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# Freedom

ANARCHIST FORTNIGHTLY

"The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under a bridge, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."

—ANATOLE FRANCE

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Threepence

## CIVIL LIBERTIES ARE BEING VOTED AWAY BY GOVERNMENT

THE clauses regarding Incitement to Disaffection among Z Reservists have rightly been regarded as crucial to the general question of Civil Liberty, and we propose to consider here in more detail the arguments for and against these last. But we shall consider them in a different manner from that of our last editorial comment. There we were concerned in general terms with the whole theoretical issues involved. But now the matter has been discussed at some length in Parliament. We are therefore to gain some insight into what we may call the status of Civil Liberty in 1951: for we can now assess the attitude of Parliament, the supposed making instrument of the nation. We may as well state at once that our assessment is very disquieting. Our illustrations will be taken less from our own, specifically anarchist viewpoint: but from the expressed views of individual Members of Parliament.

In continental countries (and, we think, in America) the civil liberties of individuals have never been secure, and new laws which threaten them therefore do not raise questions of generally accepted principle. But in this country, for many years, and with especial articulation since the time of Milton, there has been a strong tradition of civil liberty. This tradition has been maintained, sometimes by individuals, sometimes by public demonstrations of feeling, and has acted as a valuable restraint upon the powers of government. It is the steady erosion of the safeguards of individual liberty which gives us so much concern to-day.

### Liberty on the Downward Slope

Turning to the debate on March 15th on the smug contention of a Member of Parliament (Mr. Grimond) implying that his party had no responsibility for the Sedition Act of 1934, Fenner Brockway pointed out that "there are three Hon. Gentlemen on benches who served terms of imprisonment under an Act introduced by a Liberal Government of 1924 onwards, which was then known as the D.O.R.A. (Defence of the Realm Act). The Hon. Gentleman's party is therefore, is responsible for the present, both for the Act of 1934 and for the amendments which will follow." In fairness, however, we must point out that since the 1934 Act was a Conservative Act, and the present one, a Labour Act, it is clear that there are forces which over-ride party principles at work. The master ones, we believe are increasing militarisation on the one hand, and increasing centralisation on the other.

Another member, Mr. MacColl, pointed to the rapid decay of civil liberty in recent years. (Mr. Sydney Silverman made the same point with regard to increasing powers of search.) Mr. MacColl declared: "I

think it broadly true to say that since the time of Lord Camden the Executive has always been trying to extend the right of search." He went on to quote a notorious clause in the Criminal Justice Administration Bill of 1925 which was rejected after strong opposition from both sides of the then strongly Conservative House. "Since then," he continued, "we have unfortunately had the 1934 Act . . . and it really illustrates the point that once you lose the Battle for Civil Liberty, you have lost it for a very long time."

The same member described the 1934 Act as containing "some very vicious provisions" and pointed out that the Labour Party, including the Prime Minister, had voted against it at the time

because "it was considered to be a very vicious Act". (Mr. Emrys Hughes had made the same point.) But the dangers to Civil Liberty were grimly underlined by Mr. Sydney Silverman—who throughout these debates has shown himself to be by far the most determined and eloquent champion of civil rights. "Those who know the 1934 Act and the discussion upon it," he said, "will remember that that was described as a very serious new inroad into civil liberty; and that was perfectly right. Some 17 years have now gone by since then and, in matters of liberty, as in economic matters, there is a kind of Gresham's Law—the worse principle gradually displacing the better, until somehow or other, one becomes so accustomed to the new situation that one's standards and ideals are lowered. Then, when new things are introduced to bring them lower, they pass by almost unnoticed without the committee seeing a further inroad being made."

These citations will serve to show that general principles of liberty are at stake.

The Attorney-General consistently blocked in committee, any attempts to prevent abuses under the terms of the new clause. One of these relates to the possession of documents which if given to someone liable for Z call-up might disclose the names of those who are affected. Mr. MacColl described "the real mischief of this sub-section" as that "it makes very alarming departures from the normal practice of the law. It makes possession of a document in itself an offence and not the publication of that document. According to the sub-section if one has in one's possession a document

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## 1305: Class Legislation

AT the Trade Union Congress last September, two and a half million votes were cast in favour of a motion demanding the withdrawal of Order 1305, which prohibits strikes without 21 days' notice and makes arbitration compulsory.

But to date, there seems to have been no protest from the T.U.C. against the two instances when the Order has been used by the Government to prosecute unofficial strikers. (The first time against 10 gas workers last November; secondly, the current prosecution against 7 dockers.) Instead, the Union bosses are conferring with Aneurin Bevan, new Minister of Labour, pleading for the amendment of the Order, and proposing instead a provision to allow unions and employees to choose arbitration voluntarily.

It is said that Bevan "does not like" the Order and is in favour of abolishing it, leaving it to the unions to exert their "moral authority" over any strikers. There is no indication, however, that his dislike of 1305 has made him do anything to prevent the launching or the continuation of the prosecution of the dockers. Mr. Bevan may not like the Order, but while it is there he is obviously prepared to use it. From his point of view, incidentally, it is unfortunate that he should have stepped into the job of Minister of Labour at an awkward moment—at a time when feeling is running high against the Government's attack on workers' rights. From our point of view, however, it is quite convenient, for it saves a lot of confusion for it to be made clear from the start just where a man stands.

Nye Bevan is looked upon as the firebrand of the Cabinet. His famous "vermin" speech against the Tories, his attacks on employers, have made many workers look upon him as their champion against the bosses. But there is nothing so effective for cooling down a firebrand

as putting him in office, and there should be no illusions that when the occasion demands it, Bevan will call in the troops to break strikes, as George Isaacs did, and will use repressive legislation against the workers, as Ernest Bevin did in the same job in wartime.

In that connection, it is interesting to remember now, when the Communist Party are supporting the anti-1305 agitation, that when Bevin introduced his similar Order IAA and prosecuted the Trotskyites in 1944 for inciting a strike in Newcastle, the Stalinists gave him their whole-hearted support.

Nor should there be any confusion with regard to the T.U.C.'s desire to ease 1305. The official union leaders are getting more and more discredited among the rank and file, and in order to put up a show, they are now following on the popular feeling and, like any politicians, casting in on the issues of the moment. Just as the wage freeze was abolished in practice by rank and file action first and then declared null and void by the T.U.C., afterwards, so the workers are leading the leaders into a position where they must save their face by doing something or be completely exposed.

### The Bosses Get Away With It

For this Order 1305 is being so blatantly used purely as anti-working class legislation that, however much in private they don't object to it, the union leaders cannot openly support it. The Regulation is, in law, binding on both employers and workers, yet there have been plenty of examples of employers contravening it with impunity and not one of a prosecution against them.

Recently, there has been a spate of dismissals by firms where the workers have been bringing pressure to bear in support of wage claims. Throughout the engineering industry, a national wage agreement made between the unions and the bosses has caused dissatisfaction among the workers affected. (Just as the dockers and the railmen could not accept the terms agreed upon by their "representatives"). So engineers have been working to rule, banning overtime and piece work, and doing no more than legally bound. In many cases the bosses' answer has been wholesale sackings—260 at Kearns', Altrincham, 1,000 at Tweedales and Smalley, Castledon, 700 at Victoria Machine Tool Co., Willesden, 800 at Rochdale and at other firms hundreds of workers have been dismissed.

No 21 days' notice of dispute to the Ministry of Labour. No arbitration in accordance with Order 1305. And no wonder the workers are seeing this legislation as a weapon which is only used against them while, in the sacred name of "production", the bosses get away with it.

### The Real Struggle

Anarchists have always shown how the law is a weapon of the ruling class. The emancipation of the workers will never be gained through legislation, for legislation implies someone to make, interpret and enforce the law, and that implies the existence of the State. The struggle today is hardening and clarifying—it is becoming more and more clearly a case of the workers versus the State. In these circumstances, the political ideologies which have for so long led the workers into reformist, parliamentary channels can be seen for what they are—deviations from the real issues. And the real struggle is yet to come. P.S.

