

## Plums and 'Penny Blacks' — Reflections on the Laws of SUPPLY & DEMAND

THE Press last week reported that plums are so plentiful in Worcestershire this year that many growers are not picking all their crop. Current prices for plums are 1d. a lb., with pears fetching only about 2d. a lb. and some varieties of apples just over 1d. a lb.

On the same day there was an announcement in the press that Harnes, the stamp dealers of Bond Street will be auctioning a block of 43 penny black stamps which, it is anticipated, will fetch a record £2,000 or more.

WHAT an interesting commentary on the workings of the financial and economic system is provided by these two news items! It is clear that the value of a commodity or of services under the present system is determined neither by need nor the amount of human labour involved in their production but is based on the "laws" of supply and demand. Demand, in the language of the political economists, refers to would-be purchasers and not to needs. The social usefulness of a commodity is not a criterion in determining its "value". Thus 43 penny black stamps are worth £2,000 or the equivalent of more than 4 million plums at current values!

At current values to be sure, because though a plum is always a plum to the grower and the consumer, its "value" varies with the operation of the "laws of supply and

demand". Thus a plum in May is worth ten in June and say a hundred or a thousand in August. In effect the money system breaks down, or virtually becomes redundant, when goods and services are plentiful, and flourishes when there are shortages. And to our minds this is only an obvious conclusion to reach if one looks upon the money system, as operated today, as the instrument for the maintenance of privilege and the social division of society.

Only a system based on profit and dominated by finance is at a loss when faced with abundance. So long as half the world's people go short of the necessities of life there can be no such thing as food surpluses. A society which allows fruit to rot on trees, and wheat to sprout in "Liberty" ships; which subsidises farmers to put land out of production and watches as man-made mountains of unwanted coal blot the landscape, yet knows that there are millions of its fellow-

beings who need these very commodities, such a society cannot call itself civilised whatever its achievements in other fields.

THE supporters of the monetary system claim that with all its faults it is the only practical way of effecting the exchange of goods and services within the nation and between nations, as well as providing the producer, or the worker, with a freedom of choice. A potato grower

may well sell a sack of potatoes to a butcher, but being a vegetarian does not want to be paid with the equivalent value in meat; equally the mine worker is not interested in receiving payment for his work in sacks of coal. Since every commodity and service has its price in money terms the producer or the worker can, by being paid in money, choose from the common pool of goods and services those he prefers or can afford, or he can even (sometimes) accumulate (or borrow from the purveyors of finance!) money tokens with which to obtain commodities that are beyond his existing means. That is all very well and a case for money be made out if its function were thus limited,

though it seems to us an extremely complicated way of dealing with production and distribution. And where the money system becomes the instrument of capitalism it actually inhibits production (whatever money incentives may do for encouraging productivity) and distribution besides creating antagonisms between man and man.

SOCIAL and economic organisation and thinking are regulated by money. Most people today when told that 43 penny black stamps are worth as much as 4 million plums, not only will not question the system of values by which this rela-

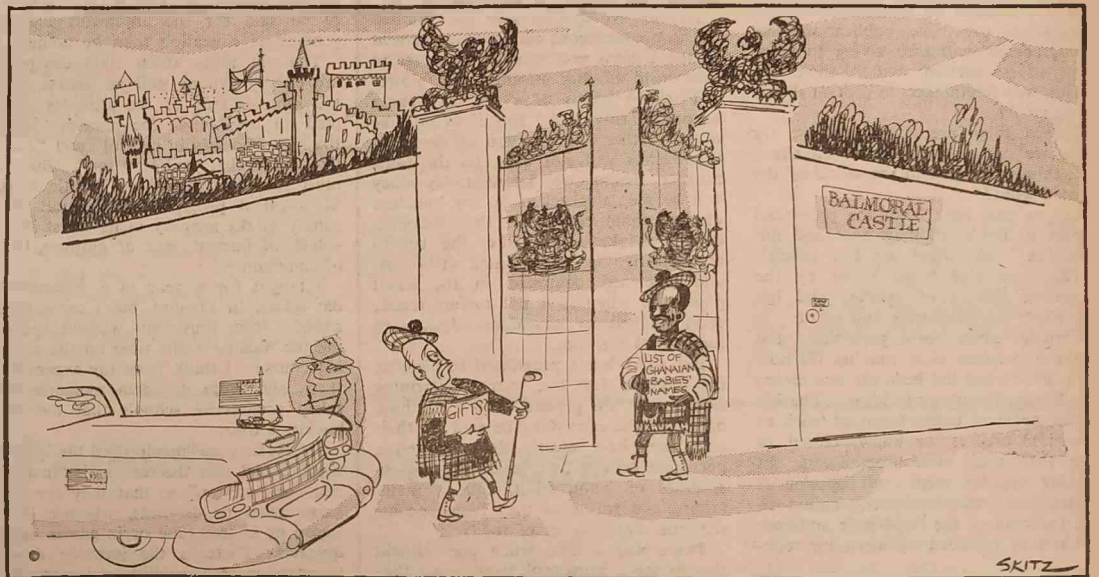
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### KEEPING RHODESIA SAFE FOR THE WHITES

SALISBURY, AUGUST 19.

The South Rhodesian Parliament yesterday extended for three years the Subversive Activities Act, 1950, which was due to expire yesterday.

To-night the Minister of Justice stated his intention of introducing a simpler act in the new year. In the meanwhile the Government holds that it was essential to prolong the existing act.



## Death, Inc.,

LAST week a £2,500,000 Victor bomber disappeared without trace (presumably caused by an explosion in flight). It is "now revealed" that the Victor was on a secret mission with orders to test in "as near operational conditions as possible Britain's very latest retaliatory weapon".

We do not know the destructive powers of the weapon, and it will doubtless be a long time before this is "revealed", but those people who feel uneasy about not having the benefits of a tested retaliatory nuclear weapon immediately to hand should be consoled by the latest news from the United States where, it is "revealed", scientists are experimenting with "psycho-chemicals" which is a method of reducing the entire population of a country to a lethargic mass. It is suggested that the best method of achieving intake would be through "the enemy's water supply before hostilities began."

The *News Chronicle* science reporter supplies us with details of this refinement in war weapons cooked up by the scientists and presumably also being developed by the "enemy" for use on us. He writes:

"One of these prospective new weapons is a substance called 'lysergic acid' derived from a black fungus found in rye and other grasses.

