

Freedom

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NOTES.

The Great Fiasco.

The Triple Alliance strike, fixed for Friday, April 15, was, as everyone knows, called off almost at the last hour. Although the Executives of the Railwaymen and the Transport Workers' Unions had pledged their support to the miners, they seized on Frank Hodges' statement the previous night as an excuse for breaking their pledge. Gosling told Lloyd George that they would be "rotters" if they did not support the miners, and Sexton had said a day or so previously, "Our difficulty is to keep our men in." Yet these self-styled "rotters" managed to do the trick. Now the men in many districts are demanding the resignation of the leaders who betrayed them. To our mind this is a futile demand, if it means that the new officials are to have the same powers as the old ones. These officials draw salaries in various ways which in some cases run up to nearly £2,000 a year, and quite naturally they do not see things from the same point of view as their members, who in most cases earn only about £3 a week. If the members continue to put all power into the hands of these highly-paid officials, they must put up with the danger of being let down by them. Trade unions can only use the industrial weapon; to put control of this weapon into the hands of Labour M.P.s is foolish, because the man who is in Parliament knows that his job as M.P. will vanish if the industrial weapon is effective. Besides, the Labour M.P.s who rub shoulders with financial and commercial magnates every day in the House of Commons, and who frequently take part in the social festivities of the wealthy, are certain sooner or later to forget the men with whom they at one time worked in factory, mill, or mine.

Lloyd George as Mineowners' Advocate.

The miners' leaders, who complain that Lloyd George took the mineowners' point of view, must either be very foolish or be talking with their tongues in their cheeks. Did they really expect him to back the miners? The Government is the Executive of all the wealthy and privileged classes in the Empire, and the head of the Government has to protect their interests or make way for some one else who will. Lloyd George has proved himself a very effective guardian of those interests, and at the last election he came back to power at the head of the wealthiest body of members that had ever been returned to the House of Commons. Gone are the days when he launched his campaign against the landlords and attacked Lord Rothschild. Now he is the pet of society, the most skilful advocate of the exploiters, and the deadliest enemy of any change. He has also said that the inequalities of the present system are a dispensation of Providence, and to suggest doing away with them is blasphemy. This worthy product of politics knows on which side his bread is buttered, and it is only the children in worldly matters who would expect him to be impartial in a struggle between Capital and Labour. Certainly he was a "capital" chairman at the recent conferences at Downing Street.

The Wisdom of Wells.

Mr. H. G. Wells has been trying to find a means of rescuing the world from the gigantic mess in which he finds it to-day, and he is publishing his conclusions in the "Sunday Times" under the heading "Salvaging Civilisation." His chief remedy is the organisation of all the States of the world into a World State. We hope he will try again. The League of Nations, as originally planned by some idealists, was to be a League of Peoples; it has worked out as a League of Exploiters, and its principal task is to partition the world into "mandatory areas" for the rival groups of capitalists and financiers. The War which ravaged civilisation was brought

about by those who controlled the great States of Europe, over whom the people had no control. They were treated as pawns in the game, and were forced into the army or into the factories to carry on the war. Now, if the people have so little influence over the Governments of the States to-day, whatever hope is there that they would receive any more consideration from the Government of a World State? Wells, like Lenin and State Socialists generally, thinks it possible to mould society into the form of which they dream, if only they can hold the reins of government. They do not see society as a multitude of individuals, but as a plastic mass which is to be ruled and regulated until it conforms to their particular wishes. The tendency nowadays, we must admit, is in that direction, the State in every country steadily getting more control over the lives of its citizens; but no one who looks to freedom of the individual as the hope of mankind would ever imagine that a World State would be a means to that end. The history of government for many centuries shows us that those who held power always used it in their own interests. It was instituted by the strong to oppress the weak, and can never be used for any other purpose. A World State would mean a World Tyranny.

The Unemployment Dole.

The papers always tell us that this is a very rich country. We believe it, for we notice that on April 15 the number of unemployed registered was 1,677,000, whilst 964,000 were working short time. The amount of unemployment benefit disbursed in the week ended April 9 was £1,221,000. This, of course, does not take note of the numbers of permanent unemployed, who live by the receipt of rent, interest, and profit. Only a very rich—and very stupid—community would pay people to be idle whilst the means were at hand by which they could employ themselves and produce their own wants. Some people imagine that these unemployment doles come only out of the pockets of the rich, and therefore are really extra wages. But of course everything the unemployed consume is produced by the workers, a fact which is cleverly concealed by the wage system. If it were not for the monopolists, every one of the unemployed could be provided with sufficient land to grow his own food, and the necessary seeds and tools with which to make a start. Even if we paid them the dole at the same time, we should still be better off by the amount of food they produced, and they would be healthier and happier on account of their work. This solution, however, is too simple for such a rich—and such a stupid—community as ours. It is no good getting angry about such foolishness—everybody seems to enjoy it.

The Cost of Government.

