

F R E E D O M B U L L E T I N

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MELCHETT'S MEGALOMANIA

"Rationalisation" is a word that is juggled with to-day by captains of industry and Labour leaders. In the minds of many it is a path into a Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. All our post-war troubles are to vanish under its magic wand, and Great Britain's basic industries will boom again and absorb our multitude of unemployed men and women. But when we read Lord Melchett's paper on the subject, which was broadcast by deputy on November 9th, we had our doubts about the absorption of the unemployed. He says: "The great and fundamental aim of rationalisation is the regulation of production and consumption," by amalgamation into large-scale industrial units which will eventually become national in scope. This means new economies and a new efficiency in a score of different directions. The closing down of obsolete plant and machinery and of unprofitable mines and factories is one side of the process. Another is the use of every labour-saving and every fuel and power-saving device, which means a vital saving in the ratio of costs to output.

"Another factor is a point on which I have always laid great stress—the provision of research." Transport will be cheapened, and raw material purchased on a large scale will lead to still further economies. Then, again, a large combine will be able to obtain its capital from investors, or its further credit from financial houses, at a very much cheaper rate than a company operating in a small way.

Well, this looks very nice from Lord Melchett's point of view, but where do the workers come in? On this point the eloquent Melchett is silent. The human factor is not even mentioned in his paper. Perhaps we can supply the deficiency. The closing down of economic plants means more unemployed. The labour-saving devices mean still more unemployed. And as all these economies will mean a greater production by each individual worker, whose wages will be a still smaller proportion of the value of his output, the surplus in the shape of profits for the capitalist will be greater than ever. The trouble to-day is that the workers do not get enough to buy what they produce, consequently there is always a glut on the market. How the workers will fare under rationalisation goodness only knows. It is quite evident the problem does not worry Melchett. Perhaps the General Council of the Trades Union Congress can enlighten us, since they are backing the noble lord's plans.

The noble lord looks forward to the time when the whole of the production and distribution of world

industries will be controlled and directed so that the benefits flow to the whole community. You will notice that when capitalists and politicians wish to put anything shady across they always talk about its ultimate benefit to "the whole community." We know enough of these people to doubt their word on every occasion, and this is no exception to the rule. Under Lord Melchett's scheme the workers will be regarded as mere raw material for profit-making. World industries as envisaged by him mean a few people sitting in his new building at Westminster controlling the economic life of millions of workers, who will be employed or discharged just when it suits the profit-making plans of these super-capitalists. A few tame Labour leaders from Transport House close by will be kept on Melchett's payroll to help him in checking any signs of revolt in his army of slaves, but otherwise Labour's share, as usual, will be that of hewers of wood and drawers of water for a privileged few, as it has been hitherto. Some people dream dreams that come true, but we hope and trust that when the workers realise the true meaning of rationalisation Lord Melchett and his allies on the Trades Union Congress will have a rude awakening.

If reason is to be a factor in industry, the first consideration must be the welfare of the men and women engaged. They alone can tell what they want, and they alone must decide the conditions under which they will work. The profits they will seek will be a fuller life and freedom from oppression, and in seeking these profits they will be more likely to bring benefit to "the whole of the community" than all the plans of profit-making capitalists are likely to do. The Labour leaders who are co-operating with Lord Melchett must think again and more deeply than they have done up till now.

In trying to reconstruct the national industries they are putting the horse before the cart. If our unemployed men were put on the unemployed land of this country their industry alone would help to revive our industries at home, and thus automatically revive trade with foreign markets. Megalomania in industry is as illusory as it is in Imperial matters.

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NOW FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

When the numerous victories of Labour candidates in the municipal elections last November were known to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, he cried exultingly, "Now for the General Election!" His followers have also taken up the cry, and the *New Leader* recently published a series of articles by E. E. Hunter in which he analysed the prospects of Labour candidates in the constituencies and proved to his own satisfaction that the Labour Party would have a small majority. But there is an old saying about not counting your chickens before they are hatched, and we doubt whether Mr. Hunter's prophecy will come true. The agricultural districts have hardly been touched by Labour propaganda, and in such scattered constituencies it is far more difficult to get at the individual elector than in crowded industrial areas.

