

Freedom

FEBRUARY 14 1970 Vol 31 No 5

VOTE—WHAT FOR?

AT ANY TIME during the next fourteen months the Prime Minister may announce the date for the General Election. As the leader of the party governing this country, it is up to Harold Wilson to decide on the time, as and when it suits their chances.

Having done so, the whole circus will once again roll into town, with the candidates of all parties vying with each other for the support of the public. For them it is an important time for, depending upon the number of crosses placed against their names, it will determine their whole life for the next five years.

For the wooded electorate, the chances are that very little change will take place in the following five years, no matter which candidates receive the most votes. Elections for them are but a brief period of illusion that they are deciding who governs the country. It is the only time that the public is asked its opinion and to actually participate.

Having gained victory many candidates are not seen again until the following election and the party that forms the government proceeds to organise our lives and govern for the benefit of those who own and control the industry and wealth of the country.

At the approach of any general

election, the public is wooed with promises for this, that and the other. It is a time when all sorts of restrictions are lifted and people are given a false impression that everything is rosy. Already the creating of this impression has started with the lifting of the travel allowance restrictions, and the forthcoming budget is likely to give further spending power to the public. However, Wilson's dilemma is to achieve a balance. He cannot afford too much of a give-away budget because, together with the wage increases, it could affect the trading position and therefore the balance of payments.

From now on all parties will be playing politics. Each one will be seeking popularity with electoral bribes. The uncertainty about the date will also create tension and from the Government's point of view, they are unlikely to give any hint because they just do not know themselves. Their showing in recent opinion polls gives them little en-

couragement and their only chance seems to be in holding on to power for the full constitutional period.

Already the ground on which the election will be fought has been staked out by the Tories—taxation, imposed wage settlements, law and order and immigration. In general they are trying to put over a tough image against the so-called 'permissive society'. Most of this is just emotion, using the public's irritation and frustration for electoral gain, for there are plenty of harsh laws already on the statute book to deal with demonstrators and to strengthen these would mean restrictions on our liberties.

Unlike many on the 'left', we do not think the Labour Government has failed. Before the 1964 and 1966 elections we said that Labour's priorities were with the economy of this country and that they would restrict the bargaining power of the trade unions. We forecast legislation against unofficial strikes and we know how close we came to that.

Whichever party gets hold of the reins of power, they will put the economic system before the social needs of people. Whichever party wins the next election, legislation will be introduced to restrict wage increases and an attempt will be made to curtail the bargaining power of the unions.

As a trading country, with a possible recession in America, cost per unit of production has got to be controlled. Tough action will be required and this seems to be an economic fact of life in the present-day capitalist society. However no politician is going to say this in public, just as during the March 1966 election, no Labour MP said that in the July a full freeze on wages would become law. Prior to an election all governments (that is those that have to go through these 'democratic' motions) will try not to be unpopular, but once elected they quickly change.

Not only are differences between the parties slight, but whichever is

returned to power, there will be little difference made to the lives of the majority of people. If anything, the two main parties are moving towards a more authoritarian position and those who argue for voting for the lesser evil are only fooling themselves. It is up to the individuals to free themselves from this illusion. The conscious refusal to vote is a positive step and a sign of social responsibility, because one cares too much to give power to the politicians and the state.

A period prior to a general election is a good time to mount a campaign to propagate anarchism, using the refusal to vote as its main theme. Many people are becoming disillusioned with politicians and their parties. More and more are turning to themselves and are taking direct action to achieve demands, whether in the area of industry, housing or universities. Manchester comrades have started by duplicating a leaflet and in London posters have been printed. We shall also be printing anti-election articles which could be used as leaflets.

The politicians have started their wooing so let us start our campaign to frustrate their chances and prick their hot air balloons of promises.

P.T.

'SOUNDS LIKE RUBBISH'

THE reaction of Aberdeen's local press to any revolutionary activity is predictable—they laugh at it. When *PORN* came out they laughed, though a little nervously, a little neurotically. For *PORN*—Pupil's Own Revolutionary Newspaper—had been circulated throughout Aberdeen's secondary schools and though only in its first edition it contained four controversial articles.

