

Freedom

AN ANARCHIST FORTNIGHTLY

Railwaymen must not be tied by reformist ideas

CLEAR THE TRACKS!

RAILWAYMEN are fighting a struggle for better wages and better living conditions. The same problem faces all workers in every country, and workers everywhere should be interested in the railmen's fight for the reason that success in any struggle comes from understanding the issues at stake, the strength at the workers' disposal and the forces deployed against them. But in addition to all this there are many complicating factors which play a less obvious but equally important part. There are all kinds of divided loyalties, varying degrees of desire for social change, even inter-union rivalries which play their part in determining the degree of solidarity and firmness on the part of the men and their leaders, and so affect the outcome of the struggle.

The railwaymen's fight for an all-round increase of 10/- shows particularly clearly the complicated factors which are brought to bear on an apparently simple issue.

The lowest paid workers on the railways get £4 12s. 6d. a week, and the National Union of Railwaymen claim that this is the wage of 11 per cent. of its members, while no less than 55 per cent. earn less than £5. A year ago, therefore, the N.U.R. put in a claim for an all-round increase of 12/6 a week. The Railway Executive rejected this and offered instead increases of from 3/- to 6d. for the lowest paid grades. The N.U.R., not unnaturally, rejected this offer as disgusting and humiliating, and continued to press for 10/- a week all-round wages increase. The Executive then referred the matter to the Conciliation Board, and both sides agreed to accept the findings. The N.U.R. executive are reputed to have expected a compromise finding giving a 5/- a week rise all round. Instead, the Board rejected the demand for an increase, and quashed the offer of an advance for the lowest paid workers.

Meanwhile, J. B. Figgins, the N.U.R. leader, had voted at the T.U.C. Congress at Bridlington for the Government's wage stabilisation policy, which in effect meant no demands for wage increases, although he was in the midst of the struggle for an advance which was expected to cost £15 millions a year. By pledging his union in advance to accept the findings of the Conciliation Board he had put himself in a hopeless position.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Now the T.U.C. support of the wage stabilisation policy of the Labour government is based on a "responsible attitude towards the country's economic difficulties". In effect, the T.U.C. leaders and the government are saying that Britain's position in the world today is so insecure that it is a threat to the country to demand wage increases which will increase costs and so embarrass ability to compete with other countries. In other words, the trade union leaders are recognising the difficulties of the employers, are looking at problems of production through capitalist eyes.

We are constantly told that the only way for "survival" is by making British industry more efficient, lowering costs by the installation of more efficient machinery, more labour-saving and so on. Workers naturally see behind all this the spectre of unemployment, but their political and economic leaders tell them that such measures will improve output and production, bring prosperity and so absorb more labour and reduce risks of unemployment. Some workers believe all this, others are sceptical. The important effect is that the entertainment of such doubts, the identification of workers' interests with employers' interests, completely hamstring effective struggle.

UNION RIVALRIES

Other factors also come in to produce the same effect of breaking up the possibility of unification of action and aim. The N.U.R. made its claim for all-round increases without consulting the other railway unions, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, and the Railway Clerks' Association.

The A.S.L.E. & F. claim that their first priority at the moment is negotiation of pension schemes. Hence they regard the unilateral action of the N.U.R. as an attempt to pose as the most militant champions of the railwaymen, with the overt intention of capturing A.S.L.E. & F. members. The struggle for other union's members (and hence increased dues) is a commonplace of union tactics. It is a most fruitful source of disunity.

The suspicion of such ulterior motivation, together with the willingness to consider the problem from the Boss' point of view, provide a poor foundation for vigorous prosecution of the struggle. Hence half-hearted methods have been employed throughout. The original N.U.R. claim was supported by such devices as Sunday strikes, taken stoppages, partial go-slow methods; all of them adding up to an attitude of "this will show you what we could do if we really meant business". After the final rejection of their claim railwaymen naturally felt very bitter indeed, and leaders expressed fears that "the men would steal (sic) the initiative". Go-slow tactics were resumed in various depots and districts, but have now been largely abandoned.

DEVALUING THE POUND

On top of the rejection of their claim came the devaluation of the pound, inevitably forecasting a rise in prices and hence a fall in the standard of living and of real wages. Even if they had won their claim, the fruits would have eluded them; now they have not merely failed to advance, they have suffered a wage cut.

Now we have gone into this matter in a rather cold-blooded fashion, not because we are out of sympathy with the railmen's claim—we advise anyone who might think that to read the *Freedom Press* pamphlet "Railways and Society" by George Woodcock. No, our reason for stating the matter thus is that the railwaymen's dilemma is the dilemma of all workers to-day. The railwaymen are in fact very much to the fore among more advanced workers, for they ask not merely for better wages but for more responsibility in the shape of workers' control. And their industry is already an outstanding example of the *de facto* responsibility for safety and adequate running which does lie in the capable hands of the workers.

WORKERS' CONTROL FOR WHAT?

