

# Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"Authority is as destructive to those who exercise it as it is to those on whom it is exercised."  
—OSCAR WILDE

## THE 'DETERRENT' THAT FAILED

THE front page headlines in the *Evening Standard* last Thursday week read: "On the day two die for footpath killing" "BANK RAID GUNMEN MURDER GUARD". How many readers, we wonder, reflected that these headlines far from proving the *Evening Standard* thesis, that the death penalty is an effective "deterrent", were in fact, the most telling argument for abolition? (The *Standard's* editorial silence on the subject is significant).

At 9 a.m. on Thursday, November 10th, two youths, one aged 18, the other 23, were hanged for the murder of another youth. A third youth escaped the gallows because he was too young to hang. An hour after the State, Society, or whatever one chooses to call the machine which on the one hand condemns the taking of life and on the other places the seal of legality on the taking of two or two hundred—an hour later two men enter a bank at opening time, attack a guard, hold up at gun point another employee, kill the guard and escape with a bag containing money. As we write, two youths aged 20 and one of 16 are charged with murdering the guard and a girl of 18 is accused of receiving £928.

We do not know whether those charged are concerned with the shooting. The fact remains that according to press reports two men entered the bank, and presumably one shot the guard on the very day when but for the tender years of one of the bandits, three youths would have been hanged for the death of

one innocent citizen they intended to rob. No-one will assume that the Worthing stick-up men had not heard of the Hounslow foot-path murder trial verdict, nor the rejection of their appeals to the Home Secretary for clemency. Yet they went armed and shot their way to the money bags.

They hoped to get away with their loot? In which case the "example" of the Hounslow case did not serve as a "deterrent". Yet the State justified the taking of two young lives, even though one, Norman Harris, had not struck a single blow at the victim (who, it should be recalled, was not killed by a gun shot but by physical violence), on the grounds that others would be "deterred" from resorting to violence.

★  
THE HOMICIDE ACT is a typical example of so-called "British compromise", of trying to appease the abolitionists as well as the Tory ultras who dream of the good old days dominated by the rope and the "cat". The result was summed-up by the Howard League

### THE MAJORITY IS ALWAYS SANE

The Mayor of Aromas, near Dijon, complained to his prefect that the inmates of the local lunatic asylum, who outnumbered the 148 sane villagers, were voting as a block for the Opposition. He did not object to the right of a French lunatic to vote, but since they came from all parts of France, he questioned their right to control the affairs of Aromas.

*Observer* 13/11/60.

for Penal Reform after the Hounslow execution, which it describes as "an appalling illustration of the injustice of the Homicide Act."

"Francis Forsyth and Norman Harris could not have been hanged under this Act had they set out with the sole intention of killing another man and committed a deliberate murder.

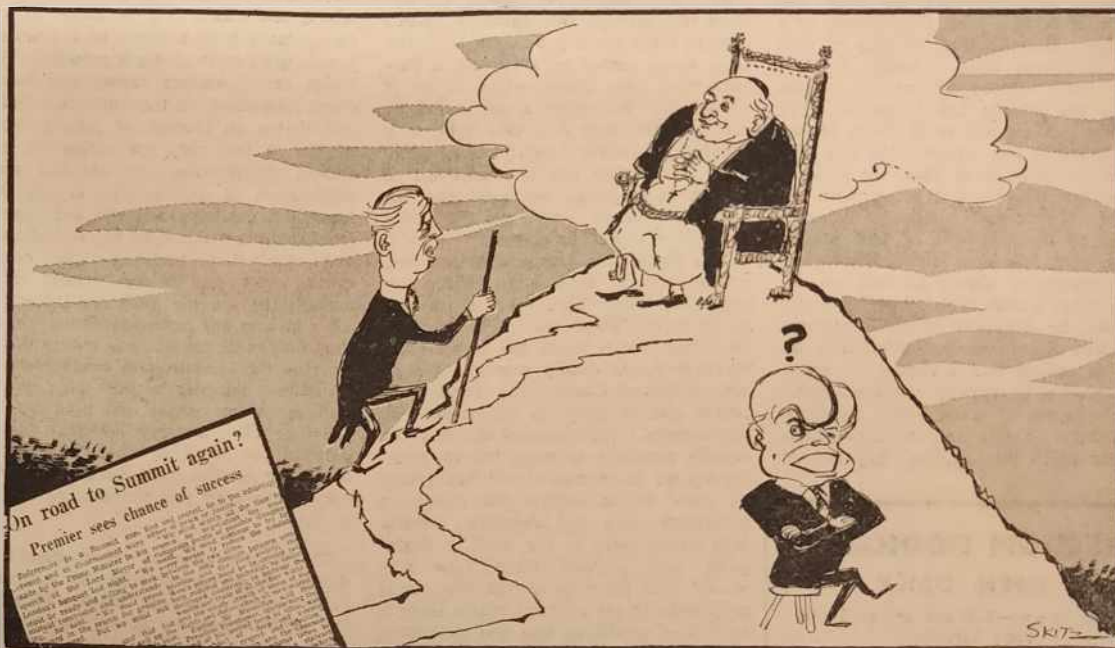
"But because they are alleged to have

intended to rob a man, and in the course of this attempt the victim was accidentally killed, these youths have qualified for the death penalty, and been hanged in the name of the law.

"One of them, Norman Harris, had not struck a single blow at the victim. If the public were fully aware of these facts, it is unbelievable that they would condone an Act which has proved itself so manifestly unjust.

"It is to be hoped that the Government will now recognise the shocking defects of the Homicide Act, and abolish capital punishment."

Isn't the Howard League a little naive in its "hopes". Mr. R. A. Butler our enlightened Home Secretary surely had all the facts. And he had the powers to reprieve at least Norman Harris. He didn't. And an hour after he hanged him as an example to others, a bank guard was murdered in Worthing. What a rhinoceros' hide the Home Secretary must have!



THE PILGRIM

### Macmillan calls for European 'Unity'

## European Economics at Sixes & Sevens

AT the opening dinner for the political and economic conference of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA—the Seven) in London last week, Mr. Macmillan told delegates that he was convinced that the countries this side of the Iron Curtain must "strive to achieve the maximum degree of unity". The "unity" he had in mind was economic, for apparently "we cannot all be united in our defence policies or in alliances on the political plain."

It is therefore important that we should be united economically. Economic unity could not be brought to Europe unless there was a positive will to agree among all the nations concerned. That is what we must all work to cultivate.