We cannot imagine why the workers should vote for any of the parties. The rival programmes offer them little that would help to break the chains that have ever bound them to their masters. Even if the Labour Party were to be returned in sufficient numbers to enable them to carry the main items in their programme, it would merely mean a change of masters for the workers. There is absolutely nothing in their programme or policy which, if carried into law, would enable the working men and women of this country to stand on their feet as free and independent beings, able to order their lives as they thought fit. This is the real revolution for which all thoughtful men and women are working, and many of those who up till recently have pinned their faith to the Labour Party or to the Independent Labour Party are now beginning to doubt whether this revolution is likely to be realised by either of these parties.

The outstanding feature of all social legislation of recent years has been the steady increase of officials who are appointed to carry out these reforms. Health

insurance, unemployment insurance, and all the other reforms, governmental and municipal, which have been instituted for the ostensible purpose of providing for the welfare of the working class, have brought in their train hordes of officials armed with power to pry into the homes and lives of the workers and their families. Besides these Peeping Toms there are the many thousands in Labour Exchanges and Government offices who spend their lives and the taxpayers' money in gathering statistics and compiling reports. The administration of these offices provides jobs for the hungry office-seekers of the upper and middle class, and they in their turn are whole-hearted supporters of the State which pays them. Thus every new "social reform" helps to strengthen the State machine, which is the main weapon used by the exploiting class against the workers.

A Labour Government might mean less hours of work or a slight increase of pay; it might mean raising the school age to sixteen and old-age pensions at 60. It might mean more factory legislation and more welfare schemes for the workers, and also more houses for the workers; but nothing in its policy even suggests that it will make one step forward to breaking up the age-long relationship of master and worker. The workers will still be workers, and their masters still be their masters.

Consequently, while the Labour Party and all those who are looking forward to the possibilities of power and privilege under a Labour Government may rejoice over the coming General Election, we see no reason why the workers should cross the road to vote for any candidate. Their chains have been forged by Governments and will never be broken by Governments. That must and can only be done by themselves.

DRIFTING TOWARDS WAR

In the first number of the BULLETIN to be published in 1929 it appears to me to be of paramount importance to concentrate upon what I consider to be the most vitally urgent matter for discussion by the various parties, groups and unattached thinkers who share libertarian ideas. In a very able résumé of the foreign policies of the Governments of this country and of Europe, A. G. Gardiner draws attention to what has been accepted as commonplace, the vast preparations by France for the establishment of a military domination of Europe, an attempt that may well prove to be the most formidable in history. The enormous air force, the factories turning out gas and bombs of more terrible potency for destruction than any yet known, the building of a steel wall from coast to coast, the use of black troops—all these combined are inevitably bound to issue in war.

Is it that the adherence of France to the League of Nations has resulted in a feeling of false security against the menace of war? The inability of the League to step in and prevent the opening of hostilities between the two toy countries of Bolivia and

Paraguay should sufficiently indicate the power and worth of this pinchbeck organisation.

After discussing France at length, Mr. Gardiner unaccountably dismisses a problem of far greater urgency, the problem of our relations with the United States of America, in two paragraphs. He entirely burkes the central, perhaps not yet outwardly avowed, cause of friction, merely saying: "They are drifting into a snarling and unreal antagonism." Now it is impossible to impute ignorance to so experienced and well-informed a publicist. Can it be that a ukase has gone forth against discussion of our relationship with America?

Between the peoples of this country and the people of America there is no antagonism, but, as a barrier against war, this negative fact is of no consequence whatever. The experience of 1914 proves that with the vast resources of newspaper publicity antagonism is easily aroused, the passion of the ape and the tiger are easily brought to the surface. The hush-hush policy is the policy that brings nations to destruction. The root cause of the yet scarcely voiced governmental and economic anta-

gonism is the struggle for OIL. The navies of the world are now, for all practical purposes, oil-driven. Close upon 90 per cent. of the oil output of the whole world is controlled by Great Britain. The oil fields of Mexico and the oil fields of South America are nearly all controlled by Great Britain. Unless some form of agreement can be arrived at, here is the very core of the storm centre of the near future.

I am not, I hope, unduly pessimistic, but I

THAT NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE!

Politically we are equal in this country, which means that we have equal opportunities of interfering with each other socially. Some people, not very many, have no desire to direct the lives of their fellow citizens, being indifferent to what their fellows do or leave undone, or being too busy looking after their own affairs, or because they believe that freedom of action and inaction is the best possible way of developing conditions that will serve the common good, or because they respect their fellows' consciences. Most people possess, in some degree or another, a desire of determining how their fellows shall conduct themselves. With an alarmingly large number of people this desire is urgent and insistent, and many not only possess the desire, but are possessed by it. This lust for interference used to be called the "Nonconformist Conscience." While its expression was confined mainly to the chapel and street-corner uplift meetings, it was, however obscure, comparatively harmless; now that it enjoys political power it has become a grave menace. The extension of the franchise to young women has increased its seriousness.