The first article, 'Where We Stand', was a politically orientated manifesto intending to show that education cannot be separated from political reality: 'The ruling ideas of our time are those of the employing class, who use education to train the young mind to accept the role they have prepared for it in capitalist industry.' *PORN* is therefore, and we hope will continue to be, something more than a libertarian or reformist newspaper. The other three articles dealt with school uniform, religious indoctrination in education and the legalisation of pot, which is readily available in Aberdeen—although distant, we are not correspondingly provincial.

The press, although mockingly hostile, naively printed the salient arguments of each article. When quoted, Christians and constables were bitingly satirical, and Mr. D. S. Duncan, Aberdeen branch press secretary of the EIS said, 'Not having read the paper, it sounds like rubbish.' Enough said.

Unfortunately we experienced great difficulty in persuading most pupils of our seriousness, due, I suppose, to the fact we were broaching a vacuum, in the sense that political awareness amongst them is negligible. We cannot, however, give up, and *PORN* No. 2 comes out this week. It is important that pupils learn to act for themselves in schools, where penalties are less severe than those imposed by society at large so that they may be more skilful and successful in fighting authority when they have left school.

The school gates are just as important as the factory gates. A political environment at youth may prove to be of more lasting value than a dim awareness in middle age. *PORN* helps, despite opposition, to create this environment, to foster awareness and to inculcate a spirit of rebelliousness against the authority of the education system—an institution which, all the more contemptible because of its pettiness, reproduces the abuses of the system.

PETER MAHLER.

THERE HAVE been strong indications that one of the issues, if not the main issue in the forthcoming election will be 'law and order'. It is not even known which political party holds the monopoly copyright of this desirable commodity. The Conservatives, out of office, can conveniently saddle the party in power, the Labour Party, with all the current ills and put forward their own cure-all, 'Law and Order'. As with the Profumo case, the whole thing has been elevated to a moral issue and the product of a 'permissive society'—whatever that is. The Church of England has never changed its reputation of being the conservative party at prayer but the unctuous Morgan Phillips once truthfully pointed out that the Labour Party owed more to Methodism than to Marxism. So God is obviously to be a party plank.

It is not even a fact that law and order are synonymous. From the anarchist view that 'liberty is the mother not the daughter of order' they are absolute contradictions. Facts tend to support this seemingly far-fetched theory. It is a fact that we have more laws than ever on the statute book, plus laws passed by local authorities and the whole body of case-law which, in the main, never comes under parliamentary scrutiny. With all this law, it is obvious that we have more crimes. The worst period of crime in recent American history was during the prohibition era (1918-1930) when a law was on the statute books to prohibit alcohol; never has there been such an era of lawlessness, masquerading as law enforcement. One technological factor alone—the motor car—has contributed to invent a whole new range of crimes, ranging from its murderous potentialities, to the enormous number of thefts of and from motor cars; its contribution to the crime rate is about 50%. The very fact that the motor car is so widespread is evidence of the greater material possessions more common today when the *ethos* is that of a consumer acquisitive society. The more property, the more robbery.

This increase in laws which the politicians will advocate will not help to reduce the crime rate. There are enough laws on the statute book already to deal with anything which may arise. There has been some talk of strengthening the law on 'trespass'. As the police well know, this is quite unnecessary, the powers given to them to step in to prevent a breach of the peace are sufficient. Besides this they can use laws made for other purposes—drugs acts, for example—and search warrants are not hard to get. Finally a property-conscious judiciary can be depended

The More Law, the Less Order

upon to let in by the back door any legislation founded on case-law which may be convenient. The principle of 'John Doe' or blanket warrants has been introduced by this means.

Very few laws are used for the purpose for which they were introduced. The police know this, and also know that many laws, particularly in the field of morals, are unenforceable so they content themselves with sporadic outbursts of moral crusading fervour from time to time, as the newspapers or politicians get more fretful. We are in the midst of one of these crusades now.

The second principle that 'law and order' politicians advice is the employment of more police and better pay for the police—as it is their wage-claim never gets questioned, and consequently we have the best police that money can buy. However this again is a self-defeating proposition. The more police we have, the more convictions there will be. It is always denied by the police that promotion or favour depends upon the number of convictions registered, but if that is the case it must be the only profession where 'productivity' does not count.