In concentrated form, it can paralyse the will to fight, turn brave men into cowards and render them incapable of following simple commands.

Some compounds based on the same

substance are already used in experimental work on mental disease. One, called 'LSD' (short for d-lysergic acid diethylamide tartrate), is manufactured synthetically in this country.

One of its clinical effects is to drive the human memory back in time and produce symptoms similar to schizophrenia, or split-mind) sometimes necessary in the study of mental disease.

American scientists attached to the United States Army Medical Research Centre are now trying out its effects on troops. The Science and Astronautics Committee of the U.S. Congress has recommended a threefold increase in expenditure on chemical and biological weapons.

American army chemists told the committee that psycho-chemical weapons could give hope of winning battles without loss of life or destruction of property.

Field operations to test the drugs could not be ready until the middle of next year.

Cynics might argue that the population is already suffering from a collective split-mind and that their apathy is to some extent responsible for the "mess we are in" to-day, therefore, these new drugs cannot make much difference to a people already "drugged". Optimists, however, may view the new weapons with a less hostile eye than the one which looks with fear at the destructive force of nuclear weapons—after all we are at least going to be "left alive"!

Theoretically the individual is faced with the choice between schizophrenia or radiation, but when it comes to the practical show-down we will have to take what we get!

WORKERS who avail themselves of the hire-purchase system "get into a web of debts" and then "have to give up a large part of their wages in order to work out the debt." And then, getting deeper and deeper into debt, they are forced to spend less and less on food, clothing, footwear, and other necessities.

In Britain it is beyond the worker's means to buy new furniture, or a radio or television set, "so he gets it on hire purchase which means that it costs him nearly double." And so he has to work overtime, "sometimes putting in sixteen hours a day," his wife takes in washing or knitting, while often "even youngsters of school age also have to eke out the family income."

The above is a report of an article which appeared recently in the Russian periodical *New Times*. Allow-

### LIVING IN THE PAST

COPENHAGEN, AUGUST 20.

Professor Mogens Fog, a Danish doctor and former Member of Parliament, has been refused a visa to attend a medical congress in the United States because he is a former Communist. He said to-day that he had not been a member of the party since 1941. —*Reuter*.

### LIVING IN THE PRESENT.

THE HAGUE, AUGUST 19.

The Dutch Government to-day announced the abolition of its Ministry of Overseas Affairs, thus marking the end of the Dutch colonial age. The Dutch West Indies now have autonomy in all their affairs, except foreign and defence, under the Dutch Crown. —*Reuter*.

## Never Never in Russia

The prospective buyer presents guarantee from his employers, and he does not even have to worry about his repayments. These are taken care of by his employers, who deduct the payments from his wages. Interest is payable at a rate of 1 to 2 per cent.

Once a worker is beguiled into acquiring goods on the never-never, he has a millstone round his neck. It may be for short periods, for small articles like refrigerators or TV sets; it may be for half a lifetime if it is a house. It makes him involved in the capitalist system that much more.

### Free from Goods

Up till now the worker in the Workers' Fatherland has been free from this particular bondage. He has been free from consumer goods also. While only necessities were available, his wages were more or less adequate to buy all he could see. But now, thanks to comrade Krushchev's guiding hand (introducing the consumer goods' policy for which he sacked Malenkov earlier!) goods are appearing in Soviet shops.

But lo and behold. Just like in the capitalist hell, workers in the socialist heaven haven't got the ready cash to buy goods outside the usual run of consumption.

So, within weeks of the above arguments appearing in *New Times*, the Russian Government has announced the introduction of hire purchase into the Soviet economy.

Articles like radio and television sets, cameras, wrist watches, bicycles, motor-cycles and scooters, motor-boats, sewing machines, hunting guns, and woollen and silk fabrics can now all be had for a down payment of 25 per cent.

A Tighter Grip

So the Russian worker now has this added bondage on top of all the others. Sad as the plight of the British worker is—as outlined in *New Times*—his plight is even worse.

The Russian worker's employer—the State—knows the extent of his HP burden. His employer—the State—lends him the money! It collects the payments straight out of his pay packet and is therefore in an even stronger position to urge greater production—greater exploitation—out of him.

We wait impatiently to hear of *New Times'* eulogy for the new opportunities opened for the Soviet worker by this great step forward towards socialism! We wait even more impatiently to see who will be the first to describe the Soviet Union as 'a property-owning democracy'!

Don't Forget  
FREEDOM'S  
ever Increasing  
DEFICIT!



## VIEWPOINT

## FREETHINKING &amp; PRINTING

AS a writer, I feel shaken by the failure of any provincial paper even if it is most unlikely that the journal would ever have come into my life. It seems to me that there is interlocking in the business of "the printed word". A man may read an obscure local paper because it is the only source of local news; and this at least puts him in the habit of reading, and then he may take a book from the library (and not just a do-it-yourself book of the type that is promoted by seeing sets, etc. in television programmes) to follow up a train of thought, etc. If there is no local paper, he may be content to get the general news from television and rely more and more on "the idiot box" for entertainment and forget the library except for the occasional do-it-yourself manual; and the printed word will have suffered another defeat on more fronts than one.

The Printing Unions, I feel, should be concerned to preserve the whole atmosphere in which the printed word can exist, and take into consideration the set-up of the provincial paper when they formulate demands. Such small papers provide special information and thought which, most likely, is not supplied by T.V.; and therefore they are vital to "the reading habit".

All right. You may agree that as a writer I should be worried about the number of provincial publications that have recently collapsed owing to rising costs of production; but is there any reason why freethinkers in general should be agitated?

Indeed there are many reasons; for have we not said, and tried to show, that things interlock in the world of the printed word?

Let us pass now from the provincial papers to the small magazines and unorthodox books which are also specialist and are also being killed by the mounting charges of printers and ink and paper manufacturers and so on. If one thinks about these periodicals and books it becomes clear that up till now the printed word has been the one means of diffusion for minority ideas. The big public media of communication (such as television) are, as we know, closed to such themes as unite freethinkers. In the big popular media, all opinion is diluted into wishy-washy convention so that the bulk of the large-scale audience will not be offended by anything "con-

troversial". To drive the small magazines and the small publishers out of existence is to suppress the rights of expression of democratic opinions. This is the twilight of democracy.