But for the readiness of the railway workers to concede points to the employers' case, to recognise the "patriotism" of not pressing wages claims and so on—all this makes one wonder what sort of control the workers would exercise. If the problems of the Railway Executive are real problems, then the workers when they take over must also concern themselves with reducing labour costs, with rationalisation and all the other things that push wages down now. Such a conception is an obvious absurdity. Even if the workers took over the railways while other industries continued as before, the railway workers would still have to concern themselves with keeping down transport charges which form an item in the costs of other industries and so affect issues of competition in markets overseas. Again, the situation is an absurd one.

It follows then that if the railway workers or any other section of workers are to press for workers' control, the conception behind the words must be general workers' control of all industry, all production, all the public services.

And they must seek workers' control not in order to operate the market system of production to capture overseas markets, increase exports and all the rest of the factors which paralyse the rational satisfaction of needs to-day; they must seek to control production so that they may place it on an entirely different basis—one which seeks to supply human needs, rather than capture markets.

They must, in short, have imagination enough to hold revolutionary concepts about society and production. If they don't have such ideas, they will inevitably see wage problems through the bosses' eyes, and have the force taken out of their struggle by economic considerations which only make sense at all in a capitalist framework—and the state of the world to-day doesn't allow much sense to emerge even then!

If they hold revolutionary concepts, and are inspired by ideas of how men might live, they can apply revolutionary methods of struggle, can cease to claim more workers' control, but instead take control. And they will do so with the object of inspiring other workers to take similar steps—and not merely in this country but everywhere in the world as well.

REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS OF WORKERS' CONTROL

The total failure of the political leaders to make a world in which it is possible to live; the failure of the union leaders to resolve a situation facing not a wage rise but instead a cut in real wages; the emptiness of work itself which denies responsibility for directing their industry to men who already are responsible for running it efficiently—all this points to the bankruptcy of existing leaders and the existing social and economic system and its methods of directing industry. The situation cries out for the workers to take over, and the idea of workers' control never held greater urgency. But if workers are to take control successfully, they must look beyond union rivalry and patriotism and subservience to the extraordinary system of money and exchange. They must develop a revolutionary consciousness.

HYPNOSIS

THE well-known music-hall hypnotist, Peter Casson, writes in the *Sunday Pictorial* (28/8/49) as follows:—

"For years it has been to the advantage of hypnotists to insist that no person, while hypnotised, will do anything foreign to their normal moral code. Nonsense! One would only have to implant the suggestion into a thoroughly decent human being that it was a Christian act to poison or fire a gun, that it would, shall we say, save the life of a little child, prevent a great evil, or stop the suffering of thousands, and the murder would be possible."

Mr. Casson makes some suggestions for preventing hypnotism getting into the wrong hands and becoming a menace, proposing the licensing of hypnotists by the British Medical Association and so on. As the quotation selected from his article shows, he should also give a little hard thinking to the means of controlling those more potent and deadly hypnotists, the State, Church and Press, who have on a vast scale already and with nefarious success adopted precisely the course he warns us hypnotic quacks may exploit.

K.A.B.

"Blessed are the young, for they do not hear the President's message!"

Henry David THOREAU

DEVALUATION: THE REAL GAP WIDENS

MUCH has been made recently of the Dollar Gap and the proposed solution which has come in the form of devaluation. By the manipulation of commodity prices, currency control clauses in the Marshall Plan and a higher price for gold, the five hundred million citizens of the sterling area are to have 'another chance'. Now we know, of course, that the primary occupation of that ill-assorted combination, politician, economist and civil servant, is to balance figures, make profits, strengthen their hands. They have created the problem. Now they attempt a solution. They may succeed temporarily, juggling their exports to balance dollar imports, even if capitalist methods have to be used by socialists, fascist methods by trade union leaders . . . no matter, as long as the books are balanced and the trade graph rising. They will then be satisfied that the Gap has been closed.

Already, however, the closing of one gap is leading to the widening of another. The effect of devaluation will be that the rich will become richer and the poor poorer. But few politicians, and certainly no economists, will apply themselves to the closing of this gap.

Devaluation is meant to help the country by assisting manufacturers of finished goods to sell them at competitive prices in the dollar market. By doing this successfully their profits will increase, shareholders' dividends will improve and more will be paid to the government in taxes. The obverse aspect of this cheerful picture, however, is that it can only be attained by the workers suspending their claims for higher wages and better living conditions, for such a rise would mean higher costs for manufacturers and more money in the hands of the working masses when it is necessary that their spending power be reduced to a minimum. So the British worker, influenced on all sides by appeals to his patriotism, is to take the coming rise in the cost of living without a murmur. For the business man and the Companies, the necessary incentive is provided by the probability of higher profits. But for the worker the incentive comes in the form of the old plea—"It's the only way out."