The Budget presented to Parliament on April 25 by Mr. Austen Chamberlain should open the eyes of all those "practical" people who judge things by their cost in pounds, shillings and pence. It is a study in wasted millions. The entire State expenditure for 1920-21 amounted to £1,200,000,000. On the Army, Navy, and Air Force the expenditure amounted to £230,000,000—this is two years after the end of the war to end militarism. But the machinery of Government is the most wasteful of all, £497,000,000 being put down to the Civil Services, the happy hunting ground of the parasitic class. On top of all this comes the interest on the National Debt, £345,000,000 being paid out to the blood-suckers who stayed at home and lent money to the Government at high rates of interest whilst the conscripts were blown to pieces on the battlefields of Europe and Asia. All this money represents the toil of those who produce the wealth of the world. Now the war is over—or nearly over—the Army they are taxed to maintain is called out as soon as they show signs of revolt against the system. Truly does Nietzsche say of the State monster that it "bites with stolen teeth."

OBJECTIONS TO ANARCHISM.

By GEORGE BARRETT.

(Continued from last month.)

No. 20.

How will you regulate sexual relationship and family affairs?

It is curious that sentimental people will declare that love is our greatest attribute, and that freedom is the highest possible condition. Yet if we propose that love shall go free they are shocked and horrified.

There is one really genuine difficulty, however, which people do meet in regard to this question. With a very limited understanding they look at things as they are to-day, and see all kinds of repulsive happenings: unwanted children, husbands longing to be free from their wives, and—there is no need to enumerate them. For all this, the sincere thinker is able to see the marriage law is no remedy; but, on the other hand, he sees also that the abolition of that law would also in itself be no remedy.

This is true, no doubt. We cannot expect a well-balanced humanity if we give freedom on one point and slavery on the remainder. The movement towards free love is only logical and useful if it takes its place as part of the general movement towards emancipation.

Love will only come to a normal and healthy condition when it is set in a world without slums and poverty, and without all the incentives to crime which exist to-day. When such a condition is reached it will be folly to bind men and women together, or keep them apart, by laws. Liberty and free agreement must be the basis of this most essential relationship as surely as it must be of all others.

No. 21.

Society is an organism, and an organism is controlled at its centre; thus man is controlled by his brain, and society by its Government.

This is one of the arguments so often used by the so-called scientific Socialists. It is quite true that society as a whole, if it is not an organism, at least can be very closely compared to one. But the most interesting thing is that our scientific objectors have quite forgotten one of the most important facts about the classification of organisms. All organisms may be divided into one of two classes—the "morphonta" or the "bionta." Now each morphonta organism is bound together into one whole necessarily by its structure; a bionta organism, on the contrary, is a more or less simple structure, bound together physiologically; that is, by functions rather than by its actual form. This can be made much simpler. A dog, for example, which we all know is an organism, is a morphonta, for it is bound together necessarily by its structure; if we cut a dog in two, we do not expect the two halves to live, or to develop into two complete dogs. But if we take a plant and cut it in two, the probability is that if we place it in proper conditions each half of that plant will develop into as healthy an organism as the original single one. Now, if we are going to call society an organism, it is quite clear to which of these two classes it belongs; for if we cut society in two and take away one half the people which compose it, and place them in proper conditions, they will develop a new society akin to the old one from which they have been separated.

The really interesting thing about this is that the morphonta—the dog—is by all means an organism controlled by the brain; but, on the other hand, the bionta is in no case a centralised organism. So that so far as the analogy does hold good it certainly is entirely in favour of the Anarchist conception of society, and not of a centralised State.

There is, too, another way of looking at this. In all organisms the simple cell is the unit, just as in society the individual is a unit of the organism. Now, if we study the evolution of organisms (which we have touched upon in Question No. 18), we shall find that the simple cell clusters with or co-operates with its fellow-cells, not because it is bossed or controlled into the position, but because it found, in its simple struggle for existence, that it could only live if the whole of which it formed a part lived also. This principle holds good throughout all organic nature. The cells which cluster together to form the organs of a man are not compelled to do so, or in any way controlled by any outside force; the individual struggle for life forces each to take its place in the organ of which it forms a part. Again, the organs themselves are not centralised, but are simply interdependent; derange one, and you upset more or less the organs of all, but neither can dictate how the other shall work. If the digestive organs

are out of order, it is true that they will probably have an effect upon the brain; but beyond this they have no control or authority over the brain. The reverse of this is equally true. The brain may know absolutely well that the digestive organs are for some reason or other neglecting their duties, but it is unable to control them or tell them to do otherwise. Each organ does its duty because in doing so it is fulfilling its life-purpose, just as each cell takes its place and carries on its functions for the same purpose.

Viewed in this way, we see the complete organism (the man) as the result of the free co-operation of the various organs (the heart, the brains, the lungs, etc.), whilst the organs in their turn are the result of the equally free co-operation of the simple cells. Thus the individual life-struggle of the cell results in the highest product of organic nature. It is this primitive struggle of the individual cell which is, as it were, the creative force behind the whole complexity of organic nature, including man, of this wonderful civilisation.

If we apply the analogy to society, we must take it that the ideal form would be that in which the free individuals in developing their lives group together into free institutions, and in which these free institutions are naturally mutually dependent upon the other, but in which there is no institution claiming authority or the power to in any way control or curb the development of any of the other institutions or of the individual.

