

# Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

## IN WHOSE INTEREST WAS IT?

# Dalton's Boycott Call

IT is not often that a Government spokesman of Ministerial rank urges the people to take direct action in their own interests.

Therefore it was with some suspicion that we read that Mr. Hugh Dalton, Minister of Local Government and Planning (an office of wide scope, surely?) has recently urged housewives to stop buying clothing and textiles until prices in the shops reflect the present fall in prices of raw materials.

We discussed earlier in the year the fantastic price increases that took place in the wool markets of the world as a result of the stock-piling policy of America, and, to a lesser extent, of Britain. Apparently satiated, for the time being, these two gluttons are now buying more normal quantities of wool, and the price is rapidly falling.

Traders are usually pretty quick in putting prices up when they have such a good excuse—as well, to be fair, as a cast-iron reason—as a rise in the cost of raw materials. They are not always so quick in bringing them down, however, when prices warrant that, but some manufacturers and retailers have lowered prices of carpets, knitting-wools and blankets—in some cases by nearly 50 per cent. But Mr. Dalton thinks the process could be hurried up by a consumers' boycott.

Now, we have often supported such measures in these columns and have brought forward examples—in fruit and vegetables and fish, for examples—where prices have been forced down by housewives refusing to buy. But we were not surprised when angry opposition to Mr. Dalton was soon making itself felt from traders, who in some cases were denouncing his suggestion as "criminal" or "callous and uneconomic". One discern-

ing retailer of carpets thought that "the suggestion is nothing but a vote-catching dodge", while they all pointed out that the public were already so uncertain about prices that they were not buying, and that further falls in sales would result in severe unemployment in the textile manufacturing trades.

Now, Mr. Dalton is an economist; he was for a time Chancellor of the Exchequer, and although he was foolish enough to lose that job through giving away Budget secrets a few minutes early to a friendly reporter, he is no fool on economic matters—from a capitalist point of view, of course. Nor is he fool enough to try a stunt like that merely for a vote-catching reason.

As a politician, Mr. Dalton is not above vote-catching, but I should think that he, and his colleagues in the government must know by now that as far as the housewife's vote is concerned—they've had it!

No, I may be crediting Dalton with a deeper game than he is actually playing, but it seems that there is more to this than meets the eye. After all, if the Government were really so concerned about high prices as he said, they could reduce the crippling purchase tax which raises prices on so many goods right out of the reach of so many of us. But that, of course, they cannot do because they need the revenue for armaments.

Similarly, the Government needs the workers for armaments. Both Mr. Bevan, while Minister of Labour, and the present Minister, Alfred Robens, have declared their dislike of direction of labour, as applied during the war. Instead of that, they are directing raw materials. Steel is not going to cycle manufacturers, but to arms manufacturers, so that cycle workers are being

sacked (see FREEDOM, 14/7/51) and, naturally, the only work they will be able to get will be in armaments works.

Therefore, the present Government policy is clearly one of deliberately creating unemployment in the "unessential" industries—i.e., unessential for war preparation—and Mr. Dalton's "boycott" call to housewives may have been deliberately calculated to achieve that end.

If that is so, and things worked out as Dalton wanted, the eventual result may be a further rise in prices instead of a fall. It might work like this: prices are high, so housewives' don't buy. Shops are over-stocked so they don't order from the manufacturers: the manufacturers stand off their workers who find jobs in armaments, where they are probably better paid; meanwhile prices in the shops have fallen and the housewives are buying again, but stocks cannot be renewed because raw materials are not available for home consumption, neither are workers (now in armaments), so goods become scarce. And when goods are scarce, the prices go up—this time for good.

But by then, Mr. Dalton will have forgotten all about it. Indeed, if there to be an election this autumn it may not matter what Mr. Dalton says or does as he may be out in the cold once again. In fact, it may well be that the Labour Party will have no real desire to be re-elected for another term of office. They are in such a mess at the moment, with nothing ahead but tougher times and even more unpopularity for the Government that they may be perfectly happy to hand over to the Tories, hoping to come back at a later date—perhaps after the next war.

P.S.

## FOREIGN COMMENTARY

# British Fifth Column at Work in Persia?

WE wrote in last week's *Foreign Commentary* on the Persian Oil talks that Mr. Mossadig's announcement that a note would be sent to Britain had misfired and we suggested that it would probably never be sent. In fact it was sent, but is not the "ultimatum" which Mr. Mossadig had announced, but instead, according to a statement by a Persian Government official, a new formula for a resumption of talks.

The time factor has now entered into the struggle, and time is on the side of British interests. The Persian Government has already announced the floating of a national loan of more than £22 millions to help them over the economic crisis caused by the standstill at the oil wells and refinery. Meanwhile, the Persians are busily looking around for customers. The first contract for 300,000 tons of petrol has been signed with Afghanistan, and offers are reported from Czechoslovakia and Poland.

But the most sinister development in this dirty business has been the formation of a new political party calling itself the "National Will", consisting of elements who oppose the Mossadig Government. It is led by a former Prime Minister, Mr. Tabatabai, who is said to be pro-British. The *Associated Press* reporting this adds that the "new party will organise scattered groups to the Right of Centre into a solid opposition. It is reported to have its own protection units in order to prevent attacks by Government supporters."

The new party will undoubtedly make good use of the statement made by Mr. Atlee when he opened the new refinery at Fawley, Southampton (which is the largest in Europe and cost £25 million plus \$34 million to build, though only a third of the size of Abadan) in which he said that Britain's supplies for 1951 were already assured and that the pros-

"Liberty is for everybody—for the individual to make up his his own mind and to express his opinions, however much people may dislike them or be shocked by them."

—A. J. P. TAYLOR.

pect for 1952 "was well assured". He suggested that those Persians who did not want to see their country ruined should take notice of this statement and consider the danger of a permanent loss of markets for Persian oil. The British Government, he added, was most anxious to come to an agreement.