Of course the achievement of this unity depended on finding a solution to "the many practical problems involved". Britain for instance, had "constantly to bear in mind" the effect on the Commonwealth countries of anything it did to achieve European unity. But he assured his audience that "in working toward a wider arrangement for European trade"—which presumably meant, getting a foothold in the rival organisation, the European Common Market (ECM—the Six)—Britain would, of course "act in the closest consultation with the other members of the EFTA".

Unity means "oneness", "parts that constitute a whole". How nations politically divided can ever achieve economic unity is beyond our understanding. Indeed we always imagined that the political

rivalries between nations were largely economic! Is EFTA proposing to rationalise production and distribution within the seven member nations or is it simply a marriage of convenience, an attempt to counteract the threat to their markets in the Six nations as a result of the setting-up of ECM?

Of course it can be argued against our sceptical approach, as in fact Mr. Macmillan did in his address, that in signing the Stockholm convention the Seven nations in EFTA committed themselves

to promote throughout the area of the association, a sustained expansion of economic activity, full employment, increased productivity, and rational use of resources. (our italics).

Now a "rational use of resources" involves at least (a) a sharing of technical and scientific research and of production methods (b) a planned production. In other words it demands that the economic relationship between the nations concerned shall be based on co-operation and not competition. This is not possible under a capitalist economy. The only "unity" which capitalists recognise are cartels, and it is interesting to note that while Mr. Macmillan was spinning his wordy web to delegates of EFTA, the nine-man Common Market commission was issuing its 53-page draft of the rules of the game so far as ECM members were concerned, in which it was proposed to impose fines of up to \$1,000 a day on offending cartels! The draft rules would

prohibit all agreements, decisions, or concerted practices which prevent, re

strict or distort competition in trade between the member States of the Common market. All such agreements are to be required to register with the Common Market authorities and only those expressly authorised by the commission are to be allowed to continue.

Existing cartels are to register within six months of the entry into force of the rules; unless the commission objects within six months, the cartels may provisionally operate until the commission has reached a final decision. . . . The draft rules provide for the maintenance of professional secrecy, and for appeal to the court of justice of the community.

This to our minds, is the true language of capitalism. And as we all know, from the anti-Cartel laws in the United States, no legislation will stop cartels being formed when the industrialists and financiers consider amalgamations, take-overs, and price-rings are in their best interests! We do not believe that it will be any different in the case of the Seven, in spite of Mr. Macmillan's fine words. There is no economic co-operation in the individual nations. How can there be unity between them?

The words of Mr. Edward Heath, Minister for European Affairs, after the day's speeches, should have brought any starry-eyed democrat, who might have been at sixes and sevens over the intentions of EFTA, back to reality, when he declared that talk expressing unanimity was not enough

I would like to see many more suggestions about how EFTA might be built up—especially from the business element. "Especially from the business element". Quite so!

### In the Affluent Society

## Redundancy and Hardship

THE affluent society, which pays its railway shopmen eight pounds per week, can hardly have much meaning for motor car workers either. The news from Coventry is that Standard has declared 1,700 workers redundant and that 6,300 manual workers have been put on a three-day week. These figures are in addition to the 8,000 who are already on short time, in some cases only 19 hours a week, and at the same time it is believed that 200 staff workers will be paid off.

Despite the alleged prosperity of the country, the high wages, opportunities and security of the professional classes, thousands of workers are in a situation where a week's notice may lead them to hopeless unemployment and poverty. It is just because this unemployment is not of the general level of the thirties that its effect is so terrible for those who suffer it, because they are living at a time when prices are determined by the average rate of income. There is no incentive for even the mildest socialist movement, or for reforms within capitalism, since the disruptions of unemployment do not hit at capitalist prosperity as a whole. It is only the individuals who suffer, in an age in which social help for people affected like this is derided as unnecessary.

The motor car industry, of all industries, is sensitive to every little change in the bank rate, hire purchase restrictions, export conditions,

levels of investment and the prevailing degree of middle-class affluence. It is the very worst one on which the livelihoods of thousands of workers throughout Britain should depend. A spokesman for the Coventry district of the Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions said that he did not see how Standard's could have avoided the sackings. What a position for someone who is allegedly at the top of an organisation designed to protect the workers' interests to make. It is however a natural consequence of the trade union view that capitalism is all right. It looks increasingly as if the days of wholesale slumps have given way to a pattern of recessions and rises, in which each industry has its ups and downs in turn, bringing hardship to the people involved without being socially important enough to call defensive or corrective measures into play.

The organisation of production is the key to the solution. The companies naturally have to seize their opportunities to make profits and expand production when the chance comes, and restrict it in unfavourable circumstances. Control by the workers could ensure a stable level of production for need, but it would have to be control of the whole organisation, not only of what goes on on the factory floor, and it would have to be matched by a rational economy throughout the country, and possibly the world.

P.H.



“... a culture whose whole life, from science to politics, risks becoming one single neurotic game”

# Alex Comfort's Broadcast: 'The Play's the Thing'

MOST mammals, and many lower animals, have a set of activities which they seem to enjoy, but which are not obviously related to their biological business in life. Some are simple satisfactions like rolling or scratching. Others are group activities, like the hydrobatics of porpoises. Others are mock activities—sham fighting—or rehearsal activities, like the kitten hunting leaves. The common feature of all these doings is that they look as if they were being done for their own sake. It is sometimes said that they 'discharge tensions'—a form of internal sneeze; the animal looks as if it enjoyed what it was doing and felt the better for it. There is about play a characteristic element of doing-for-the-sake-of-doing which is its main distinguishing feature.

We cannot find out whether animals engage in purely mental 'play', analogous to our humour or philosophy, because we cannot ask them. Our mental play can be of the muscle-flexing type, such as the solving of needless problems for amusement, or of the type of the anticipatory substitute—like the child who plays at being a king, an architect, or a soldier. But this kind of play in man is not always what it seems: it often has much deeper unconscious origins than the players are aware of. The highly characteristic thing about human behaviour in this respect is the ease with which it becomes *all* play. In societies like ours, where social pressure on the form of individual behaviour is negligible by the standards of past human experience, individual fantasy is the chief determinant of almost all that we do. The artist knows that, when he writes fiction, he does not write 'in earnest'. Modern Europeans and Americans do not in general live in earnest, or arrive at opinions in earnest; and even under the influence of wars, traffic accidents, and dietary habits, and the unconscious forces which they express, they do not

die in earnest. In fact they are often at their most earnest over the more typically mammalian forms of play—physical competitive activity (sport, in plain words) and mating display; or over the self-conscious fantasy which we call art. Indeed if we watch the audience at a football match we shall find that they are playing at playing.