Thus society would grow from the simple individual to the complex whole, and not as our centralisers try to see it—a development from the complex centre back to the simple parts.

No. 22.

You can't change human nature.

To begin with, let me point out that I am a part of human nature, and by all my own development I am contributing to and helping in the development and modification of human nature.

If the argument is that I cannot change human nature and mould it into any form at will, then, of course, it is quite true. If, on the other hand, it is intended to suggest that human nature remains ever the same, then the argument is hopelessly unsound. Change seems to be one of the fundamental laws of existence, and especially of organic nature. Man has developed from the lowest animals, and who can say that he has reached the limits of his possibilities?

However, as it so happens, social reformers and revolutionists do not so much rely on the fact that human nature will change as they do upon the theory that the same nature will act differently under different circumstances.

A man becomes an outlaw and a criminal to-day because he steals to feed his family. In a free society there would be no such reason for theft, and consequently this same criminal born into such a world might become a respectable family man. A change for the worse? Possibly; but the point is that it is a change. The same character acts differently under the new circumstances.

To sum up, then: (1) Human nature does change and develop along certain lines, the direction of which we may influence. (2) The fundamental fact is that nature acts according to the condition in which it finds itself.

The latter part of the next answer (No. 23) will be found to apply equally here.

No. 23.

Who would do the dirty work under Anarchism?

To-day machinery is introduced to replace, as far as possible, the highly paid man. It can only do this very partially, but it is obvious that since machinery is to save the cost of production it will be applied to those things where the cost is considerable. In those branches where labour is very cheap there is not the same incentive to supersede it by machines.

Now things are so strangely organised at present that it is just the dirty and disagreeable work that men will do cheaply, and consequently there is no great rush to invent machines to take their place. In a free society, on the other hand, it is clear that the disagreeable work will be one of the first things that machinery will be called upon to eliminate. It is quite fair to argue, therefore, that the disagreeable work will, to a large extent, disappear in a state of Anarchism.

This, however, leaves the question only partially answered. Some time ago, during a strike at Leeds, the roadmen and

scavengers refused to do their work. The respectable inhabitants of Leeds recognised the danger of this state of affairs, and organised themselves to do the dirty work. University students were sweeping the streets and carrying boxes of refuse. They answered the question better than I can. They have taught us that a free people would recognise the necessity of such work being done, and would one way or another organise to do it.

Let me give another example more interesting than this and widely differing from it, thus showing how universally true is my answer.

Within civilised society probably it would be difficult to find two classes differing more widely than the University student of to-day and the labourer of Western Ireland nearly a hundred years ago. At Ralahine in 1830 was started the most successful of the many Co-operative or Communist experiments for which that period was remarkable. There, on the poorest of bog-soil, amongst "the lowest order of Irish poor, discontented, disorderly and vicious, and under the worst circumstances imaginable," an ideal little experimental community was formed. Among the agreements entered into by these *practical impossibilists* was one which said that "no member be expected to perform any service or work but such as is agreeable to his or her feelings," yet certain it is that the disagreeable work was daily performed. The following dialogue between a passing stage-coach passenger and a member of the community, whom he found working in water which reached his middle, is recorded:—

"Are you working by yourself?" inquired the traveller. "Yes," was the answer. "Where is your steward?" "We have no steward." "Who is your master?" "We have no master. We are on a new system." "Then who sent you to do this work?" "The committee," replied the man in the dam. "Who is the committee?" asked the mail-coach visitor. "Some of the members." "What members do you mean?" "The ploughmen and labourers who are appointed by us as a committee. I belong to the new systemites."

Members of this community were elected by ballot among the peasants of Ralahine. "There was no inequality established among them," says G. J. Holyoake,* to whom I am indebted for the above description. He adds:—"It seems incredible that this simple and reasonable form of government† should supersede the government of the bludgeon and the blunderbuss—the customary mode by which Irish labourers of that day regulated their industrial affairs. Yet peace and prosperity prevailed through an arrangement of equity."

The community was successful for three and a half years, and then its end was brought about by causes entirely external. The man who had given his land up for the purposes of the experiment lost his money by gambling, and the colony of 618 acres had to be forfeited. This example of the introduction of a new system among such unpromising circumstances might well have been used in answer to Objection No. 22—"You can't change human nature."

No. 24.

But you must have a Government. Every orchestra has its conductor to whom all must submit. It is the same with society.

This objection would really not be worth answering but that it is persistently used by State Socialists against Anarchists, and is even printed by them in the writings of one of their great leaders. The objection is chiefly of interest in that it shows us painfully plainly the outlook of these wonderful reformers, who evidently want to see society regulated in every detail by the batons of Government.