The passing of a Bill in Parliament into law is generally governed far less by the opposition to it than by the agitation for it, because the opposition is nearly always indifferent and passive, whereas the agitation is insistent and active. Therefore, the chances of a Bill being passed are in ratio to the

venture to prophesy that within a few years the world will be ablaze again. This conflagration will destroy the already tottering remains of our civilisation, unless by constant publicity we can stimulate the peoples to make it clear that no longer will they be the pawns, the cannon-fodder, the dumb brutes who are to be driven to death by Governments whom, up to the present, they have so signally failed to control.

A. M.

number of enfranchised persons in favour of it. The more voters, the more laws, because the more voters, the more people anxious to thrust their own version of the right conduct of life upon their fellows. The fact that the new voters recently admitted to the franchise are women accentuates the seriousness of the matter. A woman in the early twenties is, as a rule, much more inclined to support a social law than a man of the same age; she is less of an individualist, and she entertains a higher respect for the so-called rights of society.

Minority rule busies itself with matters economic; majority rule with matters social. We suffer under both these forms of government. Socialist movements, which set out to break the minority rule, Capitalism, have gained concessions here and there, but have not destroyed the ruling force, but seeks now to centralise it and absorb it into the State. Nobody thinks of questioning majority rule, which develops unimpeded. Constitutional means have proved themselves ineffectual against the minority rule of Capitalism. It may very well be that constitutional means will prove themselves equally ineffectual against majority rule, the Nonconformist conscience of the future; in which case other means will have to be found by those people who wish to lead their own lives and not the life indicated to them by the mass.

B.B.W.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

If a man prefers to be a lackey, what are you going to do about it? In this country there are hundreds of thousands of such people—gentlemen's gentlemen, butlers, footmen, grooms, housekeepers, ladies' maids, and so forth—who consider that their work is light and that they have every reason for being contented. Even more numerous are the clerks, who almost universally regard their occupation as a gentlemanly one, and are often more reactionary than their masters. Not long ago I spent some days in a country house to which some twenty members of the family had assembled from all the corners of the earth. We discussed social problems constantly, and the curious thing was that everyone professed sympathy with Socialist opinions. But all these people were Government employees, and I quickly discovered that their dominant ideal was a purified and well-regulated bureaucracy, maintaining order, for the sake of the inferior classes and the backward nationalities, throughout the world. Not one of them recognised that the wage system is, in its very essence, slavery, however

heavily gilded the chains may be. Not one of them thought it iniquitous to allow certain people, or Governments, to conquer or buy up the earth, provided they have the power or means to do it. Not one of them considered it absurd to allow ourselves to be ruled by a class whose sole claim to pre-eminence is the accident of birth. Practically every one of them was an Imperialist; as members of any bureaucracy are almost sure to be.

To me the social pyramid is at present standing, and wobbling most precariously, on its apex, and the only thing to be done with it is to set it firmly on its broad and proper base, giving all men and women equality of opportunity, abolishing all monopolies, and thereby bringing it about automatically that labour, of the kind recognised by a free society as useful, shall be the only title to reward. That is, of course, infinitely easier to talk about than do; but the only way to make any headway with it is to bring to the task clear and unbiassed minds.

Labour should be master of itself; but here again,

if Labour does not want that, what are you going to do about it? At present Labour shrinks from the responsibility of taking its affairs under its own control, and would rather entrust the running of this world to royalties, aristocracies, plutocracies, and bureaucratic officials. It prefers its present precarious position to what it deems the even greater risk and trouble that would result from assuming the management of its own life. It is even content, therefore, to accept the position of social inferiority universally assigned to it.

Our problem is to inspire the masses with a bolder ambition, and a larger understanding of the possibilities of life than that they have at present. From first to last it is a question of education in the broadest sense of that much-abused word; and, according to my reading of history, the great, and perhaps the only real, educators of the masses have been Revolutions. Then fundamental truths are dragged from the obscurity into which Authority, always opposed to change, had driven them, and their profound significance is illustrated and rooted into the consciousness of the masses by the accomplishment of actual facts. Whatever else may happen, France will never go back to feudalism, or the United States to chattel slavery, or Russia to the exclusion of the peasants from the land they cultivated so long for the profit of an idle aristocracy.

