

Freedom

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NOTES.

The strikes in Belfast and on the Clyde are now surpassed in importance by the railway strike in London and the threat to cut off London's electricity unless the Government introduce a 40-hour week for all trades, in order to absorb the unemployed. This demand is of such a far-reaching character that it is impossible to believe that the Government will agree to it. Should the electricians carry out their threat to strike, the Government threaten to use the military in their places. This might easily lead to a revolutionary situation, as the workers are not in a mood to be trifled with. Having fought for four years in the great war for justice and freedom, they are determined to keep the Government to their word. The London Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union told an interviewer that the majority of the hotheads in the Union are the men who have come out of the Army. "They thought they were coming back to a new world, but they have been disillusioned." The Government may bring out the soldiers with their hand-grenades and their tanks, but it is an open question whether the soldiers would fire on the workers. They found the troops in Glasgow were unreliable, and imported others from outside, who will probably be as unwilling to shoot as the local troops. The situation is full of possibilities, and if a struggle with the Government does come every revolutionist should throw himself or herself into the fight and sweep away the rotten system of exploitation and oppression that has cursed the world so long.

A Lesson from Paris.

The transport strike in Paris has been crushed by the Government. A decree, signed by M. Clemenceau, compelled the train, tram and bus companies to hand over the control of their undertakings to the military authorities, and all demobilised men on strike were ordered to return to work or return to the Army. The strike was broken. The men returned to work, which proves they have not much love for Army life. Clemenceau, of course, was anxious to show the foreign politicians and diplomats how he dealt with strikers, and they will probably carry the lesson back with them when they go home. In October, 1910, M. Briand, then Premier, broke the great railway strike by the same methods of calling the railwaymen to the colours and ordering them to "carry on" as railwaymen. He also caused an uproar in the Chamber of Deputies by saying that "if it had been necessary to have had recourse to illegal measures the Government would have taken them." Another little point to notice. When the strikers last month presented their demands, the employers said they could not discuss the question of the hours of labour as "that was a question for the Peace Conference"! As most of the able-bodied men in this country are still conscripts under the Military Service Acts, they should remember the power it gives their masters, who will certainly use it in strike troubles if they consider it worth the risk. If the League of Nations is to settle the hours and wages of labour, we can see some fun coming. But some Labour men are even in favour of that!

The Sinn Fein Parliament.

In accordance with their pledge, the Sinn Fein Party are ignoring the Parliament at Westminster, and on January 21 opened their own Parliament at the Mansion House, Dublin. Although only twenty-six members were present—nearly all the rest of the seventy-five being in prison—their assembly as a native Parliament is another stage in Ireland's age-long denial of England's right to rule her. The Declaration, which was read at the first meeting, was suppressed by the Censor (two thousand people heard it read!) but is published in full in *Forward* of February 1. There is really nothing in its programme that would not be agreed to in principle by any up-to-date Government. It is when principles are put into definite practice that the true test comes. The Irish workers elected the Sinn Fein members, but there is hardly one member who can be regarded as a recognised representative of the Irish Labour movement. This movement first became a force under Larkin and Connolly at the time of the Dublin Strike, and is now making

great headway amongst all classes of workers. It is to this movement rather than to the middle-class Sinn Fein Parliament that Anarchists will look for any real progress towards the workers' control of their own lives. Freedom will not come from a Parliament in Dublin, but will have to be fought for on every farm, in every factory, mine, or ship. The American Colonies threw off the rule of Britain over a century ago, but to-day there is more real slavery in the United States under President Wilson than ever there was in the days of King George. The Irish workers' motto should be "No masters—English or Irish."

The "Far-Flung Line."

The publication of the figures relating to British soldiers serving in different parts of the world, brings home to us very forcibly the fact that not only is the war not yet ended, but there is little likelihood of hostilities ceasing yet awhile. So long as there remain fields for exploitation there will the British Tommy be found, in order to give to the natives the usual friendly benediction with rifle and bayonet. The particulars of our little expeditions are interesting. We have troops in Murmansk and Archangel, Siberia, Trans-Caucasia and Trans-Caspia, Persia and India, the Balkans, Austria and Germany, Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and other districts of Turkey. These are only some of the places where the good-natured British Tommy is endeavouring to maintain or restore "law and order." Small wonder then that demobilisation hung fire. But happily the workers are beginning to see through the tissue of lies which appear in the Press. The Army revolt in the New Year has done more to smash our wonderful traditions of respect for authority than anything that has yet happened. We were undoubtedly on the eve of a huge expedition to Russia, but the direct Actionists in the Army gave their views in unmistakable fashion. Without waiting for politicians, leaders or statesmen to side-track them, they took the law into their own hands, and insisted on quicker demobilisation.

Parliament Ignored.