Democracy is not simply the will of the majority—that might be Hitlerism—but also the protection of minorities; and it is the thoughtful minorities which give vitality to the communal psyche. Even if a citizen does not personally read any of the little "highbrow" journals, his life is still to some extent quickened by them; for the stimulating thoughts filter down through the popular expounders and condition all our minds to whatever subtlety they may have. The little papers and the unorthodox books issued by the small publishers are, in fact, the cutting edge of our minds, and without them freethought will atrophy and minds conform to the general pattern of inertia or mass-organised hysteria.

It is no use saying that some of the little magazines and "outsider" books are cranky, for many aren't. The cranky ones remain in their own circles, but with the others the ripples spread out. The others, to change the metaphor, are the essential trace elements; and the important thing is that the practical conditions which permit the cranky magazines to exist are the same as those which permit "the others" to continue.

As the *News Chronicle* has pointed out in a courageous editorial, the actions of the Unions are bringing us closer to the world of Big Brother with power left in the hands of a few newspaper barons. Truly said. But I would like to go further and ask you to note that the barons will not even be the same moguls whom we know today—they will be men unchecked by the influence of the commentators in the "independents". Make no mistake, the barons are sensitive to any printed criticisms; and informed comment in the small papers is, when it is not merely crank, soon relayed by attendant advisors to the men at the top.

But am I being prejudiced in blaming the Unions for the current alarming sickness of "the printed word"? I think not, for whatever is to be said on their side, they have clearly demonstrated a persistent refusal to take on the responsibilities of being adult, and by maintaining old formulae they have become the true reactionaries of today.

There was a time when one thought that as the Unions took over power they would take over adult responsibility.

For example, the Printing and allied Unions should at this stage deem themselves the guardians of the cultural values of the printed word. Their first adult duty should be to do everything to make it possible for publishers to issue works which spread such values; yet, in all the recent talk, they have not even paid lip-service to what is printed.

Certainly a statement was made by a Union spokesman declaring that the little printer (printing what?) would not inevitably be the victim of the new demands for shorter hours and higher wages as, according to this authority, some little printers were meeting the Union demands before the strike. But I can assure this spokesman that the little printing firms which were already paying higher wages could not in the main be dealing with the small independent periodicals and unorthodox books

which are basic to the health of the communal psyche, because most of these publications barely survived existing minimum costs of production.

The precarious position is not due, as I believe, to bad management but to limited circulation—limited because their whole point is that they should stimulate the keener minds to higher flights which ultimately will benefit the rest of us who cannot hope to have superior understanding of all the intellectual specialisations. The plain fact is that these specialised papers keep the specialised minds functioning, and the specialised papers cannot meet the steadily rising cost of production like the manufacturers of cereals who can afford to dish out more for the printing of their cartons.

No, we must blame the Unions. We cannot honestly say that the proprietors of the "independents" would willingly sabotage their own platforms, for they have chosen their work (which is often less remunerative than sweeping the

factory floor) precisely because they comprehend the extraordinary importance—far beyond the actual number of readers—of minority journals. No thing interlock in the business of "the printed word", and we must blame the Unions on ethical as well as practical counts.

If there were quality clauses concerning what is printed to mitigate the printers' demands, one would not sense anything more sinister in the crisis than Mr. Briginshaw's frank cry of "We want more. And why not?" But in effect the Unions have been saying to writers: "Go and write pulp for the big-circulation giants, if you want to remain in the authorship business, and forget all this stuff which, indirectly or directly, enables the community."

Personally, I think that all this—from the closing down of the dimmest provincial paper to the folding up of a specialist magazine—should be of grave concern to freethinkers. The Printing dispute has shown us all again—the writing on the wall!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

## DISCUSSION

## Teachers and Pupils

THE article by P.H. in a recent issue of *FREEDOM* (August 8th) is an effective criticism of the present teachers' training system, but I think there is more to be said for the arguments against progressive education than he admits.

The old ideas about rigid discipline are clearly evil as well as useless, and the same is true of the attitudes summed up by P.H. in the phrases "Show the kids who was in control" and "They like to feel that you're on top". But we must recognise that there is little value in so-called progressive education that simply masks anarchy in its worst sense—lack of interest, lack of purpose, lack of community.

I taught for a year in a progressive day-school in London, but I came to it straight from university without spending (or wasting?) any time on the training course. I think from my experience there and from my own memories in fairly progressive schools that the following is true:

1. It isn't so much that the pupils need to feel that the teacher is "in control" or "on top" as that they need to know what to do next, whether in a lesson or in free time or in games or in quarrels. There is the infantile desire to abandon responsibility and surrender the power of decision to parent/teacher.

Of course the answer to this is not to make sure they never learn how to use this power; but nor is it to oblige them to use it before they know what it is all about. The ideal course is to help them learn how to use it. This inevitably involves telling them what to do, stopping them doing some things, trying to influence their course of action. It is easy to say you mustn't punish them, but I am not sure a punishment that clears the air isn't better than moral disapproval that thickens it.

2. Another simple need is for an organiser and arbiter, and this too involves ordering pupils about. Again, the thing to do is to make this constructive, telling them what to do so that they understand the reasons. Nothing is more annoying and harmful than not knowing why you must do this, mustn't do that. The real task is to help them see the reasons why certain courses of action are good or bad. If they find that a disorganised game is no fun or a rowdy lesson is no use, they will help you to keep discipline—until in the end they are keeping discipline by themselves.

3. A more abstruse point is the need to rebel. Most pupils in progressive schools come from progressive families. There is a danger that they will never have encountered firm authority in their lives. They grow up desperately needing to rebel, to disagree, to fight, and there may be nothing to rebel against; instead they will turn on each other and even on themselves. Result, delinquency and apathy. The ideal course is to maintain discipline and encourage them to question it, let them argue with you and be absolutely fair with them when they do.

4. A great danger of progressive schools is that they will become morally negative. There is little point in forbidding smoking or necking or slacking (but every point in jumping on bullying or lying); but it is necessary to make your own opinion clear. This must be done sincerely. A frequent phenomenon, as I know to my cost, is the pose that one will not punish and does not disapprove, which is continually revealed by the most transparent disapproval and a cruel form of indirect punishment.