## 300,000 in Barcelona General Strike TROOPS FIRE ON DEMONSTRATORS

AS we go to Press, news comes of widespread unrest in Catalonia. First signs occurred last week when a successful boycott of trams in Barcelona, following an increase of 14 per cent. in fares, resulted in the Company withdrawing the surcharge.

On Monday last, a general strike of 300,000 workers paralysed Barcelona. Three other industrial centres, Badalona, Tarrasa and Sabadell soon followed Barcelona's lead.

Troops with pistols and rifles broke up demonstrations in the main streets, whilst armed guards outside the Provincial Governor's palace charged the people with batons. The Governor has called for urgent reinforcements from Saragossa, 200 miles away, while the Madrid government has issued a communique to the effect that it has "more than enough means to crush the demonstration". First reports give the casualties as three killed and six wounded.

Reuter's correspondent describes the demonstrations in the following terms: "Crowds of housewives and workers marched through the streets here to-day in protest against the rising cost of living. This morning workers began a sit-down strike and mobs punctured the tyres of cars, taxis, and buses. Stands were overturned in the market-place and a large crowd gathered outside the council offices where the council was sitting. Rags soaked with petrol were

thrown through the windows, followed by blazing balls of paper.

"Resistance against the rising cost of living provided welcome public support for the demonstration and crowds quickly gathered before the Town Hall and outside the Food Price Control offices as the strike was joined by office workers, bar tenders, market stall-

holders, and people from almost all business staffs."

All government spokesmen have blamed the demonstration on to "Communist agitators". Any anti-Franco activity is always referred to as "Communist" and the importance to Franco that this should be accepted at its face value is only too obvious in a world on the verge of "Communist" hysteria. As an example of the loose way the term "Communist" is used in Spain to-day, one must quote the remarks of the Civil Governor of Barcelona who said that "today's incidents have been provoked by professional Communist agitators interested in causing trouble. Barcelona residents had sad memories from other days of Communist activities". A reference to July 19th, 1936, when the workers of defeated the military rising. But it is a fact, denied by no-one, not even the Communists at the time, that the Communist Party virtually did not exist in Catalonia.

It is impossible to say whether the Barcelona unrest is the beginning of the end of Franco's régime. Last time, Franco was able to count on Hitler and Mussolini; and we have no doubt that this time, when Franco sees that the situation is too much for him, he will look to America and the Western Powers to help him resist the will of the people. He will try to convince them that he is resisting "Communism". It is the duty of all friends of the Spanish people to make sure that Spain does not become a second Korea. R.

### Deserter who gave himself up gets 18 months

A soldier in the Army Catering Corps, who had been absent from his unit for over six years and who voluntarily surrendered at Maidstone on February 12th, was at an Aldershot court-martial sentenced to eighteen months' detention for desertion while on active service.

He told the Court that on the application of his wife's doctor he was granted fourteen days' compassionate leave while he was in Holland in January, 1945. When he arrived home at Lewisham he found his house had been bombed and his family dispersed. A week later he learned that his wife was in hospital in Watford. He had no ration or identification cards, and made a living by selling second-hand clothing from door to door. He was afraid to visit his wife except by night in case he was recognised. Eventually he surrendered and handed in all his military equipment intact.

It is not surprising that in spite of the Government's appeals to deserters to give themselves up there are still several thousand on the run who don't believe the Government's promise of leniency. At the same time the Government continues to refuse an amnesty for wartime deserters.

## HOPE & DESPAIR AT BRIAR PATCH

THE case of Mr. Leslie Kirby, a carpenter whose family were bombed out in 1940 and lived for several years in lodgings and in a caravan, vainly searched for a place of their own until he bought a plot of land "Briar Patch" and built his own bungalow of second-hand bricks and timber, was discussed at length in Freedom at the time (29/5/1948). Because the house was built without the Council's consent, they gave him notice that it would be demolished and the materials sold to pay for the demolition. After the garage had been taken down, the workmen refused to go on with the job and one of the men sent to cut the water and electricity supplies asked for his cards. The case came into the news again this month when Mr. Kirby sued the Rural District Council, the Berkshire County Council and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. The barrister appearing for Mr. Kirby said that if the defendants would say that the bungalow would be permitted to remain up for a reasonable period, Mr. Kirby would be prepared to withdraw the case. Although he was claiming damages, the

object of his action was to try to preserve his home.

Mr. Kirby lost his case, the total cost of which is estimated at more than £4,000.

He stated that he is already in debt for more than £500.

The only alternative accommodation which the Council can offer him is a Nissen hut which the Judge described as "adequate, if unattractive", though a surveyor who had inspected Briar Patch and the hatted camp said: "The difference between Briar Patch and the hut the council offered is the difference between hope and despair."

The authorities are legally in the right, of course, but what moral right can possibly be claimed for depriving this family of the home they provided by their own efforts, when because of our economic system which devotes its productive efforts to armaments and exports, with housing a good way down the list, the only alternative is an old corrugated iron army hut? Would Mr. Kirby be so desperately anxious to hold on to his home-made home if he had the slightest chance of getting anything better?

LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

PUBLIC MEETING

PRACTICAL ACTION AGAINST WAR

at the Large Holborn Hall

on Wednesday, 28th March, at 7.30 p.m.

Speakers: ALEX COMFORT, TONY GIBSON, JIMMY RAESIDE, F. A. RIDLEY.

Chairman: Philip Sansom

**'Sociality' & 'Social Cohesion' in Russia**

THE first instalment of Alex Comfort's article ("The Social Psychiatry of Communism," in *Freedom*, Nov. 25th and Dec. 9th) struck me as containing much truth, and my only disappointment was that he did not further document his psychological distinction between late-capitalist totalitarianism and Stalinist totalitarianism, or attempt to deal with the variety of ideology within each society. Since both systems are at an opposite pole from anarchism, it is a little reassuring to think of Russia as *nothing more than* fascism, for we have gotten to "know" fascism, have seen it tend to destroy itself, and have seen it destroyed. But our understanding would suffer; and it would not be encouraging to think that our propaganda would thrive in the long run on such simplification.

But after reading the whole article I feel that I want to comment on three aspects of it: (1) Comfort's puzzling state-ments about "sociality" and "social cohesion" in Russia; (2) his rejection of political struggle; (3) his notion of applying psychiatric methods and theories to politics ("social psychiatry"). (I am not pretending to discuss his total thesis.)

(1) I believe Comfort makes a serious error in using interchangeable a number of suggestive phrases intended to describe the nature of Russian social living: "social solidarity," "social cohesion," "primary social cohesion," "sociality." Against these he sets the notorious aloneness of individuals in western society. For example:

The combination of sociality with absolutism has far greater power of this kind [cultural assimilation] than any group which lacks primary social cohesion—our own and American society do at the present time lack that type of cohesion, the individual in them is far more isolated.

And further on he implies that the "sociality" of the Soviet Union is substantially the same as the "sociality" of a free society: the differentiating characteristic is "intellectual liberty" (by which Comfort must surely mean to refer to the political liberties and the absence of centralized power):

Since the Revolution a stream of visitors to Russia have come back depicting the Communist culture-pattern as either heaven or hell. These views are not incompatible or necessarily propagandist. It is apt to appear as heaven to those individuals who feel more need for social cohesion than for intellectual liberty, and as hell to those who prefer intellectual freedom to sociality. The objective of anarchism has been, and still is, by definition, to secure both.

But can it be—even disregarding the questions of freedom and power—can it be that the sort of social living that exists in Russia is essentially what anarchy is!

