

Freedom

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NOTES.

Labour Government in Action.

At last a Labour Government at Westminster is an accomplished fact, and men from the railway, the mine, and the factory are now sitting on the Treasury benches of the House of Commons, which hitherto have been reserved exclusively for the upholders of Special Privilege and Monopoly. Mr. MacDonald's speech on the policy of his Government was the speech of an old Parliamentary hand, and it will not excite much enthusiasm amongst the bolder spirits in his party. He knows there are lions in the path, but he is supremely confident that where others have failed he will succeed. We do not know whether he really believes that the French Government is going to loosen its grip on German territory and industries, as a result of his friendly letter to Poincaré; but we are certain that if a settlement is arranged it will be found that the French Government has obtained most of the things for which it has been working since the Armistice and which its military position in Europe enables it to demand. Mr. MacDonald has soon found there are other lions in his path besides Poincaré. Mr. Asquith's ultimatum on the Poplar poor relief question is a hint that he has got his fingers on the reins, and that the Labour Party is not going to have a free hand to prepare a social programme for the next General Election. The Liberals also intend to do a little window-dressing for that eventuality, and the present session of Parliament will be devoted mainly to manoeuvring for position. The greedy office-seekers in the older parties resent the intrusion of the new-comers and will seek opportunities to stab them in the back. Politics is a business and party programmes are the bait with which to catch the unsuspecting voters. Labour politicians are beginning to learn the tricks of the trade, and will soon be immersed in the struggle, with high offices of State as glittering prizes for the victors.

Labour's Industrial Weapon.

The Labour politicians are getting anxious about the revival of industrial action by the workers. In spite of all the entreaties of the party leaders, the dockers are threatening to strike unless the employers increase their wages 2s. a shift, part of the reduction forced on them some months ago. The shipbuilders, who suffered such drastic cuts in their wages two years ago, are now demanding substantial increases; and the miners have decided to terminate their present agreement with the coalowners. We are never very much interested in struggles for higher wages; we wish to see the wage system abolished. But it is a good sign to see these demands put forward at the moment when the Labour Party takes office, as it shows that the workers do not expect much in that direction and are still trusting to their own organisations to improve their conditions. It will be a sorry day for them if they ever allow their hours and wages to be fixed by a Government department. We notice, however, that a deputation from the General Council of the Trade Union Congress has interviewed the Labour Minister and asked that the Government should ratify the Washington Convention on the eight-hour day and the 48-hour week. Ratification means the legal enactment of a 48-hour week for all workers in Britain. It is over thirty years ago since the eight-hour day was first demanded in this country, so no one can accuse the Trade Unions of being in a hurry. The workers will get this concession from the Government when they are strong enough to get it for themselves, and not a day before. Another deputation to the Home

Office asked for new factory and workshop legislation, and a largely increased inspectorate, both men and women. The Under-Secretary promised sympathetic attention to the request. In this case also it will be "the Lord helps those who help themselves." These people would be much more profitably occupied in working to end the wage system than in trying by palliatives to make it tolerable. They would find that when their agitation began to gain strength the capitalists would hasten to grant these reforms in their attempts to save the rotten system.

The Secret Compact.

The statement by Mr. Lloyd George that, during his temporary absence from the Peace Conference, President Wilson signed a secret compact with Clemenceau, by which the French were allowed to occupy the left bank of the Rhine, has caused others to give their version of what happened on that occasion. The details are unimportant, but the incident has thrown a flood of light on the deadly battle that was fought out on the Supreme Council behind closed doors. The press at the time gave to the world the impression that the elderly gentlemen representing the Great Powers were intent only on drawing up a Treaty which would bring peace once again to a bloodsoaked world. We now know that these four or five politicians were sitting there day after day scheming to outwit each other, and that, instead of their conferences being of a friendly nature, violent quarrels frequently took place over the division of the spoils. If one gained territory here, the others insisted on compensation elsewhere. The millions who had been slaughtered were forgotten, except that they were sometimes regarded as arguments for further concessions and further territory. One negotiator would balance the loss of his country's wealth against another country's loss of lives. Sordid huckstering of the most contemptible and disgusting character. That a Treaty framed under such conditions should have failed to bring peace to the world is not surprising; it was but an armed truce between the nations, and was signed at last only because the peoples were weary of war and refused to fight any longer. Now there has been a breathing-space, a new generation is coming on that knows not the horrors of war; and the statesmen are setting the stage for another conflict which will eclipse the last in horrors. It depends on whether the masses will realise their danger in time; but, if the statesmen are undisturbed in their scheming, another catastrophe will overwhelm us sooner or later. The League of Nations may postpone it but cannot avert it if the curse of Capitalism remains.

THE SOVEREIGN VOTER.

(With apologies to Omar Khayyam.)