Britain is obviously anxious to come to an agreement, because much capital and profits are at stake. Persia has all along been aware of this and started by making maximum demands. The present deadlock is to our minds a purely business one and is caused by both sides not wanting to give away more than is necessary. Hence the bluff, which each side exposes by counter-bluff and so on. But we have no doubt that a settlement will eventually be agreed, and that British interests will be very well represented in the new set-up and who knows, when Mr. Stokes again goes to Teheran, that he will not be received by Mr. Tabatabai instead of Mr. Mossadig!

## KAESONG POSTSCRIPT

THE deadlock in the truce talks in Korea continues, though it appears that both sides have now stated their conditions for a resumption and observers say "prospects seem brighter". The Americans are feeling virtuous about the promptness with which they owned-up to the Communists that one of their planes had fired on the Kaesong area in error on September 10th, and assured the enemy that disciplinary action had been taken against the unfortunate pilot. But that is a small concession to the Communist charges that United Nations' aircraft had violated the Kaesong zone neutrality 139 times by flying over it. The United Nations dispute the charges because, they say, there was never an agreement that the air above Kaesong was part of the neutral zone!

How much longer will the people go on acquiescing, by their silence, to such childish, irresponsible behaviour?

Obviously, morality has touched the depths when a General can say, and get away with it, as did Lieut.-General Van Fleet, Eighth Army commander, when he visited the central front recently, that he hoped the Communists would launch another offensive "to give us a chance to slaughter them".

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## Politicians meet and Africans wonder... and fear...

# A STERILE CONFERENCE

A CONFERENCE opened this week at the Victoria Falls to discuss the possibility of creating a Central African federation. We reported this proposal at length when the London conference of officials on Closer Association in Central Africa was held last March (*Rhodesia: Setting the Scene for the Race War*, FREEDOM, 31/3/51) and when its report was issued (*A Central African Dominion*, FREEDOM, 23/6/51). In the second of these articles we described the elaborate systems of compromises designed to find a method of uniting the self-governing colony of Southern Rhodesia, and the protectorates of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, which reconciled the irreconcilable—the conflicting interests of the indigenous peoples and the White settlers.

Since then Mr. James Griffiths, the Colonial Secretary, and Mr. Patrick Gordon-Walker, the Secretary for Commonwealth Relations, have visited the three territories to gather opinions in readiness for this week's conference, which everyone is at pains to emphasise, is exploratory and not binding upon anybody. The attitudes which have been expressed are, not unexpectedly, support from the majority of the White inhabitants and solid opposition from the Africans.

In Northern Rhodesia, European business men told Mr. Griffiths that "federation would greatly increase the three territories' bargaining power, particularly in negotiating for an outlet to the sea. It would also offer a much more attractive field for overseas investors than at present, and would stimulate European immigration. Representatives of the White settlers urged

Mr. Griffiths not to attach too much weight to African opposition to the federation proposals. They declared that this opposition came only from a small educated minority of Africans: the great majority knew nothing about the matter." (*Manchester Guardian*, 6/9/51).

Mr. Godwin Lewanika, a former president of the Northern Rhodesian African Congress in a speech to the Congress analysed the June Report in great detail from the African point of view, concluded, "The report points to Federation as the means to greater material progress and wealth. We can see that these will be brought at the cost of the disintegration of our whole way of life, and of our complete dependence on European industrial economies with all its uncertainties and perils."

The African Protectorate Council in Nyasaland told the Colonial Secretary that "if Federation were accepted, promises made by the British Government would not be fulfilled, and the Africans would not realise their hopes of self-government". The Council consequently rejected the proposals, and refused to send delegates to the Victoria Falls conference.

Thus, as Mr. Colin Legum, the *Observer's* correspondent wrote from Kitwe, Mr. Griffiths, in his tour, "has not heard a single African organisation which is prepared to support the federation proposals; nor has he found a single European organisation opposed to them."

In Southern Rhodesia, where the touring visitor was Mr. Gordon-Walker, White opinion is divided. The Prime Minister, Sir Godfrey Huggins, arguing for the federation, declares that the country must choose between joining with the northern territory or with the Union of

South Africa. (Both his government and Dr. Malan's are preparing their claims for annexing the protectorate of Bechuanaland, which lies between their territories.) The opposition Rhodesian Party (formerly the Liberal Party) opposes federation since it would "interfere unduly with Southern Rhodesia's native policy". The Afrikaners in Southern Rhodesia announced on September 9th that their cultural organisation *Genootskap van Afrikaners* would become a political party on the lines of Dr. Malan's Nationalist Party with the aim of Dominion status in which "natives shall under no circumstances enjoy political rights with Europeans".

On September 13th, Mr. Gordon-Walker met 150 delegates representing three-quarters of Southern Rhodesia's African population and told them that "federation would make possible the development of schools, universities, hospitals, and other schemes for the welfare and progress of the people. British Government policy in the Northern territories was not that the Africans should rule but that there should be partnership between all races; and that was also Southern Rhodesia's policy".

Nevertheless, only one of the delegates favoured federation. According to the

## MORE TROUBLE IN THE DOCKS

WE were beginning to think that London's Port Workers had been quiet for an unusually long time (the holiday period?) when news came of strikes in Tilbury and East India Docks.

As so often, the cause at Tilbury was a decision by employers to institute a measure on which the workers had already registered their firm opposition. Last July there was a strike against the decision of Scruttons Ltd., a stevedore company, to put 200 men on their permanent register. They dropped the idea then, but returned to it this week, only to be met by another strike, in which at the moment of writing, over 3,000 men are involved.

In East India Dock the dispute concerns the number of men working to a gang.

*News Chronicle* (13/9/51), "The Southern Rhodesian Native Affairs Minister, Mr. Patrick Fletcher, said on the previous day, that African opinion on the proposed federation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland did not count, because it was already represented by the Southern Rhodesian Government.

"Federation negotiations are negotiations between governments," he told reporters.

On the following day, however, he told the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent, "I never suggested that African opinion did not count. I have publicly maintained that, in spite of the common roll, we should always be at pains to ascertain African opinion, I pointed out that in this country African opinion is represented through our normal channels of government". And the Prime Minister, interviewed on the incident, expressed his government's resentment at Mr. Gordon-Walker's direct meetings with the Africans since, "here we have a properly constituted Parliament appointed by election by British subjects who qualify to get on the common voters' roll. Africans are British subjects in Southern Rhodesia."