Their confusion, however, between the control of the conductor's baton and that of Government really seems to indicate that they are not aware of any difference between Government and Liberty. The relationship of the subject to the Government is entirely unlike that of the musician to the conductor. In a free society the musician would unite with others interested in music for one reason only: he wishes to express himself, and finds that he can do so better with the assistance of others. Hence he *makes use of* his brother musicians, while they similarly make use of him. Next, he and they find they are up against a difficulty unless they have a signalman to *relate* their various notes. They therefore determine to *make use of* someone who is capable to do this. He, on the other hand, stands in just the same relationship to them: he is making use of them to express himself in music. If at any time either party finds the other unserviceable, it simply ceases

to co-operate. Any member of the party may, if he feels inclined, get up at any moment and walk away. The conductor can at any minute throw down his baton, or upset the rest by wilfully going wrong. Any member of the party may at any time spoil all their efforts if he chooses to do so. There is no provision for such emergencies, and no way of preventing them. No one can be compelled to contribute towards the upkeep of the enterprise. Practically all the objections which are raised against Anarchism may be raised against this free organisation. What will you do with the drummer who won't drum? What will you do with the man who plays out of tune? What will you do with the man who talks instead of playing? What will you do with the unclean man who may sit next to you? What will you do with the man who won't pay his share? etc., etc.

The objections are endless if you choose to base them on what *might* happen, but this fails to alter the fact that if we consider what actually does happen we find a free organisation of this kind entirely practical.

It is not, I hope, necessary now to point out the folly of those who pretend that such an organisation is analogous to Government.

In a Government organisation people are bound together not by a common purpose, but by law, with the threat of prison behind. The enterprise is supported, not in accordance with the amount of interest taken in it, but by a general compulsion. The part played by each is dictated, and can be enforced. In a free organisation it is merely suggested, and the suggestion is followed only if the individual agrees, for there can be no compulsion.

CONCLUSION.

[We are anxious to print these articles in pamphlet form at once, and would welcome contributions for that purpose.]

Anarchists Barred from Russia.

The following letter has been received by our comrade M. Lenoble, of the *Workers' Friend*. The comrades who sign it were deported by the United States Government, but are refused admission to Russia. Looks like a game of battledore and shuttlecock. Anarchists evidently are to be treated as outcasts, even by the Bolsheviks:—

DEAR COMRADE LENOBLE,—The deported group which left London on March 2 arrived in Libau on the 12th. There the Soviet Commissar Jouk refused to give his signature to a "propusk" for the undersigned to get into Soviet Russia. The reasons he gave were various. To me he said, "Vie ni Russkie" (You are not Russian). To the other Anarchists he said, "Russia does not need bomb-throwers." Afterwards he allowed many of the Anarchists through, except the undersigned. We were not allowed off the ship, which brought us back to Danzig. The shipping company and the American Consul are awaiting an answer from Washington as to what to do with us. At present we are in a very critical position, and one comrade is down with fever, temperature 101 degrees. On March 15, being still on the boat, we telegraphed to the lawyer in New York who represents the comrades there. Well, you can imagine our position is not very grand. Kindly let the Freedom Group know about this; write also to New York, to *Free Society*. What will happen to us only the devil knows. Perhaps back to America! At present it is bad; we are without money, and without money you cannot live.—With Anarchist regards to all comrades,

MAYER L. NEHRING, A. SEVERNI, A. KRISHTAL,
A. LITSHKEVITCH, S. OLEYNIK, P. PROCUDO.

Who Wants to be Governed?

In the hour of need men will call for a Dictatorship so long as they are slaves to the imposture that there is need of government. What is government for? To maintain a few in wrongful possession of the earth. To make war to extend private possession. To maintain the slave system that this wrong has created by crushing the slaves should they revolt. To punish "crime" bred of the conditions that this wrong has created, and for that purpose to have police, prisons, and gallows. To rob the people of the rewards of their labour in the name of taxation levied to provide the instruments for their own subjection. Such, then, being the purpose of government, none but the upholders of the system should want government, whether it be a King or a Committee. What is needed is not a change in the form of government, but the abolition of government. But the abolition of government can only be achieved by the abolition of the system of which government is the outcome. It should not be a matter of how to rule slaves, but of how to abolish slavery and so get rid of rulers. It is a question of the assertion of the common right to the earth, through the over-riding of which slavery and government have come into existence.

—*Commonweal* (Sept., 1920).

* "History of Co-operation."

† I need not, I think, stay to explain the sense in which this word is used. The committee were workers, not specialised advisers; above all, they had no authority and could only suggest and not issue orders. They were, therefore, not a Government.

FREEDOM.

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OUR GREATEST NEED.

What is the present moment's greatest need? For our part we should answer unhesitatingly—clear vision; and for this two things are required, viz., accurate observation and accurate reporting. Lies trip us up at every step. Muddle-headedness keeps us eternally struggling in the net.

Where has the Labour and Revolutionary movement any genuine strength as yet? Certainly not in Russia, for there the merest handful, having captured official power, now rule the mass. In Italy and Spain those who cry "Death to Capitalism!" are fighting even more furiously among themselves, as witness the recent conference at Leghorn. In Germany Social Democrats and Communists are at daggers' points. In France the movement lies helpless, torn asunder by internecine strife. In the United States the great American Federation of Labour and many other supposedly powerful organisations crouch helpless beneath the unemployment storm. Everywhere those in possession are still comfortably in possession, while the dispossessed, despite all their gesticulations, remain, at best, precisely as they were.