The growth of the police force raises another difficult point. They will, by reason of their particular and peculiar powers, become a specially privileged group in the community, above the law; in fact, they already are in many cases. When one asks the question 'Who is to police the policeman?' one gets the dusty answer, 'The police!'

As the number and powers of the police grow, so will the scandals. As the 'decent' citizen comes more into contact with the police (as has happened because of the motor car offence and in many cases through demonstrations), so the illusion of the 'wonderful British bobby' has vanished and in its place he is revealed not as the god-like, incorruptible, highly moral escort of old ladies across the road but as 'human, all too human'. One would deny the premise that 'all coppers are bastards' and claim they were the all-too-legitimate heirs and favourite sons (and daughters) of the warfare State.

The claim of the police to be 'not as other men' and so the reliable guardians of the new 'law and order' is easily deflated by the weekly revelations of their corruptibility, brutality, dishonesty which seems to be a necessity in carrying out what they self-righteously

believe is 'their duty'. Recent newspaper reports have disclosed that the two policemen who were shot dead in Glasgow (which called forth a howl from the retentionists) were shot by ex-policemen, who surely should have known better. Both these ex-policemen were wanted for bank robberies. We are told that there is a bad apple in every barrel, but do we lessen the 'baddies' by enlarging the barrel? Allegations have been made of police brutality in handling Welsh Nationalist demonstrators at the Law Courts, *Syndic* reported on a case involving a Nigerian diplomat at Brixton that the police told those they had arrested, on their journey to the police station, 'We're going to kill you, you black bastards'. In the police station, two girls, aged 16 and 17, were forced to strip. One was called a 'black cunt'. A policeman drew his truncheon, approached one of them, and said, 'Now prove you are a woman. This is the right size and colour for you, ain't it!' (This account was censored by one of *Syndic's* printers on the grounds that he didn't want trouble with the police.)

Recent weeks have seen the charge against three Hammersmith detectives for stealing £5,000 from an Indian detained at the station and Mick Jagger has alleged that cannabis was planted on him. These are obviously cases of the more law the less order.

Supposing that the law was operating fairly and there were no nasty incidents such as those at Glasgow, Brixton, Chelsea and Hammersmith, not to mention Sheffield and West-End Central of Challenor fame?—the concept of perfect justice perfectly administered is still far from the norm. The arbitrary raids at John Lennon's exhibition, Andy Warhol's film, Freedom Press two years ago, and Tony Smythe (NCCL secretary) some few weeks ago, all leave something to be desired. The capricious use of bail as a method of punishment, a punishment meted out for unorthodox political or social opinions—as evidence the Rum-bold Road and Endell Street squatters. The discriminatory transfer of the Endell Street case to Lewes Assizes (with its Home Counties' morality). The off-hand granting of search warrants on the flimsiest pretext, countered by raids entirely lacking in warrants. Can it be wondered that there is frequent commission of the offence of 'contempt of court'?

When one visits courts and assizes one is seized with a contempt for those who sit in judgement, firstly for their supine support for the police, secondly for their reactionary viewpoints (without which they would never survive on the bench) and finally, for their presumption in sitting in judgement or 'organized vengeance' as Kropotkin terms it.

We have just seen the end of an interesting case where private citizens were obviously following the demands of public 'morality' and took the law into their own hands. This was obviously a crude lynch law and since they were a gang of skinhead-type youths who had gone 'queer-bashing' on Wimbledon Common and had killed a homosexual, one of them got a life sentence, and others were heavily punished too. Is our society so tolerant of homosexuals that they could not have absorbed the unspoken thoughts of many 'decent' citizens that homosexuals should be wiped off the face of the earth? Skinheads, like many of their type, are puritanical and moralists—just like the politicians who wish to introduce a moral society. The most highly moral political regimes were those of Hitler and Stalin—apart from the question of murder, theft and lying, inseparable from the State.

Crime has little to do with morality. Morality is infinitely variable. There is

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SPAIN NOW—AND NEXT?

Meeting Organised by
ANARCHIST
BLACK CROSS

at 'FREEDOM' HALL,
84b Whitechapel High St., E.1
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15,
at 8.30 p.m.

Speakers:
Miguel Garcia Garcia
(Just out after 20 years in jail)
Stuart Christie
Chair: Albert Meltzer