What Sir Godfrey Huggins did not say was that out of an African population of 1,898,000, the number of voters, through the financial and property qualification, and the education qualification, is . . . three hundred. (See FREEDOM, 31/3/51 and 23/6/51).

Thus the Victoria Falls conference is unlikely to reach any further conclusion than the last conference held there, when as Miss Rita Hinden recalls, "the European unofficials of the three territories met in 1949 and concocted their own thoroughly unpalatable federation scheme with no single African present".

The *Times Review of the British Colonies* says unctuously: "To make the right choice will require in many instances the sacrifice of short-term sectional interests. History, however, is full of examples where such self-abnegation has brought rewards out of proportion to the sacrifice, and there are grounds for hope that Central Africa will not be behind in this respect."

But the sacrifices would come, not from the settlers, but from the Africans, and what history shows, as the Northern Rhodesian African Congress said earlier this year, is that "colonial countries which have been granted Dominion status have either exterminated the indigenous peoples or turned them into serfs."

## THANK YOU, MR. FIGGINS!

RAILWAYMEN will be interested to know that they may soon have their union leader's permission to go on strike. At a meeting at Oswestry last Sunday, Mr. J. B. Figgins, general-secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, attacked the "miserable increases" which the Rail Executive had offered the workers in reply to the union's wage claim.

The day had gone, he declared, when they could not declare a strike. "The union can declare a strike," he said, "and declare it officially. If these people are sufficiently foolhardy theirs is the responsibility, but we are no longer going to see our men treated with contempt."

The union had asked for a 10 per cent. increase all round; the Executive had offered what amounts to a 5 per cent. increase—which, on the lowest grades, amounted to only 4s. 6d.—and in some of the higher grades, less than 5 per cent. was offered.

It is a refreshing change to hear some militant talk from a union boss—but we wonder how much of it is due to the pressure from below? If we are not mistaken, the railmen are prepared to strike anyway to get their very justified increase—probably Mr. Figgins thinks it is better for him to lead the strike than for it to be yet another unofficial one—for railmen have shown that they don't have to wait for union permission before taking action.

## TUGMEN WORK TO RULE

IN defence of a wage claim, tugmen and lightermen on the Thames are staging a "work-to-rule" which will eventually mean a gradual slow-down of the turn-round of ships.

This dispute concerns an application for a £1 a week incentive bonus, and for 1s. 6d. a day as "contingency pay"—pay to compensate for unexpected tasks.

## A LAST WORD ON THE BIG FIGHT

A REUTER report from Cape Town, quoted in *The Times* on 13/9/51, stated that pictures of Randolph Turpin, the boxer, with his white mother, and of him shaking hands with Mme. Auriol, wife of the French President, had been banned in the Union of South Africa.

# ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIAN THOUGHT

LITERARY notes—what place have they in a journal devoted to social criticism? The grimmer puritans of the revolution and the extreme aesthetes will probably agree in saying that they have no place at all, and, indeed, their presence seems to be only justified if one takes a wider view of both the struggle for freedom and of the functions of the arts than is expressed in either of these extremes. Some day, before this series is much older, I intend to devote an article to consider the question of the relationship of writing—as distinct from propaganda—to a social philosophy and in particular to one like anarchism which, if it is to live up to its name, inevitably presupposes a much wider field of interest than is encompassed in the narrow outlooks of rigid political parties, an outlook, indeed, that is only limited by the boundaries of thought itself.

However, for the moment I seem to be rather skirting this issue, since the books I am concerned with at present are a couple of volumes which have recently appeared in America\* and which throw some new and, I think, very important light on the nature of totalitarian movements, their real aims, and the kind of conditions in which they arise and people from whom they are formed. Neither book is by an anarchist, yet I think that in a number of respects both of the authors run parallel with anarchist thought and give a more definite expression to ideas which have already been touched on in libertarian literature.

The *Origins of Totalitarianism*, the first of these books, is a weighty analysis by Hannah Arendt—I used the word *weighty* advisedly, since the book is both solid in content and written in a rather heavy academic style, derived from the German universities, which the average English reader will often find indigestible, but which should not deter him from carrying on to the end, since almost every chapter contains really sound and valuable material on various aspects of the subject.

So far as I can tell, Hannah Arendt writes from no partisan viewpoint, and has no axe to grind—unless one can so term a desire to see humanity retain its freedom and dignity and achieve eventually some new insight into the essentials of communal living which will enable the errors of the past to be amended and the dangers of the present to be overcome. But the very detachment of her attitude is an advantage in the task she has undertaken, since it has become steadily more clear that the party propagandists have failed to find, not only a way out of the present world situation, but even its very nature. We are faced with problems which are as much spiritual (or psychological if you prefer the word) as political, as much individual as social, and which those whose concern is for the quotidian details of political life are therefore completely unable to comprehend. Thus the most impressive warnings of the dangers around us have come from imaginative writers like George Orwell, Arthur Koestler and Aldous Huxley, men not concerned with the need to defend limited viewpoints and not afraid to give full rein to their insights into the destructive potentialities of men who regard their fellows as masses to be

manipulated instead of as individual human beings united in a social community of free men. It is therefore not inappropriate that this writer who gives a really adequate attention outside fiction to these same problems should be, not a propagandist of any kind, but a philosophical scholar with a strongly existentialist background.

The book she has written is divided into three sections, showing how the totalitarianism which has afflicted the world since Lenin's day has developed out of the political tendencies which were already inherent in nineteenth-century Europe. Her main thesis is that totalitarianism is not a logical doctrine of self-interest or humanist idealism (or the two things mingled unhappily together) like the political doctrines or tendencies of the past. She claims that Nazism and Stalinism, the really developed totalitarian régimes, differ from the earlier tyrannies and despotisms, even including Mussolini's Fascism, since their aims are not merely to create and maintain power, to crush opposition and convert all men to submission to their doctrines. Indeed, according to Hannah Arendt, the true totalitarianism begins his most terrible work after power has been attained and all opposition is crushed, for it is only then that he can at last commence the task of remodelling humanity according to the entirely fictional world view, the perverted Utopian vision, which inspires him.