5. The great fault of most progressive teachers I have met is that they are dishonest. Much of their tolerance was

no more than lack of interest or laziness; much of their discipline was no more than personal exasperation or enjoyment of power. It is essential for a progressive teacher—far more than for a conventional one—to let the pupils know exactly where you draw the line; to be as absolutely fair as you can; to allow insolence and jokes against yourself that you will not allow against other pupils; to make it clear whenever you adopt a particular course of action what you are doing and why you are doing it; above all (and this is forgotten tragically often) to treat pupils as friends and equals, not in an embarrassing way, but so that they know they are always really able to rely on you. Over and over again I have seen freedom in a school made corrupt because the teacher all too clearly (and they aren't fools) doesn't like the kids.

6. Above all, perhaps, progressive teachers seem to be as dogmatic as others, whether the dogmatism is Quakerism or crankism of some kind or another, or Freudianism or Jungianism or any one of the thousands of isms that are going around. Teachers must have open minds, and they must always be prepared to see the pupil's point of view (really see it, not just admit its existence) and to change their minds if it seems better.

Until a lot more progressive teachers take account of at least some of these problems progressive schools will continue to make an awful lot of mistakes and cause an unnecessary amount of unhappiness. But never lose the main thread—that children are people, that they are as good as you, that they must be free as much as they possibly can, that you must think it possible you may be mistaken.

N.W.

## Theatre

## ROOTS

"Roots" by Arnold Wesker,  
Duke of York's.

"ROOTS" is a good play. It is rather slow-moving, but that is because the subject and characters concerned in it move slowly. Arnold Wesker has chosen to present a study of life among farm labouring families in Norfolk, and their reaction to a disturbance.

The disturbance consists of the return from London of Beattie, a daughter of one of the families, who has been with a boy friend Ronnie for three years. Ronnie is portrayed only through Beattie's descriptions, which one concludes must bring in a distorting factor, but he seems to be an intelligent, mixed-up, coffee-bar individual, of the type known very well in London.

The farm-workers come badly out of the clash. They are shown to be ignorant, insensitive and closer attached to a way of life which denies them satisfaction. The play is an antidote to the tendency to think that anyone who lives and works on the land, away from the big cities, must be a *fortiori* good and healthy. The contrast between the thoughtful town-dweller and the unthinking labourers is presented subtly, showing the good and bad points of both. The conclusion is striking: that everyone can do more with their own lives if only they care to make the effort. However, the problem still remains of what direction do we want to move in.

P.H.

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## BOOK REVIEW

## ONE OUT ALL OUT

BOREAS'S plea for the compulsory castration of each and every member of our higher-graded, ever-expanding civil service\* is an idea worthy of the rapt attention of the lunatic fringe of the lunatic fringe.

For let us be honest with ourselves, flying saucers, the flat earth, Joanna Southcott's boxing bishops, trick diagnosing machinery and the atom bomb are becoming *passé*.

As an old-time card-carrying member of the Lunatic Fringe I have taken an active interest in most of these things but I no longer feel that I can, with a clear conscience, let you be prepared to lay down your life for my right to discuss, expound or denounce these intellectual aperitifs. It is for this reason that I welcome Boreas' pamphlet, "A modest proposal for regulating the civil service". Here at last is something worth fighting for, here for a change is a concrete line of action that will benefit each and every one of us, action that will aid the arts and indirectly the sciences. Boreas' thesis is simply stated and I will try to summarize it without bowdlerizing it. He argues that both the public and the bureaucrats are concerned with the threat to what they consider are their private interests. That the petty tyranny of Committees of Censor are depriving our top-grade civil servants of their hereditary and, as we have always assumed, inalienable right to create bad verse, bad novels and bad criticism in the governor's time. Boreas' solution is simplicity itself, namely the compulsory castration of these pale wanderers of our governmental corridors. He argues that no great civilization has ever reached its full glory without its happy horde of rosy-cheeked eunuchs and should our own lads be prepared to dispense with what is, after all, only a minor and slightly vulgar distraction, then they in their turn could

pour the whole of their energies into a variety of worthwhile channels.

The libertarian and the humanist will cavil I know at Boreas' use of the word "compulsory" and his nostalgic references to the ancient Mayos priests doing their twice nightly act with the sacrificial knife atop the Zigeraut will offend many freethinkers and vegetarians among us. To refer to us as trash hurts, for is compulsion really necessary? I myself visualise the act as a simple and homely ceremony. Having been notified that he is to be promoted to a higher grade, the civil servant would give a little dinner to celebrate his elevation. Good food, a little wine and pleasant discussion would while away the evening then, at a pre-arranged time, he would retire to a prepared room for the act of self-immolation, later, white-faced and slightly doddery on the old pins, he would join his guests where by tactful consent they would talk of abstract painting and other non-figurative subjects.

From then on nothing could halt them. As Boreas points out, with the temptation of Sex removed more memos could be written, more letters distributed and we can visualise the whole of our administration top brass exhausting the output of its own form-printing factory. Whitehall will then become a place of joyful creative workmen, from every flower-decked window will pour the sweet soprano voices of happy authors and pretty poets and who knows, England may even yet produce a work of art comparable to "Gone with the Wind". Away with Atlantis and the Indian rope trick. Whet the knife Rodney, for here at last is a cause worth living for.

ARTHUR MOYSE.

\*"A Modest proposal for regulating the civil service" by Boreas. Published by Atropos Press, 405 Strand, London, W.C.2. 1s.

## PLEASE G—D, DO ME A FAVOUR

TEL AVIV, THURSDAY.

Do you remember about Haifa's brand-new, beautiful, underground railway?

It is the one that has been ready for weeks, but has not started to run because of Orthodox opposition to Sabbath operations.

Well, it will now apparently operate on the Sabbath—and all thanks to a unique and ingenious compromise that makes the twentieth-century measure up to Solomon's times.

Every Friday afternoon, as the sun sets for Sabbath observance, Haifa's underground railway will be sold, lock, stock and barrel, to a non-Jew.

It will be bought back on Sunday morning. By not belonging to Jews its operation on the Sabbath is no sacrilege.

This is what Haifa municipality decided today. All it has to do now is to find a non-Jew, probably a local Arab Moslem, with whom to do business.

*News Chronicle* 21/8/59.



## Reflections on Supply & Demand

Continued from p. 1  
 relationship has been established but will in fact accept that that which is "rare" must be "worth more" than something which is common. (A bumper harvest is what every farmer looks forward to *only for himself*; a bumper harvest *all round* however can be a financial disaster even more serious than a bad harvest!).