Into the polling-place, and why not knowing,
Nor whence, like water, willy-nilly, flowing,
And out again, when he has made the Cross,
Back to his fruitless, ill-paid labour going.

He, in his youth, did eagerly frequent
Old party rallies, heard great argument,
About the robber tariff, and the trusts,
And came away, no wiser than he went.

With them the seed of piffle did he sow,
In hopes of some cheap job, helped make it grow,
And this is all the working class has reaped—
Their efforts help their leaders get the dough.

—The Dawn.

REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT.

By PETER KROPOTKIN.

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I HAVE SEEN WAR.

By CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD. (From "The Poet in the Desert.")

I have seen War.
I have heard it.
I have smelled it.
Even now I am waked from dreams
By the stink of bodies
Three days dead under the sun.
Maggots filled their mouths
And flies crawled over their eyeballs,
Buzzing up angrily as we threw
Manhood into the pit of putrefaction.
Weeds will grow upon the lips of lovers
And grass flourish out of the hearts of fathers,
But the father and the lover
Will return no more.
Nature will make excellent manure
Of musicians, artists, artisans, artificers,
Mechanics, merry makers, discoverers;
Poets, makers of soul;
Sacred receptacles of unspoken dreams.
I have hugged the grinning skeleton to my
bosom
And called him Honor, but his breath
Was the air of the charnel-house.
I have, in my folly, endured
Burning summer and biting winter;
Thirst, hunger, fever and the marching of
marionettes,
So that men lay down in the mud
And puked from exhaustion.
Incessant rain, the earth become diluvian;
Men, mud-daubed lizards;
Body and soul wallowing in primeval
beastliness.
Was this for a great thing?
The slaughter of Man
And the enslavement of souls.

I have heard the screams of innocent, dumb
horses,
Disemboweled;
And have stopped my ears
Against the cries of my mangled fellows,
Begging, for the pity of Christ, that they be
shot,
And their agony ended.
Emperors, presidents, spinners of diplomacy,
Have you ever heard the ravings of those
Who, through the scarlet door of the torture-
chamber,
Reached to clearer vision and died
Cursing "God," "Country," "Patriotism,"
Words which had betrayed them?

The peoples set up no boundaries against
each other.
They drink together under pleasant arbors
The red wine of friendship.
They harvest from adjoining fields the
tasselled gold,
And call to each other from neighbour-
vineyards
Where doves coo among the vines.
They sing the old-time songs of good com-
rades;
Marrying and intermarrying.

Suddenly, as lightning fires the dry prairie
And conflagration roars to the horizon,
Madness falls upon the peoples.
They run about killing each other,
Not knowing why.
Whose fingers are slipped through
The collars of the dogs of war,
Ready to release them?
Who strike the iron gates
And let loose the pack,
Baying: "War! War! War!"?
Do the peasants who plow under the blue sky
Meet in the kindly fields
To declare war against each other,

Or the laborers after their toil
Sit in their cottages, planning battle?
Do the miners hasten from their dark
Communion with the ages
To slaughter their brothers of other lands?
Or the slaves of Titanic forges
Plot murder against their fellows?
Who is it orders this hate;
This carefully arranged murder?
Whose is the quarrel?
Whose the profit?

The common herd slavishly keep step
To the time set for them by their Masters,
And as sheep crowd up the slaughter-chute
To the butcher's knife,
They enter the dark cave
Whence is no return:
Neither baby-fingers, nor lovers' cheeks;
Neither sun, nor moon, nor the ripple of
waters;
Neither seeing, nor hearing;
Nor thought, nor laughter any more.

The strange and curious bees are forward
to die
For the hive they have stored.
Free, winged things,
None can fence their pastures against them.
But what share have the toilers
In the honeycombs they have builded?
Or what ownership have soldiers in the earth
They wet with blood?
For what do the people throw away reck-
lessly
That mysterious commodity
Quarried from the depths of Time?
Jewel to each more precious than all jewels,
Which the Masters cannot restore.
The lives of the people, but a little thing
To the Masters; not so much as the life
Of the herds and flocks;
But it is of inestimable worth to the owner.
Perhaps it is star-dust; or perhaps
Out of it star-dust may be made.

O, young men, with dawn behind your eyes
And Destiny held as a puzzling toy
Between your strong and nervous hands,
Why do you crowd forward to the sacrifice?

They kiss, half negligently, the weeping ones:
Mothers, wives, sweethearts, babes,
And say good-bye; a strange seeming in
their eyes;
For ringing in their ears are the songs of
the harpies,
Black from the funnels of Hell,
Who fly, smoky-plumed, before the battle,
Screaming the bewildering medicine of their
cry.

Awake! Awake! Be not besotted by the
shrieks
Of the filthy ones; nor mistake their screams
for songs.
Awake from your sacrificial drunkenness.
Go down to the eternal river and wash your
eyes clear.