The totalitarian wishes to reduce mankind into characterless and atomised masses which can be manipulated at will by the ruling group. In order to do this he must not only crush all disagreement within his realm; he must equally destroy all those people who, by any difference from the norm, can be regarded as "potential" dissidents, and by this means he not only gets rid of those who might stand in his way, but he also creates a terror of unparalleled intensity which dehumanises the survivors, makes them lose all loyalty to their fellows and unites them with their rulers in the bond of

complicity and guilt. The totalitarian does not merely desire to change his own people; unlike the old-fashioned nationalists, he has aims which are world-wide, for the simple reason that while there is even one man in the world who cannot be controlled, his dominion is not complete. Finally, he is willing to sacrifice himself if it is judged necessary for the good of the cause, and in discussing this last point Miss Arendt gives an explanation which seems to account rather more adequately than most others for the confessions of the Old Bolsheviks and the self-destructive phase which Nazism assumed during the last days of the war.

This vision of political movements in which an unreal and abstract plan has become the dominant determining factor seems at first somewhat obsessional and unbelievable. What we accepted in the fiction of *1984* or *Darkness at Noon* still appears fantastic when it is reduced to the non-fictional terms of a political treatise. Yet it is an explanation that really seems to fit the more monstrous features of totalitarian life—the features which were so appalling to any ordinary mind that at first, during the war, we were inclined to attribute them to atrocity propaganda. How else can one explain such incidents as the extermination of whole racial groups and whole classes, like the Jews and the Kulaks, except by assuming that the people who did these things were governed by some political vision which dominated them beyond the ordinary degrees of sanity? Indeed, if there is an obsessional quality about this book, it is because it deals with men who are obsessed with their completely paranoiac plans of domination to such an extent that their actions completely defy common logic.

Hannah Arendt traces the rise of totalitarian thought through the breakdown of traditional social patterns during the nineteenth century and the disintegration of society into shapeless masses rather than co-ordinated communities. She sees an early symptom in

the anti-Semitism which reached its peak during the Dreyfus affair, she detects the growth of the totalitarian attitude through nineteenth century imperial expansion, with its leaders like Cecil Rhodes, who declared: "I would annex the planets if I could." In these two movements she sees the tendency to regard men as divided between desirable and undesirable groups which has become a major factor in modern totalitarian action. She also devotes some interesting passages to the way in which certain aspects of evolutionary thought and of ideas on eugenics during the past century have played their part in fostering racist doctrines. But she has neglected almost completely the succession of authoritarian Utopias, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, in which the fictional and arbitrary visions now realised in totalitarian practice first began to assume their nightmare quality and their urge towards uniformity and the crushing of individual freedom (in this respect Marie Louise Berneri's book on Utopias\* might very well be read in connection with the present work, for under the bland mask of Sir Thomas More one can see already the shadowy anticipation of modern reality and a study of the Utopian mentality through the centuries will do a great deal to explain our own times).

The *Origins of Totalitarianism* is a bold and original book. Here and there the author has been led by her exploratory zest into some wild and unjustifiable statements, but these do not detract from the philosophical or historical importance of her book. And not least among its valuable attributes is the fact that Miss Arendt refuses to accept any determinist solution; she believes neither in the inevitability of progress nor in that of doom, and she sees the solution to our ills, not in any ordained historical process, but in our free determination to seek a new personal and social basis for our relationships, which will serve as the

\* *Journey Through Utopia* (Routledge & Kegan Paul).

most effective barrier to totalitarianism. I am afraid I have been led away by my interest in Hannah Arendt's book to such an extent that I have left little space for the other book, *The True Believer* by Eric Hoffer. Yet in its way it is just as provocative a study, and written in a crisp epigrammatic style which is in itself a delight to read. *The True Believer* is concerned with mass movements and particularly with the kind of people who enter them; it is not so much a treatise as a collection of briskly expounded thoughts on this subject, but what it lacks in solidity it makes up in the sharpness and shrewdness of the author's insights.

Eric Hoffer analyses the appeal which mass movements make to frustrated and lonely people, and sketches with a pointed economy the kind of people who find their place in such movements—they are brilliant portraits in which one recognises many types one has oneself seen. The second part of the book discusses the way in which mass movements unify their supporters and, finally, the means by which they rise to power and consolidate their positions. In this aphoristic book there are many things with which one may not agree, but only the "faithful" can be annoyed by its candour and Voltairian irony. For the anarchist it has much to say that is important, particularly as one of the problems that may face a libertarian group in some future situation may be that of appealing to the masses without falling into the trap of creating a mass movement of the kind which he describes. Beware of the fanatic, beware of the professional martyr, beware of the hero and the hero-worshipper—these are some of Eric Hoffer's warnings, and we shall all do well to keep them constantly in mind.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

## WHAT IS FASCISM?

What is Fascism? Although so much has been written on this subject, there is no general agreement as to what it is and no simple definition that will distinguish it from Communism on one side or simple dictatorship on the other. Perhaps the most that can be said is that it is a political technique by which an autocratic government is based on the support of the masses. Every Fascist régime begins with mass support, and although this is often discarded later its continued success depends on a skilful manipulation of public opinion. In the last resort Fascism depends less on the police or the Army than on the political skill of the leader and the existence of an efficient political machine. If this definition is accepted, the Peronista régime in Argentina can fairly be described as Fascist—certainly the only example of true Fascism in South America and perhaps the only surviving example in the world.

*Times Educational Supplement*, 7/9/51.

## GOD HAS HIS USES

Politicians and industrialists who have no personal interest in religion make honorific references to "God" with increasing frequency, and it is doubtless some odd version of social responsibility which causes the outdoor advertising concerns to cover otherwise vacant billboards with the pious counsel, "Attend a church of your choice every Sabbath." Not longings for spiritual insight, but a practical estimate of the organisational binding power of church affiliations is behind this new appreciation of religion.

*Manas* (U.S.A.), 5/9/51.