In English society, particularly, we spend a good deal of emotional energy in repressing gesture, but we seem to have no outlet for the states of mind the gesture otherwise expresses. Our own most practically important kind of gesticulation appears now to be motor-ing. This, as we know, can easily acquire the same expressive quality as a primitive dance; but we also know that it is proving a highly dangerous vehicle for the expression of moods.

The need for an expressive form of movement, and the fact that we feel deprived without it, can be seen easily from the speed with which even a superficially rather unpromising activity like student folk-dancing acquires content. Even with inexpert performers, a four-some reel between two mutually jealous couples looks entirely different from the same figure danced by a pursuer, a pursued, and two lovers—which is as it should be. But when a dance led by professionals really does take light, as it should in a society which knows how to play, and a film sets a cinema-hall of youngsters dancing, we send for the police at once to restore the traditional absence of expressive gesture.

It is significant that there is only one formal artistic activity to which we apply the word 'play'—the things that go on in the 'playhouse'. The point of this usage seems to be the contrast between play and deadly earnest. We do not really stab Caesar: the Romans, of course, put on plays in the arena with real corpses. Dancing and drama come equally naturally to man, but in growing up we learn not to tell lies before we learn not to express our moods in movement, and our dramatic impulse falls victim early to the need to distinguish 'let's pretend' from 'false pretences': we learn to restrict our acting propensity to set contexts where there is no risk of confusing real and imaginary, and we use the word 'play' for a dramatic piece largely to emphasize that what we are doing is not either earnest or deliberate fraud. But, in fact, our plays do impose on us and lead us to confuse real with imaginary, in spite of all our conscious precautions.

For me, the really interesting part of the natural history of drama in our society is probably not so much the play and its motives as the origin and motives of the desire to act. So long as the stage has a rather exorbitant publicity value and prestige there will be no lack of people who wish they were on it, but the special attraction of drama for the actor is something of which it would be interesting to know a great deal more: in particular about the effect of acting on the actor's sense of personal identity, and whether the stage selects people who wish to act out particular scenes or to assume other identities than their own.

is a vehicle for individual acting-out. The novelist can do this in his head and without help; the dramatist employs others to bring his fantasy-presentation into real presence. His instructions control the behaviour of a whole group of volunteers in the fantasy situation so that it will be what he wishes and not what comes naturally to them. One cannot help noticing that the dramatist's relation to his actors is very like the neurotic's would-be relation to other people, but for the dramatist the cast will co-operate, because pretence is their occupation, while the neurotic, unfortunate chap, is casting for a plot which he has to impose on an unco-operative world.

In fact, by far the most popular modern topic of the Anglo-American prestige play is the presentation of neurotic behaviour. Our culture has an appetite for watching this which is second only to its appetite for violence. But in spite of an enormous amount of vocal 'psychology', this behaviour is not there to be analysed and it is not presented realistically. It is there to be manipulated with a view, as a rule, to justifying it, or to giving it prestige. We watch the characters raving and muddling themselves on the author's behalf, and derive an illusion of insight from it, but in fact they are acting-out his chosen psychosexual immaturities and self-excuses as unashamedly as are the homicidal cowboys and the kidnapped, indestructible maidens of the melodrama and comic-strip tradition. The horse operas and the comic books seem actually to me the healthier influence. They give us our psycho-symbolic wishes in the way folk-stories have always done, whereas the O'Neills and the Tennessee Williamses minister to our self-pity, as well as to our social and political inactivity. They are psychological drama only in the sense in which the comic books are psychological literature. They help us to keep our neuroses as object of value.

The great original of this modern tradition of giving prestige to neurotic behaviour is, I suppose, Ibsen. Most of the stock figures in the subsequent development are already to be found in him, and, as with Dickens, we can recognize nearly all the marionettes as the fauna of Ibsen's own exasperated background. At this level the plays are brilliant—as maps of the author's experience. The individual marionettes are departments of himself. Unlike Dickens, he never opens the windows, let alone the door, to admit live figures from the street. But on the other hand, also unlike Dickens, Ibsen himself did, through his work, reach a real resolution of some of his problems and a real insight into them. His writing certainly demands, therefore, the respect we owe to any stout quest for self-knowledge. But unfortunately the intellectual prestige he gives to neurosis has stuck. It has influenced drama, and I would go as far as to say that it has even influenced private behaviour.

Ibsen's figures are acting-out: they are behaving as it gratifies the author to see them behave. What they are *not* doing is depicting the behaviour and motives

of real neurotics. There is no observation of real-life psychology behind them. These characters are the ancestors of the fauna of phoney, emotion-seeking, 'exhausting problem adults who have infested the stage ever since: people who never work except at symbolic treatises or tasks which they despise; who never think when they can feel; who never forget when they can 'atone'; who have absolutely no sense of the ridiculous and who never, never ask for advice. In an age of real neurotics for whom one can feel real sympathy they are unreal—less real in Ibsen, perhaps, than in his successors. 'People don't do such things!' says Tesman, when Hedda shoots herself—and truth breaks in. People don't—or rather, they don't for these conventionally emotive reasons. Flaubert, who knew his neurotics intimately, had no such illusions. Emma Bovary kills herself out of fright, spite, and lack of cash. Ibsen would make her do it on principle; Flaubert is much nearer the mark in letting her pretend that she thinks she is doing it on principle. Nobody else shares the fiction. And when Rosmer and Rebecca set off to drown *à deux* like a couple of exhibitionist teenagers, how I always wish they would jump in and find the stream frozen solid! If Chekhov had invented them it would have been frozen solid!

Real invalids who are too voluble eventually lose our sympathy, try as we may. We run the risk of a similar and much more justified reaction among theatrical audiences against the cult of inaccurately represented personality-disorder in theatre. It is probably more in evidence there than in the novel, because the rows and the speeches, the quarrels and the gestures of the immature attract our attention—they have always been good theatre. In real life we call them 'theatrical', as we speak of 'making a scene'.

**Unreasonable Emotion**

Of course, the pseudo-psychological tradition does replace a series of others, in all of which some pretext has to be found for the presentation of noisy demonstration, or otherwise unreasonable emotion—so that the mixed-up intellectual and the symbolic not-case replace the dedicated villain of the melodrama and the fate-haunted hero of post-classical tragedy. If we did displace our worse moods and our more irrational moments from drama, there would be little left, and I do not suggest that we will or should—but we might well cease to treat them as the badge of the intellectual way of life; for no other theatrical tradition does so, and ours has not done so for long. One has only to look at the writer of insight, like Anouilh, to see the striking contrast. That blistering row between the General and his wife in Anouilh's *Waltz of the Toreadors* which drags out into words the unspoken beauties which are latent in every marriage there ever was, but which marriage depends upon keeping silent—this is not 'positive' in all conscience, but the treatment of it is.