You bow in servile idolatry to sacred falsities,
Antique garments stuffed and set upon a pole.
She whom you follow is a whore, bedizened
in tinsel.

The true Freedom lies with toads
In a dark dungeon.
Set her free and lead her into the street
To be seen of all men,
Naked and unashamed.
Make a proclamation through silver trumpets:
"This is our true Redeemer."
"And in her realm is no idolatry,
Neither of men, nor of flags;
Neither of words, nor of songs."

"She who walks beside her, gaunt and
stony-eyed,
"Is Rebellion, the Mother of the Beautiful One;
"And she who walks on the other hand is
Justice,
"Daughter of Freedom."
Say to the Masters,
"Will you willingly acquiesce when these
Three
"Shall strip from you the robes you have
stolen
"And part them among the naked?
"Will you be glad when these shall divide
"Your abundance among those who starve?
"Will you who have for so long swept the
flowers
"From before the feet of the children,
"Snatch up the trumpets and join in the
exultant
"Psalm which these shall sing,
"And pluck delightedly
"The hyacinths which will spring up behind
"The footsteps of Freedom?"

Young men who are about to die,
Stay a moment and take my hand,
Who am also about to die.
You have been carefully winnowed and selected
For the banqueting of the Hooded Skeleton
Which beckons, but says never a word;
Leading down into the dark chasm,
But leading none back forever.
Tell me, for what?
Not you alone die, but the children
Who through you should enter the great
pageant,
Receiving at the hands of the Master of Mystery
The miraculous wafer which, being eaten,
Opens the heavens,
Unlocks the eyes to visions,
The ears to songs.
Fathers of the expectant generations,
Tell me, for what?

Shall you and I gather about the arena
And applaud the gladiators
Who stain the sands with their blood
In a game of the Masters?

Is not Death busy enough?
None escapes his shaft.
His muffled feet creep to us all in time.
Why should we heap him with an unripe load?
Take War by the throat, young soldier,
And wring from his blood-frothed lips
The answer,—Why?

Young men,
And even more than young men,
Young women,
Guardians of the Future,
Is one man who toils so much better
Or so much worse than another,
So much richer or poorer,
That he must kill his brother?
Is it just to inscrutable Nature
Who with infinite pains has brought you
Down the Path Endless?
Tell me distinctly for what is the sacrifice?
I demand that you refuse to be satisfied,
That you unravel the old shoutings,
That you peer to the very bottom.
Draw in your breath delightedly,
And confidently insist:
"My life is my Own."
"A gift from the Ages,
"And to me precious
"Beyond estimation.
"I will deny authority.
"I will question all things.
"I will obstinately be informed
"Whence comes the battle?
"Whose is the combat?"

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

Last month was packed with big events, which, viewed comprehensively, are full of encouragement for every one of us. Against apathy we are powerless, but when life again begins to stir opportunity comes to us once more with open arms. The events to which we here refer more particularly are the death of Lenin; British, Polish, and Italian recognition of the Russian Government; the Labour Party's accession to power in this country—an event, it is to be remembered, unique in our long history; Gandhi's release; Mussolini's extraordinary speech before the Grand Fascist Assembly, January 28; the development of the Fascisti movement on British soil; the attempts of English clericalism to establish closer relations with the Roman Catholic Church. Every one of these is giving rise to impassioned discussion, which is the necessary preliminary to determined action. As such we should hail them with delight.

Lenin's death we consider in another column, and we have only to add that we are not at all impressed by the messages of condolence despatched by the Independent Labour Party to the Russian Government and Lenin's widow, or by the eulogies appearing in our Socialist official papers. These gentlemen kiss the King's hand and vow that nothing could induce them to leave the strait and narrow path of legal constitutionalism. Lenin openly mocked all that. He declared most frankly that only by violence could the bourgeoisie be overthrown. He asserted publicly that he wished to see the Labour Party in power because its inevitable failure would convince the masses that democracy, and democratic methods, could give them no relief.

The recognitions of the Russian Government will make, we think, little difference to trade, which will continue to depend on Russia's credit. She is still, by the confession of her own leading officials, passing through a severe economic crisis. The real effect of these recognitions will be to strengthen Russia's governing machine, for we are well convinced that, as the demands of the masses grow insistent, Imperialist, Fascist, and Dictatorship Governments—all birds of the same feather—will unite to smother them. Already the Russian Dictatorship has seen to it that only its trusted supporters have the privilege of carrying arms. For example, in the Moscow *Pravda* of February 2, appeared a special decree calling for the surrender, within three days, by all citizens of any arms or ammunition in their possession.

We think, with Mussolini, that our new Prime Minister will swing steadily to the Right, and that his warning to Indian revolutionists is extraordinarily significant. His position is, of course, one of the greatest difficulty, for he has all the responsibility and none of the power. Let him try to alter radically anything that really matters, and the Liberals, combining with the Conservatives, will throw him out.

