

Freedom

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NOTES.

The Dictatorship Epidemic

First Russia, then Italy, and now Spain and Germany. How far will the fever spread? On September 12 the military in Spain made a coup d'état, headed by the Captain-General of Barcelona, Primo de Rivera, who is now virtual Dictator. King Alfonso had an inkling of what was coming, and bravely decided to keep his job. All the Cabinet resigned, some of them crossing the frontier to save their skins. The Dictator then appointed a "Directory" composed of military chiefs, and is now ruling Spain without a Parliament. The reasons given for this sudden stroke are the corruption of the politicians and the mismanagement of the Moroccan campaign; but perhaps these gallant soldiers thought a victory gained at home would cover up their inglorious defeats in Morocco. Of course, they are opposed to the "Reds," and have arrested many Anarchists, Syndicalists, and Communists. No strike is to be commenced, and any in progress must cease. No meetings or processions will be allowed. "With the exception of these restrictions," they were informed with dry humour, "workmen's unions can carry on in complete legal liberty and autonomy." In Germany also a Dictatorship is now in force, the Reichstag having passed the Extraordinary Powers Bill which gives the Chancellor dictatorial powers over the nation's economic and financial affairs. He will now have a free hand to deal with any possible outbreaks from the Right or the Left. We know who are likely to get his hardest blows. He has ordered the railwaymen back to work in the Ruhr, and told them to take the oath of loyalty demanded by the French military authorities; and in Saxony a martial law decree orders the immediate dissolution of the workers' defence organisations which were formed to fight the reactionaries. It is now certain that the industrialists will attempt to satisfy the demands of the Allies by squeezing more out of the workers, by abolishing the eight-hour day and the workers' councils, the only surviving gains of the revolution. The "democracy" which was to be safeguarded by the War has been wiped out completely by the Peace.

Labour Guardians and Unemployed.

The unemployed in Poplar have received a severe shock. Owing to the ratepayers' complaints of the high rates, the Board of Guardians decided to cut down the scale of relief; and as the winter was approaching, it seemed to them an appropriate moment to stop the weekly coal allowance, whilst other economies were to follow. The unemployed naturally view things from a different angle, and on September 26 a deputation waited on the Guardians and asked them to restore the coal allowance. The Guardians, all except two of whom are Labour members, refused the request. So the unemployed locked the doors and said the Guardians must stay all night unless they reversed their decision. Instead of treating this as a practical joke, the Labour men got in a panic and sent for the police—and an ambulance! The police took the hint and soon provided fit subjects for first aid—in other words, laid out some of the unemployed with their truncheons. Mr. George Lansbury and his son Edgar, A. A. Watts (Communist Party), John Scurr (I.L.P.), and other members looked on whilst this happened, and afterwards published a justification of their action in calling in the police. We confess we are not surprised at these events. In 1920 George Lansbury, then editor of the *Daily Herald*, went to Russia, and on his return told the readers of that paper: "Discipline—iron, rigid discipline of the workers by the workers—is needed in Russia. It will be needed here when the workers come to power." Now that he and his friends have come to power in Poplar they have given the unemployed a taste of the "iron, rigid discipline" they consider necessary. The moral for the workers seems obvious.

The Empire Conference.

The gathering of Premiers representing "the Commonwealth of nations known as the British Empire" soon got down to business. The gentlemen from across the seas have come determined to get economic concessions as the price of their co-operation with Great Britain, and they were not long in tabling their demands. They call it "Preferential trade within the Empire," but in Joe Chamberlain's days it was known as Protection. In reality, they are trying to form an Imperial "Plunderbund," by which those who have any political influence will be able to tax trade competitors out of the field, leaving them free to bleed the consumer to their heart's content. Of course, they are very modest to begin with; but as soon as one "young industry" gets what is virtually a subsidy others will be clamouring for similar privileges. One of the industries appealing for State protection—agriculture—is the oldest industry in existence. The enormous number of unemployed is being used as an argument in support of this scheme, and lavish promises of work for all are dangled before their eyes to gain their support. Mr. Baldwin told the Conference that "the British Empire cannot live for itself alone." They must unite "to bear on their shoulders the burdens of those weaker than themselves." India, Ireland, Egypt, and other places in the Empire would gladly forego John Bull's "help"; it is too expensive. This Empire Conference has a political significance that seems to have escaped notice, in the fact that it is really deciding questions which have hitherto been the prerogative of the House of Commons. Presently, when a Labour Government comes into office, it will find itself subservient to the Imperial Conference, and its power but a shadow. They tell us to look to Parliament for revolutionary changes, but Capitalism is steadily building new lines of defence, and when Labour breaks down the walls of Parliament it will find the enemy more strongly entrenched in a fresh position. Our rulers have plenty of "Constitutional" moves up their sleeves with which to nullify Parliamentary action.

An Economic Puzzle.