For the sake of clarity, I am going to use the terms *sociality* and *social cohesion* in contrasting senses (I am not acquainted with the sociological jargon). *Sociality* I take to refer to the basic desire—probably biological—of human beings for intimate, trustful and co-operative social relationships with each other; not to be alone and lonely, to touch one another, and to be physically close. It is near-allied to, if not identical with, love and mutual aid. It has an urgency, and a near-enough biological origin (warmth) to warrant our ranking it—after the sheer survival drives—with the need for affection, the need for sexual love, the need for creative and demanding work. With liberty, sociality is the cornerstone of anarchism, and a strong motive of our anarchist dream; given these, the remainder would surely follow.

Now, sociality is intimate, personal. We may extend it to a visitor not to an unknown citizen of a distant city. In a free society, a wide sense of solidarity and spirit of co-operation would most likely depend on knowledge of the plain advantages of inter-group co-operation—practical, rational and based on expectations of reciprocity. But the natural personal communities—as opposed to communities of ideology, class, profession or flag—would be the groundwork for society-wide co-operation, the prerequisite of a sense of broad solidarity; for they would directly satisfy the need to be social and the need to have a sense of contri-

butio to a social group. (If we may use such a mechanical-sounding phrase in speaking of the free society, "social cohesion" would co-exist with society.)

Is this the case in Russia? But it seems clear that the glowing sociality of the collective farm, depicted in the Soviet cinema, is precisely what is absent in reality (if the Soviet cinema is like the American cinema, the very emphasis points to a felt lack). The risk of heresy and the threat of betrayal and punishment hide in and darken every personal relationship (the less routine, the more so); the thorough bureaucratic organisation of social activities beyond the family level practically excludes direct, interpersonal initiative; mutual trust, even within one's family, is simply dangerous. What we would have every right to expect, then, is an atomizing of society even greater than in the west; superficially, terror would seem to be the only force holding the society together.

But something additional occurs in Russia, which compensates—in a way—for the lack of primary social feelings, and blurs the total picture. This we may rightly call "social cohesion"; or even more properly "societal cohesion"; namely, the binding of the citizens together as the subjects of one State, through their sense of belonging to the society and being useful in it, of having State-validated social prestige, of being part of a great theomorphic power.

To clarify this, let us try to make some sense of the psychology of power. I think most of the psychologists, in varying language, mean something like this: The desire for power—that is, for ability to pursue one's desires—is a perfectly normal and necessary human desire. So also is the desire to be loved and esteemed by one's friends. But the drive to power and prestige, and the need to be reassured of one's worth by visible tokens, results from an inculcated sense of unworthiness and powerlessness. (Originally, the childish desires which the parents disapproved were sacrificed for the sake of their approval and love; but these desires usually continued to exist, in "dissociation" from consciousness, and this dark-

and buried side of oneself, and the not-quite-averted disapproval, impose a conviction of unworthiness; while the child's inability to resist the parents' disapproval—he cannot forego their love—enforces a conviction of powerlessness. He is then constantly seeking to convince the world that this is not true, and to wrest invisible disproofs from the world. The present attitudes of parents make this pattern, in varying degree, almost the rule.) Hence the magnetism of ideologies which deny the individual's power and worth *except as he is associated with them*; for the individual's constant pretenses to himself never reassure him once and for all.\*

The cruel barrier between persons in western society is the dread of self-revelation and of inability to compel the others to accept the desired picture of oneself. As if this were not enough, there is also the direct rivalries, in conditions of scarcity, for power and domination; and further—still not enough!—the unreliability and ephemeral nature of the social-prestige mechanisms and of the available group-validations of oneself (one's friends, wealth, social position). But it is a central part of the analysis of every State, everywhere, that in time of war it tends to acquire the rôle of validator of the individual, handing out impartially to each loyal subject a sense of usefulness and citizenship.

Such validation of the individual the Russian system certainly offers, at least to many of its subjects. They are producers, and producers are valued by the State; the warrior, until recently a figure respected only in war-time in the west, has a similar status. Those with initiative and aggressiveness may rise within the system—without without risk, but the risk of catastrophe is different from constant insurmountable frustrating obstacles. The monolithic structure simplifies, and perhaps tends to stabilise, the hierarchies of

\* I am assuming that the "basic" problems of persons in "the west" are substantially the same—an assumption one would not dare to make with respect to the eastern countries. I think I have remained within limits that justify such an assumption. Obviously, to penetrate the Soviet situation more deeply, the non-European traditions of pre-19th century Russia would have to be investigated.

prestige; the citizen is not involved in an unrelenting war against his neighbours, and the ideology glorifies the humblest position perhaps more than the highest. Finally, the State, by means of the quasi-religious idealism of Communism, offers the individual a sense of participation in a vast system of power, of participating in History. Thus we would infer the prestige-centred anxieties of the west to be less common. The individual is relieved of his sense of unworthiness, and is perhaps enabled to ignore his loneliness; but the State by this process binds to it the individual, for whom the disappearance of the State would signal disaster.

If the State could indeed close the circle, and restore a first-level sense of solidarity, it would be invulnerable. But this may be its fatal weakness: In many religious systems, the fatherhood of god leads back to the brotherhood of man: not an anarchist sort of brotherhood, which is without mediator; but a great sense of identification with the brother (though not knowledge and awareness) and love (though probably not friendship). Such a sense of solidarity, so long as dependent on the State, would be valuable to the latter, and many of the major ceremonial of the Soviet Union are probably intended to instil it. But the person's need for constant alertness against betrayal by his neighbours, the unpredictability of dogma and the arbitrary ex post facto nature of law and punishment, the authoritarian direction of all forms of co-operation—not to mention the fact that Russia is not a homogeneous society and that the citizens are not only in their helplessness before an eternal impersonal State—make it hard to believe that even such a social second-remove could develop for Russia. What is instilled is the comradeship.

But none of this is the sort of solidarity with which anarchism has to do; secondary sociality for the purpose of mitigating anxiety and fortifying the resolutions of the contradictions of a bureaucratic system. Let us not concede that the Soviet Union has done more to solve another of the secondary problems of western society (the tendency toward internal struggle and disruption). If it has done that. In the absence of evidence about Russia, we must do a great deal on our knowledge of bureaucracy elsewhere, and we do not know to be so efficient, rife as it ordinarily is with sadistic and power drives that vent an approach to the authoritarian ideal of social cohesion and bureaucratic efficiency. And, so far as Russia is concerned, the excessive violence, for its necessity to impose a *modus vivendi* on its subjects, is not explained by its need in the heart of Russia the dictatorship is as ruthless as ever in the past; I think we should look in the sociology of the sources of the politics.)

New York

DAVID WOODCOCK

(To be concluded.)

**A NEW STUDY ON GODWIN**Reviewed by George Woodcock  
(Author of *William Godwin—A Biographical Study*)

**WILLIAM GODWIN: A Study in Liberalism** by David Fleisher. (Allen & Unwin, 12/6)

THE study of William Godwin has in recent years been undergoing an important revival, both in England and also in North America, from which came the magnificent University of Toronto definitive edition of *Political Justice* five years ago. The latest addition to this new accumulation of material is David Fleisher's book, *William Godwin, a Study in Liberalism*.

This is slight, and in some respects a rather superficial study. The first chapters are devoted to a summary of Godwin's career, but this is rather too briefly and pedestrianly discussed, and is hardly likely to satisfy those who are anxious for a full biographical and psychological portrait. Indeed, since the main object of the book is a study of Godwin's ideas, the author might have done better to have left out a biographical section which adds no new material and opens out no fresh or penetrating view of Godwin's life as a background to his ideas.