Gandhi's release is due, in all probability, partly to the fact that the Swaraj (Home Rule) Party scored a tremendous victory at the recent elections, but chiefly to the falling-off of trade with India, which is itself the outcome of increasing native discontent. India is still by far our largest customer, and our trade with her in 1922 was less by nearly £20,000,000 than it had been in 1921.

Mussolini's speech contained such passages as:—"They want to disarm the Fascist revolution, but I declare now, once and for all: Woe to him who touches the Fascist militia. He is asking for a lead bullet." He showered with scorn everything that Democracy and Parliamentarism hold most sacred. No Dictator could have announced more bluntly that his sole reliance was on the sword. A large and most influential section of our own ruling class is outspoken in its admiration of Mussolini.

Fascism has been holding open meetings in London, Leeds, Edinburgh, and no doubt in other cities. These are noticed in the press, for Roman Catholic prelates, Italian consuls, and other dignitaries take part in them. Similarly, of course, the "Crusaders," a secret and armed society greatly affected by our aristocracy, received ample publicity when it functioned recently in Westminster Abbey. We have no idea that our Government needs the assistance of these forces; nevertheless their very existence shows that a reactionary minority is expecting trouble in a not distant future. We are glad to see that this latest development has led to the starting of an excellent paper, *The Clear Light*, edited by Mr. Alfred Houldsworth, at 29 Slack, Heptonstall, near Hebden Bridge, Yorks.

Closely allied with these movements are the negotiations looking toward closer union with the Church of Rome which our own Protestants have been conducting. Inevitably they will be futile, for Rome cannot renounce her age-long claim to infallibility, and supreme spiritual and temporal power. Nevertheless, the approaches made are most significant. Historically the

Church of Rome has been the one unwavering champion of the principle of unquestioning obedience to Authority. Free thought and freedom of action she never has tolerated, and never will. To her, therefore, all Special Privilege invariably rallies when it finds itself faced by any serious movement for the enforcement of equal human rights. This has been proved repeatedly.

With America's entrance into the War there came such a persecution of the protesting minority as seems to us unparalleled in modern times. For years there was a veritable Reign of Terror, and the exercise of free speech became almost impossible. Now, as we think, the tide is turning, for well-known men and papers are protesting loudly and persistently. But 96 members of the I.W.W. still lie in California's penitentiaries under her barbarous Criminal Syndicalist Law; and although, among the Mexican prisoners, Librado Rivera has been at length released, J. M. Rangel and his five comrades are now in their ninth year of imprisonment in Texas. The United States is seething with political scandals of an astounding magnitude; all legacies of the War. When the next slump comes, and it is not far distant now, there is almost certain to be trouble of the gravest kind.

Judging by our exchanges a similar revolt is developing in Europe, for events so thought-stirring generate a spirit of inquiry and discontent which no Dictatorship can permanently suppress. Anarchist periodicals, such as *Pensiero e Volontà*, *Le Réveil*, and *La Revue Anarchiste*—to name only a few among many—are now putting out a propaganda which seems to us superior, in force and clearness, to anything the movement has hitherto produced. That surely is the one thing needed. Such events as we have singled out are making the agitation, but they need interpreters. At present the masses are bewildered, and only when they get a grip of fundamental facts can we expect to see them move effectively. Our task is explanation.

W. C. O.

A CONSTRUCTIVE POLICY.

(To the Editor of FREEDOM.)

DEAR SIR,—In your article on this subject you miss the true idea of non-resistance, if I may say so. It does not mean lying low, subservience, and doing nothing against evil. It means not resisting evil by violence, war, State force of police and armies, such as Parliament uses. But, positively, it means moral resistance, by better ideas, by forgiving those who do us injury, by protest, by refusal to pay rent, or take up arms at the behest of a State.

I have read your paper and many Socialist and Communist papers, dailies and weeklies and monthlies. They protest against evils. We can all do that, easily. But they see no way out, no plan, programme which touches the selfishness of the animal man, his greed, lust, pride, hate, and fear, which cause the evils of to-day. If you could merely abolish the State and army and police, you would get pandemonium of unethicised men and women: like taking down the cages at the Zoo! Thus you might get Russian civil wars, and then a Cheka for Government.

So in India: you would get wild hill tribes ravaging the villages! The Socialists and Communists and Freedom folk (as Auberon Herbert, with whom I used to communicate) do not show how to produce a society of men who share life's work and wealth.

The ideal of these people is admirable, but when they tell us how to produce it, they do not calculate on men as evolved from animals, and having lust, greed, hate, and pride still!