The strikes and rumours of strikes among the miners, engineers, dock workers, railwaymen and policemen, and many others have upset the Press. It recalls the huge Coalition vote, and raises the cry of "Bolshevism," and hints at Russian gold being behind the steady, horny-handed sons of toil in their present demands. It overlooks the fact that an increasing number of British citizens ignore the Parliamentary machine. It does not realise that industry has marched beyond the limitations of our bourgeois institutions. Thus we have the claims of the workers for more money and fewer working hours, and their growing distrust of Labour leaders and politicians on the one hand, and, on the other, the spectacle of a House of Commons' membership reputed to be the richest which has ever been returned to Westminster. These two facts surely have some relation to one another, and it is, therefore, not surprising that Labour prefers to get to grips with the industrial problem in the shortest and quickest way. But strikes are, after all, only a symptom, and mark the strong undercurrent that is running, and which expresses the urgent desire of the masses for a freer, happier life in co-operation with their fellows.

According to Holy Writ.

When one remembers how our rulers are able to quote the Bible in support of their many beneficent actions, it is easy to understand their affection for it. The Food Controller was recently troubled in mind as to how to dispose of the "fat, unsaleable bacon which has been so much in evidence lately in the shops." He now announces that arrangements have been made for its exportation to another country. Knowing that he would not send rotten meat to foreigners without being able to justify it to himself, we turned over our Bible and there found the text suitable for his purpose. It is in Deut. xiv., 21:—"Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, or thou mayest sell it unto an alien."

REVOLUTIONARY EUROPE.

RUSSIA.

The most important event of the past month has been the Allies' invitation to all the Governments in Russia to take part in a Conference at the Princes Islands, in the Sea of Marmora, on February 15. The hypocrisy of the statement in which this invitation was embodied is shown by the two or three sentences in which the Allies stated their aims:

"They recognise the Revolution without reservation and will in no way and in no circumstances aid or give countenance to any attempt at a counter-revolution. It is not their wish or purpose to favour or assist any one of the organised groups now contending for the leadership and guidance of Russia as against the others."

That statement is a lie from beginning to end. Every reactionist in Russia has been assisted with money and munitions, and Allied troops, both black and white, are at this moment doing their utmost to smash up the Bolshevik Government. Besides this, almost every leading capitalist paper has stated that until the Bolshevik organisation is broken up there can be no real peace.

According to the *Daily Mail* of January 25 it seems that one of the reasons for this change of front on the part of the Allies was the evidence given to the Peace Conference by M. de Scavenius, Danish Minister to Russia, who is an ardent advocate of intervention. He declared that "no Russian armies could be trusted to fight the Bolsheviks, even if supported by Allied soldiers. If military intervention took place the Allied armies would have to rely entirely on themselves and on imported supplies, since the official reports show that no food whatever can be bought from the Russian peasants." No stronger testimony to the Russian peoples' sympathy with the Bolsheviks could be wished for. Finally, says the *Mail*, "definite questions were put to the United States, Italian, and British Dominion representatives whether, in any circumstances, they would support military intervention with men or money? Their answer was an unqualified negative." This refusal must not be taken too literally, but was evidently meant to infer that for the present other matters were more important.

Whether the Bolshevik Government will accept the invitation is at the time of writing uncertain, but they are evidently not to be hurried into giving an answer. It is quite certain that they will not cease their international propaganda or withdraw their armies from the Baltic Provinces, which are stated to be among the conditions on which the invitation is based. The invitation is announced as President Wilson's proposition, but we can see the hand of Lloyd George in almost every line. His success in talking British working men out of their demands and getting strikers back to work has persuaded him to try some of his old tricks on the Bolsheviks, but he would find Lenin and Co. hotter stuff to deal with than the average trade union leader whom he lures to Downing Street.

Meanwhile Allied intervention has had the effect of drawing to the support of the Bolsheviks several parties in Russia who had previously held aloof or were hostile. The Mensheviks now stand definitely on the Soviet platform, says Arthur Ransome, and the Social Revolutionaries are lending their support, without definitely joining the Bolsheviks. But the most important happening is the changed attitude of the Co-operative Societies. When the Bolshevik Revolution first broke out in 1917 the Co-operators were opposed to it. Since then, however, the action of the reactionaries on the land question has caused them to modify their opposition, and in December last the All-Russian Conference of Co-operative Societies at Moscow declared neutrality to be impossible at this stage of the struggle against reaction, and agreed to put the whole of their experience at the service of the Soviets in the work of establishing labour communes. Their educational work is also to be linked up with that of the Soviets.

The food shortage is undoubtedly severe in the large cities. The grain stores in Siberia and Southern Russia are cut off from them by the counter-revolutionary Governments in those parts, and the Allies are intensifying this starvation by their blockade, which they hope will be as effectual against the Bolsheviks as it was against Greece (under King Constantine) and against Germany and Austria. Those revolutionists who are in favour of a League of Nations, which shall control the raw material and also the food supply of the world, must now realise what a powerful weapon the capitalists will have against any people who decide to strike a blow for freedom.

The anti-Bolshevik Press occasionally circulate all over the country nice little paragraphs giving details of a so-called "free love" decree issued by a small local Soviet in the Ural district.