The short answer perhaps is that one psychological drama has lost most of its social relevance by becoming sentimental instead of psychological. It exists now to give us insight into our neuroses, not the author into his, which is always a painful business, but to make us proud of them. It is not play so much as self-deception. Our plays are the plays of a culture whose whole life, from science to politics, risks becoming one single neurotic game. They are an expensive luxury at a time when, if we do not secure enough insight to live in earnest, we run a risk of dying in earnest; and after that absurd suicide there will be no respectful applause, and certainly no curtain call.

ALEX COMFORT.

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## Individual Acting-out

The motive behind the writing of plays is much simpler. In our society drama

## Periodicals Review

**WORLD LABOUR NEWS**, the English language paper of the International Working Men's Association has been published bi-monthly for about a year. It is a mine of information about industrial affairs and disputes throughout the world.

However, it unfortunately follows the "narrow" syndicalist line, that the traditional form of agitation is enough to get workers to organise along revolutionary lines, despite the fact that this has been a failure so far. It does not consider in its columns the possible interrelations of personal anarchism and a libertarian outlook on the organisation of industry, or direct strike action. It is also more sympathetic to the non-libertarian revolutionary left than most other anarchists would be.

*Id*, the journal of the Summerhill Society has had two issues so far. It is a very welcome publication. Progressive education has had no periodical specifically advocating it since the New Education Fellowship and *The New Era* succumbed to respectability, responsibility and dullness. It is a pity that the periodical could not have been a joint

## Periodicals Review

effort by the handful of free schools working together, but that would have been asking too much of human nature.

Like Neill's books, *Id* has a warm and personal quality, dealing with children and not with ideas. The editor and contributors are not afraid of discussing controversial points and everyone interested in free education would probably be interested in reading the journal.

Volume one, No. one of *Degree*, addressed to the Universities, contains two good articles and a lot of tripe. The two are by Pat Arrowsmith on Direct Action, in which she distinguishes between the actions designed to coerce and those designed to convert, and by Charles Fox on Negro poetry. *Degree* is too much like an undergraduate rag, smart but with no substance. An article on Marxism and violence proclaims that "The Marxist theory of revolution is a synthesis of the nomographic and ideographic methods of appreciating objective situations", and then makes it clear that the writer has not even the objectivity to read anarcho-syndicalist views on violence from their own writings, but prefers to retail Marxist distortions.

P.H.

## Fudgie, Pudgie & Bobby

THE performance of human tasks by the energy of natural fuel released through machines has an effective history of only two hundred years. The use of ingenuity to cut down the drudgery in providing food, shelter and warmth, communications and travel seems a good thing in itself, because the resulting increase in leisure and improvement in health enable people to live fuller lives. Things appear, however, to have diverged a great deal from this happy scheme; much of the development has been motivated by love of power in politics and finance, vast resources of energy have been used for destruction and murder, and benefits have been distributed selectively. Such behaviour typifies *homo competitor*.

Those most immediately affected by this kind of technical progress are the workers whose skills become redundant, and it is interesting to look at the sort of human function that has been replaced by machines. Early on, the strong man's muscle was matched by the steam engine. The fly-shuttle resulted in its inventor being driven out of the country by cotton workers whom it had put out of work, but in a few years the weavers were confronted by the automatic power loom. By now inventions were coming out thick and fast and ever more subtle. Soon the engraver's craft met with sudden death at the hands of the photogravure process. During the past fifteen years the automatic control of fluids in pipes has become taken for granted in the oil and chemical industries; here a small black box corrects for immediate errors, anticipates what would happen if things were to go on as they are doing, and allows for slow trends in the process: the result is a quality of control quite beyond a human operator's ability. In the last five years the electronic computer has become a common tool for elaborate arithmetical calculations and does what it is set up to do—including simple logical work which is the trivial ability of the human brain—with a speed and accuracy beyond

human powers. Thus technical contrivances have been able to replace physical force, dexterity, skill and a mental function, but whilst anyone thinks he can understand a steam shovel which replaces his arm, relatively few can understand what a computer is doing—let alone how it does it.

By and large people's attitude to such developments has been first resentment and then resignation, because deep down is recognised the human desire always to do everything more intelligently and more elegantly. It is the way in which the innovations are introduced that is objected to, because of the misery or hardship so often created. "They might have managed things better"—as if "they" needed to with police and troops at their beck and call.

More recently the beginnings of a new fear are detectable. Previously the labourer and mechanic could at least feel "on the same side" as those who invented the gadgets, at least as far as being of the same species. Now the clever men seem apart, making machines which, in a manner of speaking, even *think*—and if machines are better than some men at *this*, what have those men left? This is akin to the horror of meritocracy.

That there is a limit to the insult that can be offered to a man's self-respect seems to have been realised at a Houston, Texas furniture factory—if one can believe last week's news item, which seems to warrant a pinch of salt. Three chimpanzees named Fudgie, Pudgie and Bobby are to replace two human employees at stuffing pillows, putting beds in boxes and attaching legs to chairs. But, the other workers at the factory are not to be told what is going on. (How do you keep a thing like that secret? The world's psychologists would be thronging the door.)

No work, no banana. Then later an incentive scheme: more work, extra bananas. After all, when men treat other men like this, how can you expect them to treat monkeys?

PIZ FURCLETIA.



## LOCAL RADIO

In this column four weeks ago we discussed the great possibilities of developing local radio if only we, the people, had the energy, the initiative and the imagination, to take the opportunity before it was too late ("Local Radio for the People" FREEDOM 22/10/60). That was before the business men managed to persuade the government that they were the right people to do the job. Last week Mr. Greene, Director-General of the B.B.C. speaking in Manchester had something to say on the subject, and much of it was along the lines of our article, at least warning the public of what would happen if local radio fell into the hands of the commercial operators. A brief summary of what he told his audience of the Manchester Luncheon Club was given in the B.B.C. news bulletin on Wednesday (November 9) but we are unable to find a report about it either in the (Manchester) *Guardian* or the *Times*. The *Daily Mail* (which, by the way, is not so bad as it was some weeks ago, when we described it as "worse than the *Daily Mail*") published the following report of Mr. Greene's speech:

Hugh Carlton Greene, Director-General of the BBC, hit out yesterday at the companies who want to run local commercial radio stations.

"They want radio for profit, not radio for the public."

One hundred companies have been licensed to run the "plug" stations if and when the Government gives permission.