The *Russian Information and Review* (published by the Russian Trade Delegation in London) is always interesting reading, but we are much puzzled by some paragraphs in the issue dated October 6. It reports a speech made at the Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow by Chicherin, People's Commissary for Foreign Affairs, who said: "We can say with full confidence that we have already won for ourselves a new structure of society, a structure based on labour free from exploitation." On another page we are told that "the profits of the [Rubber] Trust during 1923-4 will, it is estimated, be about 9,000,000 gold roubles." And in an article describing a railway concession granted to a German company the writer says: "This concession will undoubtedly be of great value to the concessionaire," besides bringing to the State a net profit of 1,900,000 gold roubles a year. What puzzles us is where do all these profits come from? Usually they come from exploited and underpaid labour, but Chicherin says that labour is not exploited in Russia. Perhaps the neo-Marxians will explain the mystery. In any case, someone is making fat profits in Russia under the new economic policy, which Trotsky says "must be continued for a long time." He was interviewed recently by an American Senator, Mr. King, who asked him what Russia would do if Germany had a new revolution. Trotsky told him they would do nothing. "We do not wish to conceal our sympathy with the German workers . . . but at the same time we stand absolutely for peace." He then went on to assure his American visitor that the Soviet Government was interested in "maintaining the confidence of the commercial world," and "will support all genuine foreign firms which desire to invest their capital permanently in Soviet Russia's industries." Note the word "permanently." So these "genuine foreign firms" are to be invited to invest their capital in a country where labour is not exploited! Frankly, this new economic policy beats us.

A BIT OF THEORY.

By E. MALATESTA.

Rebellion is rumbling on all sides. Here, it is the expression of an idea; there, the result of need; more often it is the consequence of a network of needs and ideas which reciprocally give rise to and re-enforce one another. It devotes its attention to the causes of social ills or it follows a side issue, it is conscious or instinctive, it is humane or brutal, generous or narrow and selfish, but it is steadily growing and spreading.

This is history in the making, and it is useless to waste one's time complaining of the course it takes, because this course has been laid out by all the evolution that went before.

But history is made by men, and since we do not wish to be mere passive and indifferent spectators of the historic tragedy, since we wish to co-operate with all our strength in bringing about the circumstances which seem to us the most favourable to our cause, we must have some standard to guide us in judging the events that occur, and especially in choosing the position that we will occupy in the struggle.

The end justifies the means. This maxim has been greatly slandered. As a matter of fact, it is the universal guide to conduct.

One might better express it thus: each end carries with it its own means. The morality or immorality lies in the end sought; there is no option as to the means.

Once one has decided upon the end in view, whether by choice or by necessity, the great problem of life is to find the means which, according to the circumstances, will lead most surely and economically to the desired end. The way in which this problem is solved determines, as far as human will can determine, whether a man or a party reaches the goal or not, is useful to the cause or—without meaning to—serves the opposite side. To have found the right means is the whole secret of the great men and great parties that have left their mark in history.

The object of the Jesuits is, for the mystics, the glory of God, and for the others the power of the Company of Jesus. They must, therefore, endeavour to degrade the masses, terrorise them, and keep them in submission. The object of the Jacobins and all authoritarian parties, who believe themselves to be in possession of absolute truth, is to force their ideas upon the common herd and to bind humanity upon the Procrustean bed of their beliefs.

With us it is otherwise; entirely different is our goal and very different, therefore, must be our means.

We are not fighting to put ourselves in the place of the exploiters and oppressors of to-day, nor are we fighting for the triumph of an abstract idea. We are not like that Italian patriot who said, "What matters it if all the Italians die of hunger, provided Italy be great and glorious." Neither do we resemble that comrade who admitted that he would not care if three-fourths of the human beings were massacred, provided Humanity was free and happy.

We wish men to be happy—all men, without exception. We wish every human being to be free to develop and live as happily as possible. And we believe that this freedom, this happiness, cannot be given to men by any man or any party; but that all men must, by their own efforts, discover the conditions of happiness and win them. We believe that only the most thorough application of the principle of solidarity can put an end to struggle, oppression, and exploitation; and that solidarity can come only as a result of a voluntary agreement, an intentional and spontaneous harmonising of interests.

For us, therefore, everything that aims to destroy economic or political oppression, everything that helps to raise the moral and intellectual level of humanity, to make men conscious of their rights and their power and to get them to look after their interests themselves, everything that arouses hatred of oppression and promotes human brotherhood, brings us nearer to our goal and, therefore, is desirable—subject only to a quantitative calculation as to how to secure, with the resources available, the maximum useful result.

And, *per contra*, anything is undesirable, because opposed to our aim, which seeks to preserve the present state of things, or to sacrifice a man, against his will, to the triumph of a principle.