Unfortunately, this decree is not in favour of free love, but rather of compulsory marriage—of course, a very different thing. In reality, the Soviet Republic marriage decree differs very little from the laws of this country, except that the couple may adopt either surname or a joint surname of both. On the subject of illegitimate children, their regulations are more liberal than those of this country. At the same time we think it would be more decent if our Press hacks were to turn their attention to the question of the sex relationships in this country. It has been stated that 750,000 cases of venereal disease were treated in the British Army in twelve months, and we hear of girls of fifteen and sixteen being treated for the same complaint. The armies of prostitutes who walk the streets of our great cities are supported and regarded as necessary by the very people who sneer at Anarchists for advocating "free love." When a Russian Soviet publishes a more infamous decree than Regulation 40D (Defence of the Realm Act) we will consider whether the time has arrived for us to throw stones.

As we surmised last month, the report of the murder of Peter Kropotkin turns out to be a lie. The *Zurich Volksrecht* publishes a Russian Government wireless message denying the report of his arrest. Kropotkin, the message asserts, is enjoying complete freedom, and "is in friendly relations with the Soviet Government."

The fact that the Press which prints the lies never prints the denials should stimulate comrades everywhere to increase the circulation of the few papers in this country which try to spread the truth about Russia. Our great difficulty nowadays is the lack of information about the working men and women of Russia. Even in Bolshevik Russia there are eighty million men and women besides Lenin and Trotsky, and we want to know how they are using their newly-won freedom—what sort of lives they are living, how they manage their communes and factories, how they settle local disputes, are they really free or do their age-long prejudices still cling to them? These are the things we are itching to learn about, and we would rather have one good letter giving details of the workers' real life than all the telegrams about the growth of the Bolshevik army or the many details about the Bolshevik Government. Let there be light!

GERMANY.

The first few days in January brought to a head the struggle between the Spartacists and the Ebert-Scheidemann Government. Karl Liebknecht and his followers, assisted by many of the Independent Socialists, decided the time was ripe, and street fighting commenced. For a time they held their own, and indeed were making considerable headway, until the Government called in the aid of the old military machine, which finally decided the struggle in their favour. According to the *Manchester Guardian*, "artillery, mine-throwers and hand-grenade troops came into action, and the revolutionaries surrendered after heavy losses and considerable damage to the buildings. Over 300 prisoners were taken away, and were roughly handled by the soldiery; some, it is said, have been shot without ceremony." But it appears that the Government have got more than they bargained for. The military machine, led by its old officers, took charge of Berlin, and the Government could not control it. Brutus Molkenbuhr, one of the Majority Socialists, and a strong supporter of the Government, said: "What is happening in Berlin jeopardises the achievements of the Revolution. The Government has troops no longer under control. Officers have set up a White Guard and disarmed all the forces of the Revolution. These White Guards are imbued with a spirit far more dangerous than Spartacus. They have been raging like Huns in Berlin, and the destruction they wantonly worked is worse even than anything the German armies performed in Belgium and France."

Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who were arrested a few days later, were brutally murdered by their escort, and "the number of men and women arbitrarily done to death by blood-drunken troops in the streets of Berlin is appalling." Several prominent Spartacists were arrested and shot at once, and a real reign of terror lasted for several days. As a protest against the murder of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, many strikes took place, and the funeral of Liebknecht in Berlin was made the occasion of an enormous demonstration, in spite of the troops and machine guns at every corner. There is a rumour that Rosa Luxemburg is not dead, but in hiding, waiting a chance to get away. The fact that her body has not been found is sure to lead to such rumours.

The Spartacists seem crushed for the time being, but it was reported on January 27 that at Wilhelmshaven they had proclaimed martial law and occupied various public buildings, all railway traffic being suspended. A telegram said that "Government troops have been sent from Berlin with orders to act ruth-

lessly towards the disorderly elements." This may be the last flicker of the present revolt.

The Workers' and Soldiers' Councils formed throughout Germany in the first weeks of the Revolution are still in existence. The Allied commanders have dissolved many of them, and in some cases the shorter workday gained by the workers has been abolished, and the old 12-hour day enforced; but it is impossible to believe that, having once enjoyed the air of comparative freedom, they will long submit, and when the time arrives to strike another blow the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils will be re-formed and be the nucleus of the new Communist organisation of society.

In Roumania a peasant revolution has broken out over the whole of the country. The movement is well organised, and the risings occurred in all the villages at a fixed hour on January 25. Home-coming soldiers, well armed, were at the head of the insurgents, who forced their way into the towns, and bloody encounters with the troops followed. At Bucharest fighting went on all the next day.

In Italy the Government has prohibited the publication of united demands agreed upon at Milan by all the Labour organisations, but these have since been adopted and issued by the Central Federation of Trade Unions at their recent Congress in Rome. They include, among other things, total and permanent disarmament, hands off Russia, confiscation of all war profits, to the labourer the full product of his work, the workers' control of factories, etc., cultivation of the land, and great public works to be entrusted to co-operative organisations of workers on behalf of the community. The Executive Committee of the Italian Socialist Party urges the establishment of a Socialist Republic and the Dictatorship of the Workers.