The analytical chapters tend to deal with the ideas expressed in *Political Justice* rather from a detached philosophical point of view than with reference to Godwin's rôle as a profound social critic in the context of his age. It is, of course, necessary that Godwin's ideas should be discussed from every aspect, but Mr. Fleisher does tend to lose sight of Godwin's intention, which was primarily not to write a philosophical treatise, but to direct his thought to a criticism of social institutions, intended as a radical and complete refutation of the conservative doctrines of Burke and other enemies of the revolutionary ideas of the day. One may concede to Godwin's critics that much of the philosophical basis of *Political Justice* has been invalidated by experience and by the development of modern psychological science. Yet it can also be contended that, while the rather naive reliance on reason which marred Godwin's arguments has been found untenable, along with many of the other assumptions which he shared with the radical thinkers of his time, the devastating criticism of government and other positive institutions at which he arrived has only been strengthened by the psychological and sociological knowledge which has succeeded his own outdated philosophy.

As is inevitable in any discussion of Godwin's ideas at the present day, Mr. Fleisher's criticism is centered round Godwin's theories of necessity and of perfectibility. Godwin held that reason, once it is allowed to function freely, is bound to produce beneficial results and to take precedence over other impulses. If a man were in error he would necessarily act wrongly, and therefore he could not be blamed for his actions, since those institutions and circumstances which kept him from using his reason must be held responsible. On the other hand, if reason were uninhibited by external forces, it would necessarily triumph over error and all the evil impulses to which man is subject in a state of restraint. Man, once his reason was set free, had the power of an indefinite and continuous development towards perfection, and similarly society had this tendency and must advance in the process of time towards a better condition. These ideas were in line with the concept of inevitable progress which was current all through the nineteenth century. Godwin modified them a little during his life, but though, unfortunately, he never set himself to write a systematic discussion on his later philosophy, it is reasonable to say that the changes were in detail rather than in substance.

To-day all these doctrines have a musty flavour. Inevitable progress and all the similar ideas spawned by the various determinist philosophies has been disproved by the massive logic of events. We know that reason alone is not all

powerful, and that irrational feelings and potent instincts play an inevitable and perhaps preponderant part in our lives and in that of society. On the other hand, it seems more certain than ever that restraint, and all those institutional manifestations of it which Godwin criticised, are the principal motivants of social violence, and that man, whether by reason or by feeling, has a natural tendency to live at peace and to develop his faculties when he is left alone. However erroneous they may have been the philosophical basis from which Godwin set out—and it is not quite so erroneous as Fleisher suggests—he must be given the credit for having been the first man both to realise completely and to state in systematic and memorable terms the harm done to mankind by power and government and the fact that equality, justice and the good life can only exist in a completely free society.

In the end, after discussing them too cursorily in the main part of his book, Fleisher does pay tribute to the positive contributions of Godwin's thought, in the following terms:

"He had an astonishingly clear conception of the ways in which freedom

"Each is more valuable than All."

BUT unfortunately nowadays a young man of intelligence, out of fear, out of indolence, prefers a ready-made, reach-me-down solution, which some party or other will not fail to offer him forthwith. I bear witness that it is extraordinarily difficult for him to resist this temptation—the arguments which are present to him have such an appearance of nobility! To defend himself he needs the most difficult kind of courage—the courage of appearing (and in his own eyes, too) to prefer himself and his own personality to a cause in which the welfare, the happiness, the salvation of everyone are at stake. He is unable to struggle against the sophisms which are aimed at him, if he has not first of all and in solitude long reflected on this momentous question—what is for me the most important thing in life?—and if he has not dared to answer resolutely: 'Myself!'

—André Gide's *Reflections* on being 80. (Picture Post, 3/3/51)

is endangered by political institutions. He traced the insidious effects of force and propaganda, the gradual stereotyping of the mind, the gradual corruption of the moral sense. He appreciated the static power of institutions, their inertia, which chains the future to the past. No society can ignore these truths but at its peril. Godwin advocated a simplification of governmental structure and a reduction in the extensiveness of its jurisdiction. Modern conditions make this impossible. Governments appear likely to grow more complex and more far-reaching. Perhaps a palliative may be found, however, as some contemporary thinkers believe, in a decentralisation of authority of certain kinds."

In fact, Fleisher's own fatalistic belief in the impossibility of ending government or of reducing its scope represents just the kind of determinism which he chooses to criticise in Godwin—except that Godwin, however much he may at times have advocated gradualism, was never so resigned to necessity as to believe that the human spirit could not free itself from the chains which bind it and the institutions which distort it. To-day we recognise that progress is not inevitable; neither fortunately, is its opposite. The one can be achieved, and the other defeated, by the human will, but the struggle, as Godwin himself would not have admitted in his latter days, will not be so simple or so easily won as one might think from reading *Political Justice*.

Two final criticisms. The subtitle of Mr. Fleisher's book—*A Study of Liberalism*—while doubtless a suitable indication of the author's own attitude, does not fairly represent Godwin. Whatever his shortcomings, Godwin was a revolutionary, and not a liberal, but to imagine that man could be set free by parliaments and legislation, and he rejected with indignation the liberal-democratic belief in the rule of the majority. Nor is it correct to say that *Political Justice* "belongs to the literature of utopias". *Political Justice* is, first and foremost, a straightforward political examination of the structure of society, developing into a libertarian social theory. Godwin makes certain suggestions for the organisation of a free society in its early stages, but, like most of the anarchists, he was averse from the detailed plans in which the true Utopians delight. In his criticism of the theory of Social Contract, he declared roundly that we have no right to speak for our descendants, and any thoughts of creating the plan of a social system to which men would work after they had become free was far from his mind. He would, in fact, have regarded it as a repugnant infringement on their independence of judgment.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

**Theatre****The Consul**

"The Consul" by Gian Carlo Menotti, at the Cambridge Theatre is a tragedy which must be the common experience, in some degree, of a great many men and women to-day.

The opera is concerned primarily with the futile efforts of the wife of a revolutionary who has made his escape from the Secret Police, to rejoin him across the frontier, together with her baby son and the man's mother. All her efforts are balked—first by the coldly efficient secretary at the Consulate who screens all applicants for visas and demands endless forms and documents, and then by the realisation that the Secret Police are, in fact, hand-in-glove with the Consul who, in any case, is more concerned with attending banquets than with the fate of those who throng the Consulate's waiting-room.

There are one or two aspects of the story which call for some criticism, chiefly the prevailing hopelessness and lack of resourcefulness on the part of the revolutionary's comrades in the underground organisation, and a rather naive belief, for a revolutionary, that this Consulate in particular could be of much value anyhow.

But considered symbolically—that the Consul represents bureaucratic power deliberately engaged in the obstruction and persecution of those desperate fugitives and other unfortunate who apply there for help—it is very telling indeed, and the whole thing is so well done, and the acting and singing so very good, that the essential points—the basic corruption of bureaucracy and its tragic effect on those enmeshed by it—are relentlessly brought out with all their grim implications for us to-day.

R.S.

**FREEDOM BOOKSHOP**

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W.C.1

GIVE A DOG A BAD NAME...

EXCEPT in Quebec, where the Padlock Law is being invoked with renewed vigour against all kinds of radicals, and even such respectable sects as the Baptists are being persecuted by the Church-State alliance, there is no legislation specifically against the Communists in Canada.

Many Canadians sincerely believe that there is indeed no political discrimination in their country, just as those who are ignorant of the state of affairs in Quebec believe that there is no anti-Semitism.