The disparity between exploiter and exploited is, however, nowhere more obvious than in the colonies and South Africa. The raw materials which, overnight, have become twenty or thirty per cent. more valuable in terms of sterling, are the very commodities which rely on the slave labour of uneducated or near primitive peoples. The labourers who produce, in remote parts of the world, the rubber, tin, gold, copper and oil, are the people on whom the devaluers rely for their solution. Already, in fact, there have been big increases in the wealth of certain groups. Shareholders in London and Johannesburg have made profits of fifty per cent, by simply lifting the telephone receiver. Companies have found their capital increased by a similar amount. Tens of millions of pounds were added to the sterling value of shares on the first day of devaluation.

But the cheap labour of the Rand, Malaya, Rhodesia, West Africa, and the East Indies, by which the Labour Government is trying to save itself, will receive not the smallest fraction of benefit. Once more, as with its predecessors, this trade union government is going to balance its books by further and more severe exploitation of the indigenous colonial peoples over whom it claims benevolent trusteeship.

By the 'luck of the draw' the immediate financial problems of South Africa are postponed. Malan and that most valuable of institutions, the gold mine, are given a new and profitable lease of life.

But for the natives in their compounds outside Johannesburg, for the youths fresh from their tribal lives who come to the city, conscripted by want, what benefit? After a few years, as before, they will return to their tribes, permanently stricken with phthisis, without pension of any kind. The gold mining companies face a future of prosperity. But there will be no relief for the hundreds of thousands of discarded human wrecks.

The Mining Editor of the *Financial Times* writes: "Since the end of last year, the steady increase in the supply of native labour engaged on the Rand has been one of the most welcome features of the industry's experience."

Yet he is not alone in his refusal to consider the human aspect of the matter. People belonging to every group of the community have been misled into believing that the economic sphere holds a permanent solution, that dollar parity is paramount, that this is no time to consider individual grievances or specific cases of hardship. Well, we have seen nations induced into that way of thinking before. In some ways the closing of the Dollar Gap is to serve the same function as war. The aspirations of the worker and the individual are to be ignored or sacrificed to overcoming this latest crisis. His lot will be, as in war, to work harder and for less, for the paradise that is just around the corner.

But experience is teaching us that, no matter how hard we work, governments will find new ways to dissipate the wealth that accrues from this. In our own case Palestine is no longer an expense. Now it is Hong Kong. The price of our Far East commitments is £80,000,000 annually. Now it is the atom bomb, the Brab, the armies of occupation dismantling factories which could be producing the things we need. Lord Citrine at £8,500 a year. And the Duke of Windsor has dollars to buy a new house in Florida.

So from crisis to crisis, and one waits a little impatiently for signs of a wider recognition of the root causes of it all. Yet if devaluation, by making it apparent that, Labour or Conservative, trade union leaders or political leaders, the lives of workers and individuals can never be more than expendable and malleable entities, an important lesson will have been learnt. The disillusion is already beginning. An awareness of the extent to which they have been betrayed increasingly apparent among all sections of the working class. Their trade union leaders have betrayed them. The political party in which they placed their faith has betrayed them.

Soon they will have tried all the conventional expedients. Soon there will be no-one whom they can trust but themselves.

Then it will happen.

CHARLES HUMANA.

RESISTANCE TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT

THIS American government—what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavouring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves. But it is not the less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have. Governments show thus how successfully men can be imposed on, even impose on themselves, for their own advantage. It is excellent, we must all allow. Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted and for a long period continue, to rule, is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience—in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said, that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubts that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power?

The mass of men serve the State thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, gaoles, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. How does it become a man to behave toward this American government to-day? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace

It is a hundred years since Thoreau's essay on *Civil Disobedience* was first published, in an obscure and unsuccessful magazine called *Aesthetic Papers* in which it appeared under the challenging title *Resistance to Civil Government*. Raymond Adams, in his presidential address to the Thoreau Society at Concord, Massachusetts this year, remarked that it was a pity the essay had not retained its original title—"The idea of Civil Disobedience is the passive one of not obeying and so gives comfort to pacifists; the idea of Resistance to Civil Government is the active one of aggression, of active resisting. I think it was "resistance" that Thoreau meant." We publish below some extracts from the essay—as fresh and pointed to-day as in 1849.

be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognise that political organisation as my government which is the slave's government also.

All voting is a sort of gaming, like checkers or backgammon with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not asked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligations, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority.

I hear of a convention to be held at Baltimore, or elsewhere, for the selection of a candidate for the Presidency, made up chiefly of editors, and men who are politicians by profession; but I think, what is it to any independent, intelligent, and respectable man what decision they may come to? Shall we not have the advantage of his wisdom and honesty, nevertheless? Can we not count upon some independent votes? Are there not many individuals in the country who do not attend conventions? But no: I find that the respectable man, so called, has immediately drifted from his position, and despairs of his country, when his country has more reason to despair of him. He forthwith adopts one of the candidates thus selected as the only available one, thus proving that he is himself available for any purposes of the demagogue. His vote is of no more worth than that of any unprincipled foreigner or hireling native, who may have been bought. Oh for a man who is a man, and, as my neighbour says, has a bone in his back which you cannot pass your hand through! Our statistics are at fault: the population has been returned too large. How many men are there to a square thousand miles in this country? Hardly one. Does not America offer any inducement for men to settle here? The American has dwindled into an Odd Fellow—one who may be known by the development of his organ of gregariousness, and a manifest lack of intellect and cheerful self-reliance; whose first and

THOREAU IS STILL SUBVERSIVE!