Mr. Greene said if the stations were run for commercial interests and not for the BBC, they would not be truly local and they would hunt for maximum audiences.

"They would form a net working arrangement like independent television. People who wanted to 'mint their own half crowns' had set their hopes on local radio."

He added: "If the cash register came to be regarded as the test of success, one could say goodbye to minority interests, and the whole flavour would be in for a sad change."

Mr. Greene revealed what local stations would broadcast if the BBC were given permission to start them:

Local shopping guides, road and weather reports, politics and sport, angling, darts and pigeon news. Records for hospitals, employment prospects and entertainments.

Programmes for gardeners, good causes, reports from libraries, art galleries, museums and concert halls and from the local authorities.

Though the B.B.C. may well be the lesser of two evils, local radio can only be truly local if it can exist independently of either the commercial interests or the B.B.C. which however "independent" it may well be in theory depends on the government for its Charter and to a government agency for collecting its revenues as well as to another official agency to see to it that the public pays up or else!

Local radio if it is to be something more than a local town crier ("local shopping guides, road and weather reports, etc. . ."), a labour exchange, or provide "music-while-you-are-sick", must, as we wrote at the time, be independent not only of the business and entertainments tycoons and the central authority but of the local council too. The initiative must spring from consumers and producers; from local listeners who are prepared to contribute to the cost of running such a station on the one hand, and on the other from those consumers who are also engaged in local activities such as amateur dramatic societies, choirs, music, debating, horticultural

# THE SIEGE OF SIDNEY STREET

The Film: On General Release.

The Book: (Pan Books) by Jimmy Sangster, 2s. 6d.

IT comes as somewhat of an anti-climax to the wild doings of Sidney Street (to quote the film-book blurb "the day anarchy clutched at London", "when marauding anarchists took whatever they could grab") to record the findings of the courts in respect to the survivors of that slice of history.

- Jacob Peters (arrested before Sidney Street) acquitted.
- Yourka Duboff (arrested before Sidney Street) acquitted.
- John Rosen (arrested before Sidney Street) acquitted.
- Karl Hoffman, discharged.
- Osip Federoff (arrested before Sidney Street) discharged.
- Sara Rosa Trassjonsky, discharged. (Had a nervous breakdown and committed suicide).
- Luba Milstein, discharged.
- Nina Vassileva, sentenced to two years but quashed on appeal.

This does not read like police action in a case of the seriousness and magnitude which it is presented as being. Indeed the whole Sidney Street affair seems to have been magnified out of all proportion by those experts in sensationalism, the press, the cinema, and Winston Churchill. . . .

In isolation the attempted robbery at Exchange Buildings, Houndsditch, followed 16 days later by the siege of a house at 100 Sidney Street, Stepney seems fantastic and thoroughly un-British. Events however, cannot be isolated from their context however the film tries to do this.

1910-1911 were years full of interest. Zapata had issued his plan. There was a coal-strike in South Wales during which miners stole sheep from the hills to feed their families. There was a riot in Tonyandy on November 8th, 1910, when shops were looted. Metropolitan police had been drafted to the area and after some hesitation, Winston Churchill (then Liberal Home Secretary), called in the troops under General Macready (later in charge of the Black and Tans in Ireland). It is reported by R. Page Arnut in *The Miners* that Churchill asked Macready later, what Macready thought of Churchill's campaign in Sidney Street. His answer is not recorded.

During these years the Russian authorities kept up their repression following

the 1905 revolution. Blows fell most heavily upon the Baltic Provinces (now Latvia, Lithuania and Esthonia, again under Russian domination). According to a leaflet issued by Lettish Social Democrats, 3,000 Letts and Esthonians were shot, bayoneted or hung in 1905-6 without proper trial. During this reign of terror the usual floggings, rapings and pogroms took place. In Latvia, the Social Democrats were made illegal in 1897, and many of them took to guerilla warfare against the Cossacks in an organization known as "The Forest Brothers".

To prove the basic unity of the rulers, the ex-enemies of Russia, Japan, executed in January 1911, twenty-eight 'socialists', a category which included a number of anarchists.

At home, the coronation of George V was due in 1911. There was a rather embarrassing libel case against the *Liberator* (published in Paris) for publishing an accusation that George V had committed bigamy.

On 23rd December, 1911, three hundred and sixty miners were killed in a pit disaster near Bolton.

The country was just getting over a General Election and was involved in a spy case at Borkum when English naval officers were discovered spying on the Germans.

The background in the East End at this time seems to have been similar to West Kensington today. Rudolf Rocker had conducted a preliminary campaign against the 'sweating system'; in 1912, they were ready for the tailors' General Strike. In the *Daily News* of December 22nd, 1910, it was reported that off the Commercial Road, two families were making goliwogs at twopence a dozen profit. The house at 100 Sidney Street was occupied by six families.

There was the usual prejudice against foreigners who had settled in the East End. There were even subtle distinctions in the groupings. Gardstein, the man fatally wounded at Exchange Buildings was not, it was pointed out by a leading member of the Jewish community, a Jew, unfortunately the paper which printed the denial called him 'Goldstein'.

England was basking in the virtue of being a country regarded as a place of asylum but this brought the usual calls accelerated by the Sidney Street affair for the deportation of aliens and restriction of entry.

Xenophobia was always lurking even in the Socialist movement when moved by the events. Justice accused Emma Goldman of being a police agent.

The atmosphere of exile, poverty, and suspicion was the lot of refugees and police agents were a common experience. The Asev affair had shaken the Russian comrades, as had the Coulon affair in England, and Rudolf Rocker in *The London Years* writes of a Tchishikoff who arrived in London with a revolutionary background and was later found to be a police agent.

The famed 'right of asylum' of Britain was subject to suspension if the refugee was detected in any criminal acts. Sara Rosa Trassjonsky, who nursed Gardstein when he was fatally injured, and was said to be "Peter the Painter's sweetheart" was issued with such an order in June 1911, but by that time she had become insane and the order was never enforced. Like the sword of Damocles, the threat of deportation to a waiting tyranny hung over every political refugee.

In this context of a violent background, a precarious existence, and with suspicions of police provocations it is not surprising that the individual act of expropriation was resorted to by some political idealists. About this time, Josef Stalin was conducting bank raids in Tiflis for the same purpose.

The Latvian Social-Democrats, for that is what the group around 'Peter the Painter' were, had been suspected of complicity in a bank robbery in Scotland, and in a robbery at Tottenham where the robbers commandeered a tram-car to make an escape. That they attended the Jubilee Street Club is no more proof that they were anarchists than attending the Malatesta Club was.