In Spain a kind of Albert Hall meeting was held at Madrid to celebrate the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, at which a resolution was enthusiastically adopted pledging the meeting, amongst other things, to use all possible means to secure the establishment of a "Socialist Republic that would suppress capitalist privileges and render impossible the exploitation of man by man, and satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the workers."

In France the General Federation of Trade Unions has adopted a minimum programme for immediate realisation which contains several drastic demands that would radically alter the economic position in the country.

In Portugal a revolutionary strike was defeated by the Government, but since then a more formidable movement seems to have developed, probably based upon Bolshevik ideas, but the Censor is hard at work to prevent any information getting out of the country.

In Sweden a movement has been in progress amongst the organised workers to declare immediately a Republic and a Government composed entirely of workers, but the official Labour Party under Branting is doing its utmost to check this movement.

Both in Denmark and in Holland strong movements seem to be developing with definite social revolutionary aims. In Holland even the official Parliamentary Socialists under Troelstra began to form Soviets, and threatened to take over the Government.

In Switzerland a similar state of things exists, and a Soviet was formed at Olten, which carried on a general strike for about eight days. This was beaten by the Government, but the official Socialist paper on the same day said: "We declare war afresh to-day, and we will conduct this war without hesitation until the day when the class Government of the bourgeoisie shall be ended." Later it reported large increases in the membership of Socialist organisations, and a bigger circulation for Socialist papers.

SYNDICALISM & THE CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH

(How we shall bring about the Revolution)

By EMILE PATAUD and EMILE POUGET,

Of the Confédération Générale du Travail.

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LABOUR'S CALL.

At last the crisis has come. Labour has decided to claim its own; not merely an increase of wages, but the abolition of wages; not a satisfactory agreement with the capitalist, but the abolition of the capitalist. Yes, Labour is determined that the inhuman system of exploitation of man by man must once and for all be abolished. The Russian, German, Austrian and Bulgarian workers backed their words by deeds, and to-day a bitter struggle is being waged by the master class in every country of the world against those men who dared to vindicate the rights of the working class.

The small nations which the Allies were fighting for have been relieved of the Prussian militarism, which, we were told, would have swept over Europe had not British militarism intervened. Yes, Prussianism has been driven out of some (?) small nations; is it not time it was driven out of big nations also?

Are the workers of Britain deaf to the appeals of their fellow workers in Russia who are battling bravely against tremendous odds? Do the workers of Britain realise that when British troops were dispatched to Russia they were sent to crush out of existence the very same ideal which some British workers themselves are advocating to-day, namely, "A Workers' Republic"?

The "Prussian menace" was the cry which was raised to decoy the workers of the Allied Powers into flying at the throats of their fellow workers of Germany and Austria, whilst the conspirators themselves were appropriating millions at the expense of their dupes, whom they were appealing to in the name of Patriotism and Christianity. Those who during the war were loudest in their condemnation of Prussianism are the very class who are using every device of Prussianism to exterminate Bolshevism in Russia for fear it should creep into the hearts and minds of the workers at home, thereby smashing the chains of slavery which had secured the British workers to their despotic masters.

Is it not time we ceased talking about red flags, workers' republics, etc., whilst every effort is being made by Labour's enemies to smash the first workers' republic, without the slightest interference from the workers in the Allied countries beyond passing resolutions and fiery speeches? Let the workers of Britain take a lesson from the attitude adopted by Irish Labour towards conscription, when every man, woman and child ceased all work for twenty-four hours, aye, and would have stopped it for twenty-four days if necessary. Let them look at the lesson which the electricians taught them a few weeks ago, when the "Hidden Hand" refused the Albert Hall for a *Herald* meeting.

The time for resolutions and speech-making is past; the time for action has arrived!

Let our enemies see that the day of despotism is past, that we no longer are content to grovel at the feet of the tyrant. Let us step forth as men and render all the assistance at our command to safeguard and preserve the first Workers' Republic.

F.O'M.

WILLIAM LIEBKNECHT ON REVOLUTION.

Karl Liebknecht's opposition to Parliamentary methods was inherited from his father, who was under no illusions as to the limitations of those methods. His words should be read by those orthodox Marxians who condemn Lenin and Liebknecht for their hatred of bourgeois Parliaments. The following passage is translated from *Ueber die Politische Stellung*:

"Let us suppose that government does not interfere, perhaps in quiet assurance of its innate strength, perhaps as a matter of policy, and at last the dream of some imaginative Socialist politicians comes true, and there is a Social Democratic majority in Parliament—what would happen? Here is the Rubicon: it must be crossed! Now has come the time for reforming society and the State! The majority makes up its mind to do something that will make the day and hour memorable in history—the new era is about to start. O, nothing of the kind. . . . A company of soldiers bids the Social Democratic majority begone or be chucked, and if these gentlemen do not leave quickly a few policemen will show them the way to the State prison, where they will have ample time to reflect on their quixotic conduct. Revolutions are not made by permission of the government; the Socialist idea cannot be realised within the sphere of the existing State, which must be abolished before the foetus of the future can enter into visible life. Down with the worship of universal suffrage! Let us take an active part in elections, but only as a means of agitation, and let us not forget to proclaim that the returning officer will never issue into the world the new Democratic State. Universal suffrage will only acquire complete influence of the State and over society after the abolition of police and military government."