When Richard Boyer was hailed before the Un-American Activities Committee in mid-April for sending "subversive literature" to atomic scientists, it was disclosed that he had mailed them copies of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*.

New York Herald Tribune, 20/4/49.

chief concern, on coming into the world, is to see that the Alms-houses are in good repair; and, before yet he has lawfully donned his virile garb, to collect a fund for the support of the widows and orphans that may be; who, in short, ventures to live only by the aid of the Mutual Insurance Company, which has promised to bury him decently.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavour to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil.

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act; as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race, should find them; on that separate but more free and honourable ground, where the State places those who are not with her but against her—the only house in which a free man can abide with honour. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voice no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person.

A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it elogs by its whole weight.

Some years ago the State met me in behalf of the Church, and commanded me to pay a certain sum toward the support of a clergyman whose preaching my father attended, but never I myself. "Pay," it said, "or be locked up in the gaol." I declined to pay. But, unfortunately, another man saw fit to pay it. I did not see why the schoolmaster should be taxed to support the priest, and not the priest the schoolmaster; for I was not the State's schoolmaster, but I supported myself by voluntary subscription. I did not see why the lyceum should not present its tax-bill, and have the State to back its demand, as well at the Church. However, at the request of the selectmen, I condescended to make some such statement as this in writing:—"Know all men by these presents, that I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined."

Augustus John Looks at Life

Historically we find warfare to be wholly ruinous except to those who abstain from it. Faced with the political differences which now rend the world, I cannot pretend to be impartial, but with an almost morbid horror of violence and coercion I try to remain open-minded and prepared to consider the merits of any doctrine, even that of the Sermon on the Mount, provided it be presented fairly and not at the point of a pistol. In fact I am to be persuaded rather than dragged.

Kipling said "East is East and West is West; and never the twain shall meet": that seems to me nonsense; they do more than meet; they interpenetrate; however far removed, both will overlap on the common ground of humanity and freedom. We must not sink our differences but rather honour them before they disappear entirely in the arithmetical anonymity of the work-state where even the accidents of our colouring will disappear under the dirt of universal toil. Indocrinated from the cradle in the principles of servitude, there will be few who will dare to deviate even in thought from the straight and narrow path of political expediency: there will be powerful inducements not to do so. The State, modelling itself closely on the Divinity it has superseded, will be keeping an eye on you all the time. This outlook repels me.

—AUGUSTUS JOHN

in a recent broadcast.

Thus the State never intentionally confronts a man's senses, intellectual or moral, but only his body, his senses. It is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength. I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest. What force has a multitude? They only can force me who obey a higher law than I. They force me to become like themselves. I do not hear of men being forced to live this way or that by masses of men. What sort of life were that to live? When I meet a government which says to me, "Your money or your life," why should I be in haste to give it my money? It may be in a great strait, and not know what to do: I cannot help that. It must help itself as I do. It is not worth the while to snivel about it. I am not responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society. I am not the son of the engineer. I perceive that, when an acorn and chestnut fall side by side, the one does not remain inert to make way for the other, but both obey their own laws, and spring and grow and flourish as best they can, till one, perchance, overshadows and destroys the other. If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man.

I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into a gaol once on this account for one night; and as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use it could put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in some way. I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and they were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come at some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it.

SEX AND THE SLOT MACHINE

MR. BASIL HENRIQUES, the East London magistrate, wrote to *The Times* a fortnight ago, to protest about the recent installation outside shops, of slot machines from which three contraceptives can be obtained by inserting half-a-crown. He considers that a "temptation of youth", and says:

"If these machines were in chemists' shops, at any rate the storekeeper would have them under supervision and youngsters would hesitate to be seen obtaining a packet in order to indulge in promiscuous intercourse. Placed in the streets, boys and girls are invited to buy them and no one will ever know that they have done so.

"The information from the Home Office is that 'the sale of contraceptives in this manner is not illegal and there is no power to prevent such sales.' It is illegal to sell intoxicants to young persons under the age of 18, yet, from a welfare point of view, such sales would do them and society far less harm than the sale of contraceptives in this way. Many will consider that these machines are distasteful and offensive to public susceptibilities. However controversial the whole question of contraceptives may be, there is surely unanimity in a desire that contraceptives shall not be easily obtained by children or young persons."

The *Sunday Pictorial*, that watchdog of British morality, took up Mr. Henriques' protest in its issue of 18/9/49 with the headline "This Scandal must be stopped NOW."