## The Fiction of Natural Rights

Dyer D. Lum (1839-1893), the author of this article—which is reproduced from the October 1913 issue of *Emma Goldman's Mother Earth*, a celebrated American anarchist magazine—was a great friend of Albert Parson's one of the Chicago 'Martyrs', and of Voltairine de Cleyre.

After the execution of Parson in 1887, he took over the editorship of the *Alarm*. He belonged to the 'mutualist' school of anarchism, but thought the 'utopia' of anarchist communism might be realisable after considerable development under anarchist conditions. In spite of his adherence to mutualism, he was a firm advocate of social revolution and was far more friendly towards the German anarchist communist Johann Most, than towards Benjamin Tucker, whose economic ideas were much nearer his own than those of Most.—S.E.P.

THE very cornerstone of anarchistic philosophy is often supposed to be a paraphrase of Herbert Spencer's "first principle" of equal freedom, that: "Every person has a natural right to do what he wills, providing that in the doing thereof he infringes not the rights of any other person." Yet there lurks in the expression a fallacy that correct thought must repudiate, or we must carry with us a diagram explaining the meaning of the words we use.

What are "natural rights"? In the Middle Ages schoolmen believed that they had solved a problem in physics by asserting that "nature abhors a vacuum"; but a very little study sufficed to convince thinkers that "the web of events" we group as "nature" neither abhors nor likes. With the growth of the conception of law as a term descriptive of mode of being rather than a fiat imposed upon events, the term "natural" has lost much of its old theological meaning. Still it is often used in that sense and too often implies it.

Blackstone defines "the law of nature" as "the will of man's maker". Mackintosh calls it "a supreme, invariable, and uncontrollable rule of conduct to all men". Sir Henry Maine also speaks of "a determinable law of nature" for the guidance of human conduct. Kant defines it as that "which the creator has prescribed to man". F. Q. Stuart in his *Natural Rights*, says expressly: "a natural right is a privilege vouchsafed by natural law to man to exercise his faculties", and his whole work teems with expressions implying the fixity of "real law".

The correct position is, I maintain, that what we term "natural rights" are evolved, not conferred, and if so are not fixed and unalterable. Nature confers no more privilege upon us than upon dogs to exercise our faculties as functions. In fact, to my mind, the very assumption of "natural rights" is at war with evolution. Even if we no longer personalise nature as their giver, the term still carries with it the implication of rigidity, when, in fact, not even that mythical "right reason" with which we are sup-

posed to be endowed, can prove them historically so characterised. Every man is supposed to have a "natural right" to life. Is this co-eternal with man? Did it exist, though unrecognised, among our pragnathous ancestors? If the savage transcended "natural right" in disposing at will of the life of a captive, where was it inscribed? It was incarnated in the semi-brute. If the Roman law was based upon "a type of perfect law" in nature, was the recognition of the "natural right" of the father over the lives of his family contrary to the "right reason" of the time? And to this query convictions founded upon nineteenth-century deductions are not pertinent.

Is woman's "natural right" as a "person" the same in all countries under polyandry, polygamy, and monogamy? Or are those relations of the sexes, so important to "well-being and good conduct", ignored by beneficent nature? It has been conclusively shown by sociologists that human progress consists in passing from the militant régime towards an industrial one. Yet the time was when *lex talionis* sanctified revenge as the highest virtue. Time was when not a human being on the face of the earth differed from Aristotle's opinion of slavery as a natural condition. Where was this "privilege vouchsafed by natural law" then inscribed? The question whether society would not have been far more conducive to happiness if such right had been recognised, is as idle as whether eyes behind our heads would not have been equally so. If the "principle" was not discoverable then, but has been now, are we to conclude that it is the final synthesis of "right reason", or that its incarnation is only now visible?

Having thus shown a few of the queries that arise to puzzle anyone who seeks for evidence of the "immutability" of "natural rights", let us examine closer into the nature of "rights" themselves. The human sphere is a province conquered from nature, and hence its relations cannot be termed "natural". It would be equally permissible to call them moral or religious, for the qualifying adjective being given to imply the highest validity, it would be so understood by all to whom either of these words conveyed such meaning. Equally permissible, but equally indefensible in evolutionary thought when implying fixity. But do there exist any such inherent predicates of human nature as "rights"? The same theological bias which characterises "rights" as being "natural" also regards their assertion as being positive. On the contrary, every assertion of a right purely human, paradoxical as it may seem, is negative. The assertion of a "right" is but a protest against iniquitous conditions. Social evolution ever tends to the equalisation of the exercise of our faculties. That is, social intercourse has slowly evolved the ideal that peace, happiness and security are best attained by equal freedom to each and all; consequently, I can lay no claim in equity to a privilege, for that which all alike may enjoy ceases to be privileged. The important deduction from social evolution

is that as militancy has weakened and industrialism widened its boundaries, liberty has ever tended towards such equalisation. Privilege finds no sanction in equity as right, because it violates the ideal of social progress—equality of opportunities.

Therefore it is that, as social relations have become more complex and integrated, the ideal of "a more perfect form of liberty" rises in a form of protest against what only then are discernible as socially wrong, though ostensibly as assertions, such as "rights of women", "rights of labour", "rights" of soldiers and children against flogging, the right to the soil, etc. They are fierce and burning assertions just so far as they emphasise a growing protest against inequitable conditions. In this sense they are anarchistic, inasmuch as only by . . . the abolition of restrictions, is the wrong righted. Our specific "rights" are thus dependent upon our ability to discern wrongs, or the violation of the ever-evolving industrial ideal—equality of opportunities—and exist but as protests. Abolish vested wrongs, and there will be no vested rights, natural or otherwise. Precisely as water flows to a level when obstructions are removed, just so will social relations flow to equitable conditions when restrictions are swept away. And precisely also as liberty comes in does the assertion of "rights" go out.

DYER D. LUM.