By the same measure a skilled worker or a specialist in any branch of human activity in which the demand for such men exceeds the "supply" are paid more money than are paid to other skilled workers for whom the supply may even exceed the demand. The latter may be engaged in producing the food by which we maintain life, the former may be producing H-bombs with which human life is threatened. Yet society accepts without question that high wages and salaries should be paid to the one and that some of the other should find themselves even on the scrap-heap of redundancy. Some are the penny blacks in their glass cases, the others the surplus plums left to rot on the trees. So even in the matter of human effort the laws of supply and demand operate.

But these are only inexorable laws so long as the majority of the people continue to accept and even to prefer the far from secure "security" of a system "that has been with us for a very long time and with all its faults does work" to the apparent insecurity of a social and economic system which removes the incentive of money from work, and profit from production and distribution; which links production to the basic needs of mankind, and distribution to the equitable satisfaction of these needs. Such a society will not necessarily boast of the choice of motor cars, mansions and useless gadgets it can offer the consumer, but being unhampered by considerations of supply and demand, and profits, will be in a position to organise production in the interests of all mankind, for that half of the world still today seeking the basic necessities of life (let alone demanding "choice"! ) as well as for that international minority of inhumans, the operators of the financial machine bloated with power and wallowing in the lap of so-called "luxury".

IN that reasonable and human society, those 43 penny black stamps may find a place as curios in our museums. And the plum trees heavy with fruit will not only be the prey of every uninhibited schoolboy, but a smiling symbol of mankind's prosperity!

### HALF THE WORLD IS ILLITERATE

PARIS, TUESDAY.

Almost half of the population of the world can neither read nor write.

According to a Unesco publication "Basic Facts and Figures," giving figures for 1958, Africa, with 85.80 per cent., accounts for the highest proportion of illiterates. Asia comes next with 65.60 per cent., North and Latin America 21.20 per cent., and Europe with 9.7 per cent.

The most cultured nation is Sweden. Its illiteracy rate stands at 0 per cent.!

The British remain the world's most avid newspaper readers: circulation amounts to 573 copies per 1,000 inhabitants. In the United States it is 337 per thousand.

The British are also the greatest cinemagoers.

## AMERICAN THINKERS DISCUSS Communist Economics & Workers' Control

SEVERAL of the contributors to the current number of the American magazine *Dissent* touch upon questions raised in the recent articles in *FREEDOM* on workers' councils in Eastern Europe. Ben B. Seligman in an article "Socialism Without Marx" discusses various economists' solutions to the problem of allocating scarce resources in a socialist economy. Looking for a non-totalitarian solution, as an alternative to the Soviet permanent war economy, and the similar economic 'models' postulated by Western Marxists like Maurice Dobb and Paul Baran, he sees as the most desirable alternative "market socialism". The solutions arrived at by Marxist economists all assume, as he says, that "socialism cannot function unless it is highly centralised with all the decisions predetermined by some planning board.

No choice is to be allowed to people, and the putative higher requirements of the state are to dominate even unto the exclusion of the rights of the public to decide for itself its own fate."

The centralised dictatorship demanded in theory and practice by Marxist economics is incompatible with attempts to achieve workers' control: hence the paradox that the 'capitalist' notions of marginalism and a market economy quite apart from making life more tolerable from the consumer point of view, make workers' control more feasible. Peter Wiles has commented that the Yugoslav Communists were forced into 'market socialism' in a fit of absence of mind: "aiming at workers' control and the withering away of the state, they found themselves compelled to abolish the central planning bureaucracy and this in turn compelled them to introduce a free market."

In another article, "Meaning in Work—A New Direction", Daniel Bell discusses the concept of Workers' Control: "In Communist theory (to the extent there has been one apart from the oppor-

tunistic absorption of syndicalist ideas), the slogan of 'workers' control' was conceived of almost entirely in *political* terms, as one of the means of undercutting the economic power of the employer class under capitalism, as a means to power, but not as a technique of democratisation or the administration of industry in a socialist society."

As to the "real" meaning of the term, he writes,

"the simple starting point, perhaps, is to ask: workers' control over what? Control over the entire economy? This is unfeasible. A syndicalist society is too much a single-interest affair, which, if extended with its own bureaucracy, would simply substitute one form of interest domination for another. In a single industry, or enterprise? One can question, further, whether this too, is a meaningful—realistic—concept. . . .

"The major confusion in the idea of workers' control, as it has been put forward by socialists and syndicalists, is that the word *control* has always a double meaning: as direction (e.g. to control the course of an automobile) and as a check (e.g. to control someone's rage). Usually, in the debates on workers' control, the proponents have rarely singled out the different meanings. Roughly speaking, socialists have talked of workers' control to mean direction, management of an enterprise by the workers themselves, or the participation in management."

He points out that the difficulty inherent in worker participation in management is that it tends "to minimise the separate interests of workers from management, and to rob the workers of an independent status in the plant." Hence in Yugoslavia there is no functional role for the unions, while in Britain on the other hand, the unions in the nationalised industries "have consistently refused to participate on the Boards of Management, or to take responsibility for production". (In circumstances where the unions have ceased to fulfil their defensive tasks and have been used to control the workers, substitute bodies have had to be formed, hence the shop stew-

ards' movement in Britain in the First World War, and the workers' councils in Poland in 1956).

Is there then, he asks, no role at all for workers' control? "If there is any meaning to the idea of workers' control, it is control in the shop—over the things which directly affect his work-a-day life." And he goes on to discuss the failure of both the trade unions movement and the industrial sociologists to make work meaningful and to conceive of alternative methods of organisation of work so as to provide real choices for a worker, referring us to his book *Work and Its Discontents* (Beacon Press, 1956).

★  
 ANOTHER book—*Factory and Manager in the USSR*, by Joseph Berliner (Harvard, 1957), is discussed by Seymour Melman in his article "Management and Bureaucracy in the Russian Factory". Berliner's study is said to show that "the similarities between modes of management at the plant level under private (Western) and state (Russian) capitalism "are at least as important as the differences." Mr. Melman remarks that

"Berliner's analysis of Soviet management compels one to ask: Are there alternatives to the managerial mode of decision-making over industrial production? Many people have held to the view that there is something in the very nature of production technology and the size of industrial plants which, both in the capitalist West and the Communist East, precludes democratic mass participation and requires a managerial, hierarchical rule over industrial work. From the standpoint of everyone interested in a free society it is important to know whether there are workable, efficient alternatives to managerial rule over production; whether the modes of management we have in both Russia and the United States are the consequence of particular social arrangements or are inherent in 'the nature of things'."