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THE APPEAL TO FORCE.

In an editorial under the above heading in the *Labour Leader* of January 16, the writer laments the use of force now manifesting itself in the political outbreaks of the Labour and Socialist movements. He especially regrets the Spartacist revolt against the Ebert Government, which, he says, was without excuse because the question at issue—as to how and by whom the form of Government and policy of the State was to be determined—was shortly to be decided by “the free vote of the whole of the German people,” in the same way as such questions are decided in this country and in every other constitutional country. In trying to settle the question by force the Spartacists were violating “the fundamental principles of freedom and democracy.”

It is extraordinary that the writer in the *Labour Leader* should still be under the delusion that General Elections are a “free vote” of the people, especially after the General Election of last December. For the vote of a people to be free, they must have an opportunity to hear both sides of a question. But look at the facts of the situation. The Labour and Socialist movement had not one daily paper under their own control, whilst the capitalists were able to flood the country every day with their lies and misrepresentations. Millions of leaflets were distributed by the Coalitionists, telling the people that the Labour and Socialist Parties were in favour of Bolshevism, and adding the usual stories of murder and robbery by the Russian Bolsheviks. How could the *Labour Leader* writer hope to cope with such a country-wide distortion of facts? Lloyd George knew that the Labour Party were anti-Bolshevik, but he deliberately called them Bolsheviks on the eve of the election so as to influence the voters. And at the next election, and every other election, the same tricks will be played.

In Germany, the same conditions exist. The Spartacists knew this and they tried to seize the press, the telegraphs and telephones in order to be able to put their case before the people. They failed, and the Majority “Socialists” were able to influence the elections to such an extent that all other parties were defeated.

Surely all this is known to the editor of the *Labour Leader*, but if not it certainly is known by the more intelligent men and women workers in this country. They see now that it is useless to expect a peaceful evolution of society. The robbers are in power, and will not give way except to force. All their war time speeches on justice, liberty and “self-determination” are now being exposed at the Peace Conference as pure humbug. The five Great Powers are carving up the world to suit themselves, quarrelling over a colony here or an island there, as dogs quarrel over a bone. It is the most cynical exhibition of brute force that the world has ever seen. Controlling about three-quarters of the food supply of the world, they are now absolutely and deliberately starving whole nations in order to force them to do as they wish. And what they do to the enemy abroad they are prepared to do to their subjects at home.

In these circumstances, it is childish to suppose that great changes for the better can be brought about by a “free vote” of the people. Our rulers have decided that they will bow only to force. The question for the workers to decide is: Do they wish to be free? If they answer “yes” then they must be prepared to use the necessary force. That is the logic of the position. It is not a question as to whether or not they want to use force. The only point to decide is: Do they wish to be free. As for waiting for the majority, that is another illusion. Revolutions are initiated and carried through by an intelligent minority. The majority will side with the revolutionists if they are successful, as they side with the minority who rule them now. Freedom does not rest on majorities. “He who would be free, himself must strike the blow!”

SUPERSTITION OF POLITICS.

Politics, as defined in Annandale's Dictionary, is “the science of government; that part of ethics which relates to the regulation and government of a nation or state.” Government is defined as being “the act of governing; regulation; control; restraint; the exercise of authority.” And when the Anarchist says that he has no concern with politics and that he desires to abolish government altogether, the definitions quoted above should be borne strictly in mind. The essence of government is its autocracy; there is no such thing as democratic government.

From the earliest ages mankind has been held in the toils of his superstitions, religion and politics. These have varied from one generation to another in the power of their influence. During the seventeenth century, in this country the superstition of religion was much stronger than that of politics. Never before has the superstition of politics waxed so strong, nor has the superstition of religion declined so low as in our own days. You may call a man an unbeliever and he will smile at you; call him Liberal when he happens to be Tory and he will knock you down.

To religion men and women looked for happiness; for the reward of virtue and the punishment of wrong. In this twentieth century it is to politics—“the science of government”—they look for precisely the same things.

For the last eight hundred and fifty years we have had in this country the fact of government in active operation. True, its form has been varied from time to time, but even so, such variations are an additional argument against it. If we imagine ourselves as visitors to England from a far-off country we might naturally expect to find, after so many hundreds of years of government, a smaller number of laws and ordinances in operation than were requisite at the beginning; that happiness and prosperity were the general lot of English people; that criminality was almost non-existent, and that every man and woman was secured in the possession of what is their own. Surely we should be justified in asking not less of governments than the advantages enumerated.

What is the truth? Laws have increased in numbers a hundredfold, and are increasing every week; happiness and prosperity may be found,—perhaps!—only in the mansions inhabited by the insignificant number of rich folk among us; criminality has increased and is increasing steadily, and there is no security nor stability for any of us.