## FILM REVIEWS

USED as we are to the glamorized Hollywood version of the upper class, it is refreshing to see them in another light through the eyes of French Director, Jacques Becker, in his excellent comedy "Edward and Caroline", showing at the Academy, Oxford Street, London. "Edward and Caroline" is a simple enough story about a young talented pianist and his wife, the daughter of a well-to-do family, who treat the young man with contempt and amusement, but who are quite prepared to exploit his talent. A social party has been arranged by the girl's uncle who hopes to further Edward's career by introducing him to the "right people". The young couple quarrel before the party, and he goes alone to make an impression with his playing, but finally disgracing himself by walking out in disgust half-way through the evening. With considerable wit, insight and a good cast, Jacques Becker shows us the pomposity and stupidity of a section of the upper class, with too much money in their pockets and nothing in their heads. The comic figures of ageing women gyrating before their decadent men folk is exceedingly humorous. The young pianist is delicately played by Daniel Gélin, and Anne Vernon as his silly but devoted wife is charming. Jean Gallant gives a masterly perform-

ance of the rich dilettanté. In circulation at the moment is another film which gives us a slightly different angle on the upper class, showing how ferocious and cunning they can be when their interests are attacked. "The Man in the White Suit" (Gaumont Circuit) is the story of an idealistic scientist whose chief ambition is to invent an everlasting cloth. When he finally achieves this and present himself to a collection of textile monopolists, he is told that if he releases the story of his discovery to the press it will "upset the delicate balance of the market". Incorruptible before the offer of a large money bribe to suppress his invention, he is locked up by the gentlemen of the business world. He escapes, to be pursued through the streets, not only by the bosses but also by the textile workers, who, learning of the everlasting cloth, think of it as a threat to their employment. This film gives a wonderful example of the anti-social nature of capitalism, and the blindness of some workers, who through their ignorance do not realise where their real interests lie. "The Man in the White Suit," skilfully portrayed by Alec Guinness as the scientist, is presented as a comedy, and perhaps because of this its message is the more pungent. R.M.

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## "SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN . . ."

MR. TRUMAN recently told a group of press men that Mr. Dean Acheson would remain his Secretary-of-State while he was President. And he then added, in the manner of an afterthought, that that might be for a long time. But when the reporters pressed him to say what he meant by that he refused to be drawn and told them they would have to work that one out for themselves.

Is there not something childish about this little scene? The great man whose decisions sway millions of people, and whose every word is reported and pondered over and raked for significant meaning, this man drops hints like a playful father to his children before Christmas-time. The politicians are the grown-ups and the electorate the children clustering (or sometimes, perhaps more often, cowering) about their knees, and accepting what father chooses to permit them. Childish—but also more than a little revolting.

But that is in America where as we all know politics is not merely a game but is also very often a dirty game. Does the same thing happen here? Now, we know that politics in England is not rigged by the same dishonest means that from time to time slightly scandalise America. Nor by the governmental rigging which is a stock-in-trade of the Soviet Government and its trainees. But as to the childishness, the use of superficial inducements and blandishments which adults ought to be ashamed to have offered to them—do we not have these in plenty?

The daily papers are mainly busy at the game of blandishments, "moulding electoral opinion" is a polite description: but if one looks at the political reviews, especially those of the left, one finds that speculation on whether Mr. Attlee will "go to the country" or not this autumn occupies a great deal of space.

The problem is, is it opportune? And this means is "public opinion" flowing with Labour or Tory. Gallup polls are resorted to to test this opinion. Now, without going any further, what sort of a conception of democracy is this, that one does not ask "the country" its opinion at any time, but waits until elaborate enquiry leads one to think that they will give the answer one wants? Democracy claims to respect the opinion of the people, but what kind of respect is evinced here? Need we elaborate on the stunts which range from popularity seeking disguised as "national policy" down to the baby-kissing of election time itself?

Such tricks are inherent in the whole conception of vote-catching as the prerequisite of holding power. But they do not apply to the whole electorate. A rather different childish emotion is mainly relied upon—group loyalty. The great bulk of votes for both Tory and Labour come from people who will never change their loyalty. These people have permanently abdicated their own free opinion and vested it in the party of their choice. The tricks and the stunts are directed towards what are called the "floating votes". It is this not very numerous section of the community whose votes (one can scarcely dignify them by saying *decisions*) sway the whole issues of elections. Shakespeare makes a politician of Imperial Rome describe them slightlyly:

" . . . Like to a vagrant flag upon the stream

Lackeying the varying tide . . ."

The *New Statesman* reader may scan the editorial speculations on choosing the right moment for going

to the people much in the same way as other no less serious readers scan the advice (not usually editorial) available in the press before any big race meeting. The politicians may posture and the electorate clap—but is this the whole story? Children are childish when they are given no responsibility and when no weight is attached to their opinion when their co-operation is desired they are bribed with sweets or promises. The electorate is in the same position and its behaviour is childish in part for the same reasons.

But some children grow up. Is it not possible that the electorate may one day do the same? Some children become adults who are able to take their own decisions in a responsible way and build up a body of experience valuable to the community. Furthermore we are beginning to gain some insight into the reasons why all do not develop fully. Anarchists urge little more than that the electorate should take its own decisions and replace a system where they delegate their responsibility to a government by one in which they themselves administer their own lives in the community.

### UNBRITISH ACTIVITIES

The Governor of Honduras has dissolved the Belize City Council because of its "disloyal attitude" toward Britain. When it was proposed last week to display the picture of the British king in the City Hall the Council, which wants independence from England, voted against it. The Governor said, "After my God comes my King!"

*Industrial Worker* (U.S.A., 17/8/51).

## Peasants and the State in E. Europe—2

ALL impartial observers agree that the fear of Nazi Germany and of Stalin's Russia largely prevented the peoples of Eastern Europe from taking more active steps to build a freer society in the thirties. Most were aware, and events proved them right, that the two dictators would use every opportunity to extend their empires and that even if the people were united in their struggle, as was not the case, they could count on little practical support from the West.

Few, however, saw all that was coming and that the fate of over a hundred million human beings would be decided between banquets at Munich, Moscow (1939), Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam. A stroke of the pen, a handshake in front of photographers, a toast to the host, would enable one maniac to wipe out most of the European Jews, another to kill hundreds of thousands of persons because they were Serb Orthodox and not Catholics and allow Generalissimo Stalin, that great "internationalist", to ship millions of people like cattle across hundreds of kilometres, just because they are Poles and not Ukrainians, and later Germans to make room for Poles.