Mr. Melman too, refers us to a book, his own recent *Decision-Making and Productivity* (Wiley) in which he has tried "to demonstrate that there are realistic alternatives to managerial rule over production". If he has done this, his is a valuable book indeed, and we hope that one of our American readers will discuss his findings from an anarchist point of view.

★  
 OUR efforts to sift through the conflicting accounts of the movement for workers' councils in the Communist world and to find whether, in any loosening of the régimes, there is a place for workers' control, have not been very conclusive. It is ironical to be forced to the conclusion that in the context of Communist society a "free market" economy is the most progressive alternative to the present economic régime, more so, to find that it is the most feasible step towards workers' control. Whatever the Soviet citizen's aspirations as a producer, as a consumer he wants a system that delivers the goods.

Daniel Bell thinks that the Guild Socialist movement of 40 years ago "has given us many useful guides" in the search for a modern theory of workers' control although.

"Its weakness is that it sought to grapple with too many problems and that it set forth too detailed a blueprint. It was, paradoxically, too rational. Human societies cannot be made over *de novo*. One has to begin, pragmatically, with existing structures and with the character, temperament, and traditions—and desires—of the people concerned."

But neither in the East nor in the West, in seeking a modern approach to a theory of workers' control, have we got any nearer than the guild socialists to solutions of the problems of distribution and decision-making, let alone the means of achievement. C.W.

## Governor Fuller's Masterpiece

THE late Alvan T. Fuller, businessman and twice Governor of Massachusetts, collected paintings. It is told that in his lifetime Fuller was a very generous man. Earlier this year some fifty of his best pictures hung in a memorial exhibit in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

The museum visitor may have read this about Fuller in the exhibit's catalogue:

"It is rarely given to one man in a lifetime . . . to pursue three careers and to make each of them so large and lasting a contribution to his community . . . In all three [Fuller] won distinction: in business, in politics and, not least, in collecting art . . . His presence in Congress for four years and his two terms as Governor of Massachusetts from 1925 to 1929 exemplified public stewardship of a high order, marked as they were by his forcefulness and independence. . . ."

But on to the collection. There was one Rembrandt, a Gainsborough, a Reynolds, a luminous Turner and several Romneys. In another room were five Renoirs, small and second-rate, a Pissarro, a Monet, a Degas. Best were some Sargent exercises: "copies" after Dutch masters. The one original Sargent was a murky oil; the one Augustus John, plainly bad. Also hanging were two stiff Canalettos and four large, coarsely executed Hubert Robert pastorals. And that was about it.

Did this collection reflect money without taste? Perhaps. Anyway it was disappointing—especially after the fine catalogue and the tasteful modern posters pasted in every subway station. Somehow, though, the disappointment was to be expected, and here is why.

Sadly, flagrantly missing from among the collection was any indication of Alvan T. Fuller's greatest masterpiece, his own true handiwork: the execution in 1927 of the two Italian anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Their faces—Sacco's long-nosed, smooth-skinned and young; Vanzetti's haggard, hook-nosed, with the bushy moustache; both of them hollow from their prison hunger strikes—these faces were missing, were what killed the truth and quality of the Fuller Exhibit. But of course it was to be guessed beforehand that this masterpiece would not be represented there.

And there were some in Boston who had surmised it, for at ten o'clock on the morning the Fuller exhibit was offi-

cially opened, three men and a woman stood at the front entrance to the museum distributing leaflets. On one side of the leaflet was printed—startling white against a black background—the death masks of the two anarchists. REMEMBER! the leaflet read, MURDERED AUG. 23, 1927. Above that, "Sacco and Vanzetti belong here"; and at the bottom, "Be sure to include this picture among the masterpieces of Alvan Tufts Fuller, now on exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts." On the reverse side was the celebrated statement of Vanzetti's that begins, "If it had not been for this thing I might have lived out my life talking at street corners to scorning men."

★  
 THE perspicacity, the downright clairvoyance of those four who distributed the leaflets: they had guessed correctly that the masterpiece would be missing. By the front door of the museum, they stood in the gray cold until shooed off the property by museum guards, who threatened arrest. But they took their places at the edge of the street, where they were interviewed by newspapermen, tape-recorded for radio broadcast and filmed for TV. They had with them the original Sacco and Vanzetti death masks, cast in stark white plaster. One of them, Aldo Felicani, a Boston printer, anarchist and close friend of the two men, said to the papers, "We have

been told this is in poor taste, since the exhibition honours Governor Fuller, who is dead. But," Felicani pointed out, holding up the death masks of his two friends, "we respectfully say that these two persons are also dead and they were murdered."

The *Boston Globe* carried the story in two columns on its front page: "Art Museum Police Rout Sacco-Vanzetti Pickets." The sympathetic account began, "The ghosts of a good shoemaker and a poor fish peddler—anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, executed for murder in 1927—came back as they often do, to haunt Boston today." So after more than thirty-two years—a generation—Sacco and Vanzetti are still front-page news in the city that put them to death. The United Press sent the story through New England towns. The next day there were some two dozen lines on the art page of the *New York Times* with the story of the protest.

The four picketers stood with their

leaflets, their vision and their sense of justice to tell some who did not know and to remind others who had forgotten that Alvan T. Fuller's life was not quite the "useful and creative one" described in the museum catalogue. Their presence with the missing masterpiece in hand told a great deal about that public career of Fuller's, "marked . . . by his forcefulness and independence . . ."

When Fuller died in a moving picture theatre a year ago, the papers carried the news in full headlines. But the bold subheadlines said nothing of Fuller's business, nothing of his collection of paintings. The subheads in both the *Globe* and *Herald* talked of Sacco and Vanzetti. What was Sacco's and Vanzetti's career was also Fuller's career. But what was the anarchists' triumph—in Vanzetti's words, their "work for tolerance, for Justice, for man's understanding of man"—was the Governor's nemesis. His name will live only as the names of Sacco and Vanzetti live.