Five hundred years ago the common folk of England were happier, more prosperous, better educated—for education is not merely book-learning—and freer than they are to-day, and such conditions came into existence, not because of government, but in spite of it.

He was a wise man who advised his followers to judge of a tree by its fruits.

The initial labour of governments is to set up quite arbitrary standards by which conduct shall be judged. Justice or Right is not a practical consideration—not “practical politics,” as says Henry Dubb. My Lord Northcliffe may fill his newspapers with misrepresentations and half-truths and lies, and his reward is a seat in the House of Peers; but let a newsboy attempt to sell his papers by misrepresenting their contents and he will find his reward to be a seat in the prison of Wormwood Scrubs. The contrast was put quite succinctly by Elliott in one of his rhymes:

“The law condemns the man or woman
Who steals a goose from off the common.
But lets the larger felon loose,
Who steals the common from the goose.”

And yet we find men and women, presumably in possession of their senses, arguing as to the merits of this or that politician, this or that measure, this, that or the other party. At intervals they indulge in a huge debauch which is styled a general election—though it is neither general nor an election.

“Well,” said a friend to me on the evening of the Georgian triumph, “I hope the result of this election will be to drive the people to direct action.”

Thomas Carlyle added one to the ten commandments which he said was the most important of all: “Thou shall not be stolen from.” It is the only commandment that working folk need commit to memory. But “direct action”—what is meant by the phrase?

Anarchists understand direct action to be something concrete and practical. A strike which leaves employers in possession of machinery and tools is mere foolery. Anarchists' direct action is sub-divided into four lines of conduct.

First: A refusal to go hungry and naked while stores of food and clothing are available.

(As food and clothing are produced only by workers, so workers have the only conceivable moral right to them).

Second: The refusal to pay rent.

(As landlords are not the makers or creators of land, how can they be morally said to be its owners?)

Third: The refusal to pay taxes.

(For sixpennorth of tax working folk get very nearly a pennorth of benefit).

And fourth: The refusal to bolster up government by becoming its soldiers, police or lackeys.

(Refrain from doing to another what you would not like to have done to you).

It is to be observed that such action is at once individualistic and communistic. We have no advice for mobs with irresponsible leaders at the heads of them. Our direct action is a resolving, a daring and a doing.

Ignorance is always superstitious. Gods, spirits, demons, governments, the sun, moon and stars are all invoked for help. And we do as children do, shut our eyes, open our mouths and wait to see what the gods, governments, etc., etc., give us, with the inevitable consequence that we get more than we bargained for.

Hundreds of years ago a Chinese philosopher taught, "A state is at peace till governed. The heaven-born instincts are corrupted by rule and government, under which men strive for peace and quietude."

To those words of wisdom nothing has been added during all the centuries which have elapsed since they were spoken.

JOHN WAKEMAN.

CUTTINGS AND COMMENTS. 1919

"We do not seek a yard of real German territory—not a yard of it."—Lloyd George.

The "little Welsh Wizard" does not say anything about such trifles as the German islands in the Pacific, the German colonies in Africa (1,022,000 square miles!), Alsace-Lorraine, the left bank of the Rhine, German Poland, the Bagdad Railway, etc.

"I propose that not only all the gold Germany has got, but all the silver and jewels she has got, shall be handed over. All her pictures and libraries and everything of that kind should be sold to the neutral and Allied world, and the proceeds given to pay the indemnity. I would strip Germany as she has stripped Belgium."—Sir ERIC GEDDES.

Hurry up, Eric, or the Bolsheviks may get there first.

"It would indeed be ungracious to forget the name of the great King Edward VII., who while still heir to the throne, perceived thirty-one years ago the necessity for the other European countries to unite against Germany."—*Temps* (Paris).

It would indeed be ungracious to forget this when the question is raised as to who started the war.

"There is a sort of civil war, like the late skirmish between the Electricians and the Albert Hall manager, which may develop finally into a very sharp struggle between the Socialists and Syndicalists. . . . If we have a reactionary Government, as at present, then public sympathy will be with any insurgent force that sets itself against the State. If we have a popular Government, insurgency will have a worse time than any autocratic or oligarchic Government dare give it."—Bernard Shaw.

Yes, Mr. Shaw, the insurgents know it, and are now opposed to all government, "popular" or otherwise.

THE CHALLENGE.

Not by my will I came into this world,
Into a world-wide labyrinth of Law,
Where, hydra-headed, serpent-wise upcurled,
Lurks Property with never-sated maw.
To slavery's scroll I have not set my hand;
I spurn the dead past's deadly legacy—
The might-born right of some to own the land
Or aught required for life in liberty.
Freedom from all external rule I claim;
Freedom to work, to love, to live my life;
Freedom for selfhood's growth and self-control:
Yea, and for others I demand the same:
For each and all, accord instead of strife;
Bread for the body, Beauty for the soul.