The word 'anarchist' was in 1911 a perjorative in the same way that 'bolshie', 'communist' and 'fascist' were later and with as much political accuracy. This equation criminal=anarchist=foreigner was too irresistible to miss for every law-abiding Englishman.

The association between crime and anarchism is not always unjustified. Shaw said of socialism that it attracted "not only those too good for society but those not good enough". The individual act of expropriation was sometimes a cover for what was simple robbery with political excuses. Also the most violent member of an anarchist group was quite often a police agent.

Another factor that seems to have prejudiced the public against the 'foreigners' was the fact that they had so many names. In revolutionary movements it was necessary to conceal one's real name and it is not unknown for people to play at being conspirators by frequent changes of name.

With the background of world violence, the deaths of three policemen in Houndsditch seems a puny event but it is undoubtedly the case that a prejudice against foreigners and a publicity-seeking Home Secretary blew the affair up beyond its importance and it is an undoubted fact that the murder of a policeman brings inevitable retribution by noose or gun. . . .

The jewellers' shop in Houndsditch into which the Peter the Painter's gang were burrowing was rumoured at times to be the repository of Czarist jewels, whether this was the information which prompted the raid is not known but they had rented a house in Exchange Buildings (at the rear of Houndsditch) and had obtained a cylinder of oxygen (with the innocent help of Malatesta) to cut their way into the safe. It was a Friday evening when they were preparing to break through and a neighbour's suspicion had been aroused by the tapping and he called the police.

The police dispatched five unarmed men who knocked on the door but could

## THERE'S MONEY IN MOTOR CARS

A rise in profits of more than 50 per cent is announced by the British Motor Corporation, (Austin, Morris, and Wolseley). In the year ended July 31, group profits were a record £31,980,258, compared with £20,315,465. Net profit, after tax and other charges, was £12,748,836 (£7,468,485).

Record profits are also announced by Rootes Motors. Consolidated group profits for the year are provisionally fixed at £5,863,852 (£5,345,147). Net profit is £2,227,614 (£2,095,609). The financial year ended before short-time and redundancy affected the car industry,

get no information from the man who opened it. They concluded that he could not speak English—another factor which led to the suspicion, and confusion in this case was that very few of the participants spoke English at all. The man at the door stepped back and a second man seeing the police and realizing that arrest and deportation faced them all, fired, there was a general melée with a result that Gardstein was severely wounded by his own comrades, and three policemen were killed.

Gardstein was helped away by two or three men who were in the building. Details on this are vague as in much else in this case. It was possible he was helped by 'Peter the Painter' Peter Piatkow *alias* Schtern, Fritz Svaars, and Joe Levi (or were there two Josephs, one a man with a limp?), and a woman, possibly Nina Vassileva, but none of this was ever proved, nor, after the Sidney Street holocaust was it necessary to prove.

Gardstein was mortally wounded and it was hoped to carry him up Middlesex Street (Petticoat Lane) to his lodgings at Gold Street, Stepney. However, his strength was failing so he was left with two acquaintances at Grove Street, Sara Rosa Trassjonsky and Luba Milstein. Here, the others left, and eventually the two girls after doing all they could for the dying Gardstein called a doctor who informed the police. When the police arrived next morning Gardstein had died of his wound, and the girls had disappeared. The police found a gun under his pillow and he was identified as one of the men at Exchange Buildings.

On the 20th December, a poster was issued for Peter Piatkow, and a man and a woman wanted for the murder of police officers, with £500 reward.

On the 27th, the police raided a house in Gold Street, where Gardstein had been the tenant and seized a quantity of explosives, in conjunction with revolutionary literature found there; it was originally described that the house was an 'anarchist arsenal', eventually it was stated that the explosives were safe-blowing equipment.

On January 2nd, 1911, the police received information that two suspects were in a house at 100 Sidney Street. They were in the room of a Russian dressmaker (described variously as Mrs. Gersham, Gershon, Gershaw). The tenant, Mrs. Fleichman was persuaded to decoy Mrs. Gersham downstairs with a story of a sick child. She was then bundled off by the police. All the tenants (six families) were got out, a ninety-year-old man under protest, with the promise to return after it was over. At dawn 1,500 policemen (armed) were

Continued on p. 4

## Communist Militarism

THAT the Soviet Union is one of the most militarised states in the world is a fact known to all except members of the Communist Party and fellow-travelling peace delegations. The displays of military might on May Day, the much-bemeditated marshals and the films glorifying such Czarists as General Suworov are typical examples. The rulers of Russia have nothing to learn from their Western counterparts when it comes to professing peace and preparing for war.

One of the latest products of this militarism of the emancipators of the proletariat is a new marching song for Soviet rocketeers entitled "The March of the Rocket Shooters" and written by the Russian army composer Anatoli Novikov. According to the English version released by Reuter's its first verse assures us that "For the peace of the nations/ For the happiness of the nations/ We have created a rocket./ In the hard years of war/ It served our motherland." And the refrain runs "Rockets, rockets, rockets, rockets./ You can hit any distance./ In any corner of our vast planet/ The rob-

ber will get a repulse." These peaceful sentiments continue for another four verses.

Note that the argument of the first line is the same as that used by the apologists for Western militarism to justify the manufacture of similar weapons. Note also the familiar assumption that organised violence, or its threat, is for "the happiness of nations". The happiness of battlefields is notorious—and who can describe the exquisite joy of bodies peeled of their skins by napalm bombs or incinerated by nuclear radiation? Can anyone who honestly opposes war really believe that nauseous doggerel such as this is expressive of anything else but militarism? The question is not merely rhetorical—it is one that demands an answer from all who see in the Eastern bloc a force for peace.

In this country the Communists have recently decided to become supporters of nuclear disarmament. No doubt many individual members of the Communist Party are sincere in their support, but the party as a whole is so soiled with hypocrisy and betrayal in its attitude to peace and war, as in other matters, that its support for any worthwhile cause should be vigorously repelled. "The March of the Rocket Shooters" is one more proof—if more were needed—of the duplicity inherent in Communist tactics. Those who can see this will realise that the only logical position for anti-militarists lies in the refusal of allegiance to either East or West.

S. E. PARKER.

and other societies, to mention but a few of the local activities which would thrive and develop if local radio were at the disposal of the people.

To leave it to the Commercial or the B.B.C. to interpret local life and tastes is the wrong way to go about it.

## SOCIAL CINEMA

The Boulting twins, Roy and John, like subjects that enable them to take a cool look at the world around us, ever ready to prick balloons of humbug with the pin of wit. They have dealt with diplomacy, trade unions and the legal profession and now they are on to a major topical issue—housing.