The end of the war in 1945 left the U.S.S.R. master of Eastern Europe with two problems: to find a reliable ruling class and to drag on the largest part of the population, i.e., peasants.

Before 1939, the Communist Parties in Eastern Europe had never been, with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia, mass parties. Police action and frequent party purges kept their membership to no more than four figures. Apart from Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, where pro-Slav feeling existed, the other Communist Parties had very little influence because they were rightly considered as tools of Soviet imperialism. Their members were chiefly young intellectuals and workers; the peasants were an exception rather than a rule.

The predominant position which the C.P.s quickly achieved in these countries in 1944-45 and the large number of posts

to be filled in order to maintain full control of the State machinery forced the Communists to accept hundreds of thousands of members. Like other classes of society the peasantry contributed its recruits though proportionally less than the intelligentsia. The governments succeeded however in finding everywhere their own nominees in the villages for key posts like the president and secretary of their political, co-operative, women's and youth organisations. It is through them as well as the punitive organs of the State that the present régimes maintain their hold in the countryside. Conversely they are often the first to get beaten-up or even murdered by dissatisfied peasants.

The widespread unpopularity of the Communist dictatorships all over Eastern Europe is due to many causes beginning with the behaviour of Soviet units in 1944-45 to the present forced collectivisation.

The second land reform carried immediately after the war was followed by the announcement of various "Plans" whose aim was to change the entire structure of East European economy. A large number of industrial plants were to be built within a short period together with power stations, railways and harbour installations. In that way the Communist planners hoped to achieve economic independence as regards the West and to lay the basis of Socialist States ready to fight alongside the U.S.S.R. in what they consider the inevitable conflict with the U.S.A.

Such ambitious plans called for a very large labour force drawn from the villages. Badly housed in the bombed towns, ill-fed, lacking material incentives and without technical skill, their output is necessarily low. When one adds to the above causes the incompetence of an enormous bureaucracy, the cold war which prevents the import of machinery from Western Europe and the vast sums of money spent on military purposes, it is plain why the plans have failed, why the standard of living is going down except for the privileged class and why there is so much bitterness.

Just as in the towns, the power of the State grew in the countryside. The destruction of the old order and of the rival political parties as well as the compromise which the Catholic Church was forced to seek with the régime left the

Communists as the only real organisation and allowed them to crush the peasants by forcing them into collective farms only a few years after the land had been distributed.

The excuse given was that the small-holdings were inefficient and that with the aid of machinery supplied by the State the kolkhozes would enable their members to lead a happier and easier life.

Theoretically it is not compulsory to enter a collective farm but the State by devious ways forces the peasants to join them sooner or later. Those who remain outside find difficulties in obtaining seeds, implements, permits, clothing coupons, salt, etc. They have to join a "voluntary labour brigade" far from their homes and their children do not find it easy to gain access to higher education. Above all, they have to pay high taxes and deliver to the State a large part of their crops at ridiculous prices or in exchange for coupons entitling them to non-existent consumer goods. Sometimes when they have not the required quantity, they must buy the products in a "free" market in order to surrender them to the State at the trifling prices fixed by the latter! Their only other alternative is to go to prison for a few months or years.

In consequence, they join the collective farm where an even drearier life awaits them. They watch the waste accompanying Marxist "planning" and see that the kolkhozes are run by men chosen primarily for their loyalty to the régime and that the task of these bureaucrats is to extract as much work and food as possible for the State. Their earnings, often based on piecework, are calculated by a host of officials and do not buy the goods they want. Agricultural machinery is slow to arrive because the armaments industry is too busy, and overtime is expected both on the farm and on the public works in the neighbourhood.

The peasant becomes taciturn and distrustful of both men and ideas. He no longer believes the written word for he has been stultified by too much propaganda in the past fifteen years. But he wants to get out of the collective farm with all that it implies and be master of his own fate. How it is to be done he does not know. In this he is not alone, for millions all over the world are asking how.

I.A.

## Pathological Politics

WHAT is coming to the top in America to-day (writes Alex Comfort in a letter to the *New Statesman*) is not the need for self-defence, or even the need for imperialist expansion, but the need for an enemy, a need arising from psychopathology, not politics. If there were no Soviet Union, no Communism, it would have been necessary to invent them. In such an enemy there can be no "evidence of a change of heart", because to admit any change would be to destroy the enemy's emotional function.

The determinants of this intensely dangerous pattern go deep in American culture, though in the past they have generally been under the control of saner and more liberal traditions. The repressed revulsion and guilt over the violence of the last war, and the atomic bomb in particular, have shaken that control. To a public traditionally pacific such contradictions of upbringing must be rationalised at almost any cost. If this is so, and I believe the detailed analysis of American society and literature uphold the idea, every new act of violence, every new Syngman Rhee, aggravates the position. It explains the disproportionate savagery of the methods of war which the Pentagon advocates. The last time a great nation became the prey of forces of this kind, the outcome was written in Belsen. Nobody suggests that other nations and other governments are immune to such forces. Russian internal politics have suffered much from

them. But the United States is *par excellence* the emotionally-driven Power of the post-war scene. And in its policies, forced, through its social system, upon saner administrators by the certifiable fringe, we are still dumbly acquiescent. Paranoia is contagious. When a man of Eisenhower's calibre can talk of a crusade against Communism with atom bombs as a practicable reality, we begin to realise how contagious. The forces of sanity in America are both strong and culturally deep-rooted. We are doing nothing to uphold them, and they may go by default, or be stamped by a calculated device. Other forces than the ordinary pressures of profit and prestige will ensure that, if Russia is combative, she is denounced as a warmonger, and, if conciliatory, as a hypocrite. Will the delegates at the Japanese Treaty Conference remember the gibbering hysteria which followed Pearl Harbour? Will they remember that if the "little yellow bastards" who were yesterday attempting to "rape civilisation" are gallant allies to-day, the "diabolical forces of evil" which have replaced them in the imagination of Senator McCarthy may, in a depopulated world ten years hence, prove in retrospect to have been ordinarily misguided human beings? Will we in this country, drawing on a sense of historical balance which is rare in the political record, allow our fate to be sealed by a small but vocal minority of mental patients playing upon the endemic neurosis of a sick nation?