TOM SENHOUSE.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

In pre-war times we had a moderate meandering chatter about disarmament of the nations. Liberal-minded persons advocated the settlement of disputes by an International Arbitration Court. We had Hague Conferences and frequent photographs of the Hague Peace Palaces, with accompanying explanatory articles setting forth the beauties and the ideals of that august edifice; but a jolly war came along and shattered the old effete scheme of things. Something had to be done, and eventually the moderates decided on a course of action to secure a united world. They appealed to the nations in the name of humanity to unite—after the war. They proved that commercial and moral interests would benefit by such action—after the war. Everything will be bright and happy in the process of reconstruction and the ghost of Imperialism will descend into nether darkness. An alluring prospect is projected for the times to come—after the war; but we have our doubts. We prefer to analyse this new code of international relations, rather than accept it passively.

The extremists considered themselves the only section possessing sympathies with Internationalism, and were slightly disillusioned that certain celebrities had long conjured the same general principles cradled in the nursery of moderation. The supporters of Moloch are becoming pacifist in their public sentiments, and a hitherto hostile press is being imbued with a vision of universal brotherhood. The war is over and the workers have lost. The greater war has begun. Russia struck the first shattering blow at the citadel of Capitalism. The disruption of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is a fact, and the Social Revolutionaries are organising rapidly in Germany. Even the Balkan States are simmering with Bolshevik ideas, and the intellect of Capitalism is growing apprehensive. The wiseacres of finance realise the peril and are preparing to forestall it. The greatest enemy of Socialism is political constitutionalism as it exists in Britain and the United States, and the formation of a League of Nations will simplify capitalist organisation and mobility. The idea of the League of Nations is the product of the development of economic conditions and aspirations. It also embodies the reactionary principle of forestallation, the tossing of the coppers to the beggar to prevent him seizing the gold. The League of Nations disavows the concrete unit of society in favour of an abstraction of abstractions. The individual is of negligible importance in the hazy outline of a political generalisation, and in the futile maze of articles, sections, clauses and sub-divisions, principles are mangled and battered with a scholarly pretentiousness quite superior to criticism.

Our leisured class are remarkably clever at the nimble art of polemics, since it embodies a sense of culture, absorbs valuable time and provides the working-class with nothing to think about. But their process of forestalling an international idea of a revolutionary nature is at the present time necessarily cumbersome and difficult. The mobility of capitalist agreements is somewhat deranged owing to the differences existing between the various competitive groups and trusts. The eager desire of Entente investors to secure fresh imperial fields dims their perspective of the danger of foreign revolutionary progress and it is only a few intelligent class-conscious individuals in the ruling caste who understand the probable development of the situation. It is this section, led by such men as President Wilson, Lord Lansdowne and others, that has evolved the modern "red herring," the League of Nations. They place the choice before their less wise brethren: Revolution or a League of Nations, and doubtless ere long the political campaigners will have the cry resounding from the party platforms: "We must have a League of Nations." Such a League as proposed will simplify immensely the difficulties of capitalist administration. Authority will not be centralised, but will rather be more equitably distributed to cope with restless industrial districts. The waste of competition will be eliminated, and the economy of monopoly or capitalist co-operation will be substituted. The administrative boards of the various nations will nominate quotas from their subject peoples as their due contribution towards the International Police. Military forces, as they now exist, will be useless, as also will modern navies. Police, presumably agents for preserving order, are actually guardians of private property, and as International Police will continue to perform a similar function, although the sabre and rifle will substitute the obsolete baton. We will have Chinese police shooting American strikers, negroes sabreing a Parisian mob, Lascars breaking up a Hyde Park demonstration, and sights of a like nature. All to preserve order and—as a secondary consideration—to maintain the dignity and integrity of property. The League of Nations will not dissipate class rule, nor undermine our frothy civilisation. Dominating the idea is

the principle of the preservation of privilege, and the spirit of nationalism will be kept smouldering to facilitate and encourage action of section against section. After years of a furious gospel of hate, what could be more simple than to launch British and Germans at each other's throats, should they occupy the respective positions of rebels and police.

Never before in history have events moved with such rapidity as they do now. What a monstrous mountain of printed stuff published yesterday is useless and futile to-day! Imagine the numerous solutions of the Balkans problem advocated. The problem, we were told, is territorial. At other times it is racial, religious, or economic, and to-day the situation in the Balkans is likely to evolve in a fashion that will dispose of the problem altogether, or graft on it a wholly different aspect. President Wilson has demanded the disruption of Austria-Hungary into racial areas, with complete autonomous government in each, and already the cyclone of unrest has placed these provisions out-of-date. These modern statesmen, presuming to alter the map by a readjustment of frontiers, cannot look beyond the all-pervading idea of property. They fail to realise that humanity is on the threshold of a new era. The pent-up force of centuries of suffering is thrusting down the barricades of convention, and the people are demanding a place in the sun. How long have our orthodox historians and moralists painted the catastrophic results inevitable with the overthrow of private property. All the noble institutions of our splendid civilisation, we are warned, will crumble to dust; and we fervently agree. Why not?