If that seems an unpromising subject for screen action you have not been reading the news out of the St. Pancras district here where two disgruntled tenants barricaded themselves in a municipal apartment building and defied the authorities to get them out—or to make them pay more rent, which was the root of the trouble.

It happens that the Boultings have been mulling over a story on "rent strikes" for some months but they quickly switched their focus on St. Pancras. The story is yet untitled but the Boultings have warned that this time they are not going to be satirical. They feel strongly about this subject and want to show that there is right on both sides. They are for the tenants who have real grievances and against the politicians who move in on such situations for their own greater glory.

They also propose to deal with the riotous teenagers who always get in on the act and who, the brothers feel, "are becoming an unpleasant feature of local life." That extremist politics are always involved was nicely put by *The Times* of London, which reported, dead-pan, that among the books in one of the "siege" flats of St. Pancras were *Treasure Island* and *The History of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union*.

New York Times 23/10/60



# What Voting Doesn't Do

NO official figure has yet been announced of the number of people who voted in the United States presidential election, although it was expected that the size of the poll would exceed the 1956 election when only 60% of the electorate cast a vote. (We don't know how much higher until after investigations into the suggested ballot rigging in favour of the Democrats are completed!)

The influence of the "Ad-man" was evident in the televised debates between the candidates who were able to reach millions of possible "buyers", many of whom would otherwise never have seen the products. This is one of the reasons for the increased interest, but there are many others including the "religious issue" which must have induced hitherto politically indifferent Catholics and Protestants into the polling booths.

When all the reasons have been analysed—the "farming issue", "the racial question", the "personality" factor *et al*, we are left with the depressing thought that no change in leadership will radically alter the American social structure or its relationship with the rest of the world; we only have to compare the similarities of the Republican and Democratic platforms to prove this.

The problem we feel is not one of good or bad leadership, but the idea that the democratic vote gives people wisdom and responsibility which they do not have under totalitarian rule.

If, however, a democratic leadership reflects the wishes of the majority then we have to assume that actions taken by an elected leadership are generally approved by the electorate. Nowhere in the Western world do we see any significant signs of a wise and responsible people, least of all in the United States, where anyone holding unpopular views is socially ostracised. It is true that in totalitarian states the extreme penalty for the political undesirable may be death, but intolerant attitudes spring from the follies and fears of men whichever political system they live in; the "mere" social ostracism of today can be the basis of more extreme penalties tomorrow.

Democratic-minded people assure us that their system provides the checks against the possibility of political bullying, but there have been too many instances of "the checks" breaking down in times of crisis: Hitler's Germany is the best example of this. We are certain that democracy is also vulnerable.

If freedom is only held to be valid within the bounds of national necessity, and politically limited to a

theoretical choice between parties which are basically indistinguishable, then there can be no real understanding by man of his own place in society except within the boundaries of the nation state.

Freedom to vote is meaningless in terms of equality and justice if it is not accompanied by a universal concept of man. There has never been a political democracy which appealed for votes on an international platform if it meant the loss of "national identity", which has nothing to do with the preservation of good customs and characteristics.

The American presidential campaign was fought on the principle of a "strong America" by "good Americans", and there can be few inhabitants of that large continent who are not convinced that "Russians are bad" (and Cubans), and the only way of dealing with them is by force of arms.

In spite of the history of democratic rule many people living under totalitarianism see it as the only desirable alternative, and look with

envy at the inhabitants of the "free countries".

It is sometimes difficult to discuss with people who have lived in a dictatorship the limitations of freedom common to all governments. This is understandable on an individual basis, but the merits or otherwise of the degrees of freedom in no way solve the ultimate problem of universal unity which can only be resolved by the conscious rejection of separate states and nationalities.

We are a long way from general acceptance of this view; most people are only concerned with the immediate problems which affect them personally. These may be higher wages, a bigger house, school integration, marriage difficulties, success or failure—intimate and pressing problems.

Our point is that while these personal problems are important they are only part of the bigger problem of society—how to live harmoniously with people everywhere. To vote for this is not enough.

## The Siege of Sidney Street Continued from p. 3

posted at strategic points. Sergeant Leeson and Detective-Inspector Wensley knocked on the door of No. 100 Sidney Street. There was no reply so gravel was flung at the window. A shot was fired and Leeson fell wounded. His words were "Mr. Wensley, I am dying. They have shot me through the heart. Goodbye. Give my love to the children. Bury me at Putney." He was wounded in the lungs and did not die.

The long siege then commenced. Shots were exchanged between police and gunmen until 10 a.m. when two squads of Scots Guards arrived from the nearby Tower. Subsequently no one seems to have taken responsibility for this extreme step but eventually Winston Churchill took credit for this military operation and made an appearance on the field of battle.

At about noon smoke was seen coming from the house. The theory was that Peter the Painter had set fire to the house to cover his getaway, this is shown in the film. A likelier theory is that a stray bullet ignited a gas-pipe and set fire to the house.

Whatever it was, Churchill in his capacity as Home Secretary refused to let the fire-brigade put out the fire so the two gunmen were burnt alive in the building. Subsequent reports speak of one body, charred beyond recognition, having a bullet wound in the skull (not self-inflicted) and the other probably dying from suffocation.

Five firemen were injured, one seriously when dealing with the wreckage after the fire. Police casualties during the siege were less than this. A top hat was pierced, a walking-stick severed but a stubborn old lady crossed the street without harm.

At two-thirty a detachment of Royal Horse Artillery with two guns arrived but their services were not required.

As with every sensational event the opportunists profited from it, from the pickpocket in Sidney Street crowds, to W.C.H. whose *Confessions of an Anarchist* went into a second edition in 1911, to the Canterbury Music Hall (1906) who presented a policemen's benefit scene on the perils of anarchism, to Steinnie Morrison's defence counsel who hinted that Beron was killed by anarchists, and finally to Winston Churchill whose finest hour was as usual amidst the blood and sweat of others. Fresh from military triumphs at Tonypandy, South Africa, and Cuba this master strategist brought the inevitable steam-hammer down to crack a nut. The cracking was all; whether the kernel escaped was no concern of Churchill.

The military genius who later planned Gallipoli, Antwerp, Archangel, Narvik and the successes of strike-breaking at Coventry and editing the *British Gazette* had even then the indifference for human life and passion for power and publicity out of which "great men" make themselves.