Here, in England, where Labour organisations boast themselves so strong, the great Triple Alliance, after years of sterile talk, took its courage in its hands and put up—"the bluff that failed." It snatched at the first excuse to withdraw again into its shell, realising its own weakness and knowing that, under the pressure of unemployment, its treasuries were emptying. However, the miners, being already involved, still carry on tenaciously. Let us look into their case more closely.

The miners have the largest and most powerful organisation in this country; their labour produces the commodity on which our whole international trade is based; their trade, being a skilled one, enjoys a labour monopoly that cannot be disturbed. If ever an organisation was in a position to assert itself boldly—as indeed it did through the mouth of Robert Smillie when he attacked the mine monopolists before the Sankey Commission—this should be the one. And what do we find? First, that its representatives are haggling eternally for what is called a "living wage." Secondly, that they look to the State, which is the protector of the mine monopolists, against whom the present Prime Minister once thundered so furiously, to secure them that living wage. Thirdly, that their one idea of enforcing their demands is to try once more whether they, who possess only their labour, or their employers, notoriously wealthy, can starve the longest!

Practically the whole Labour and Revolutionary movement is a unit in cursing the capitalist system and declaring that wage-slavery must go. Does it mean it? For the most part it certainly does not. The Socialists, for example, want us to be all wage-slaves to the Government, the official hierarchy to be the one paymaster. And the Trade Unionists and Syndicalists—on whom Anarchism once built such towering hopes—what are they after? They are straining every nerve to make the wage system more bearable, and thus to prolong its life.

The trouble with all these good comrades is that, while they feel intensely and often sacrifice themselves heroically, they do not observe. To-day more competent observers, often in quite elevated walks of life, are pointing out that Capitalism is passing; that it can no longer satisfy our primal wants; that a system which condemns millions to unemployment and starvation precisely because more goods have been produced than the market can absorb, is inadequate and must go. And Trade Unionism is struggling to preserve it!

To many so-called advanced thinkers the great question is as to who will occupy the seat that, as they imagine, Capitalism must soon vacate. Why, obviously to any one who will use his eyes, the successor is already there. While the Socialists have

been discoursing learnedly about the future State, the actual thing has got itself enthroned and is now hard at work regulating everything, governing everybody, clapping Socialists and other heretics into jail, and forcing all mankind, rich and poor, beneath its yoke. No heavier yoke was ever known. No greater champion of special privilege and social inequality ever stepped into the ring. For the first time in history, under its iron rule, entire peoples have been driven to the mutual suicide of modern war, loaded down with debts their great-grandchildren will sweat in vain to pay, and shot down remorselessly when, in their despair, they made even a gesture of revolt. Who hitherto in all England's long history, ever dared to add 335,000 men to its armed forces, and to fill our parks with guns, because certain of our producers, dissatisfied with the pay offered them, declined to work?

The Anarchist position is simplicity itself, being merely that men and women, if given equal opportunity of acquiring a stake in life, will guard that stake far better than any officialdom ever yet has guarded it; that the State is the parent of that helplessness which holds the masses captive; that the State is the heartless pirate who robs men of their natural rights, thereby choking up the fountains of justice and sowing broadcast the dragon's teeth of civil and international war. That position cannot be stated too simply, too frequently, too frankly. Do that and all the best thought of every country will rally to your standard, for every civilised man and woman is sick of bloodshed, and begins to realise, amid the present chaos, that the cup of the State's criminality is full to overflowing.

TO THE STRUGGLE!

We cannot break our chains with weak desire,
With whines and tears and supplicating cries;
'Tis not by crawling meekly in the mire
The free-winged eagle mounts into the skies.

The gladiator, victor in the fight,
On whom the hard-contested laurels fall,
Goes not to the arena pale with fright,
But steps forth fearlessly, defying all.

For Victory is a woman, sweet and fair;
Her kiss is won by him who battles best—
The virile rebel, unafraid to bare,
Before the greatest odds, his noble breast.

He only can be free who boldly fights,
And, foot by foot, takes each embattled hill—
Who visions Freedom in the final heights,
And struggles on, with firm, unshaken will.

So stand erect, and scorn to be a slave;
Cast far from you your old humility.
Shatter your chains, give battle bold and brave,
For your own birthright—LAND AND LIBERTY!

ENRIQUE FLORES MAGON.

(Translated from the Spanish by RALPH CHAPLIN.)

Collect the Indemnity Yourself.

"If you buy to-day for £7 a German 3 per cent. Bond of 2,000 marks (pre-war equivalent of £100), you are at a very small outlay buying an option on Germany's recovery. If, as we anticipate, you sell these bonds at a substantial profit within the next few years, the gain will represent your portion of the Indemnity in a very tangible form, and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that some industrious Germans have been working for your benefit."—From a circular issued by a Leicester firm of stock and share brokers. You will note that they are anxious to sell, and collect their share of the Indemnity from the English purchaser.

