; then they accept it as Anarchists, and as such they had no need for it, for our ideas have all along been our international language, and anything else could only be lower, not higher, than these. Thanks to these ideas, there is no country where an Anarchist would not find comrades who would soon find means to communicate with him. This true solidarity that is found everywhere needs not the plaything of ugly fads, which, if they infest so many other movements, were always kept away from ours. To handle *Esperanto* would be a sure symptom that our movement was declining too!

November 15, 1906.

M. N.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

Russia.

Without dwelling for a moment on the questionable results of a year's "Constitutional" life in Russia, and on the endless death-roll of victims, the fact remains that things are moving all over this wide country, and can never be brought to a standstill again! The spread of advanced literature is a good deal the cause of this result. It is true that by means of their large monthly reviews and many good books, the educated public was always acquainted, in a guarded way, with the most advanced products of Western European revolutionary thought and action; for over fifty years, also, Russian exiles created a free press for themselves in England, Switzerland and other countries. But these unceasing efforts are but small in their effect, we think, to what real publicity can do and has done during the last two years. In 1905 and 1906, in fact, an immense number of advanced books, pamphlets, and papers were published openly in Russia, and though many publications were seized, others quickly took their place, and there is hardly any good book or pamphlet, Socialist and Anarchist, published in other countries that has not been made accessible to the Russian public in a cheap form. Socialist literature of all descriptions has never before been to this extent brought before an immense people, being spread by countless well-meaning agencies. There is an immense desire for knowledge, and the history of past revolutions and the preceding efforts of Russian revolutionists are specially attractive. The review of the Russian revolution, *Byloe (the Past)*, St. Petersburg, since January, 1906, monthly volumes of over 300 pages, is full of historic documents, recollections of liberated prisoners (the Schlüsselburg victims of over twenty years' confinement, etc.), letters of Bakunin, etc.; some of the articles are like lessons from the past, and may have their bearings on the minds of the present generation. The old revolutionists, dead or returned from their prison graves, once more help the cause.

Apart from this literature, there is the flying revolutionary literature of the numberless groups, ending with the hectographed local leaflet. Anarchist literature is published in every form, and the demand for it is great. The movement (according to *Listki Chleb i Volya*, No. 1) took root first among the town workers of North Western Russia about two years ago, spreading to the South and South West. It is beginning to reach the centre, Moscow, and even the Ural, also the Baltic provinces (among Russians and Letts), Poland and the Caucasus. The intensity of local propaganda and action in many places can be seen from a history of the "Ekaterinoslav Anarchist Communist Workers' Group" in the same paper, and other reports.

As these active propagandists carry their lives in their hands, and have too much on hand to create new centres of attack against them by the creation of new Anarchist papers (they say what they have got to say in the form of placards, leaflets, or in a more drastic way), it is but right and natural that Russian comrades abroad with more facilities of work should help them by issuing Anarchist papers in Russian—useful to discuss the various problems which a new movement always creates, and to make the groups actually acquainted with each others' efforts and with the progress of Western propaganda. For this purpose the *Burevestnik* (the Petrel) was started in July (monthly), and it is followed, since October 30, by *Listki Chleb i Volya* (London, fortnightly), the continuation of *Chleb i Volya* (Bread and Freedom), published in 1903-5; to the latter paper P. Kropotkin contributes various articles.

There is also a new Polish paper *Głos Rewolucyjny* (the Voice of the Revolution, October, monthly), one of the very few outspoken Anarchist papers in the Polish language.

Seeing that the only real, though not definite, progress of Russian freedom was made by "direct action," the general strike, in October, 1905, and how much was lost again by that unhappy belief in parliamentarism and politics, Anarchists are the only party who spoke truly and stand uncompromised before the Russian public. This may give weight to their literary propaganda, which does not mean to supplant the real means of success—bold action.

* *

Italy.

The Italian Socialist Party is a wonderful thing. As the revolving fan with the air, so it with men,—with Ferri for axle. It draws men together and then flings them wide apart, Labriola and Anarchists this way, and Constitutional-Monarchist-Socialists the other way. This process is re-discovered at each Congress, and the "materialistic interpretation of history" is invoked to help in the drawing up of misleading genealogical diagrams to prove that the process is historical and temporary, whereas it is truly psychological and eternal. For the essential utility of all such stiffly constituted parties is just this gathering and distributing of men and ideas.