In fact, however, even apart from the regular raids on the premises of local groups which the Quebec police carry out under the Padlock Law, there is plenty of evidence that the campaign of smear accusations being carried on, in order to frighten the general public for the persecution of Communists and probably also more genuine radicals at the time is opportune. It is particularly significant that hardly a day goes by without some attempt to fix the minds of the people that it is the work of sabotage, by Communists or

Recently, for instance, the \$3,000,000 Messis Bridge over the St. Lawrence River at Three Rivers collapsed, causing a considerable loss of life. Immediately the reactionary Premier of Quebec announced that it was the work of sabotage and that he would order an investigation to find out (note the accusation came before the investigation). The Mayor of Outremont, another large Quebec town, happened to be travelling in Western Canada at the time, took up the matter, and began delivering statements to the effect that it was certainly a case of Communist sabotage. He came the denouement; the Mayor of Three Rivers itself denied the theories of sabotage and said the collapse of the bridge was caused purely through bad construction. And, in the discussion that followed it came out that the former Minister of Quebec had forwarded the contract for the bridge directly to an engineering firm without putting the job up for tender, that already the bridge had been repaired because of defective steelwork, and that the concrete work had been cracking for some time. In other words, the authorities needed a cover up for their own shortcomings and chose the Communists as a suitable scapegoat.

In British Columbia, about three weeks back, there was a fire which

destroyed a wing of the provincial penitentiary at New Westminster. A number of Doukhobors are imprisoned here, so the Warden of the jail immediately issued a statement saying "Doukhobors are obviously to blame. I'll hold an immediate investigation." Again the accusation before the enquiry. Doukhobors, of course, are traditional scapegoats in Western Canada. They are Russians, and, though they are very far from Stalinists, they have radical ideas. So a smear against them will always help to increase anti-Russian feeling and the general prejudice against radicals.

The other day at the cinema I saw a Canadian newsreel of the latest serious railway accident in the United States. To anybody who had studied the more detailed press reports of this incident, and who knew anything of railway working, it was clear that the responsibility was entirely that of the railway company, which had failed to place a warning light to tell the driver to slow down at a temporary trestle bridge which had been built on a sharp curve. However, in the whole of the newsreel no mention was made of this, and the reporter ended by saying that the F.B.I. was investigating the possibility of sabotage. Sabotage by whom? By now the well-indoctrinated filmgoer will fill in the blank with the word "Reds".

The disgusting thing about these three instances is that in none of them, at the time when the suggestion of sabotage was put into people's minds, was there any actual evidence that sabotage had taken place, while in at least two instances it was clear that the accidents had been caused by negligence on the part of the responsible authorities. But, as has been shown by the success of that almost unbelievable black-guard, Joe McCarthy, if you throw enough mud at a man, some will stick. On the same principle, Canadians in authority are busy putting in people's minds the idea that Communists or their allies are responsible for any major accident that takes place. Later the accusation is shown to have no

foundation, but the association is still there in the public mind; Reds have come to be regarded as being in some dark way connected with every public disaster, and thus the way is being prepared for the day when the government finally sees fit to open up a full-scale campaign of persecution against the Communists and, more likely than not, against the real radicals and revolutionaries as well. G.W.

Australian Dispute

CANBERRA, March 5.

The Governor General, Mr. McKell, signed a proclamation under the Crimes Act to-day declaring a state of emergency on the waterfront, where the dockers have refused to work overtime. The Labour Minister, Mr. Holt, later announced, however, that action under the proclamation had been suspended in order to give the Waterside Workers Federation another opportunity on Wednesday of reviewing the overtime ban.

Under the Crimes Act it is an offence to strike or take part in a strike. The penalty is imprisonment or, in the case

of a foreigner, deportation. The Government had given warning that the Act would be used if the dockers did not resume full working to-day. If the union persists in the ban, troops will be used to do the work refused by the dockers. If this is followed by industrial disturbance, those responsible, or those who take part, will be liable to imprisonment.—Reuter.

New Zealand Strike

AUCKLAND, Feb. 28.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. Holland, said in a broadcast to the nation to-night that the Government was "as fed up as can possibly be," and the public, who were overwhelmingly workers, were sick and tired of the watersiders' behaviour. "The watersiders have declared war on the community and the Government has taken up the challenge. The rule of law must prevail."

Asserting that the strikes were part of the world-wide cold war, Mr. Holland added:

"We could capitulate to direct action—but we won't. We could let down every worker who abides by law—but we won't. We can employ other methods of keeping the people supplied with necessary food and we will."

And the troops have been called upon to do a bit of black-legging.

Keeping the Gypsies on the Move

GLOUCESTER, March 2.

Last year, Miss Ellen Wilmot-Ware, of Coombe Hall, Gloucestershire, caused a stir when she drafted, on behalf of the gypsies whom she had been allowing to camp on her land, a petition to the Convocation of Canterbury. She had been under a threat of proceedings by the Cheltenham Rural District Council, which considered her land to be unfit for a camping site.

To-day the magistrates' court here heard the council's complaints against Miss Wilmot-Ware and made two orders against her, the first requiring her to remove from her land all refuse remaining from the gypsies' occupation and to do nothing likely to cause a recurrence of the nuisance; the second forbidding her to allow those gipsy families who were on her land when the authorities were investigating the matter to camp there again. And so another temporary refuge is denied a number of Orchards, Davises, Loveridges, Smiths, and Bucklands. Miss Wilmot-Ware, who has come to be regarded as the champion of the gypsies, says that she may appeal against the decision.

What has become of the gypsies—"these people" and others—formerly encamped at Wharfe Farm? This afternoon there were few signs remaining of their stay there. They are mostly on the road again, said Miss Wilmot-Ware—always on the move, camping on a different spot at the roadside each night and in constant fear of prosecution.—(Manchester Guardian).

A MEANINGLESS SLOGAN

No Annihilation Without Representation

The Americans contended that the British Parliament had no right to tax them, since they were not represented in it, and "no taxation without representation" became the colonial slogan during the struggle (1776).

In the matter of Anglo-American relations and world politics, Professor Toynebee suggested that the British slogan in America should be: "No annihilation without representation" The Observer, 4/5/51.

PROFESSOR Arnold Toynbee's witty remark on his return from a tour of America has been frequently quoted in the past fortnight, since it aptly summarises the point of view that resents the fact that British foreign policy is being dictated by America, and that consequently we are being pushed into war. But the slogan which was probably not very seriously intended by its inventor, is really quite meaningless. If we are to be annihilated, it is of minor importance whether we are represented on the decisions that lead up to the catastrophe or not.

If we should object to decisions which result in our annihilating others or being annihilated, being made by the U.S. Government, should we not equally object to their being made by our own Government? The Government and the Opposition often talk about their electoral mandate to do that and that. Have they a mandate to make war? Mr. Dingle Foot, an old parliamentarian, points out that "it is only the minor and secondary issues which are presented to the electorate. In discussing the last General Election, he writes:

"The Government seeks and obtains a mandate to nationalise iron and steel, to mutualise industrial insurance or to take over the sugar industry. These are the kind of matters that are discussed at election meetings. But no mandate was thought necessary to sign the Atlantic treaty, to place British forces under an international command, or to spend £3,600m. on re-armament. By a kind of tacit agreement between the party leaders these matters are withdrawn from electoral controversy."

But it is not enough to say that the precept "No annihilation without repre-

sentation" should begin at home. For how can you delegate to any "representative", decisions which result in an annihilation? A vote on a matter of principle is meaningless. How can your principle be altered by a majority decision against it? The only decisions which can be delegated are those which you consider unimportant. If they are important to you, can you really trust them to a representative? The whole concept of representative government is irresponsible in principle and impossible in practise, and to apply it to what is literally a matter of life and death is absurd.

Professor Toynbee said something else far more sensible in his interview. He was asked to explain the difference between the strong pressure of public opinion which moved Congress and the Administration to demand action against China, and the notable movement towards pacifying China shown by the public opinion polls.

He replied: "Surely we are all more prudent as individuals than in the mass." Of course, he was right. And it is as individuals, and not through "representatives" that we must decide to be neither executioners nor victims.

FOREIGN COMMENTARY

Peron Closes Down 'La Prensa'

La Prensa of Buenos Aires, the daily paper which has been a thorn in the side of Argentina's dictator since he came to power in July, 1943, and which, because of its world-wide renown as a serious and independent organ of the press, has been found very difficult to suppress, has at last been closed down. Not by Peron, but by a boycott of the newsvendors' union (a Government-sponsored organisation, of course) who demand one-fifth of La Prensa's revenue from classified advertisements and exclusive rights to distribute the newspaper in Buenos Aires.