I tell you there is something splendid in the man that will not always mind. Why, if we had done as the kings told us five hundred years ago, we should have all been slaves. If we had done as the priests told us, we should have all been idiots. If we had done as the doctors told us, we would all have been dead. We have been saved by disobedience. We have been saved by that splendid thing called independence, and I want to see more of it. I want to see children raised so that they will have it.—*Ingersoll.*

WHAT LENIN HAD TO SAY.

On September 8, 1920, Lenin gave Vilkins a long interview, reported fully in *Le Libertaire* of February 11 last. It opened with a discussion on the existing centralisation of power, and this Lenin defended with the statement that the first result of the Revolution was the splitting of the nation into an infinity of groups, each going its own way. "It was impossible," he said, "to check disorder or enforce respect for the decisions of the central power. . . . Every village was a little republic, with no interest in anything that went on outside its own boundaries. The peasants divided up the land as they saw fit, and not always equitably. The factories closed. Famine and desolation ensued." Then came the counter-revolutionary attacks, and it was necessary, as all except the Ukraine agreed, to meet disciplined centralisation with similar weapons. He then proceeded to explain that Communism in Russia would remain an impossibility until the country had been industrialised; that this meant the application of electricity to all the processes of transportation, navigation, etc., and that this, in its turn, "calls for centralisation pushed to the maximum."

It had to be admitted, said Lenin, that the outcome had been the installation of a bureaucracy, "which kills all initiative," but the scarcity of skilled workers had been to blame for that, since it had forced them to employ specialists taken from the ranks of the dispossessed bourgeoisie. "But," he added, "the chiefs are selected from among the Communists."

In more advanced countries, he thought, syndicates might carry on production, "but always on the condition that the Communists hold the important posts," for the furthering of the proletariat's interests. His standpoint toward co-operative institutions was similar, for, while he regarded them as useful instruments of propaganda and links between the proletariat and peasantry, he insisted on the necessity of having Communists on the directorate.

As to the militarisation of labour, it must be remembered that the bourgeoisie are able to hold the masses to their tasks under the whip of starvation, and that the revolutionists do not possess that whip. "After the Revolution," said Lenin, "comes a period of decomposition, which must be checked at all costs. At such times it is very difficult to triumph by persuasion. One must find other means; and as we cannot employ famine, we mobilise. Military tactics have certain positive advantages. The bourgeoisie use them to assure their own domination and make the people slaves. We others, we use them to free the people. We should not be afraid of words."

"I think I told you," Lenin said, "that in order to establish Communism it is necessary to industrialise the country and proletarianise its population." He then explained that this had compelled them to resort to discipline, for without that the harder and more disagreeable kinds of work are shirked. "It is a question," he continued, "of organising and mobilising millions of peasants, in order to tear them away (*arracher*) from the land, cause them to discard their local customs, and make them workingmen. We shall move them from one district to another and employ them on the construction of railways, canals, and harbours, in the cutting of wood, turf, etc." He added genially that the women would be disciplined similarly, "because they also are fitted for labour, and offer the advantage of being more docile and of understanding the new doctrine more quickly. There is no doubt this innovation will be profitable." And again: "The peasants form a class whose characteristics must be abolished if we are to arrive at Communism. We shall be able to attain our end only through organisation. Their prejudices, their ignorance, their attachment to the land, make them incapable of assimilating the new ideas and lending their force to the conquests of the Revolution. The peasant is a proprietor and his mentality is entirely that of the petty bourgeoisie. The peasant eats and usually has enough to satisfy his wants, while the proletarian lacks everything. Inevitably he sees things through a different prism. That is why in the Constitution we have given the workingman five votes at Soviet elections as against one for the peasant."

In conclusion, Lenin declared: "You know well that, in principle, we are against the State; but, after having destroyed it, we create the Socialist State, with a strong apparatus of constraint, during the period of transition." Being asked how long that period would be, he replied, "That depends on the country, and the extent to which the proletariat has advanced. But it will last a long time. Here, in Russia, one does not see the end of it."

For the rest, he asserted that it had been necessary to do away with the freedom of the press on account of its anti-revolutionary activities, and that the Anarchists enjoyed more liberty in Russia than in any other country.

It will be noted that the position taken is not that the emancipation of the Russian people is the end to be achieved, but that the one and only object worth struggling for is the imposition of a Communist régime, at any cost. Anything more foreign to the Anarchist ideal is inconceivable, our conviction being that men and women must first secure their freedom; must first shake off their present riders; after which, as many believe, they will group themselves communally in accordance with their natural affinities and needs. Even so ardent a Communist as Bakunin was adamant on that, his declaration being that of all possible evils a Communistic system enforced by the high hand of the State would be the worst.

This interview was given at the time when the Red Army was advancing against Poland and when the speedy fall of Warsaw was anticipated. It was then that Lenin and his colleagues believed that they were sweeping all before them; and, just as they imagined themselves capable of moulding the Russian peasant to any shape desired, so they imagined they could gather the entire revolutionary movement into their Third International and, centralising all authority in Moscow, dictate its course. In his recent report to the Tenth Communist Congress, Zinoviev, the author of the notorious twenty-one points, remarks: "The Second Congress of the International held its sessions at a time when our armies were approaching Warsaw. In the meeting hall there hung a large map, showing every movement of our armies. Every morning the delegates thronged before this map."