What we desire is the triumph of love and freedom. But does that mean that we refrain from using violent means? Not at all. The means we employ are those that circumstances make possible or necessary. It is true that we would prefer not to hurt a hair of anybody's head; we would like to wipe away all tears and not to

cause any to be shed. But the fact is that we have to make our fight in the world as it is, or else be condemned to be nothing but fruitless dreamers.

The day will come, we firmly believe, when it will be possible to work for men's happiness without doing any harm either to oneself or to others. To-day this is not possible. Even the purest and gentlest of martyrs, one who, for the triumph of the right, would let himself be dragged to the scaffold without resistance, blessing his persecutors like the Christ of the legend, even such a one would still be doing much harm. Apart from the harm that he would be doing to himself—which, after all, counts for something—he would cause all those who love him to shed bitter tears.

The main problem always, therefore, in all the acts of our life, is to choose the lesser evil, to try to accomplish the largest possible total of good with the least possible harm.

Humanity drags painfully along under the weight of political and economic oppression. It is stupefied, degraded, killed—and not always slowly—by poverty, slavery, ignorance, and their consequences. For the maintenance of this state of things there exist powerful military and police organisations which meet any serious attempt at a change with prison, hanging, and massacre. There is no peaceful, legal way of getting out of this situation—and that is perfectly natural because the laws are made by the privileged class in order to protect their privileges. Against the physical force that blocks our way there is no appeal except to physical force—there can be no revolution except a violent one.

There is no doubt that the revolution will cause much misfortune, much suffering. But it might cause a hundred times more and it would still be a blessing compared to what we endure to-day.

It is a well-known fact that in a single battle more people are killed than in the bloodiest of revolutions. It is a well-known fact that millions of children of tender age die every year for lack of care, that millions of workers die prematurely of the disease of poverty, that the immense majority of people lead stunted, joyless, and hopeless lives, that even the richest and most powerful are much less happy than they might be in a society of equals, and that this state of things has lasted from time immemorial. Without a revolution it would last indefinitely, whereas one single revolution which went right to the causes of the evil could put humanity for all time on the road to happiness.

So let the revolution come! Every day that it delays means an enormous mass of suffering inflicted on mankind. Let us work so that it shall come quickly and shall be the kind of revolution we must have in order to put an end to all oppression and exploitation.

It is through love of mankind that we are revolutionists; it is not our fault if history drives us to this painful necessity.

Therefore, for us and for all those who look at things as we do, each piece of propaganda or of direct action, whether by word or deed, whether done by a group or by an individual, is good when it helps to bring the revolution nearer and make it easier, when it helps to gain for the revolution the conscious co-operation of the masses and to give it that character of universal liberation without which we might, indeed, have a revolution, but not the revolution that we desire. And it is specially in connection with a revolution that we must keep in mind the principle of using the most economical means, because here the cost is figured up in human lives.

We know too well the terrible material and moral conditions in which the working class lives not to be able to understand the acts of hatred, vengeance, and even ferocity which may occur. We understand how there can be some of the oppressed who, having always been treated by the bourgeoisie with the most shameful cruelty, having always seen that anything is permitted to those who have the power, may say to themselves some fine day when they have the power, "Now we will do what the bourgeois used to do." We understand how it can happen in the fever of battle that some people, naturally kind-hearted but not prepared by long moral training—very difficult under present conditions—may lose sight of the goal to be reached and may regard violence as an end in itself and let themselves be swept along to savage excesses.

But it is one thing to understand and excuse, and another thing to recommend. Those are not the kind of deeds that we can accept, encourage, and imitate. We must, indeed, be resolute and energetic, but we must try never to go beyond what is absolutely necessary. We must be like the surgeon, who cuts when he must but avoids causing needless suffering. In a word, we should be guided by love for mankind, for all mankind.

We consider this love for mankind as the moral basis, the very soul of our social programme; we believe that only by conceiving of the revolution as the great human jubilee, as the liberation and fraternising of all men, to whatever class or party they may have belonged—only in this way can our ideal be made real.

Brutal revolt will undoubtedly occur, and it may, indeed, help to give the last great blow which shall overthrow the present system; but if it is not steadied by revolutionists acting for an ideal, it will devour itself.

Hate does not create love: with hatred one cannot rebuild the world. And a revolution inspired by hate either would fail completely or else would lead to fresh oppression, which might, indeed, be called "anarchist," as the present Governments are called "liberal," but which would none the less be oppression and would not fail to bring about all the conditions that oppression inevitably produces.

(Translated by F. A. B.)

THE DAY AFTER TO-MORROW.

FREEDOM=NO GOVERNMENT.

We are now travelling towards Socialism: a system of the most tortuously interlocked Government control. But surging its way to the surface is a powerful wave—a wave which, when it breaks, will wash away all before it, will explode into a thousand pieces the counter-forces which now surround it,—a wave which, by its very compression, is gathering in intensity and energy; this wave is called the Desire for Freedom.