The scramble for 'buses, for cheap goods in sales, for colonies by wars, for markets by grasping, competing firms—all such show us that we are up against the self-seeking elements still. I don't say man is only selfish; but I ask how, by mere freedom from State-force, can you get any brotherhood?

Here is a couple producing twelve undesired, feeble-minded children: and another seizing all the rents they can grasp: and millions of women eager for motor cars and dances and display. The Llano Colony is a valuable experiment. But all paid to get into it, about 1,000 dollars for a man, and less for wives and children. It is not a group of all and sundry as exist in our cities to-day, mostly grasping for self.

You need a new religion, a new vision of the Unifying Life, of an Infinite Mind-Lover, who descended into nature to ascend in men of reason—love—freedom! We must realise that these powers are latent in all men, and are our true life. Till we accept them we are as prodigals in a far country, and therefore in want. Poverty comes from lack of these powers, and war too, and the rule of lust in, and outside, marriage too. There is One—the Unifier of the universe—who gave up His life for us, and we must be crucified to self, with Him, and live by His eternal Reason and Love, or there can be no true peace or prosperity!—Yours faithfully,

G. T. SADLER.

FREEDOM.

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On the Wrong Road.

One looks in vain in the speeches of the leaders of the Labour Party for a sign that they intend to deal fundamentally with the root causes of our social evils. Of course, we understand that at present they are in "leading strings," but in their programme as outlined by themselves there is nothing to fire the imagination or stir the blood of the workers. With two million unemployed and their dependents eking out a bare existence in a land that could provide plenty for all, one would hope that a challenge would be thrown down to the privileged classes whose monopoly of the means of life keeps the workers enslaved. Instead, we find Mr. MacDonald telling the editor of the *Paris Quotidien* that the occupation of the Ruhr "in our view is the principal cause of the economic distress in which Great Britain is struggling to-day." This is the plea put forward by Liberal and Conservative speakers. Surely a Labour Premier has something more hopeful to offer the workers. From tens of thousands of Labour and Socialist platforms during the past generation they have been told that monopoly of land was the main cause of their misery and the basis of capitalism, and that with the freeing of the land wage-slavery would come to an end. Now he is in office Mr. MacDonald tells the workers that it is not monopoly, not landlordism, that is responsible for their present plight, but the occupation of the Ruhr! Was there ever a greater fraud practised on the deluded workers?

From the interview above quoted it would seem as though Mr. MacDonald is going to concentrate on foreign politics rather than on home affairs. The interviewer speaks of "the moving sincerity with which the Prime Minister of Great Britain expressed his confidence in the League of Nations as the instrument of the salvation of Europe." Mr. H. G. Wells, a prominent member of the Labour Party, has written that the League of Nations is "a blind alley for good intentions; it is a weedy dump for all the weaknesses of European Liberalism. Its past is contemptible and the briefer its future the better for mankind." The truth seems to be that Mr. MacDonald is posing as the great British statesman and from hints in the press it is not unlikely that Lord Grey is acting as an unofficial adviser at the Foreign Office. This is probably the price the Labour Party has to pay for Liberal support.

In the meantime whilst waiting for the League of Nations to get France out of the Ruhr and thereby bring prosperity back to our shores, the unemployed must be content with occasional jobs at making new roads and new canals, work which will improve the property of the land monopolists and make it more expensive to buy them out when land nationalisation is carried out. Thousands of new houses for the workers are to be built with the aid of Government subsidies, which also, of course, will help to benefit the land monopolist. Old-age pensions for all without the present restrictions, and pensions for mothers, are among the promised benefits of the near future.

But all these reforms are merely capitalist reforms which tend to make the present system tolerable. It is a road which can be trodden by either of the other political parties without endangering any of their privileges. The road to the abolition of the wage system lies in another direction, in the recognition of the right of each and everyone of us to an equal opportunity of access to the means of life, which implies the breaking down of all the fences that have been put round the land by monopolistic landlords. We know there are many supporters of the Labour Party who agree with us, but in supporting the party they find themselves compelled to accept all the compromising reforms which are put forward to catch the votes of the unthinking masses, who are led away by the sonorous phrases of the men who have captured the party machine.

The patriotic speeches made by some of the Labour Ministers must have come as a shock to the sincere men and women in the party. Mr. Clynes is worried because the great prestige

of the British Empire has waned under the Conservative Government; whilst J. H. Thomas (now Colonial Secretary) at a luncheon spoke of the wisdom of the Prince of Wales (who was present) and of "his illustrious and distinguished father." He also spoke of his gratitude to the Constitution that enables the engine cleaner (himself) of yesterday to be the Minister of to-day. "That Constitution, so broad, so wide, so democratic, must be preserved, and the Empire which provides it must be maintained." With men like this helping to shape the policy of the Labour Party, the monopolists and exploiters have nothing to fear, and the workers very little to hope for.

DOES EXPERIENCE TEACH?