What Kropotkin had to say to all this will be the subject of my next article.

WM. C. OWEN.

Labour Values in the Mines.

Service rendered to society, be it labour in factory or field, or moral service, *cannot* be valued in monetary units. There cannot be an exact measure of its value, either of what has been improperly called its "value in exchange" or of its value in use. If we see two individuals, both working for years, for five hours daily, for the community, at two different occupations equally pleasing to them, we can say that, taken all in all, their labours are roughly equivalent. But their work could not be broken up into fractions, so that the product of each day, each hour or minute of the labour of one should be worth the produce of each minute and each hour of that of the other.

Broadly speaking, we can say that a man who during his whole life deprives himself of leisure for ten hours daily has given much more to society than he who has deprived himself of but five hours a day, or has not deprived himself of any leisure at all. But we cannot take what one man has done during any two hours and say that this produce is worth exactly twice as much as the produce of one hour's work from another individual, and reward each proportionately. To do this would be to ignore that all is complex in the industry, the agriculture, the entire life of society as it is; it would be to ignore the extent to which all individual work is the outcome of the former and present labours of society as a whole. It would be to fancy oneself in the Stone Age, when we are living in the Age of Steel.

Go into a coal mine and see that man stationed at the huge machine that hoists and lowers the cage. In his hand he holds a lever whereby to check or reverse the action of the machinery. He lowers the handle, and in a second the cage changes the direction of its giddy rush up or down the shaft. His eyes are attentively fixed upon an indicator in front of him which shows exactly the point the cage has reached; no sooner does it touch the given level than at his gentlest pressure it stops dead short, not a foot above or below the required place. And scarcely are the full trucks discharged or the empties loaded before, at a touch to the handle, the cage is again swinging up or down the shaft.

For eight or ten hours at a time he thus concentrates his attention. Let his brain relax but for an instant, and the cage would fly up and shatter the wheels, break the rope, crush the men, bring all the work of the mine to a standstill. Let him lose three seconds upon each reverse of the lever, and in a mine with all the modern improvements the output will be reduced by from twenty to fifty tons a day.

Well, is it he who renders the greatest service in the mine? Or is it, perhaps, that boy who rings from below the signal for the mounting of the cage? Or is it the miner who risks his life every moment in the depths of the mine and will end one day by being killed by fire-damp? Or, again, the engineer who would lose the coal seam and set men hewing bare rock, if he merely made a mistake in the addition of his calculations? Or, finally, is it the owner, who has put all his patrimony into the concern, and who perhaps has said, in opposition to all previous anticipations: "Dig there, you will find excellent coal"?

All the workers engaged in the mine contribute to the raising of coal in proportion to their strength, their energy, their knowledge, their intelligence, and their skill. And we can say that all have the right to live, to satisfy their needs, and even gratify their whims after the more imperious needs of every one are satisfied. But how can we exactly value what they have each done?

Further, is the coal that they have extracted entirely the result of their work? Is it not also the outcome of the work of the men who constructed the railway leading to the mine, and the roads branching off on all sides from the stations? And what of the work of those who have tilled and sown the fields which supply the miners with food, cut the wood in the forest, made the machines which will consume the coal, and so on?

No hard and fast line can be drawn between the work of one and the work of another. To measure them by results leads to absurdity. To divide them into fractions and measure them by hours of labour leads to absurdity also. One course remains: not to measure them at all, but to recognise the right of all who take part in productive labour first of all to live, and then to enjoy the comforts of life.

—P. Kropotkin ("The Wage System").

Our Articles on Bolshevism in Practice.

(To the Editor of FREEDOM.)

DEAR SIR,—As a regular reader of FREEDOM may I encroach upon your valuable space? You have been attacking the Soviet Republic of Russia in your recent issue, e.g., Wm. C. Owen's article or review on Bolshevism. He writes of the views of Jean Grave, Sebastien Faure, and Kropotkin. But are we to forget the experience and views of men and women like Nurse Barber, of the Society of Friends' Red Cross; R. Humphries, of the American Red Cross and Y.M.C.A.; of A. Ransome and Williams, of United States Press; ex-Colonel Malone, M.P., S. Pankhurst, Dr. Rickman, M.A., Philip Price, Paul Birukoff, and Captain Jacques Sadoul, the last-named being of exceptional interest, he being the French military agent before enduring the first stages of the Russian Revolution? In this capacity he had numerous opportunities of finding out the truth. Most of the above were anti-Bolsheviks before going to Soviet Russia; according to the evidence, their experiences taught them to admire the Governmental Communists in Russia in their sincere struggle to solve the social problems in that great country. These people deny that prostitution, robbery, favouritism, mendicancy, are more rampant than in bourgeois nations; in fact, they have stated that Moscow and elsewhere in Russia are now almost free from such evils. Concerning Vilkins' conclusions, that the Communist Party is establishing a special class and that that class is seeking to impose a heavier yoke upon the masses. That is a lie. True, there is a Dictatorship and it is used by the Communist Party to maintain the Revolution. But who is to blame? The terrorist Government under the Tsar collapsed; the moderate Labour-Socialist parties endeavoured to form a Coalition Government; owing to antagonistic economic interests, it failed. To my mind there were only two things to be done: (1) Leave the Revolution in the hands of those wishing to form another U.S.A. capitalist Republic, or (2) form a Dictatorship of the masses or those of them who supported the social ownership of the instruments of production and the workers' control through the Soviet system. What would Mr. Owen have done? Would he have established an undisciplined and decentralised military force? How would that have worked against the White armies? No, Sir; the blame for the mistakes of the Russian Communist Party lies with conditions, with circumstances not caused by Communism. The peasants rather favour private ownership of the land and private trading. What is to be done with that problem? The skilled and professional workers claim more favourable conditions and higher remuneration. What is to be done? What does Mr. Owen suggest?