It is to the Socialists of to-day that we believers in Freedom look for a great many of to-morrow's recruits, and we know that their allegiance, when it comes, will have a great spiritual value: the energetic value of a powerful recoil. The recruits who are, almost unconsciously, ranging themselves with us from the ranks of the upholders of the old autocratic régime have their peculiar value, too. The spiritual power they bring is the adhesive strength of natural affinity. From these two sources we Freedomites can most confidently expect to recruit our following.

At first glance, it may seem a strange theory that two opposite stocks should be said to be breeding the same offspring. But once again extremes will have met, as extremes so often do. And it will have been discovered that the original cleavage was one of method rather than aim.

The progress of the Socialist to definite Freedom is fairly easy to trace, in the light of history. Socialism, as an articulate political theory, has gradually evolved and elaborated itself from a demand for equality, and from a simple and primeval instinct, namely, the struggle of the under-dog for freedom from its self-appointed rulers. The natural repudiation of the right of one person or set of persons to govern another—the challenge to "authority"—was there; and that is the spiritual basis of the Freedom movement: resentment and repudiation of the Sublime Impertinence of Government, whether benevolent or otherwise.

But the times which gave birth to Socialism were guilty of more tangible tyrannies than outraged dignity. Conditions of labour were awful, hunger and sweating throve side by side, and the swaggering insolence of the top-dog added gall to the bitter cup. Thus a great division was perceived between the rulers, with their hangers-on, and the labouring type; and "class" distinction became a slogan.

The labouring classes, being quite unorganised, were helpless at that time, owing to the constitutional power which their opponents possessed. So the advantages of co-operation were seen, and various "movements" sprang up. Trade Unionism, for one, and the gathering of the nucleus of the Labour Party. Demos, the People, got together. United effort achieved what probably nothing else could have done, and "organisation" and "unity" became magic words.

The source, then, of the democratic-party which has since resolved itself into the Socialist movement was twofold. First of all, it attracted those who were struggling for the possession of their personal political freedom; and secondly, it attracted those who clung to the doctrine of equality. Both these factions were originally joined together in a bond of common hostility to the existing conditions.

So long as they all were agreed on a common aim, unity was easy and united effort simple. But when internal differences of opinion occurred, it became obvious that, if the party was to act as

one, some authority would have to be set up to decide its actions. Therefore, some machinery had to be found which would conserve among the members the ideas of equality and self-government. The result was that the systems of representation by equal vote, and Majority Rule, sprang up.

The actual policy of the Socialist movement, as we know, is now one of State control for everything. The autocrat has been overthrown, and we are promised Majority Rule. The State will own us and look after us, and say what we may do and what we may not do. And if we say that the State is a despot, we shall be told that *we* are the State. But if we refuse to carry out the law of the State, we shall be told that *we* (the State) are traitors, and shall be under the Gilbertian necessity of hanging ourselves!

Everything will be tied up and docketed; individual life will be thwarted; individual enterprise a crime. Like well-bred horses, we shall be groomed, stabled, and fed; and, like well-bred horses, we shall be "owned."

This state of living may be all very well for those whose instincts are herd instincts, and call only for equality and security. But the man with an individual soul and a capacity for adventure, the man who first joined the Socialist movement because it was the escape from outside autocratic control—this man will surely realise that he is in a false position; and his instincts *must* lead to the only real goal: personal freedom. This will be the bursting of the wave.

The recruits who are coming over from the autocratic régime are actuated by a different temperament. The Freedomites-via-Socialism, as we see, are individuals who felt and resented the impertinence of outside government, and joined forces with those of the herd instinct, without realising the danger to individual freedom which democratic methods imply. They are simply people who have lost their way. Real personal freedom has been their goal from the first, did they but know it. In high reaction against autocratic government, they flew to the comradesly arms of democracy, because their personal instincts are friendly and sociable.

The seceding pro-autocrat is made of different stuff.

Two main explanations lie at the back of a belief in autocratic rule. The first is a belief in the lack of confusion which results from single-minded government: the desire for a clear-cut policy: the calm strength of a one-man show. The second is an instinctive or temperamental explanation. An autocratic régime rests on a belief in the inequality of man. It fosters individuality and competition. It paves the way for the rise of dominant personalities. It permits personal power. Naturally, therefore, the spirit and atmosphere of such a system exerts a sort of magnetic attraction towards individuals who have dominating temperaments. In such circumstances they breathe their native air. Democracy is not for them: no herding or levelling.

The pro-autocrats I have in mind have themselves the autocratic instinct. They are, in fact, autocrats without the opportunity for self-expression. Freedom from government offers them this opportunity. That is why they will come over in the long-run. They may be more content to knuckle down to an autocrat whose personal power they can respect, than to jostle familiarly with Nobodies. But the real ideal of your true autocrat is not to be governed, but to govern. His instinct is to dominate. When once he wakes up to the ignominy of his present position under outside control, he will take a short cut to freedom where he can expand his wings, not by the aid of official position, but simply *as a personality*. His goal is personal freedom.