Short of suppressing La Prensa, Peron has done everything to rid himself of this critical voice. He confiscated their paper stocks, and hoped to intimidate the editor by a crippling censorship and by imposing heavy penalties (of up to 8 years' imprisonment) for publishing news which "in any way provokes public alarm or depresses the public spirit". In spite of this he did not succeed. La Prensa (which one can compare with our own Manchester Guardian) carried on just the same and, as one correspondent has written, "retained the characteristic of solid independence and dispassionate criticism with which it was endowed by its founder 82 years ago."

How Peron finally succeeded in closing down La Prensa is a painful story, for in fact his dirty work has been done for him by workers who belong to the General Confederation of Labour, the Government-backed trade unions, which claim to have a 4 million membership.

When the dispute with La Prensa began on January 26th, the newsvendors' union put an armed picket line round the building, thereby preventing the printing and editorial staff from bringing out signs of a settlement. A month passed with no sign of a settlement, and it was then that the 1,200 workers on La Prensa declared that they would print the paper at all costs. They approached the newspaper's printing works in small groups, but before they reached the building armed supporters of the newsvendors' union opened fire, killing one man and wounding fourteen others, while the police looked on. But when it was clear that La Prensa would come out in spite

of the attempts at intimidation, then the police went into action. They closed down the plant and marched off 600 Prensa employees to the nearby police station.

Following these events the Government controlled-unions called for a 15-minute token strike "in condemnation of La Prensa and a tribute to Roberto Nuñez" (the employee who was killed outside the paper's printing works by their men!) and at the same time announced a "vigorous boycott" which would range from a refusal by railwaymen to unload newsprint and ink for La Prensa to refusal by bank clerks to handle the paper's banking accounts.

DESTRUCTION IN KOREA

Unsurpassed in all his experience, says MacArthur

Donald Kingsley, United Nations Agent-General for Korean reconstruction, in an address to journalists in Washington on his return from Korea early this month, made the following, among other observations: "General MacArthur told me," he is reported as saying, "that in his whole experience of war he has never seen such destruction. Some of Northern Korea has been fought over three or four times. I have seen a lot of refugees in my time but I have never seen any more completely destitute and pitiful than the three and a half million homeless in Korea." He said that in the town of Pusan the refugees were living fifteen to twenty in a room."

One of the Peronist arguments against La Prensa is that it pays "starvation wages". Yet in the present dispute the paper has the support of all the staff and during its entire history only three employees have been dismissed and those who reach retiring age continue to draw their full pay in place of a pension.

To complete this picture of confusion we have the statement of the Minister of the Interior who declares that he cannot intervene in the dispute because "the problem is purely a labour conflict and therefore beyond the scope of the Government's intervention," and the action at about the same time of an Argentine Federal judge who ordered the closing down of the paper's offices because of "its activities against the security of the State."

BECAUSE we do not share the views of those who, on principle, glorify the workers, we can have no hesitation in supporting the Prensa's hopeless struggle against the Peron workers' unions, in spite of the fact that La Prensa is a capitalist newspaper and the newsvendors' union is composed of workers. This is a case where the workers are wrong and are being duped. When they talk of taking over the Prensa and running it "for the benefit of the workers", which is what the newsvendors' union are now saying—we can only be suspicious of their sincerity: where do the printers come in such proposals, seeing that they have been so far prevented by the violence of fellow workers who are not printers but distributors, from bringing out the paper? Quite apart from whether it is capitalist or not, La Prensa is counted as one of that small number of voices in the world to-day which refuse to distort facts at the behest of the political leaders, and which do not pander to mass appeal or bow to the dictates of big business.

In doing Peron's dirty work, those Argentinian workers who belong to his stooge unions (what is happening to-day in Buenos Aires is the history of Italian and German fascism repeating itself) are doing a great disservice to themselves by dividing the workers and thus weakening them. And by helping to muzzle the free Press are themselves forging the chains for their own servitude.

LIBERTARIAN.

Through the Press DISCOVERY

AS FAR as one can gather, even before the revolution Russia was hardly a comfortable place to live in.

John O' London's Weekly, 2/3/51.

BUSY LINE

Perhaps even those who use telephones and who are not of the Roman faith will be impressed by the announcement from Rome that the Sacred Congregation of Rights has nominated the Archangel Gabriel as "the patron saint of telephonists and telegraphists."

Manchester Guardian, 3/3/51.

BE PREPARED

Evita Peron, according to diplomatic gossip, has the largest bank account in Switzerland.

Chicago Herald-American.

STATUS QUO

In his book, Politics and Persons, Father Groszer tells a delightful story of an elderly woman who visited his church in the East End of London.

"What a pity the Vicar is so political," she exclaimed, adding as an after-thought, "The Vicar at my church is a Conservative."

"But isn't that political?" she was asked.

"Oh, no," she replied, "that's in the Prayer Book. We are told to pray for the King and his Government."

Public Opinion, 2/2/51.

FREEDOM PRESS advertisement listing various books and pamphlets such as 'M. Bakunin: MARXISM, FREEDOM & THE STATE', 'Herbert Read: EXISTENTIALISM, MARXISM & ANARCHISM', 'THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANARCHISM', 'ALEXANDER BERKMAN: A.B.C. OF ANARCHISM', 'George Woodcock: ANARCHY OR CHAOS', 'ALEX COMFORT: BARBARISM AND SEXUAL FREEDOM', 'Rudolf Rocker: NATIONALISM & CULTURE', 'John Hawterson: ILL-HEALTH, POVERTY AND THE STATE', 'Peter Kropotkin: THE STATE: ITS HISTORIC ROLE IN THE WAGE SYSTEM', 'M. L. Berneri: WORKERS IN STALIN'S RUSSIA', 'F. A. Ridley: THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MODERN AGE', 'Marie Louise Berneri Memorial Committee publications: MARIE LOUISE BERNERI 1918-1949', 'JOURNEY THROUGH UTOPIA'.

# Civil Liberties and the Reserve and Auxiliary (Training) Bill

FROM PAGE ONE

which in almost any circumstances may be a perfectly harmless document which anyone is entitled to have, but if it is a document which, if used in a certain way, might lead to the commission of an offence, it comes within the sub-section."

Now, under the new Act, the Crown has only to "prove" possession of "subversive" documents and "intent to cause disaffection—not, as we pointed out in our last issue, an actual case of disaffection—so the whole question is terribly vague. Vagueness in the law is more useful to a prosecution than to a defendant, especially in times of "crisis" and newspaper anxiety.

If a man is an opponent, not merely a Communist but holds any opposition belief, especially revolutionary ones, he is almost bound to possess opposition literature. If he is a propagandist, it is obvious that he will not be content to keep his views to himself. Hence any prosecution can claim that he "intended" to argue with a Z Reservist and this is tantamount to incitement to disaffection.

Mr. Silverman sought to limit this vagueness in an amendment to be inserted thus: "Provided that the mere possession or control of such document shall not of itself be evidence of such intent (i.e., to disaffect), nor shall the Court have regard to or be entitled to take cognizance of the political belief of any person accused hereunder for the purpose of establishing such intent."

Mr. MacColl pointed out the dangers in the word "intent". "By the time the lawyers have finished with the word 'intent', it could have a very different meaning from that which the average person thinks it has. It is a common thing in law that a person is presumed to expect the natural and probable consequences of his acts, and so forth. But by the time that unfortunate person gets into Court, he may find that the evidence of intent is different from what the ordinary layman in this Committee has thought, and that that person is regarded in law as intending consciously and advisedly to commit an offence" (Hansard, 1/3/51, col. 2456).