In the platitudes of oratory, in the loftiness of Government-paid forensics, there is something inspiring in that historical word "civilisation," until we recollect that East End slums, grimy factory barracks, battlefields and prisons, are vastly more numerous and crowded than universities, public gardens and the like. The most brilliant achievements in architecture and engineering are merely symbols of a labour enslaved, where the mortar is watered with blood, and the rivets are congealed with human flesh. We could not imagine a more disgraceful system of social life under any principle, with the prevailing means at ready disposal. Science, art and nature are exploited and prostituted to perpetuate wage-slavery and its attendant evils, whilst religion is mainly the essence of the moribund morality of property and its possessors. No matter where we turn, we find church, school and university under an iron theocratic and autocratic rule, which renders independent expression impossible. And they have sung their praises and called it civilisation. They would bolster up their failures anew and make a League of Nations—a League of Properties. The English banker and the Chinese Mandarin have a fellow feeling for one another. Theirs are common interests, and they would unite for mutual protection. Racial colour is nothing, for property is alike all over nature's earth, and property must have its slaves to minister to its masters.

The worker's dream of a new world is not a nightmare of well-known evils intensified. It is a dream of liberty and well-being for all. He does not think of nations united. He simply dreams of universal peace, for, with the obstinacy of the generation with the new ideal, he refuses to believe in the destruction of militarism until its property basis is destroyed; he refuses to respect a League of Nations, with its barren promises and its potent dangers. Political justice and its mythical splendour are shattered illusions. Sweet words have lost their balm, and mankind starves on scraps of paper. The future calls for action to attain that universal equity of interests, which will be far nobler than a "civilised" League of Nations.

ROBERT S. WOOD.

OXEN PHILOSOPHY.

Few indeed are the oxen which, being led to the slaughter-house, do not meditate within their horned heads in this manner: "It cannot be that man has raised me and fed me these many moons for the sole purpose of stabbing me, and tearing me to pieces. His wisdom is infinite, his justice beyond the comprehension of oxenkind, and what he reserves for me must needs be wonderful and beyond the wildest hope of my heart. I am content, O mighty, all-powerful Man; let thy hand stab deeply within my neck; I trust and believe, and my faith in thy ultimate purpose is unshakable! Thou knowest best, O Mighty Feeder and Raiser of Oxen, what is good for me; thy ways are manifold and inscrutable,—receive my humble gratitude! And now lead me to thy pastures eternal, where I shall graze and bellow to thy honour for ever.—Amen!"

PAUL ELDRIDGE in "The Pagan."

The receipt of a free copy of this paper is an invitation to subscribe—2s. 6d. per annum.

NOTICES.

The Chief Censor informs us that FREEDOM can now be sent to other countries, but, like all other printed matter, is subject to censorship.

WE WANT YOUR HELP.

Comrades will be pleased to hear that our circulation is increasing steadily, thanks to their efforts, and with a strong push it could easily be doubled. During the present revolutionary wave, people are anxious to know all about the new ideas which are causing such a stir among the workers in the whole of Europe. FREEDOM should sell well at meetings, as also our anarchist literature. Comrades, do not lag behind whilst events are moving so quickly! Send for extra copies of FREEDOM and a few dozen pamphlets and spread our ideas broadcast at such an opportune moment!

We have received the following sums since last month in answer to our appeal for funds, but we want much more. A regular monthly collection among groups would help greatly. Received up to February 3: A. D. Moore, 2s.; J. Dick, 4s.; Belshazzar, 10s.; J. Green, 2s.; J. Kashdan, 2s.; J.S. (Walthamstow), 2s.; W. Underwood, 2s. 6d.; A. Smith, 1s.; H. Bool, 10s.; A. V. Sellens, 2s. 6d.; J. Norton, 2s.; R. Peddie, 2s.; R. Mangiarotti, 2s.; H. W. Journet, 16s. 3d.; M.H.U., 2s. 6d.; J. J. Ronan, 1s. 9d.; J. Colton, 2s.; H. Oakley, 2s. 6d.

"HANDS OF RUSSIA" COMMITTEE.

The above Committee appeals for financial assistance in its task of organising protests against any form of intervention in the affairs of Russia. Information will gladly be supplied by the Committee at 7, Featherstone Buildings, Holborn, W.C.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism. By Bertrand Russell. 7s. 6d. net. London: George Allen and Unwin.

[A review of this book has been crowded out this month.]

Godwin's "Political Justice": A Reprint of the Essay on "Property," from the original edition. With an Introductory Note by H. S. Salt. Second Impression. 2s. 6d. net. Same publishers as above.

Co-operation and the Future of Industry. By Leonard S. Woolf. 5s. net. Same publishers as above.

Independent Working Class Education. By Eden and Cedar Paul. 6d. London: Workers' Socialist Federation, 400, Old Ford Road, E.3.

Red Russia: the Triumph of the Bolsheviks. By John Reed. 6d. Same publishers.

All these books can be obtained from FREEDOM Office.

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