Believers in freedom are always asked what they will do with the world when they have got it. And from the variety of answers which are given, it is easily seen that specific aims differ. Some Freedomites have very strong leanings towards Communism—what is called Free Communism: Communism by common consent. Personally, I cannot see how this is going to work. Communism would be possible under government. But that immediately reverts everything to State Socialism; and that is directly opposed to freedom. Other Freedomites have no communal bees in their bonnets, in the sense in which Communism is usually understood; and these persons generally go by the name of Individualists. They are out for the safeguarding of individual freedom first and foremost.

All the sub-divisions have not yet been exhausted, for there are still pro-capitalists and anti-capitalists, who form separate camps.

MARJORIE PEACOCK.

(To be concluded.)

[We will publish a reply to Miss Peacock when her article is concluded next month.—ED. FREEDOM.]

FREEDOM.

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SALVATION BY TAXATION.

Poor old Britannia is in a very bad way. The War added millions of square miles to her territory, but they have brought no relief to the invalid, who is now the object of contempt to all her late Allies. Poincaré and Mussolini put their fingers to their noses at her when she speaks to them, the Turks turn her out of Constantinople, and "there are none so poor as to do her reverence." Bonar Law and Baldwin, the two iron-masters, cannot stiffen her backbone, and she looks like going into a rapid decline. So doctors from all parts of the Empire have been called into consultation. Having diagnosed her case from afar, they have decided on the remedies necessary, and show a suspicious unanimity in the matter. For weeks previous to their arrival in London the Press had been giving us hints as to the particular medicine favoured by the Dominion Premiers, which is evidently to be administered to the patient at once in the hope of bringing about a rapid recovery. "Ah!" says one, feeling the old lady's pulse, "you are suffering from unemployment and dislocation, brought on by consuming foreign food. What you want are some of our Australian wines." "And some of our Cape raisins and plums," says another. "And more of our sugar," says a third. "And if you smoke some of our Empire-grown tobacco," chimes in a fourth, "you will regain tranquillity, which is so sadly lacking nowadays." And all the medicine-men smile at each other, feeling sure that their methods of treating the disease will be adopted and bring nice fees into their exchequers.

Truly we are a nation of fools if we accept all these quack remedies as a means of curing the social ills from which we are suffering to-day. The "preferential trade within the Empire" which is being boomed by all the charlatans is Protection under another name, and has been brought forward to divert attention from more fundamental solutions of the problem. Our misfortunes are of our own making, and are too serious to be settled off-hand by the paltry palliatives of profit-seeking politicians.

When machine production commenced here about a century ago everything was sacrificed in the race for wealth. Great enclosures of common lands drove the workers into the cities, where goods were manufactured on a large scale, being carried to all parts of the world in British ships. Getting a flying start, for generations we outstripped all competitors. For the goods thus produced we exchanged food, and agriculture at home was neglected. Until comparatively recently this policy was successful and brought enormous wealth into the pockets of our manufacturers and shipowners. Now the nations of the world have learned to manufacture for themselves, and are no longer buying from us to the same extent as before, with the result that our workers are standing idle in the market-place, glad to get any crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. Undoubtedly the War has intensified this situation, but it was one that could have been foreseen by any one who noted the growth of the machine industry in lands which had been our best customers.

To-day we are faced with an entirely new situation. We must realise that the world will no longer purchase from us as of yore, therefore we must now produce here the food which previously came from our customers abroad. This situation is carefully hidden from the people, who have been persuaded that if peace came to Europe and the rest of the world, our machines would soon be running full time again, and there would be work

for all. That is a lie, put forward by industrialists and politicians who fear the truth being known. But they are at their wit's end to provide schemes which will stave off the trouble they fear when the workers realise that there is no hope for them under the present system. One of these schemes is the futile idea of trade within the Empire, which reminds us of Mark Twain's islanders who made a living by taking in each other's washing.

The Government and the wealthy classes of this country are engaged in a plot to use this scheme to transport hundreds of thousands of unemployed to the desert places of the Empire, where they will be sweated to death in producing wealth for those who have already fenced off these places as their private property. In addition, they will be forced into the ranks as soldiers in the next war, which our rulers see looming ahead. It is a scheme by which they hope to save their privileges at home and their possessions abroad. They have not a shred of gratitude for those who suffered during the War, but simply regard the unemployed as a damned nuisance, to be got rid of as soon as possible before they become a danger to those who are revelling in the wealth and luxury which the workers have provided.