The Attorney-General stonewalled Mr. Silverman's above amendment. He declared that mere possession was not enough but stated the Courts would rule that evidence about a man's political beliefs was not admissible. In fact, however, they would be mentioned—they always are—and cannot help influencing a jury and indirectly bolstering up "evidence" of intent. Throughout the Committee stage, the Attorney-General displayed very much less concern for Civil Rights than the critics of the Bill and at times showed a most disagreeable superficiality, amounting almost to levity. Some Conservative members were clearly impatient of the whole attempt to consider civil liberties—Lt.-Col. Bromley Davenport spoke of the "stone-walling and boredom" of Mr. Silverman's pleas.

## Right to hold opinions, but not propagate them

In some replies the Attorney-General gave the impression that it was all right to hold the opinions views, but not to seek to persuade others of their rightness. ("I am quite sure that the possession of philosophical, religious or ethical documents would not constitute an offence...")

## Meetings and Announcements

### LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP CENTRAL LONDON

Regular Sunday evening meetings will be held in future at 7.30 p.m., at

THE PORCUPINE PUBLIC HOUSE,

corner Charing Cross Rd. and St. Newport St., next Leicester Square Underground Sta.  
MAR. 18th R. S. W. Pallard  
"REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION AND THE DEFENCE REGULATIONS"

MAR. 25th NO MEETING

APRIL 1st Jimmy Raeside  
ANARCHISM & THE POLITICIANS

### NORTH-EAST LONDON GROUP

Discussion Meetings fortnightly, 7.30 p.m. Enquiries c/o Freedom Press.

MARCH 20th Tony Gibson  
"WAYS AND MEANS OF WAR RESISTANCE"

APRIL 3rd Rita Milton  
"THE FAMILY"

### GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP INDOOR MEETINGS

EVERY SUNDAY AT 7 p.m. at the

CENTRAL HALLS, 25 Bath Street. with  
Frank Loach, John Gaffney, Eddie Shaw, J. Raeside

On this question Mr. Silverman made a very noble plea which we quote at length because of its importance (Hansard 1/3/51, col. 2491).

"A great many people throughout the ages have said that it is all right for people to uphold any cause they like as long as they do nothing about it. But people, who sincerely hold ideas to be right, will never be content merely to hold them themselves.

"It is of the nature of human beings living in society that if they regard certain ideas as the right ones and other ideas as the wrong ones, that they regard it as their duty as citizens to win converts to their views. . . . The essence of Civil Liberty very often is the liberty to preach disobedience for reasons which seem satisfactory to people who believe in Civil Liberty."

From this debate in committee it is quite clear that the Government's law officers do not believe in that kind of Civil Liberty.

## The Central Problem

Not even Mr. Silverman, however, touched on the central issue of sedition. It implicitly denies the right of individuals to hear opposition views. It assumes that individuals liable to call-up are unable to judge for themselves. Governments are no doubt distrustful of the ability of their own arguments to stand up against opposition ones. Sedition Acts remain therefore a cloak for the enforcement of unpopular measures.

Inevitably, the right of police search, the fear of possessing "dangerous" literature, the general jitteriness, will hamper opposition opinions.

Finally, the blank failure of the eloquence and sincerity of those like Mr. Silverman and Mr. Fenner Brockway who sought to "humanise" the Bill, shows how ineffective Parliament is as a field for progressive ideas.

**"These are trying times for those of us who are capable of resisting the militarist chloroform. . . . We must keep ourselves clear of all responsibility for this slaughter of workers by workers. We must not be ashamed to avow our innermost convictions; we must preserve our souls; our Internationalism must remain intact and untarnished."**

HERBERT MORRISON  
(10/9/14)

# "Practical Action Against War"

THE Central London Anarchist Group have arranged another anti-war meeting for March 29th, at the Holborn Hall, Grays Inn Road (further details elsewhere). Among the speakers will be Alex Comfort, Frank Ridley, Tony Gibson and our Glasgow comrade Jimmy Raeside. This is the second meeting of a series

## The Man who no longer existed in eyes of Law

A GOOD many years ago, B. Traven wrote a novel, *The Death Ship*, about the adventures of a sailor who as a result of losing his papers was stranded in Europe and, since, for that reason he had ceased legally to exist, was shovelled about Europe from country to country in and out of jail. The book was republished last year as a two-shilling "Pan" book (reviewed in *Freedom*, 14/10/50), and though it now seems like a prophetic allegory of the fate of millions, received little attention in the press. But the relevance of Traven's story in its original context is shown by a report in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which, apart from its happy ending, is an uncanny parallel of the fate of the hero of *The Death Ship*. A sailor from the Argentine lost his papers, including his passport, birth certificate and seaman's book when on shore leave in Italy.

"No longer existing in the eyes of the law, he set out on a long pilgrimage in quest of an official rebirth. "Claiming to have been born in Switzerland, he was sent first to Berne. From there the authorities pushed him on to France, to Belgium, and at last to Luxembourg. Growing tired of this ghost-like existence he slipped away on his own and hid—shipped to Bremen where, with the help of the Americans, he finally got a new birth certificate from Berne."

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* remarks that "it took him fourteen months' hard work to obtain what he had originally received gratuitously after waiting only nine months."

\* Obtainable from Freedom Bookshop.

# LETTERS:

I FEEL I must comment on the letter headed "Power, Freedom and Personality" which appeared in your last issue, especially as it was above the excellent and partly divergent article by *Germinal*.

It would appear that Bob Lindon should be, perfectly happy in present day society, as in the main his opinions are not the exception but the normal outlook. To-day, in this country at least, few people pay more than lip service to ideals, the majority having a completely cynical attitude towards all forms of altruism. If the impulse to work for the common good ever existed it is fast dying, in fact, the slogan of to-day may well be "What's in it for me?"—a motto which appears to be that of the "Complete Landon Man" also.

By all means let us keep our belief in the right of the individual to act as he pleases, but with the proviso that in so doing, in gratifying your admittedly selfish impulses you do the minimum of harm to any other individual or to the community. I do not know how far it is possible to "tolerate the intolerant", but exaltation of self can so easily lead to intolerance. Let us be careful that, if it is our aim to become complete iconoclasts, we do not merely set up another religion, the worship of self.

I, too, believe that man is a social animal and would, in a sane society get pleasure from helping his fellow, but we must remember that life-to-day is still governed by the code of barbarism, as a glance at the political set-up in Russia or a re-reading of the report of the Nuremberg trials will show; assuming that we prefer to disregard the examples nearer home. Is this heritage of barbarism best countered by a doctrine of self, everyone doing "exactly what pleases him and no more"? The road may well be a long one.

No, comrade, truth, justice and freedom may be ideals which they cannot be dismissed as "mere abstractions". If our aim is to be the creation of a saner and happier way of life for all mankind, I believe that the work of the individual lies in the formation of free unions with others, working consciously together towards a clearly understood common goal, and not in the mere gratification of one's self-inflated ego.

LONDON. EDGAR PRIDDY.

I DO not quarrel with the central thesis of *Germinal's* article, "Organisation". I agree that "organisation is essential to social life". But as an example of organisation he writes of "workers organising production in a factory" deciding "what is to be produced, how it is to be produced, and who would be the best persons to perform the various jobs necessary to the process of production". This is shallow writing if not shallow thinking. If the workers in a factory which has been producing woollen under-

wear suddenly decide that they would rather produce cigarette lighters, hundreds of people might die of cold. Not that I am saying that any body of men is likely to be as irresponsible as that; but I am saying that the actual producers are not necessarily the best people to decide either what is to be produced, how it is to be produced, or who should do what in producing it. If I worked in a motor car factory I would not expect to have any say in who was to design the cars unless I knew quite a lot about car designing. What I would expect to have a say in is how many hours I was to work, under what conditions, and (in a society based on money) how much money I would be paid. Of course, if something was wrong with the cars being produced or the production methods, those individuals responsible should be accountable to the whole body of workers, who should have the right to dismiss them. Individuals who do not agree with the majority must have the right to walk out, for only so can an organisation be voluntary.