Mr. Henriques in a speech last week said:

"The Government was approached and I have in my pocket a letter from the Ministry of Supply which stated that they were encouraging the sale and manufacture of these machines, because 'if we can make a success of their sales over here then there will be a wonderful opportunity for exporting them to dollar countries.'

"Here is England, which has stood with pride on its great moral standards, sinking to that kind of level," he continued, "Willing to sell its birthright simply to get dollars, and encouraging promiscuous intercourse between adolescent boys and girls."

We are not interested in the makers of the machines. Their object, like any other firm's, is to make money; but we share Mr. Henriques' disgust at the Ministry of Supply, who, when an allegedly moral issue is involved, can only invoke . . . the Export Drive!

However, what concerns us most is the immorality implicit in the attitude of Mr. Henriques. He says that "there is surely unanimity in a desire that contraceptives shall not be easily obtained by children or young persons, but a man in his position must know that among educationalists and psychologists there is by no means unanimity in regarding adolescent sexual intercourse as reprehensible. The views held by, for example, Wilhelm Reich and A. S. Neill are not unknown even if they do not yet receive widespread approval.

The contraceptives referred to are, of course, "french-letters" which are generally considered to be not only a precaution against conception but also against venereal infection. (Professional prostitutes buy large quantities for their customers for this reason.) So the ban on slot-machine contraceptives which Mr. Henriques and his supporters would like to see, would be, in fact, a measure against a decrease in undesirable adolescent pregnancies and against a lessening of the spread of venereal disease. (For even the most optimistic do-gooder would scarcely suggest that adolescents will stop copulating because can't get french-letters out of a slot-machine!)

What, in fact, these people want is to deprive adolescents from enjoying a pleasurable activity—they could hardly call it an unnatural one—by discouraging them from avoiding its possible unwanted consequences. As to the suggestion that the machines will be used by young children, it seems unlikely that they will want to spend half-a-crown on three balloons. W.

RESISTANCE, (New York) August-September, 1949. 3d.

THE arrival of a new issue of *Resistance* is always to be welcomed. This edition contains a long article by Marcus Graham on "Anarchism, Capitalism and Marxism", and a most interesting study of the French painter Camille Pissarro by Michael Grieg, who says that, "Pissarro was an anarchist of Proudhonian dimensions, though he would say that Proudhon's anti-authoritarianism was still too authoritarian for him." There is a summing-up of the discussion on anarchism which has been going on in the columns of *Resistance* and *Freedom* as a result of the important editorial article in the former paper last year, while a very astute article by D. W. analyses what is meant in America by the word "Tolerance":

"It has now become a part of the credo of every good American that Tolerance is a Good Thing. We ought not, we are reminded by liberals, conservatives and reactionaries, send people to concentration camps because they are Jews or Catholics, Negroes or Hindus. An American is Tolerant.

"(The signs in the subways are not one bit ambiguous: They do not say: 'Don't let anybody make any nasty cracks about Joe Dragumovich, he is a human being just like you (and possibly a little better); they say: 'Don't let anybody, etc., about Joe Dragumovich, HE IS AN AMERICAN JUST LIKE YOU.'

"Just as those Russian politicians tell their future soldiers: Let's not have any of this bourgeois cosmopolitanism, this is Russia, and if you don't like it, get the hell back to Siberia.

"So there is the fact: Tolerance is the new name for Nationalism and Patriotism. Not very surprising, indeed; except for groups singled out for a scapegoat rôle, the unity of all citizens is regularly affirmed by aggressive nationalisms. Before long—it takes a certain undue confidence to believe it will be before long, but so be it—before long Tolerance will be a word as odious as Nationalism."

SOME SECOND-HAND BOOKS OF SPECIAL INTEREST FOR FREEDOM READERS

PETER KROPOTKIN:	THOMAS MARCH:	
Memoirs of a Revolutionist, 2 vols. 15/-	History of the Paris Commune 6/-	
Mutual Aid (Heinemann's Edition) 7/6	FRANK HARRIS:	
Fields, Factories and Workshops 5/-	The Bomb (Novel on the Chicago Anarchists) 5/-	
The Conquest of Bread 5/-	CHARLES T. SPRADING:	
The Terror in Russia 1/8	Freedom And Its Fundamentals 3/6	
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Just Arrived . . .

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Controversy: GIVING CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

GEORGE WOODCOCK'S article, "The Canadian Set-up" moves me to say that I had thought Freedom free of the conventional news-suppression common to the capitalist press. But I think it something more than remarkable that a review of the Canadian set-up can mention the political parties and their relationships without a single mention of the Social Credit in Canada. The Social Credit Party in Canada not only runs the province of Alberta but has considerable backing in other provinces with seats in the Federal government. It is queer that a union of anarchist groups without any machinery for implementing their dream of freedom for the individual in co-operation should ignore the successes of the Social Crediters in Canada who have, in Alberta, decreased their taxation by 40 per cent. since 1935 while promoting expansion of all sorts of social services, land and industrial development, etc. While the rest of the world sinks to annihilation under a colossal pile of fictitious debt and taxation, Alberta has reduced her debt by 37 million dollars.