This scheme must be prevented. There is no necessity for any man or woman to leave the country. There is land sufficient, if properly cultivated, to provide food for all; and instead of allowing themselves to be shipped off as useless animals to distant lands, the workers should demand free access to the land, and get rid of the parasites who have hitherto monopolised the means of life. And when our rulers talk to us of Preference, let us say: "Yes, preference in the use of the land for those who will cultivate it, and preference in the consumption of wealth for those who produce it." The politicians and capitalists have made a sorry mess of the world, and it is time we kicked them out and began to manage our own affairs. We might easily do better; we could not possibly do worse.

International Anarchist Congress.

This oft-postponed Congress was held in Paris on October 8 and 9. Three delegates—Bjorklund (Sweden), Manus (Norway), and Bertoni (Switzerland)—were arrested by the police as soon as they arrived in Paris; and, in spite of their passports being in good order, our comrades were expelled from the country. However, the Congress was held as arranged in the suburbs of Paris. The principal result was the formation of the Universal Anarchist Union, the secretariat of which will be appointed later. *Le Libertaire* promises us a detailed report in a future issue.

THE UNEMPLOYED.

By BEN JONSON (Acted in 1599).

Sordido—O, but, say some, the poor are like to starve.
Why, let 'hem starve, what's that to me? Are bees
Bound to keep life in drones and idle moths? No.
Why such are these—that term themselves the poor
Only because they would be pitied,
But are indeed a sort of lazy beggars—
Licentious rogues and sturdy vagabonds.

And this is all that these cheap times are good for,
Whereas a wholesome and penurious dearth
Purges the soil of such vile excrements,
And kills the vipers up.

Hind— O, but master,
Take heed they hear you not.

Sordido— Why so?

Hind—They will exclaim against you.

Sordido— Ay, their exclains

Move me as much as thy breath moves a mountain!

Poor worms, they hiss at me whilst I at home

Can be contented to applaud myself

To see how plump my bags are and my barns!

("Everyman Out of His Humour.")

DUPING THE DOWN AND OUT.

Once again the Socialists, like ex-champion Beckett, allow themselves to be knocked out without striking even a shadow of a blow. It is not to the Poplar incident that we are referring, but to the problem of unemployment as a whole, respecting which the National Council of the Independent Labour Party has issued recently a special statement. In that statement the central issue of the entire revolutionary movement is studiously side-stepped, and the party takes refuge in a series of proposed reforms, few, if any, of which can ever by any possibility come to birth. As a political document it is perhaps astute, because it will not scare away the timid fish for whom the party is now angling.

The voter is first reminded that industry requires organising, and that Capitalism is incapable of making that "broad scientific survey of the materials and productive capacity available" which will put an end to market fluctuations. If that were true, the task of ushering in the Social Revolution would be indeed an easy one, but it happens to be just about as false as anything can be. We are not starving because Capitalism is going it blind, for Capitalism has its eyes wide open, and has brought the organisation of information to the highest pitch. Through its press, through its Boards of Trade and Mercantile Associations, through the assistance of Government officials, and by the help of other agencies too numerous to mention, Capitalism to-day has mapped out all the world. It knows almost to a dot where it can sell goods profitably and where it cannot; what natural resources are worth picking up, and how much it should pay for them. In short, to that essential feature of its business it attends most carefully, and certainly lack of industrial information is not at the bottom of our troubles. An infinitely more formidable lion blocks the way, and that lion the Independent Labour Party has not the pluck to face.

The Socialist argument is, of course, that the official machinery of the Government can alone supply us with the information that, as they aver, is necessary to our salvation. There the evidence is heavily against them, for almost invariably Governmental conduct of industry has resulted in prodigious waste and has displayed a lamentable lack of skill and judgment. The reason for this is simplicity itself. The man who is attending to his own business is Argus-eyed, for on his vigilance and far-sightedness his own survival hangs. No such spur pricks the permanent official, and in a dozen countries to-day may be seen the spectacle of Prime Ministers who have inflicted ruin on the countries under their control, but are now living, in retirement, the lives of kings. Never has the world been presented with more convincing proofs of this most vital truth. Never has the myth of governmental omniscience and infallibility been so disastrously punctured by events.

However, the Independent Labour Party hopes to capture the governing machine, and to that end it tells us what it proposes to do with it. Slums will be cleared, and decent houses built. Schools will be constructed, and railways, roads, waterways and harbours developed. A national scheme for the supply of electricity will be set on foot, and afforestation and land reclamation organised. Credit will be scientifically controlled in the public interest; and we are solemnly informed that, to accomplish this, "during a time of depression the bank rate would be steadily reduced until industry expanded"! For the rest, we are promised "the enforcement of a living wage in every industry; the payment of adequate allowances to the aged, the sick, and the unemployed; the taxation of luxury incomes, and the expenditure upon useful work of the national revenue thus raised."