Such obstacles as those just mentioned had to be removed at any cost, for they were strangling progress. To-day there are others, equally out-of-date, and probably even more injurious; first among which I myself rank that of Land Monopoly. Our first business is surely to see for ourselves quite clearly what those obstacles are, and to get a full understanding of their perniciousness, in all its ramifications. Our second business should be, as surely, to go to the masses, share with them the knowledge we have mastered, and inspire them with the emotions it has kindled in ourselves. Without their sympathetic co-operation nothing can be accomplished.

W. C. O.

FORGOTTEN EVEN BY THE DEVIL

An interesting booklet on the life of exiles in the Turukhan District, during the regime of the Tsars, recently appeared in Russia. Its author, Yakov Shumyatski, is a prominent Bolshevik and at present public prosecutor in Moscow. He had himself been exiled in Turukhan in the time of the Romanovs.

The Turukhan District, popularly known in Russia as "Turukhanka," covers the tremendous area of 30,000 square miles in Northwestern Siberia, and is very sparsely settled by Samoyeds, Ostyaks and other primitive tribes, some of whom are still nomads. It was to "Turukhanka" that the Tsars used to exile those revolutionists whom it was intended to bury alive, literally speaking. The District was known as the place "forgotten even by the devil."

The Bolshevik Shumyatski describes life in "Turukhanka" as an existence of absolute isolation, far away from the last outposts of civilisation. It meant long winters of complete darkness, terrible arctic frosts, physical disease and mental decay. Repeatedly, Shumyatski emphasises that to be sent to "Turukhanka" was synonymous with being

doomed to slow torture ending in insanity, suicide or premature death.

Reading the booklet one wonders whether the climate of the arctic Turukhan District has changed with the accession of the Bolsheviks to power. May be the long winter night has grown lighter, the cold less severe, the terrible isolation more bearable by decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party? With never a word does Shumyatski, the Bolshevik public prosecutor of Moscow, mention that his Government, allegedly Socialist and revolutionary, keeps on sending its political opponents to the place "forgotten even by the devil," just as the Tsars had done before.

What a commentary upon the "revolutionary humaneness" of the Bolsheviks, so much praised by the Max Eastmans and similar friends of Bolshevik terrorism. Numerous men and women—Socialists, Anarchists, revolutionists of various schools—are now suffering exile in "Turukhanka," merely for opinion's sake, and under conditions even worse than those which obtained in the time of the Tsars. For the latter used to allow 15 roubles monthly for the support of an exile in the Turukhan District, while the Bolshevik Government gives only 6 roubles and 25 kopeks to the political in "Turukhanka." May the blind apologists stop and ponder over these facts.—"*Bulletin of the Relief Fund for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned or Exiled in Russia.*"

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Even if you cannot write articles or address audiences, there are other ways open to you by which you can spread Anarchist ideas. For instance, you might sell the BULLETIN or some of the excellent books and pamphlets we have in stock. We give reduced prices for quantities and would be only too pleased to send you a packet if you will tell us what you want. If you are interested, send for our list and make your own selection. The General Election is coming along and everyone will be discussing the social problem. Now is the time to push the sale of Anarchist literature. Come along, comrades.

FREEDOM GUARANTEE FUND

The principal object of this Fund is the payment of our old debt to our printers and the re-starting of FREEDOM. But in the meantime we are running this BULLETIN to keep in touch with readers and the movement, and as this sheet cannot hope to pay its way, donations and subscriptions are invited. We hope our friends will respond liberally and thus enable us to maintain one Anarchist paper, however small, in this country. Collecting sheets will be sent to comrades on request.

The following donations have been received to date (January 9th) since our last issue:—G. Bush 1s. 6d., A. T. Rogers 6s. 6d., Tatsumi Soejima 2s., G. W. Brooks 1s. 7d., A. Smith 3s. 5d., E. Richmond 10s. 6d., L. Organ 5s., J. S. R. 2s. 6d., G. P. 3s., M. B. Hope £1, S. Brooks 2s. 6d., J. H. Grigsby 8s., B. Ward 5s., G. Miller 2s. 6d., Elizabeth £2 1s. 1d., D. Dent 2s., J. Rosende 2s., L. Newman 3s., T. K. Wolfe 2s., V. G. 3s., H. F. B. 10s., C. Hansen 4s. 2d.