While men are in debt nothing can make them free. Social Credit has the means to set them free, while the anarchist idea seems to be to vie with the Communists, merely in chucking destructive spanners—at which game, have no doubt, the Communists can win all the time.

GLADYS BING.

A Reply . . .

MRS. BING'S criticism of my article seems rather beside the point, since I was writing specifically on the issues revealed by the Canadian federal elections, and in these the Social Credit Party paid a minor and insignificant part.

However, the question of the Social Credit government of Alberta is an interesting one, though Mrs. Bing grossly exaggerates its importance. Firstly, it should be pointed out that the Canadian provincial governments are something in the nature of large-scale county councils: foreign policy, the armed forces, income tax, the Mounted Police, and many major issues affecting the lives of the people, fall completely outside their sphere of action. Their functions are strictly limited to local affairs, and are steadily being reduced by the centralist tendencies of the Ottawa authorities.

The Social Credit government of Alberta has managed its own limited sphere of activity like any average reformist clique; it is fantastic to attribute its actions to what we have always imagined to be the characteristic features of Social Credit—financial reform, etc., for it has made no progress at all in these spheres. In fact, even Tories in Alberta look on the Social Credit bosses with relative benignity, remarking that it is amazing how a few years in office will tone down these "extremists".

Before waxing enthusiastic over the "achievements" of the Alberta government, it should be born in mind that, since 1938, the province has been going through a steadily mounting boom, unparallelled in other Canadian provinces. Such factors as the world demand for wheat from 1938 onwards, the construction of the Alaska highway, the spread of wartime industry, and, finally, the opening of a major oil-field in the province have turned Alberta into a little Texas, and, through no effort of the government, there has been a ten-year era of enhanced activity and prosperity. To talk of the government "promoting" industrial development is beside the point; the interests of American capitalists and militarists have brought an expansion in which the government merely gladly acquiesced.

The same "act of God" has filled the provincial treasury with unexpected manna; the province owns all mineral rights, and somewhere about a quarter of its revenue now comes from oil royalties. This fact, and the rapid expansion of taxable sources, has made it easy for a substantial reduction in the actual rate of taxes, and it should also be remembered that there is an increasing tendency for the dominion government to subsidise provincial projects out of money obtained through income tax and customs and excise, so that the citizen often pays in provincial taxes what he may save in provincial taxes, which in Canada to-day are usually a minor part of what the individual is called upon to pay to the state.

The existence of the Social Credit government in Alberta is an interesting indication of the small capitalist attitude which I mentioned in my article. In 1936, during the depression, the Social Crediters made their appeal through their denunciation of the banks, whose foreclosing activities made them at that time the great enemy of farmers and small tradesmen. As the spreading oil and industrial interests turn the province over to a domain of large capitalism, I venture to predict that, like the various similar movements which arose in the United States before 1914, Social Credit will rapidly wane in Alberta as a political influence.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

GLASGOW AND THE POLICE

The Glasgow Anarchist Group report:

We still pull in a good crowd, and as always we expose all forms of politics and religion, which makes question time the most interesting part of the meetings. As there is no time limit, it is often 11 p.m. and after before the meeting ends.

We get an odd Christian or Communist fanatic along and this helps to liven up the meetings, but we notice particularly that the bulk of the questions are mainly probing into the anarchist case, which is always thoroughly dealt with.

We have had the police interfering again. On Sunday, 12th September, they at us twice, wanting us to cut out our loud-speaker, which we refused to do. We ignored them, carried on the meeting, and in their presence told the audience that we were carrying on as usual, and that it was in their interests to see that the police didn't stop us.

Devaluing the Economists

SINCE the natural resources and available labour which go to create national wealth quite obviously remained exactly the same before, during and after devaluation, the only sure manner of knowing that an economic crisis existed was to go along to the Stock Exchange and watch the "excited spivs" through the pavement shouting and screaming in the frenzied rush to cash in what at least they believed were the country's economic difficulties. The police were naturally powerless to prevent the obstruction caused, since this was not a crowd of barrow-boys but gentlemen in striped trousers and black coats; and although resplendent in its new collars-and-ties the Metropolitan police was busily looking for check-suited bookmakers who took bets on the street corners, even a divisional superintendent could differentiate between the gamblers who dealt in petty flutters and those who dealt in shortages and their resultant misery.

As the speculators piled up fortunes and went off to their clubs to complain about the growing-greed of the railwaymen who were accused of high treason because of their decision actually to work to the rules arbitrarily laid down by their employers, the infringement of which would lead to legal action in the event of an accident being caused, it was time for the man-in-the-street to ponder over the meaning of devaluation of the pound sterling.