Measuring our words carefully, we declare that such a programme is quackery incarnate. These measures could not be enforced so long as all the sources of production remain in the keeping of Monopoly, and the Socialist leaders know it well. So long as the masses remain disinherited, these politicians can no more secure them a living wage than they can fly to the moon. They can clear their slums, and build their railways, and carry out their other high-sounding projects, only by paying heavy blackmail to those who hold in their grip the land needed for

those improvements. Under our existing system of Land Monopoly every one of these schemes involves a prodigious outlay of money; and, if it is proposed to raise this colossal tribute to landlordism by taxation, we remind Labour that it, and it alone, will have to pay the bill. By no hocus-pocus can it hope to escape that fate. By no subtlety of oratory can we get away from the fundamental truth that Labour applied to natural resources is the one and only possible source of wealth-production.

The Independent Labour Party is mocking the unemployed, and mocking them with a cruelty that passes words. It is filling them with promises it cannot expect to keep, and lying to them because, in its moral cowardice, it dare not face what we have called the "central issue of the entire revolutionary movement." It dare not proclaim that the humblest docker has just as good a right to life, and all the opportunities of life, as any king. It dare not point out that, to get those opportunities, we must *begin* by abolishing that Monopoly which keeps them at present under lock and key. It talks about overthrowing Capitalism, and it is afraid to attack that infamous landlordism which, according to its own Karl Marx, is the corner-stone of the whole system of wage-slavery against which Socialism professes to be making war.

Stern times are upon us, and with profound conviction we warn the unemployed against looking to the Independent Labour Party for any shelter from the gathering storm.

W. C. O.

THE EXPLOITERS.

I.

What about Labour's programme? Has it not always been that useful work must be the sole title to reward; and has not this necessarily meant that the producer, no longer paying tribute to the idler, will get automatically the full value of his toil? No more holes in Labour's pocket. No more pouring water into a sieve. No more futile wrangles with the exploiter, because no more exploitation. Is not that the very essence of the Labour Movement throughout the world?

The question is clear, and it calls for a clear answer. Labour is being robbed, or it is not. If it is, the robbery must be stopped; and we must find out at once who the robbers are, and how they manage to plunder us. If our property is being carted away wholesale, we don't want watchdogs who fawn on and lick the burglars' hands. When profits disappear mysteriously it becomes time to ferret out the leaks. Every business man does that, and are we not supposed to be a business people?

Of course there are leaks, and gigantic ones at that. Here, for example—as in almost any London suburb—is what was, only a few years ago, a barren and comparatively worthless piece of land. To-day, thanks to increasing population, that tract has become enormously valuable, being covered with buildings occupied by hundreds of tenants, every one of whom pays rent? To whom do they pay it? To themselves, whose arrival on the scene and whose continuous labours created and maintain the value? Not at all. They pay it to an idler whose whole life has been devoted to spending the great fortune Labour so kindly throws into his lap.

That is an obvious leak, and the whole country is full of similar ones. Within the last fifty years huge cities have come into existence, because Labour has developed a gigantic industry and thereby built up the British Empire. The inhabitants of those cities pay millions of pounds a year in rents, and into whose pockets do they go? Almost invariably into the pockets of some Do-Nothing whose ancestors fenced in what was then land of little or no worth.

The leaks are everywhere. If Labour wants to raise potatoes or dig coal, to put up a shanty for its own shelter, or to construct a railway that will increase incalculably the wealth of the whole country—whatever its would-be activity, it must pay tribute to the Idler before it can set itself to work. Moreover, this tribute-paying never stops. To-day I bought a lot of groceries and yesterday I treated myself to a new hat. In each case the shopkeeper necessarily added to the price the rent-tribute he himself must pay. The shops I patronised had over them respectively the signs "Grocer" and "Hatter." They should have borne the additional words: "And collector of taxes for his Majesty the Landlord."

People who can't see the flood thus streaming out of the pockets

of the producer and into the pockets of those who only hinder production, can't see anything. Their blindness is beyond all cure, and we don't want to see men so afflicted at the head of Labour movements. That sort of a plumber is simply an insufferable nuisance, and the sooner we sack him and attend to the job ourselves, the better it will be for every one of us.

First, stop the leakages; every one of them! After that we may, if we have the leisure, see to polishing up the handle of the big front door.

W. C. O.

PRINTED PAGES.

KROPOTKIN'S LAST WORK.

Ethik. By Peter Kropotkin. Erster Band: Ursprung und Entwicklung der Sittlichkeit. Aus dem Russischen Ubersetzt. Berlin O 34: Verlag "Der Syndikalist."

We have received with pleasure the first volume, translated into German from the Russian, of Kropotkin's "Ethics." It deals with the origin and development of morals, and is encyclopaedic in its scope. Kropotkin takes us back to the dawn of history, analyses the great religious movements that have moulded human thought, and traces in detail the revolution of ideas that has followed in the wake of modern science. In this one volume he cites no less than 192 leading authors, many of whose names are familiar to those who have made philosophy their special study, though they would find it hard indeed to give a concise summary of the conclusions those authors reached. This, however, Kropotkin does invariably; and the extraordinary thing is that he was able to produce a work of such weight and magnitude under conditions about as unfavourable as they could be. He wrote it during the last three years of his life, in the little hamlet of Dmitrow, near Moscow. He was weak from extreme old age, and it was impossible for him to get the nourishing food he needed. Even the replenishing of the small lamp by whose light he worked became a problem. He had no secretary, and, worse than all else, it was almost impossible to get even the most necessary books. No man who had not accumulated a vast store of scholarship could have accomplished such a task.