To our way of thinking, there is great significance attaching to an interview given out by Senator Norris of Nebraska for publication in the *New York World* of 9th December. Mr. Norris has been in the national legislature for twenty years, and intends to retire at the end of his present term, a self-confessed failure. "Under the present conditions in Washington," he says, "and conditions which have existed ever since I came to Congress, it is almost impossible to obtain effective legislation in the interest of the plain people. I have been bucking this game for twenty years, and there is no way of beating it."

Here, we say again, is a most remarkable statement. We commend it to those who still believe that the State is a social rather than an anti-social institution, and that "the interest of the plain people" can be promoted by the methods of organised political government.

Mr. Norris appears still to think that political government was instituted for social purposes, and that it has somehow become perverted and may be restored. The remedies that he proposes indicate that this is still the course of his thought. We earnestly ask him to devote some of his forthcoming leisure to considering an alternative proposition, namely: that political government, whether autocratic, constitutional or republican, is an anti-social institution created primarily to perpetuate and promote the economic exploitation of one class in our society by another, and for no other purpose whatever. If Mr. Norris will view this proposition in the perspective of his own experience, and in the longer perspective of the history of political government from its beginnings, we are confident that he will find that it fits the facts much better than his own thesis.

If government exists, as Voltaire says, solely for the purpose of taking money out of one person's pocket and putting it into another's—and we firmly believe that upon investigation Mr. Norris will discover this to be its only primary function—then it is surely a little fanciful and illusory to expect it to work well for a directly opposite purpose; and perhaps also Senator Norris will permit us to say that the effort spent on trying to make it work well for an opposite purpose is rather worse than wasted.

In our view such efforts are futile, undesirable and misleading. It seems a pity that at the end of Mr. Norris's long experience, he should still have nothing better by way of remedy to offer than the suggestion so often made and so often acted on, of "putting good men in office." As for his other suggestion of abolishing the Electoral College, let him look at England, where, from the point of view of democracy, political institutions are so far superior to our own, and see how they work there. Better in many respects, no doubt, than they do here; but do they work enough better to justify Mr. Norris in believing that his proposed reform would really accomplish anything? No; at a time like this, when all political institutions are under profound and general suspicion, it is idle to recommend a mere pottering with the externals of a system. The thing is to show clearly and distinctly the nature and purpose of the system itself. The thing is to show that in its primary essential purposes, political government itself is anti-social and evil, and continually to marshal before the public the proofs of this which lie about on every hand. If Mr. Norris will devote himself henceforth to disseminating this information and exhibiting these proofs, he will find the next twenty years rich in the satisfactions that the last twenty years have denied him. He need not trouble about the constructive side of the question; that will come later. When the people really become aware that political government in any form is their greatest social enemy, they will find their own constructive methods of dealing with it. First things first; and the first thing is to touch and arouse an intelligent apprehension of the State as an engine of economic exploitation, an instrument for enabling one class in our society to appropriate without compensation the labour and the labour-products of another class; and this is work for one man's lifetime, and more.

—*The Freeman* (New York).

LENIN.

Was Lenin a great man? It is a problem we shall be disputing over for many a long year, as we are still disputing over similar problems that bothered our ancestors. What, for example, do you think of Cromwell, whom Carlyle worshipped and most Irishmen abhor? Frederick the Great was, I suppose, the real founder of the German Empire, and as such has been deified. His method was, as explained by himself: "I begin by taking what I want. Afterwards I can always find pedants to prove my rights." Neither Napoleon nor Bismarck was of the type that sticks at trifles, and to millions they are Supermen, for whom no statue can be too high.

Lenin's death, therefore, was a god-send to the "screaming parrots whom universal suffrage throws up"—to borrow one of Dean Inge's most telling phrases. Never had the sob-sisters of the press a better chance of "copy," and their output has been amazing. I myself have waded through huge drifts of it, and I select Mr. Bertrand Russell's estimate, published in the *New Leader* of January 25th, as perhaps one of the best. He says: "Once only I saw Lenin; I had an hour's conversation with him in his room at The Kremlin, in 1920. I thought he resembled Cromwell more than any other historical character. Like Cromwell, he was forced into a dictatorship by being the only competent man of affairs in a popular movement. Like Cromwell, he combined a narrow orthodoxy in thought with great dexterity and adaptability in action, though he never allowed himself to be led into concessions which had any purpose other than the ultimate establishment of Communism. He appeared, as he was, completely sincere and devoid of self-seeking. I am persuaded that he cared only for public ends, not for his own power; I believe he would have stood aside at any moment if, by so doing, he could have advanced the cause of Communism."