The absurdity of this four-card-trick, which seeks to improve the economic standard by juggling with figures, is patent to the most uninformed and illiterate member of the public. Unfortunately, simplicity does not seem to be an asset in the world of to-day. Whilst the man-in-the-street took in the position at his first guess, he did not trust himself, and preferred to listen to the experts. They

always sound convincing. The pundits explained the position in terms of economics. But economics is not a science, it is an agreed swindle. What does all this bosh about earning dollars and the dollar gap mean in reality? We do not eat, drink, smoke, wear, ride or live in dollars; under the present economic set-up they are powerful as a means of exchange, but alter the set-up and dollars will be valuable only as curiosities of the past. Our needs and luxuries come from material advantages in the land (which being inanimate and part of the earth's surface, belong to no man or nation by any right save that of violence and conquest) allied to the efforts of man's labour. He is robbed of the fruits of his work by the economic arrangement that has built up a system of exploitation out of what was originally merely a convenient method of replacing sale-by-barter—the monetary system.

The economic pundits' explanations of the world's shortages are so patently ridiculous that clothed in the appropriate jargon they are very often believed by the readers of the daily press. Once one begins to believe in the economics of the modern State one can cheerfully accept such statements as that it is necessary to work harder in order to send all that we produce abroad, in order to raise our own standard of life; or that the less money the people who go to make a nation receive as individuals, the richer the nation will be. On may even fight to the death to defend one system of economics against another.

The Marxist declares that power should be invested in the bureaucrat and the Capitalist declares that it should be invested in himself and the Social-Democrats prove by their very existence that in the modern state both these

doctrines are not merely capable of fusion but in fact are the same doctrine with a different emphasis on who should fill the managerial rôles. When we reflect that for the minor difference that separates the different aspects of totalitarianism the whole world may be destroyed by atomic bombing, we are less inclined to give economics the contempt it deserves. We must instead place it with religion as one of the banes of man's imagination.

In the Middle Ages men were also destroyed by the thousand for trivial differences. To-day it seems hardly credible that Europe could have swum in blood on such issues as whether to sprinkle a child's head or plunge it into the water; that the world could have been rent asunder for disputes about an admittedly empty tomb; that men could have adored the statue of a lady whose compatriots they burned, while they themselves were liable to be burned by others who adored the same lady's son but broke up her images. But then, and even to-day, the pseudo-science of theology was seriously taught, and people could discuss how many angels danced on the point of a needle just as the London School of Economics ponders over problems which merely postulate the continuance of the wage system for all time. When we read exhortations based on economic crises, or arguments between the exponents of rival systems of exploitation whose different interpretation of economics is largely based upon the means by which they personally can become the masters over those who actually perform the work of production, we are inclined to recall the disputes of religion—Voltaire tells us a fable of a great dispute that arose between two Mohammedan sects as to whether the prophet wrote the Koran with a pen plucked from Gabriel's wing or if Gabriel had made his a present of it. When a certain freethinker insinuated that first of all it would be proper to examine whether the Koran was really written with a pen taken from the wings of Gabriel, he was stoned.

Does the parallel need underlining?—Should we be exploited at all? A.M.

Meetings and Announcements

UNION OF ANARCHIST GROUPS: CENTRAL LONDON

OPEN AIR meetings are held in Hyde Park every Sunday.

Speakers, support for the platform and literature sellers will be equally welcome.

INDOOR Lecture-Discussions will begin weekly on Sundays at 7.30 p.m. at the Trade Union Club, Great Newport St., W.C.2 (near Leicester Square Station).

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF ADDRESS

OCTOBER 2nd Albert Meltzer "Revolution in Mexico"

October 9th Tony Gibson "Have we abolished God yet?"

October 16th Norman Haire "Sexual Behaviour and Society"

October 23rd Geoffrey Thorpe "The Meaning of Freedom in Education"

October 30th "Brains Trust on Anarchism"

November 6th Mat Kavanagh "History of Anarchist Idea"

GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP

Outdoor Meetings
MAXWELL STREET,
every Sunday at 7 p.m.,
Frank Leech, John Gaffney, Eddie Shaw.

The new series of weekly Indoor Meetings begins on Sunday, 16th October, at 4 p.m.
CENTRAL HALLS, 25 BATH STREET,
GLASGOW.

MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST GROUP

OPEN AIR meetings on Lewis Blitz Site
Sunday evenings at 7.30 p.m.
All comrades welcome.
Enquiries: Ring Royal 4669

GODWIN SOCIETY

A Godwin Society is being formed. Its objects are:

1. To encourage the study of William Godwin's social and philosophical writings.
2. To investigate ways and means by which Godwin's social principles can be related to the problems of contemporary life.
3. To publicise by press and platform the results of these enquiries.

Will readers interested write for further information to:

ALAN SMITH,
12 Shawville Gardens, Ilford, Essex.

WILL ANY READER, wanting to correspond with a French anarchist student, write to Freedom Press?

HAMPSTEAD

Please note that the weekly discussion meetings are being temporarily discontinued.

EAST LONDON

Will readers interested in the formation of an East London Anarchist Group, please write to the Provisional Secretary, c/o Freedom Press?

CORRESPONDENTS: A Swedish syndicalist student, and his wife are anxious to correspond with two Freedom readers.