A work of this character cannot be reviewed in a few short paragraphs, and we can only point out here that Kropotkin attached the greatest importance to this, his final contribution to the revolutionary cause. We think he was right. No man understood more clearly than did Kropotkin that we are passing through a period in which all thought is bound to be recast, that it may bring itself finally into accord with the vast body of actual knowledge now within our reach. Eventually that must alter our entire attitude toward Life, and it is the difficulty of passing from the blind guesses of the past to the ascertained certainties of the present which is causing almost all our trouble. "Open thine eyes to see, slave, and thy feet are free. Thy bonds and thy beliefs are one in kind; and of thy fears thine irons wrought hang weights about thee fashioned out of thine own thought."

A WORKER'S TRIBUTE TO KROPOTKIN.

Peter Kropotkin: The Rebel, Thinker, and Humanitarian. Tributes and Appreciations, Excerpts, Fragments from the Uncollected Works, Miscellaneous Letters, and Illustrations. Compiled and Edited by Joseph Ishill. Privately published and printed at the Free Spirit Press, Berkeley Heights, New-Jersey, U.S.A.

This book is a tribute to Kropotkin by Joseph Ishill, who set up the type, printed it, and bore the entire cost of the production. It is worthy of its subject, and an artistic production pleasant to handle and read. The matter has been well selected. The tributes and appreciations of Kropotkin are from many comrades who testify to his work as an Anarchist. We could say many nice things about this book, but refrain as it is not for sale. Only 75 copies have been printed, all of which have been already distributed. The production of this splendid volume has been a labour of love to Joseph Ishill, and we shall always treasure the copy he has kindly sent to us.

Anarchist Discussion Circle.

The Anarchist Discussion Circle will resume its weekly meetings on Saturday, October 20, 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. We shall be pleased to see again all those who attended the last series of meetings, and hope comrades will give us their support.

THE NO MORE WAR MOVEMENT.

(To the Editor of FREEDOM.)

DEAR SIR,—The No More War Movement is the British section of the War Resisters' International, and Martha Steinitz, of Germany, is the Continental agent of the International. She reports that in Austria the Anarchist Socialists' organisation is affiliated to it; in Germany, the Union of Religious Socialists; in France, the Communist Anarchists are active; in Holland, the Religious Anarchist Communists are affiliated. It appears to me that, of all human beings, Anarchists—those who propose to substitute mutual agreement for outside compulsion or force, whether called State or any other name—should strive to promote and establish peace, not only between States or countries, but in the countries themselves; socially, and not least individually. The last would of itself bring on an era of mutual agreement. The two would interact—the one inducing the other.—Yours truly,

W. DOUGLAS.

[We know that some of our comrades at home and abroad are working in the No More War Movement, as a field of propaganda; but the great majority of its adherents seem to us illogical. They advocate disarmament and the settlement of disputes between nations by mutual agreement, yet oppose Anarchism on the ground that government is necessary to compel people to behave themselves. If the individuals composing the nations cannot be trusted to settle their disputes by mutual agreement, why should the nations be expected to do so? Do the advocates of disarmament intend to abolish the police? If not, why not? In the early days of the War a Dutch pacifist called on Malatesta and explained to him a scheme for the reduction of armaments based on the population of each country. Our comrade asked him how many Italy would be allowed. When he was told, Malatesta said: "Ah, just enough to keep the Anarchists in order!" And in our opinion so long as society remains on its present basis of rulers and ruled disarmament and the abolition of war will be a dream.—ED. FREEDOM.]

"Freedom" Guarantee Fund.

We are pleased to acknowledge the receipt of the following sums since our last issue:—T. S. 5s., Gateshead Sympathisers 2s. 6d., R. Sinclair 7s. 6d., Gateshead Group 10s., G. P. 1s., J. S. Kavaloff 4s. 3d., A. D. Moore 2s., L. G. Wolfe £1, H. G. Russell 10s. This is a very poor list, and we hope donations will come in much better in future, as we really cannot continue otherwise. There is a heavy deficit each month, and this can only be met by donations.

CASH RECEIVED (not otherwise acknowledged).

(September 12 to October 11.)

"FREEDOM" SUBSCRIPTIONS.—W. Barker, A. Harrison, R. Sinclair, T. Urabe, F. Weizman, S. Gloverman, H. L. J. J., W. Fraser, E. P. Totten, J. S., H. G. Russell.

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