NORMAN THOMAS DI GIOVANNI.

[In *Dissent* (U.S.A.), Summer, 1959].

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Total 10 15 9  
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1959 TOTAL TO DATE £563 13 10

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## More on Majority Control

DEAR COMRADES,

I have never advocated "control by all" in P.G.F.'s sense of the term. Indeed, I cannot recall having advocated "control" by anyone. What I have tried to do is to indicate why I believe that majority control is incompatible with anarchism and I cannot see where P.G.F. has proven me wrong.

No intelligent anarchist has ever denied, to my knowledge, that there may always be a small minority of people who, for various reasons, cannot act in a responsible and free manner. The incurable psychopath and the congenital idiot have to exist in a state of psychological and economic dependence upon others in any type of society which does not believe in their extermination, but to equate the care they need with the majority control 'forecast' by P.G.F. in his original letter, or with "a majority decision by all affected parties" to a dispute, is to make a false analogy. To help the sick, to succour the injured, may well involve a certain amount of physical restraint, but only the most captious would describe this as an act of authority.

Young children have a natural biological dependence upon adults. This is, however, of comparatively short duration and such schools as Summerhill and Burgess Hill have shown that quite young children are capable of taking decisions concerning their affairs. As for the invalid and the aged, why should they not have a voice in matters which relate to them? Is Comrade P.G.F.'s anarchism to be confined to a physically healthy elite? And what is to be the fate of those unfortunate individuals who "sincerely disagree with the social movements accepted by most other members of society"? No doubt they will have to conform, or suffer the consequences of 'majority control'—which is precisely the position in present-day society!

P.G.F. wishes to avoid a discussion of the moral grounds for the exercise of majority control. Why? If his majority have no right to exercise control then it must be based on their possession of might. And if this is the case, why should he object to minority control? Once the question of control is reduced to this level, then those who have the 'might' must necessarily have the 'right'; life becomes a struggle between the 'strongest'; and we can say goodbye to anarchism.

P.G.F.'s view that the dissolution of a group as a result of internal dissension is no different from the defection of

### MATTER OF TASTE

DEAR FRIENDS,

A WELL-KNOWN method of attacking an individual's ideas is to drag the question of his race or colour into the argument. Thus in a controversy with a Negro opponent a smart-aleck may indulge in heavy fun about thick, woolly heads and "life on de 'oje plantation". If the coloured opponent objects he can be ridiculed for getting hot under the collar about a harmless piece of fun, and the smart-aleck can assert "Many of my best friends are Niggers."

This form of personal attack can be directed against Jews, and I am sorry to see it employed in FREEDOM. The article in question is directed against a Jewish comrade S.F., and was signed "Goy". This "Goy" can disclaim any anti-semitic intention, for was it not all a heavy piece of fun? Doubtless "many of his best friends are . . . etc". Jews who are "good comrades" are mentioned in the article—even if Karl Marx's beards and Emanuel Shinwell's shirt are mentioned later, all in jolly fun. But the point is that S.F.'s Jewishness has got nothing whatsoever to do with the ideas he put forward, and it is a piece of real impertinence to drag it into the controversy.

FREEDOM has a very good record for keeping anti-semitism, and similar devices for confusing issues, out of its pages. I hope that the Editors will be vigilant in keeping such bits of bad taste from being published. It would be unfortunate, for instance, if coloured people should be deterred from writing to FREEDOM because "Goy" might reply in comic "nigger-minstrel" language because he happened to disagree with their ideas.

London,

TONY GIBSON.

a minority is irrelevant. I put forward dissolution as the libertarian alternative to compulsory *expulsion*, not to defection which may simply mean the exercise of the right of secession.

The issues raised by P.G.F. in connection with the sovereignty of the individual have so many ramifications that it is impossible to answer them fully in the space of a letter. All I can do is offer the following observations in the hope that they will make my own attitude clearer.

Today a man is born into a society in which the central principle of human relationships is authority. His upbringing, even if it is one of the freest possible, is inevitably conditioned by this fact and his life is menaced by institutions which demand his submission. The society of which we dream would have as the central principle of human relationships the sovereignty of the individual, the primary right to self-determination. A man born into this society would be born into an environment of freedom. As his potentialities for self-determination developed and his biological dependence upon his parents decreased, so he would be enabled to associate freely with those individuals with whom he felt an affinity and who shared his interests and aspirations. By associating in this way he would not be *limiting* his individual sovereignty—he would be *exercising* it. Even now, under a régime of authority, when I agree to meet a friend at a certain place and to do a certain thing I am not conscious of any restriction being placed upon my free-

dom, since the agreement is a voluntary one and I can break it if I choose. My freedom, my autonomy, would only be violated if my friend had the power to compel me to keep the agreement and my relationship to him was one of subordination to his will. To me, therefore, there is no fundamental difference between "individual and co-operative activity" as regards the exercise of individual sovereignty. Certainly, its practice in a society or group depends upon its reciprocal recognition by all concerned, but this is an essential condition for freedom and does not imply a limitation of it.

In my opinion, therefore, there is no need for the dissolution of "all social ties" in order to achieve complete individual sovereignty. Only those social ties based upon coercion are in need of dissolution and it is the task of the anarchist to work towards this end. But to be able to do this work effectively we have to recognise quite clearly that the difference between anarchism and authoritarianism is one of kind, not of degree. Freedom is not, ultimately, a question of the abolition of authority as such. The state and economic exploitation are the two main forms of institutional authority in our time, but they are not the only forms and we should be on our guard against imagining that authority would disappear simply by virtue of their elimination.

Yours fraternally,

London, Aug. 18. S. E. PARKER.

## 'Why Don't You Think More of the Victims?'

WE anarchists who are naturally opposed to capital punishment are often reproached for "softness" in thinking of the criminal and not of the victim. Beyond the fact that no one who has been hanged for murder has ever committed murder again the usefulness of the death penalty to the families of victims has never been proved. Indeed the opposite is sometimes the case.

In Houston, Texas, which is not a progressive town by any standards, a 12-year-old boy was found murdered, and thrust into an ice-box. Eventually seven negro youths were arrested for the killing.

The mother wrote a letter to the local newspaper, as follows:

"Since my son's death I have been largely sustained by the sincere sympathy of the whole community, but the attitude on the part of some has alarmed me. I have felt from the beginning that some abstract evil force had killed my son. The person or persons responsible is ill and to find a scapegoat will not absolve society from its share of guilt.