Power Through Taxes

[The following letter from Dr. S. V. Pearson raises the problem of taxation as a weapon of the State. For reasons of space, we have slightly shortened it.—Eds.]

Your pages reflect a desire for a 'new approach' in order to attract fresh adherents to the sensible tenets of anarchism. I have no desire to enter into the fray to discuss the relative place of such all-important subjects as sex and education; but there is one question, the neglect of which has struck me constantly, and that is this:

I wonder why so few anarchists inveigh against taxation seeing that the power of governments is founded on taxes. Where would any government, which after all is only an agent, be if it had no funds to play with? And how does it use them? Always to control, frustrate, restrict and interfere, to dispense 'social services' for ameliorating the results of poverty which its actions produce, and above all to bamboozle people into supporting war. Perhaps a constant emphasis on such points is considered of secondary importance. Yet, surely, what is of primary importance is to expose the power which enables governments to cramp freedom and home rule.

I suppose a majority accept taxation, at all events tacitly, as reasonable and inevitable. That is because a majority are ignorant of the distinction between private and public property and put up with the direct or subtly indirect thieving of the products of their own labour which taxation involves. Even the surtaxes and high death-duties result in curtailing production in a variety of ways and are passed on to workers. It is not all 'bunk' when the members of an aristocratic family say they have been crippled by successive duties. It is a diversion of funds which they might, and often did spend on productive activities which, when handed over to the State, is spent on armaments, officials and doles. Think of the disintegrated five-barred gates and half-ruined old barns and sheds which are to be found on the farm estates of certain agricultural landlords and the many repairs of buildings which go undone on the town estates of title-holders. Their tenants will not or cannot carry out such repairs. They too, may be hit by taxes. Workers and general production suffer. Wages sink even though many are drafted, for a time and generally unwillingly, into 'The Services' and into the offices of the controllers. Man comes to be divided by these processes into two groups, the regulators (and the would-be regulators seeking 'security') and the rebels. That which a worker adds to production, which should reach him in full, should be his; but our present regime steals much of it from him by such roundabout ways. Meanwhile, ignorance of what is public property leads to the public's true revenue being diverted

into the private pockets of the few.

Another reason why attention is infrequently given to taxation is because some have contracted a habit of believing that taxes can disappear when a scheme for 'abolishing money' has been successful. That seems to me to be inept. Money, howsoever defined (and this is seldom done in such discussions) is a useful invention, and because in our present set-up it can be, and is abused, is no more reason for trying to abolish it than it would be sensible to go to a lot of shepherds in the East and tell them they must give up their shepherd's staffs because they have been known to use them to belabour one another in a quarrel.

The evil effects of taxation can with difficulty be disentangled from that which is perforce coupled with it, namely the failure to collect for public services the community's own revenue, which should primarily be collected and administered locally. This failure to take for the community what is its own property coupled with the other permitted robbery, namely the taxes which deprive a producer of a part of his wages, explains how it is that both individuals and the public coffers are poor. It is no wonder that an autocratic State has arisen, one of whose duties is to look after everyone's misfortunes, ostensibly to lighten them. This socialism is aimed at the welfare of the masses. But it is fundamentally a mistaken policy, founded on ignorance; and it misleads people because it mollifies some of the hardships which would otherwise be more glaring and numerous. Unfortunately, it also turns attention from the root causes of the hardships and bolsters up faith in the power of governments and their benevolence.

There are many other evils which arise from shutting one's eyes to the tremendous power of taxes. Just to mention one: the effect of subsidies paid out of the tax-payers' pockets. Take shipping subsidies for example, started more than a generation ago by Germans, Italians, Americans and followed by many other nations, including our own. Recent news reveals a plan for building yet another luxury liner, a monstrous floating palace again not a ship, in America to cost 67 million dollars, and the acceptance of the tender was subject to the U.S. Treasury subsidising the job to the tune of 40 million dollars. This has been granted, though the taxpayers' sanction was never asked. Even a great business magnate, Mr. F. A. Bates of the Cunard Steamship Company points out: "Raw argument and cold temper between nations is taking the place of flowing commerce between free men." The injury to international commerce together with the intrusion of government bulk buying augment international friction, and this is but one, and perhaps not the greatest of the evils produced.

Big subsidies such as this naturally have more influence than smaller ones.

What a lot could be said about the Overseas Food Corporation which had over £20,000,000 advanced to it up to March 15th last for the Ground Nut Scheme! Yet evils result even when the public purse is raided for small amounts. Sir Thomas Beecham made some apt remarks when talking at a luncheon on his 79th birthday, on the subject of "sponging on the taxpayers". Ernest Newman put Beecham's views pithily in the *Sunday Times* (8th May, 1949) thus: "Our public music making is bad as it is, not in spite of all this subsidy, but largely because of it." Similar remarks might be made about the taxpayers' support of Medical Research, Education, etc.

"The people cannot afford to be enslaved for the sake of being insured."

Benjamin R. TUCKER

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