One of the casualties of the Sidney Street affair was the Jubilee Street club which was the connection of the gang with anarchism. "Peter the Painter" had painted scenery for them, and Gardstein was to appear in a play there. The Club seems to have been more highly propagandist and educational than shown in the film, it had a library, reading-room, ran classes and a Sunday school, speakers' classes and ran trips to the British Museum. After the affair the landlord gave them notice.

In all the confusion of aliases, foreign names, informers, it is possible that "Peter the Painter" never existed. It is certain he would have repudiated being a Russian—he was a Latvian! It is also quite probable that he would have said he was no anarchist—only a Social Democrat!

It seems unlikely that there was a third man who escaped from Sidney Street. One edition of *The Star* proclaimed "six city murderers" killed at Sidney Street, so the evidence of Mrs. Gershon that she only had two visitors can be accepted as more reliable than that in the film "Peter" is seen making his escape from the house next door and he sees Sara Trassjonsky, who has been shot in Sidney Street, being taken dying, away in an ambulance. In fact Sara was, at the time under arrest, she later committed suicide.

We see in "Peter the Painter" the making of a myth. Some one once said if he had been a plumber nobody would have heard of him. Leeson, the policeman who was wounded, gives in his

## Stimulating Minds

In U.S. education's Sputnik-sparked search for talent, the latest grail is "creativity". Few search for it harder than Psychologists Jacob W. Getzels and Philip W. Jackson of the University of Chicago, who sharply disagree with the prevalent notion that a high IQ is the mark of "giftedness". In fact, argue Getzels and Jackson, the truly creative child who thrives on novelty is likely to find IQ tests boring and hence do poorly on them.

Seeking a better yardstick than the IQ, Getzels and Jackson tried asking children to glance at "stimulus" pictures and write an appropriate story. Recently, the pair gave their "test" to 500 teen-agers, including both high-IQ students and youngsters who appeared highly creative.

One of the Getzels-Jackson pictures showed a man in an airplane seat. Biting his pencil thoughtfully, a high-IQ teenager jotted down a conventional description of "Mr. Smith" returning "from a successful business trip" and "thinking about his wonderful family and how glad he will be to see them again". To a creative classmate, the situation looked very different. "This man," he wrote, "is flying back from Reno where he has just won a divorce from his wife. He couldn't stand to live with her any more

because she wore so much cold cream on her face at night that her head would skid across the pillow and hit him in the head. He is now contemplating a skid-proof face cream."

The kind of mind that can come up with skid-proof face cream, contends Getzels and Jackson, is likely to drive a teacher dotty. But it is also, they argue, the kind of mind that solves problems by striking out in new directions until teachers conquer their tendencies to associate goodness with giftedness. To mark accordingly, they add, schools will continue to smother some of the nation's best youngsters.

Time, October

## Meetings and Announcements

**LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP and MALATESTA DEBATING SOCIETY**

### IMPORTANT

MEETINGS WILL BE HELD in basement, 5, Caledonian Road, (near King's Cross Station)

Sundays at 7.30 p.m. All Welcome.

- NOV. 20.—Jan Leslie on THE EARLY WORK OF WILHELM REICH
- NOV. 27.—Jan Celnick on THE KRONSTADT REVOLT.
- DEC. 4.—Laurens Otter on FELLOW-TRAVELLERS WITH ANARCHISM
- DEC. 11.—To be announced.
- DEC. 18.—Philip Sansom Subject to be announced.
- DEC. 25.—No meeting.

## London Anarchist Group AN EXPERIMENT IN OFF-CENTRE DISCUSSION MEETINGS

- 1st Thursday of each month at 8 p.m. At Jack and Mary Stevenson's, 6 Stainton Road, Enfield, Middx.
- Last Wednesday of each month at 8 p.m. At Dorothy Barasi's, 45 Twyford Avenue, Fortis Green, N.2.
- 1st Wednesday of each month at 8 p.m. At Colin Ward's, 33 Ellerby Street, Fulham, S.W.6.

## Study Group on Non-Violent Defence

(Organised by CND)  
Every Thursday at 8 p.m. at 18 Campden Grove, W.8.  
Admission 1/-.

## Public Discussion Meetings:

- RANK AND FILE INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE LIAISON MEETING  
White Swan, 28 Farringdon Road, London, E.C.1.  
FRIDAY, November 18th at 8 p.m.
- PHILIP SANSOM opens discussion on "What Sort of Rank and File Movement do we Want?"  
December 2nd. BRIAN BEHAN on "Why We Need a Rank and File Movement."

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## Bad Week!

### PROGRESS OF A DEFICIT!

WEEK 46

Deficit on Freedom	£920
Contributions received	£873
DEFICIT	£47

November 4 to November 10

Surrey: F.B.* 5/-; London: J.C. 2/6; Hyde Park: Sympathisers 1/9; Enfield: M. & J.S. 1/-; London: A.M.B. 5/-; Auckland: K.J.M. 3/3; Wolverhampton: J.G.L.* 2/6; Stockwell: Anon.* 2/6; Sheffield: P.M.B. 2/6; Niteroi: A.M.G. 5/-; Pré St. Gervais: E.E. 1/0/0; Stockport: F.O. 5/3; Northampton: J.B. 3/-; London: J.T. 2/-; London: P.S. 12/-; Kidderminster: J.W.H. 1/-; Surrey: F.B.* 5/-.	Total	3 19 3
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## LETTER IN DEFENCE OF SENSUALITY

N.W.'s article: "Sense and Sensuality" brings to mind one of the finest books ever written on that dodgy subject, sensualism. I refer to: "In Defence of Sensuality" by John Cowper Powys who must surely be one of our oldest as well as most famous individualists. At eighty-eight, he was born in 1872, he is still writing his wonderful romances and novels and poems and essays living in a tiny cottage in the heart of North Wales like a modern Merlin. He has been referred-to as "the Welsh Wizard" and once, in America, as "the English Degenerate". But he is certainly more of a magician than anything else.

I urge any who are plagued by the horrors of puritanism as well as all "funny ones" who are being driven mad by modern life or by any other damned mania whatever, to get hold of this book and also: "Philosophy of Solitude", "Art of Happiness" and "In Spite Of".

I believe that these books and the philosophy put forward therein could well be the means of causing a great change if sufficient people were to get it into their heads to apply this "way" to their everyday lives.

Yes, I liken John Powys to another John: John the Baptist. Truly a voice crying in the wilderness.

But, thank the Gods, Powys' message is not the anti-life blight that Christianity has turned out to be. And the important thing about it, this whatever we wish to call it—Elementalism perhaps, is, that it works, surely the acid test for any so-called philosophy is just "does it work?"

London, Nov. 12. GLYN HARRY HUGHES.