The record of the party in question would almost be enough to make one formulate this theory without further data, and the present moment is so full of action that the reporter is kept busy referring to the theorist who is needed to explain this centrifugal movement. For it is the action of ideas that is now taking place in Italy, and the face of the country is changing with them. Trade unionism never flourished here as it did in England; it escaped some of the cramping influences of the English movement, and it is only now that it has taken deep root and in a soil well prepared with Socialism. But not merely political Socialism. This latter has been so unproductive that it has become a byword that it is only cultivated by "professors without colleges and lawyers without cases,"—that they have not one representative of the working class in Parliament, and that the official report of the late Congress of the party very carefully marked *operaio* against the names of the two or three working-men who were able to put in a word. But the Italian lawyer is a peculiar person, being capable of entertaining political theories that would abolish him as a class, so that the Socialism preached in Italy has been allowed a free development of its tendencies. Hence the action of the party has been educational in spite of its political finalities and its dogmatic centre. The trade unions have been a slower growth than the party; they have heard and discussed and acted on every political and economic theory that has been accepted or refused by the party, and their centralisation has been of a healthy slowness. With them has also grown up a not less important form of democratic organisation, the local *Camere del Lavoro*. The feeling of neighbourhood is perhaps not so strong in England. Anyhow such organisations are scarcely known in that otherwise highly organised country. Or it may be due to a lack of Anarchist influence in the country, with a reputation for being practical, at least, if not always up-to-date. Anyhow this most practical form of labour organisation is almost unknown, and what seems worse, unimagined. It simply consists of local unions of workers of all grades, the subscription is nominal (and is occasionally helped by grants from town councils), the federation is of the simplest description (the financial turnover of the Italian central committee is about twenty pounds annually), and their action is what the members make it, thus simply organised, spontaneous, and efficient. The advantages are obvious in the case of local strikes, and it was through these bodies that the general strike was realised, against the advice of the party.

The trade unions have thus had a more than liberal education, and, more than the party, are representative of the labour movement in Italy. The party fan keeps up the ventilating and educational process; the unions and *Camere* exercise themselves by formulating and enforcing small economical demands in preparation for the formulation and enforcement of more serious ones. And that formulation has begun.

It was not generally known until two years ago how the labour organisations mistrust all actions of the State, so that their declaration against the nationalisation, or rather statisation, of the railway caused some surprise. The surprise grew and took on a colouring of fear when the Railway Men's Union began to think out an alternative scheme which would give the unions the control and management of the lines. This is no visionary scheme of the theorist, but a practical programme of work drawn up by the workers. Some of the Southern Peasants Leagues are ever more alive than this to the possibilities of action, or direct action, as the politicians call it. Land is constantly being squatted on and cultivated, and the land question will soon be coming to the front here as it has in Russia. But besides these isolated signs of the times it is instructive to see the effect of the awakening trade union movement on the Socialist Party.

At the recent congress at Rome the whole of the time was taken up in discussing the tendencies of the party. The two extreme wings were the Reformists, or Constitutional Democrats, and the Sindicalists, or active trade unionists. At the centre was Ferri, with his watchword of unity of the party. The autonomy of the parliamentary group was the most practical point under consideration, and influenced by this the Reformists finally voted the central ticket, leaving the Sindicalists and Revolutionists in a small minority. The figures were, however, somewhat discounted by a declaration of a large number of the majority that they would have voted with the Sindicalists if these had not so much insisted on the point "that the Socialist movement must be cleared of professionalism in order that it may become entirely a workers' movement." Yet the Sindicalist definition of "workers" included all who are employed in the service of the community.

The value of this congress was that it brought forward an enthusiastic group who will continue to work for the subordination of parliamentary and party ends to the practical and revolutionary trade unions and *Camere del Lavoro*. We have thus in the new trade unionist movement in Italy a synthesis of political and economic action, leading to the true co-operation of all labour.

K. W.

MONTHLY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

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Printed and published by J. TURNER, 127 Ossulston Street, London, N.W.