"People who are oppressed and deprived by society hit back. Finding my son's murderer will not keep alive some child who now lives—more murderers will be bred by the conditions which bred his murderer.

"As long as we foster the sickness of slums and segregation, we shall all be afflicted by it.

"This is not to say that I am convinced of the guilt of current suspects, but merely that the anger directed against them would be put to better use if turned toward those conditions which breed crime."

In addition to this letter a leading doctor in the community is the

chairman of a committee to see that the suspects have the best defence available; the fund raised for this purpose has had contributions from both races.

The crude vengeance of society upon killers provides no basis for the advance of society, the compensation of victims, or the rehabilitation of the criminal. The attitude of the Houston mother is a far more constructive approach to the problem of crime and society.

J.R.

### TWO PROTEST MARCHES NEXT SUNDAY

The Spanish Confederation of Labour (C.N.T.) in London have organised a protest march for Sunday, August 30th. The march will leave Marble Arch at 3 p.m. and the route will be along Oxford Street, Piccadilly, Trafalgar Square, Whitehall, Victoria Street, Grosvenor Place, ending at the Spanish Embassy in Belgrave Square. The purpose of their protest is explained in the following terms:

Taking advantage of the international political situation, Franco is trying to exploit his 'anti-communism' by asking as reward that the Democracies should allow his admittance to NATO.

With this aim in view he is sending his Foreign Minister to London to meet Eisenhower. The presence of Franco himself would have been too much, so his Minister Castiella is taking his place.

This provocation to the countries of Europe who have such bitter memories of Hitler's and Mussolini's régimes, (the teachers and protectors of Franco and whose cause is being continued in fascist Spain), cannot be silenced by us, exiled Spaniards who are highly conscious of the pain of our country, and whose situation demands our solidarity.

We protest at the fact that in the name of Democracy, credit is given to the Spanish Dictator, and we hope that in the name of social justice, this protest will be supported by the human sentiments of those who love Freedom and do not make the Rights of Man just a question of utilitarian conveniences.

Another protest march, organised jointly by the Committee of African Organisations and the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War leaves Marble Arch at 2 p.m. on Sunday, August 30th to be followed by a meeting in Trafalgar Square at 3.30 p.m. This demonstration has as its slogan, "AFRICA SAYS NO TO FRENCH A-TESTS."

## Africa

DEAR FRIENDS,

I would like to comment on a couple of statements made in FREEDOM (18/7/59) by Arthur Uloth when commenting on "Africa South" and "British Policy In Changing Africa" by Sir Andrew Cohen.

Mr. Uloth comments:—"One is able to see the pattern of the future emerging, a savage war between Black West Africa and her allies and the white-ruled East and South". He thinks "Black Africa is almost certain to win" but adds, "the slaughter and destruction will be very great, and the end will be an African totalitarianism of great power, and a danger to the rest of the world." What a gross over-simplification this is! No mention of Russia; surely Communists would have a say (if not *the* say) in all this, and wouldn't this be likely to provoke America? Jomo Kenyatta is made to say—in "Something of Value" by Robert Ruark—something along these lines to those African Nationalists who feared the Communists:—"You fools! do you think I can't see that the Russians are white, just like the people who rule us? Do you think they would help us if they did not want to dominate us? But we need the Russians for our organ-

isation and for our arms, when we are victors we will turn to our own rulers. Somehow I cannot believe the Russians would step aside for a power that would be a danger to the rest of the world."

I think we can consult Ezekiel Mphahlele, when we want to see the type of "progress" the African wants:—"I admire the white man's achievements, his mind that plans tall buildings, powerful machinery. But I think the white man has no right to tell me how to order my life as a social being, or order it for me. He may teach me how to make a shirt or to read and to write, but my forbears and I could teach him a thing or two if only he would listen and allow himself to feel." And again: "All my life people have been tugging at it in different directions . . . and I must scream, *leave me alone*. Downright anarchy, downright individualism, you may say. I enjoy a fair amount of both, at any rate in my thought-life."

And couldn't any reader of FREEDOM admit this last quote for himself, and realize any real human being would see the same?

N. Rhodesia.

R.J.W.

## Sport, Opium of the People

DEAR EDITORS,

Just a short observation regarding the article "Sport the Opium of the People" in the July 18th issue. J.R. seems to have read over "Homo Ludens" by Huizinga and even if he has not, the point should be made that there is a distinction between sport and the play element in culture. Most readers of J.R.'s article probably suppose J.R. condemns all kinds of games, and they are now shaking their heads over the aridity of anarchist views on the proper functioning of society which, they would infer (from the quotations from Veblen), would exclude any activity unrelated to economic activity.

From my experience as a "gentleman" participant in various game activities concentrating most heavily in my younger days on boxing, I would say that "sport" is more rewarding, or rather more fulfilling, than economic activity. Of course, capitalistic production methods being what they are, most people would readily agree to this, but in making the comparison with a more ideal work situation, say, a community

farm, my contention still stands. Or at least that play can be every bit as satisfying as work. ("Work" being meant in the sense that Joseph Pieper uses it.)

Another point I'd like to cover dealing with a subject raised also in the July 18th issue—is the question of power. Arthur Uloth takes a very negative attitude toward the notion of power. He wants to know what we can do to get rid of the power urge. Maybe power and play are basic to all higher forms of life, including man, and no amount of analysing will get beyond these factors of the human psyche. If so, we anarchists need to support the idea of a greater distribution of power rather than the suppressing and curtailment of that which is extant. If everyone owned his own job everyone would have a bit of power and there wouldn't be any large blocks of it lying around for some power elite to gather up.

Minneapolis, Aug. 16. COLIN CONNELL.

### MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

London Anarchist Group meetings are suspended for the Summer. They will be resumed at new premises in the Autumn.  
Date and place to be announced.

### NEW YORK LIBERTARIAN FORUM MEETINGS

Held every Friday night at 12 St. Mark's Place (between 2nd and 3rd Avenues), 3rd floor, N.Y.C., 8.30 p.m.

### CLEVELAND

Cleveland Libertarian discussion meetings will be held monthly on the 2nd Friday of the month, beginning September 11th, at 8 p.m., at 3705 West Park Road. Phone: Winton 1-7936.

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