*Germinal's* shies at the word "authority", and this seems to illustrate a great weakness in anarchist thought generally. None, to my knowledge, has yet given a satisfactory explanation of how, in practice, it is possible to organise anything without at least some sort of authority. The authority should be delegated, and those who give it should have the right to take it away again at any time. But unless individuals are authorised to use a certain amount of initiative in making decisions (though subject to cancellation or amendment) there can be no organisation and therefore no co-operation between men.

*Germinal's* quotation from Berkman says that in "the libertarian organisation . . . every member is free and equal". Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately, for in an absolute sense it must involve uniformity) nature does not recognise equality. I have not the same capacity for mathematical problems as Professor Einstein, therefore we are not equal. "In the healthy organism all parts are equally valuable," says Berkman. All parts are valuable, yes; but I would rather lose my tonsils than my eyesight, and as a mechanic in a motor car factory am I as valuable as the designer or the production manager? In so far as it is in man's power to grant equality while having regard for the varying qualities with which nature has endowed individuals, let him do so. In so far as it is in his power to grant freedom without imperiling that of others, let him do so. But let us remember that for man there is no absolute freedom and no absolute equality, only varying degrees of each.

The articles on Krupp and the Negroes and on Yugoslavia impressed me by a fairness, and a devotion to one of Bob Lindon's despised ideals—truth. They have come to regard as almost non-existent in people who acknowledge any sort of sin. I particularly admired the outspokenness of the former article. The

FREEDOM

suppression of news for political or other considerations, for that is what the bare mention of such flagrant injustice amounts to, is tantamount to condoning the crimes of executing the Negroes, and in exposing such practices *Freedom* is doing a great public service.

Incidentally, the letter from your correspondent in Wupertal, Germany, commenting on Alex Comfort's article, "The Psychiatry of Communism", is a salutary reminder of the dangers of relying too much on theory.  
LONDON. D.P.

## ONLY 7 WEEKS TO GO!

TIME marches on and the date when "Freedom" is to appear as a weekly draws nearer. The issue for April 28th will be the last of our fortnightly publications, and the next issue will appear the following week, May 5th.

To those comrades and readers who are with us in considering the appearance of an anarchist weekly as a momentous event we must say a few words, for many things have to be done during the next seven weeks.

Have you sent specimen copies of "Freedom" to your friends (enclosing subscription forms which we will gladly supply on request) and to local people who though not by any means anarchists might be interested in reading the anarchist paper?

Are local political meetings covered by "sellers", and have you organised means of introducing the paper to new readers? A reader who, as far as we have no previous experience in selling papers, writes: "You will be interested to learn that the sales representative of householders proved surprisingly well. I sold 50 in five hours from door to door during that time I visited 200—250 in a 'respectable' middle-class district. Why not also give this method a try in your area?"

Finally, the Appeal for £500. By the time the weekly appears we should have been taking an average of £50 per month, far we have received an average of £115 in less than two months. To reach the £200 by May 5th we must average £115 in less than two months. Why not also give this method a try in your area? One minority view when it recently increased its size from eight pages, asked readers to contribute no less than £400 towards the salaries of our contributors, let Bear in mind that that paper pays £3,000 in salaries alone in the course of a year! All we ask in order to double the size of "Freedom" is a guarantee of 1,000 new readers. If you want to help, please start away!

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR WEEKLY

One friend suggests it would be helpful to let readers know that the new subscription rates to "Freedom" will be in effect when it becomes a weekly. They will be as follows:

1 year (52 issues) 15/- (U.S.A. \$3.00)  
6 months (26 issues) 8/- (U.S.A. \$1.50)  
3 months (13 issues) 4/- (U.S.A. 75 cents)

SPECIAL RATES FOR 2 COPIES:  
1 year 25/- (U.S.A. \$5.00), 6 months 13/- (U.S.A. \$2.50).

SPECIAL RATES FOR 3 COPIES:  
1 year 35/- (U.S.A. \$7.00), 6 months 18/- (U.S.A. \$3.50).

(Postage included in the above rates.)  
Readers who are attracted by figures may be interested to know that 52 issues of "Freedom" contain three-quarters of a million words, or the equivalent of a book of nearly 1,500 pages; for 15/- including postage!

## Freedom — Weekly Special Appeal

February 23rd to March 7th:  
Gosport: F.G. 5/-; London: W.E.D. 15/-; York: H.A.A. 12/-; Bredhurst: W.S. 10/-; Ann Arbor: A.I. £1/8/0; Cambridge: C.L.D. 5/-; "Man" Group, per J.S. £8/0/8; Bournemouth: D.S.B. 8/-; London: M.C. 2/6; Glasgow: A.M.C. 1/6; Woburn: J.R. 1/6; 2/8; Dublin: S.R.K. 3/-; London: R.K. 1/6; Carnoustie: A.C. 1/6; London: L.G.W. 5/-; Total ... £11 9 2  
Previously acknowledged ... £74 7 8

1951 TOTAL TO DATE ... £85 16 10

GIFT OF BOOKS: F.E.R.

## FREEDOM Anarchist Fortnightly Price 3d.

Postal Subscription Rates 6 months 4/6 (U.S.A. \$1), 12 months 8/6 (U.S.A. \$2).

Special Subscription Rates for 2 copies 6 months 7/6 (\$1.50), 12 months 15/- (\$3).

Cheques, P.O.'s and Money Orders should be made out to FREEDOM PRESS, crossed a/c Payee, and addressed to the publishers.

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# "Practical Action Against War"

which we hope will be a regular feature of our anti-war propaganda. The first meeting held at the Holborn Hall in February (speakers: Frank Ridley, Eddie Shaw and Philip Sansom) showed us that although the people who attended were obviously anxious to avoid war, some of them seemed to look for a lead, instead of taking the initiative towards individual resistance, in spite of a convincing case put for such a stand by the speakers.

The meeting on the 29th, however, should bring a better response. The title "Practical Action against War" may encourage and convince the audience that in the end it is action on their own responsibility which will have effect.

## DEBATE ON "THE FAMILY INSTITUTION"

AT the University College on February 27th, a debate took place between

## A CHANGE OF NAME IN SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL — BUT NOT OF HEART

(From a Correspondent)

AT a meeting of the Committee of the International Socialist Conference, attended by delegates from 21 Socialist and Social Democratic parties, the following resolution was agreed unanimously:

"Socialist co-operation must be based on consent. The resolutions passed by an international Socialist body must reflect agreement freely reached. They cannot constitute a binding command on parties, which are individually responsible to their own members and to a national electorate. An international Socialist body cannot claim mandatory powers. The achievements of the International Socialist Conference justify it in assuming the moral authority of the Socialist International. No change is required in the principle of co-operation by consent, whose virtue has now been proved to the satisfaction of all Socialist parties."

The two proposals were that Comiso should change its name to "The Council of the Socialist International" and that

the International Socialist Conference should change its name to "The Socialist International".

There followed the usual resolutions including one opposing any attempt to bring Franco Spain into the Atlantic Treaty and "condemning the régime of terror existing in the Argentine."

But no mention about war, which, of course, is understandable. The days when it went without saying that a Socialist was opposed to war are long passed. The Socialist movement has "grown up" and we find Socialist Conscientious Objectors of 1914-18 as War Ministers in 1951! And the resolution quoted above has to be read in this spirit. Then, what may appear to be a very democratic statement, becomes a cynical nationalistic piece of humbug. It ensures that the Socialist International will exist, only in name whilst the affiliated bodies pursue their nationalistic course at will, ending in wars in which Socialist will be killing Socialist in the name of freedom!