To me all that means nothing; for I reflect that the secret thoughts of our most intimate friends are hidden from us, and that Mr. Russell can know no more of the real Lenin than he does of the real Cromwell, who died more than two hundred years ago. Such men as Lenin do not wear their hearts upon their sleeves, and can be judged only by their work. Looking at the matter thus, and examining the record, I ask Mr. Russell for his warrant in declaring that Lenin, like Cromwell, "was forced into a dictatorship by being the only competent man of affairs in a popular movement." Apart from the stupidity of assuming that there were no other men of ability in England or Russia, I object to the castration of these virile figures. They had, at least, initiative, and I feel pretty certain that both started out to clean up an Augean stable with brooms of steel. Such men are always the forcers; never the forced.

The record, as set out by Trotsky in "The History of the Russian Revolution to Brest-Litovsk," is unmistakable. He states that "during October the question of the rising played also an important part in the internal life of our party"; that "Lenin, who was in hiding in Finland, wrote numerous letters insisting on more energetic tactics," and that "on October 28th a secret meeting took place, at which Lenin was present." With much detail he describes the winning over of the army, the shouldering aside of Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, the military occupation of the entrances to Petrograd, and, finally, on November 7th, 1917, the capture of the Marie Palace, where, as he puts it, "the scarcely born Provisional Parliament was almost breathing its last." Meanwhile Lenin had been in hiding, but on the decisive day "he came secretly to the Smolny." On November 8th he made, with Zinovieff, his appearance on the platform, and, on the evening of the same day, before the Congress of the Soviets, "he introduced," says Trotsky, "two decrees, on peace and on the land. Both were adopted unanimously after a short discussion. At this meeting, too, a new central authority was formed—the Council of People's Commissaries." Forced into a dictatorship, forsooth!

It was a successful *coup d'état*, planned as carefully as any on record, and it is childish to dispute it. What followed is the sole thing worth discussing, and this divides itself into two heads: The style of Government adopted, and its success or failure.

State Socialism, in its most rigid form, was imposed by the triumphant few; and Lenin, the most rigid of State Socialists, became the official Pope. He was as logical and consistent as was Torquemada, of the Spanish Inquisition; and of Russia during this period it might properly be said, paraphrasing the cry that still goes up daily from the minarets of all Mohammedan Mosques: "There is but one God, State Socialism, and Lenin is his prophet." Indeed, he and Cromwell

were singularly alike in this, at least, that Cromwell justified his actions invariably by quotations from the Bible, and Lenin by extracts from Karl Marx. If further proof appeared necessary he went back to the French Revolution and declared boldly that the Jacobins alone had given that great upheaval its historical importance. Their doctrine was that there could be only one will—that of the State. It is Imperialism incarnate. It is the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope transferred from the religious to the secular domain.

Lenin, and the oligarchy of which he was the high priest, knew exactly what they wanted; and let me say at once that I had far more respect for him than for those pseudo-Anarchists who believed that they and such an autocracy could abide together. By its very nature Dictatorship must be all or nothing. It cannot permit revolt. It is lost if it allows its authority to be flouted even in the most trivial affairs. Between unquestioning obedience and freedom no peace is possible. Lenin and his oligarchy understood this well, and acted up to it consistently. They suppressed all revolt, and suppressed it with a ruthlessness designed to render further revolt impossible. They had absorbed, and they carried into execution, all the teachings of the Inquisition, of Cromwell's rule in Ireland, of the French Reign of Terror; yes, and of the Tsars and of our own Government when it condones Amritsar massacres and Alexandria bombardments. One lesson, unfortunately, they had not learned, viz., that, sooner or later, such a system, entailing as it does such methods, becomes impossible and has to go. They forgot that Cromwell only gave Monarchy and Aristocracy a new lease of life; that Robespierre begot Napoleon; that Jesuitism has been probably the greatest of all historical failures, though no Communist was ever more devoted to his cause than many of the Jesuits have been. The truth, of course, is that mankind, by its very nature, has to develop, and that it cannot be strait-jacketed for long.

Living in a shilly-shally world, I feel profoundly grateful to the courageous few who push their experiments to logical conclusions. Lenin was of that type. So late as April, 1921, at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, he declared open and merciless war not only against Anarchists but against "all petty bourgeois Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist tendencies." He put the whole system remorselessly to its final test, and under that test it broke. Within a few months, after a hideous interval of massacre, the straitjacket had to be unlaced, because Russia was expiring. Her internal industries were at a standstill; her cities were starving, for the simple reason that the peasants, harried out of their lives by military requisitions, were refusing to produce. Lenin has been given much credit for having accepted the position as impossible, but I myself can see little worthy of praise in that. The situation in general, and the peasants in particular, had knocked him out, and he recognised the fact. I admire him only because he quickened history's slow pace and precipitated the inevitable smash. Once more, and in an amazingly brief time, he gave the world its most luminous illustration of the vital truth that economic dictatorship is an impossibility and State Socialism a hopeless creed.