### Foreign Commentary

Continued from p. 1

## How the other Americans Live

TO those people in Europe who think of America as a land of milk and honey, central heating and refrigerators, motor cars for everyone, and equal opportunities for all to "make good", the Economic Report issued by the Congressional Joint Committee in Washington giving a survey on how millions of families are obliged, and manage, to live on incomes of less than \$2,000 a year will perhaps come as a shock to them.

There were 10,500,000 families with incomes of \$2,000 or less in 1949. They include truck drivers for small retail organisations, ash collectors, hotel workers, clerks, laundry workers and domestic servants.

The report said: "The most frequent method used to cut down the food budget was to eliminate meat and milk except for babies. The habit was to economise by eating starchy diets that are filling—bread, potatoes, macaroni, spaghetti, rice. Many families reserved meat for Sundays and holidays. Few ate fruit unless the family lived in a region where certain kinds are plentiful and cheap."

Old bread was widely used, the commitee found, to cut costs.

"A new suit, dress or overcoat we found mentioned as a rarity for grown-ups," it said. "Most clothing purchases were made on the credit plan or second-hand, and there were many families who depended entirely on gifts of clothing from relatives and charitable agencies."

"The housing shortage since World War II added something inexorable to the life of low-income families which has been devastating to those of us who have seen it at first hand."

"We still wrangle in towns, cities and capitals state and national, about the housing shortage while countless children are being brought up in squalor. But health is the point of highest vulnerability."

"The defences of low-income families are really down when sickness strikes and our common barriers against its onslaughts on health and livelihood are as yet painfully inadequate."

Also from Washington comes the estimate that the total cost of Government for the coming year will be over \$500 for every man, woman and child in the United States.

To appreciate what this means, let us take the case of a Providence truck-driver mentioned in the Report. He has a wife and ten children. Now the total "cost of Government" for these twelve persons is more than \$6,000. Yet the Report informs us that this man's earning for the year were \$1,924!

And listen to what the report has to say about this family: "To us their struggles and makeshifts, their ingenuity and grit, as well as failures and unwise choices are part of . . . American life," the committee said. "So, too, is the spirit that keeps them going and spurs them on."

\*

At the other end of the scale is somebody like Mr. Dudley J. Le Blanc. But he is not included in the Report. He has made good, and is news and is featured in a recent issue of *Time*. Mr. Le Blanc is the concocter of a patent medicine called *Hadacol*, which is a cure-all. "In four years—and on an investment of only \$2,500—Le Blanc's sales have jumped from \$75,000 to an estimated \$25 million this year." Now Mr. Le Blanc has sold out for more than \$8 million but will stay on as sales chief for 15 years at a salary of \$100,000 a year! What the Report says of the Providence truck-driver could well be applied to Mr. Le Blanc. Who can deny his "ingenuity" and "grit"; and as to the "spirit" that keeps him going—why, *Hadacol*, that cure-all mixture contains, among other things, a liberal dose of "24-proof alcohol".

LIBERTARIAN.

## Trade Unions v. Govt. in W. Germany

THE German Trade Unions in the Western zones have announced that they will cease to co-operate in all organisations set up by the Federal Government or the Occupying Powers for the purpose of reorganising the German economy or of influencing its development. Their statement says:

"There are Federal Government committees for the discussion of wage and price problems, for the allocation of raw materials, for import and export, and so on, but all these committees are only in a position to make recommendations and have no executive authority, and the trade union representatives are in most of them only in a minority.

"Co-operation, however, will also cease with organisations which were set up by the Occupying Powers, as for instance, the executive of the German coal mining industry (the DKLB), the trustees of the German steel concerns, and a similar organisation for the chemical industry. In all these committees the trade unions had, in the eyes of the occupying powers and of the German people, considerable responsibility. They do not wish to shoulder this in future, if the German economy should continue to develop along the present lines which are in direct contrast to the democratic and social aims of the trade unions.

"The relation between wages and prices in Germany has become impossible. Real wages are constantly dropping, because the Government wants to

give business a chance of building up wrecked German industry from the profits gained from high prices. Through import controls and customs, prices are in part being kept artificially high and tax reductions were also granted for undistributed profits used for self-financing. All pleas by the trade unions for a social policy within the committees have remained without success. Steadily increasing prices make life unbearable for not only pensioners but also for the lower wage groups and agricultural workers, and unskilled workers earn less than the subsistence minimum. Even the occupying powers have criticised this economic policy, for instance Mr. Cattiere, the former ECA representative.

"The trade unions, however, are also very disappointed by the policy of the occupying powers. After the collapse of the Nazi Reich, all property belonging to the big concerns were confiscated and handed over to trustees for administration. The idea was to liquidate the concerns and to prevent their owners, many of whom were guilty of bringing about Nazi barbarism and the last war, from seizing power again, which in Germany is often the same thing as political influence. The trade unions wanted to help in this task and it was their duty to do so. They helped to plan decartelisation and to put it through, and their nominees were also entrusted with trusteeships. They co-operated, however, on the condition that the removal from

power of the old owners would be completed by the socialisation of their industries.

"Now, unfortunately, the occupying powers have not only taken some of the coal mines out of the trusteeship, they have also ordered that shares of the old concerns can be exchanged against the shares of the new companies. This means that former cartel shareholders would again become owners of the new workers and the whole of the work of the trade unions during the last years would be undone. The trade unions demand that the German Parliament alone shall decide the question of ownership in the coal and allied industries and that until that is done nothing shall be altered in the present state of affairs.

"Since the right of co-determination which has been won after bitter struggles is also being sabotaged and the Government coalition parties will not tolerate an extension of these rights to other branches of industry, since prices rise from day to day and the old captains of industry, even the right-wing extremists continue to increase their power and influence, the trade unions no longer want to bear the responsibility. They have not yet decided on extreme measures—up to now they have only threatened and are negotiating with the authorities, but there can be no doubt that they will apply them unless Government and occupying powers can decide to revise their policy."