I favour Free Communism and each according to his needs—each freely doing his duty to society to the best of his or her ability. But the people have not reached that stage—they repudiate Free Communism. I hate dictatorship, terrorism, and warfare, civil or national. I believe in reason and freedom, and the voluntary recognition of responsibility on the part of the individual; the social control of the instruments of production for the needs of all. It is the same way, the only path to happiness throughout the whole world. But how are we to get there? Through dictatorship? I wonder. Much depends upon the ignorance and apathy of the workers. If the fall of Capitalism comes before the people understand and desire Communism, then inevitably a dictatorship either of the masses or the capitalists will be declared. I believe in peaceful persuasion and hate violence and Governments and States. My hope is to see the world accept Free Communism without Governments or a dictatorship; but can I hope for that as the next stage in social evolution? I do not desire a civil war, which will be unnecessary if people think and act sanely. But will they? To conclude my now too long letter, permit me to quote Arthur Ransome on the Bolsheviks:—

"No one contends that the Bolsheviks are angels. I ask only that men shall look through the fog of libel that surrounds them, and see the ideal for which they are struggling, in the only way which they can struggle. . . . If they must fail, will fail with clean shields and clean hearts, having striven for an ideal which will live beyond them. . . . They are writing it among showers of mud from all the meaner spirits in their country—in their enemies and in my own. But when the thing is over, and their enemies have triumphed, the mud will vanish like black magic at noon, and that page will be as white as the snows of Russia, and the writing on it as bright as the gold domes that I used to see glittering in the sun when I looked from my windows in Petrograd. And when in after years men read that page they will judge your country and mine, your race and mine, by the help or hindrance they gave to the writing of it."

Ransome's experience shows that the Communist Party of Russia is sincere. If we see mistakes, show a better way, not by the sword, but by reason.—Yours fraternally,

SIDNEY WARR, JUNR.

["The road to hell is paved with good intentions," said Byron; and the sincerity of the Bolsheviks is no test of the value of their work. Nearly all the people Mr. Warr quotes against us wrote of their experiences two years or more ago, since when the centralisation and the bureaucracy have been intensified, with corresponding evil results. Our critic says he hates dictatorship and terrorism, and favours Free Communism. Yet he seems to think that he may reach his goal by the means he detests. How can he expect to sweep away the ignorance of

the workers when his own ideas are so hopelessly confused? A dictatorship has never as yet bred freedom, and there is not the slightest sign of it doing so in Russia.—ED. FREEDOM.]

C. B. W.—We hope to print your letter next month.

THE INTERNATIONAL MODERN SCHOOL.

The above School reopened on March 6 last. After six week-end meetings we can examine our position and reasonably report. In spite of all the difficulties we have had to face, we have made wonderful progress, and enthusiasm and comradeship is established between the teachers and the young school children. We commenced with less than 30 children; we have now on our register over 100, and we are still growing in numbers. We have an average weekly attendance now of 85 scholars, eager young comrades. All of this is encouraging, but as the numbers increase so do our difficulties. We are greatly indebted to our friends of the Garment Workers' Hall for the use of a large airy room; still, comrades, if we are to carry on our classes without one class interfering with another, we must have a place where we can meet in quietness. The "Workers' Friend" Group are going to help us in this respect, by co-operating in the hire and use of some roomy building; so, comrades, aid the Group to aid the School, and the advancement of the teaching for which Ferrer lived and died.

We briefly state our aim as "to combat the anti-social environment of capitalist education, as operating through the State schools and the religious institutions, and to bring up the child in the spirit of Freedom." We entertain "such subjects that may develop the young mind towards the love of Nature, beauty, self-expression, and social outlook and activity." We are attempting to interest and instruct without the use of domination; we can only instruct when interest is shown. As far as we have been humanly able, we have succeeded in our endeavours, always in keeping with libertarian principles. So far, our regular subjects embrace clay modelling and simple singing and story reading for the very young, with freehand drawing, social science, free composition, hygiene and physiology, botany, and simple debate for the other scholars, according to age and interest; and hope, as soon as finance and other factors permit, to develop other educative subjects. Several scholars, spontaneously, have written essays, which have formed the basis of debates among themselves; much talent lies untapped in our little comrades. Support us all you can, and help us to fight ignorance in the cause of liberty and truth.—C. B. W.

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