Our Socialists are smothering the memory of Lenin with adulation, but not for any such reasons as I here advance. They do not admit that he has hastened our advance by showing us that the road of State Socialism leads straight to death. On the contrary, they profess to believe that the miserable piece of patchwork known as the New Economic Policy will give the abortion life; although it leaves all Russian territory in the hands of the oligarchy, and enables it to endow with concessions of a value beyond all computation that international plutocracy against which they are supposed to have declared undying war. As avowed Constitutionalists they can have no genuine admiration for Lenin the fighter, who, quite honestly as I believe, sought to exterminate Capitalism with fire and sword, that he might usher in what he believed to be a saner and more honourable system.

Arthur Ransome, who probably knew Lenin better than did any other Englishman, declares that he was an unconquerable extremist, and with that in itself we Anarchists can have no quarrel. Naturally our philosophy has compelled us to think his analysis of the social problem erroneous, and the methods to which that analysis drove him one of history's most tragic blunders. Let us console ourselves with the reflection that only through the exposure of error do we arrive at truth, and that Lenin, more than any other man of our generation, has proved that Dictatorships are failures, and that, for a world to-day paralysed by slavery, freedom is the only possible cure. Unhappily this will not restore to life our countless dead, or bring liberty to those still rotting in Russia's abominable gaols.

WM. C. OWEN.

ANARCHISTS, NOT SEPARATISTS.

The present situation in Germany is pitiful, but unfortunately it is also complicated and obscure. Opportunism, as a supposed shelter from the pressure of events, appears to be triumphant all along the line; and, as is always inevitable, opportunism leads to endless splits and mutual recriminations. On the charges and counter-charges made by either side we find ourselves quite incapable of passing judgment, although we feel justified in making the general statement that the compromises to which the German Socialists and Trade Unionists continually commit themselves seem to us just as disgusting as do those in which the Socialist and Trade Union movement of this country is at present wallowing. However, we think it right to reproduce the following brief statement forwarded to us under the seal of the Federation of Communist Anarchists, of Dusseldorf and Gerresheim. We give a literal translation, softening not at all the harsh expressions used.

To Foreign Comrades:—

The development of the Separatist movement in the Rhineland, and the position toward it which the Rhineland Syndicalists are taking up, compel us, alike in the interests of truth and of the Anarchist movement, to approach our comrades of foreign countries and tell them, as briefly but as clearly as possible, what an injurious role in the Syndicalist movement Separatism is playing. We are moved to this by an article in Nos. 50 and 51 of the *Syndicalist*, in which an attempt is made to disclaim the Separatist efforts of the Rhineland Syndicalists and to lay them to the Anarchists' account. Without entering more closely into the subject of the personal attacks against certain of our comrades in which this abusive article indulges, we here make the following statement:—

The Rhineland Anarchist organisations do not merely stand apart from the Separatist movement. Always they have combated it most sharply. No organised Anarchist is a member of the Separatist movement or has supported it. We should cease to be Anarchists were it otherwise. We remark regretfully that the contrary is the case with the Rhineland Syndicalist movement. Entire local groups—some of which have thousands of members—have gone over, with their leaders, to the "Rhineland People's Party." Other local groups have been split all to pieces because a portion of their members belong to the Separatist movement.

For reasons that will be easily understood we have hitherto refrained from giving publicity to these facts, especially in view of what must be the consequences to the Syndicalist movement. Our reticence has been ill rewarded. In the article published in No. 50 and 51 of the *Syndicalist*, under the title of "Ought the Anarchists to be active on behalf of the Free State?" the attempt is made to shove off on the Anarchists the Separatism with which the Rhineland F.A.U.D. (Free Workers' Union of Germany) is infected. This attempt needs to be exposed the more sharply because Souchy, the *Syndicalist* editor, was quite recently at a Conference of the Rhenish Westphalian local groups, and was there fully informed as to all these matters. Souchy's acceptance for the *Syndicalist*, therefore, of the article referred to is a slandering of the German Anarchists, and this we point out in the sharpest manner.

For further information we refer to the *Freien Arbeiter* report by the Gerresheim local group, which belongs to the Federation of German Communist-Anarchists. For the better understanding of the facts here set out we should have to go into details of what has taken place inside the Syndicalist movement, but there are special reasons for not discussing these publicly. We are willing, however, to communicate them to foreign comrades by letter.

Correspondence should be addressed to Rudolf Oestreich, Glashütte 228, Dusseldorf-Gerresheim, Germany.

Anarchist Discussion Circle.

The Anarchist Discussion Circle meets every Saturday, at 7.30, at the Minerva Café, 144 High Holborn, W.C. (entrance at rear of building). These meetings are open to the public, and all are free to take part in the discussions. Subject for discussion is advertised in the *Daily Herald* every Saturday.

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