

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"This was a city where too few
 refused
 And every yes-man's mouth is
 filled with sand."
 —ALEX COMFORT
 ("And All But He Departed")

ELECTION MEANS CHOICE

What Do We Choose?

ELECTION means choice. And at a General Election the people (that indefinite abstraction) are asked to choose who shall rule them. What we have to consider now is what this choice amounts to in practice. For although the procedure of parliamentary elections has not changed much in several centuries, the general circumstances in which elections take place, and the functions of government itself, have changed very considerably, and as a result the choice exercised by the people in 1951 is quite different from their predecessors of 1851 or 1751. It is different even from our fathers' time, before the 1914 war. Yet the term "democracy" is used to cover this choice however dissimilar its meaning may have become.

One hundred years ago, the government concerned itself with such matters as the armed forces and the police and with comparatively minor matters of foreign trade regulation. It also made the laws. But all this activity did not greatly affect the average citizen. He may have felt the government affected his life in a general way, but it did not greatly interfere with it.

Intrusion of Government

To-day the same cannot be said. Governmental activity affects almost every sphere of life, for regulations govern such basic matters as food, housing, clothes, when and where one may (or may not) drink alcoholic drinks; it lays down regulations for one's children's education, and demands to know how much money one earns. Meanwhile, its apparatus of laws and regulations and orders in council constitute a kind of entangling jungle through which the citizen finds his way with difficulty and caution. Finally—though the list is not by any means comprehensive—there is military conscription.

It follows from all this that one's choice of a candidate—really for a party representative—carries with it far more implications as far as the sphere of government activity goes than it did in the days of the Whigs and the Tories or of the Conservatives and Liberals. Our democratic system may have evolved, and there may be some historical truth in references to "the mother of parliaments" and "the Constitution"; but it is also true that administration to-day bears very little resemblance at all to the origins of its evolution.

Narrowing Differences

It might be thought that the citizen of to-day has much more solid grounds on which to make his decision since on his vote many regulations concerning his life may hang. But here another factor enters in—the growing similarity of the party programmes. For Conservative policy is basically not very different from Labour. Foreign policy is agreed to be identical and the same is probably true about imperial policy. In home affairs the Tories will leave untouched the nationalisation of the health services, the railways, and the mines. Steel policy does not make much of an election slogan for the average voter.

And then there is the fact that the majority of voters have already made up their minds as to which party represents their interests (often, like the politicians themselves, they naively call their interests "national interests"). Altogether the choice is very limited, even though the government really does regulate our lives.

The Choice is Unreal

But the fundamental aspect of choice eludes us in such a discussion as the above. The apologists of the idea of government regard it as a necessary administration, and they eulogise democracy because they say it is a method whereby the people determine their own destiny. Now in varying degrees we all have some idea of what we want from life: what sort of work we want; adequate

material security to complete one's education or training or to get married and support a family; where we wish to live—and many other personal things on the fulfilment or frustration of which our hopes of happiness depend. Government does, as we have seen, encroach very materially upon these matters—let us forbid that it advance further; but our choice at election time has very little bearing on these matters despite that. We have no choice which materially affects our nearest wishes. The democratic system does not give us control over such matters.

An article elsewhere in this issue in-

dicates some of the difficulties of the logical French when faced with the still more logical colonial African. If representation means anything at all, one ought to be able to choose one's representative, and mere numerical victory in no way makes the successful candidate acceptable.

But the hollowness of democratic election procedure only reflects the hollowness of the whole idea that government can administer for and on behalf of the people. The apathy of to-day is the result of this unreal business. It is clearly no remedy to do away with democratic procedure in favour of autocratic rule. The limitation of choice would be the same or even further restricted.

To make the question of choice a real one—and it would make the populace as a whole really responsible for their own lives and those of their fellow-administrators would have to be in the direct hands of the populace. It would mean radical decentralisation, not merely of administration, but of economic affairs. It requires an entirely revolutionary outlook. But it would make the choice a real one.

BUILDING AND PLANNING

HOUSES IN THE AIR

DURING the coming month we shall, no doubt, be hearing a great deal about the Conservative Party's housing "target" of 300,000 homes a year, and the Labour Party's programme of 200,000 (which is not being reached). Last week the Liberal Party announced their policy, which settles for a nice liberal figure of 230,000, to be let at 11s. 10d. a week. "It is wrong to use housing as political propaganda," says the Liberal report—and it goes on to do so.

We know of course that politicians live largely in a world of paper and talk, so it is understandable that they should mistake words for actions, and that they value themselves so highly that after a while they cannot conceive of anything at all happening if they didn't have a hand in it. All the same when we hear that, "Between the wars the Conservatives built so-and-so many houses," or that "Since the war the Labour Party has provided so-and-so many homes," as though politicians were bricklayers, architects and plumbers, instead of lawyers, journalists, trade union bosses, ex-officers and graduates from the London School of Economics, we can only wonder at "the never-ending audacity of elected persons".

It all makes us think of the marble tablet in the gentlemen's lavatory at the corner of Theobald's Road which says, "This convenience was erected by the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Metropolitan Borough of Holborn, 1907."

The Liberal statement calls for modifications of the Rent Restrictions Act. This Act is an object-lesson in the long-term futility of reformist legislation. The first Acts were hurried through parliament during 1914-18, after the great Glasgow rent strikes against the rapacity of landlords. The present Act was passed at the beginning of the last war in anticipation of similar events. Landlords feel that they are being victimised because the value of the rents they receive is so much less than it was before the war. (They ignore, of course, the fact that the capital value of their property has trebled.) Consequently they are allowing houses to go to ruin rather than pay for uneconomic repairs. In a number of cases we know houses are empty and falling to pieces because the landlord says it is "not worth his while" to let them, or else they are being let for non-residential purposes.

Houses are, in fact, going out of use more quickly than new ones are built—we are not, to borrow the jargon of the population experts, reaching a "net reproduction rate of one". The number of occupied residences in this country is going down, not up.

An ex-R.A.F. corporal, Mr. John Cowan, a foreman bricklayer, of Standard Street, Southwark, has been refused permission to build a bungalow for his

family of a wife and five children under 12. They live in a small four-roomed house in crowded Southwark. Except for plumbing and electricity, he would do all the work himself. His application last week for a licence to build was rejected within 30 seconds when he applied at Southwark Town Hall.

The Building Apprenticeship and Training Council in a report to the Ministry of Works, states that there is a shortage by 20 per cent. of enough properly trained apprentices to maintain the existing labour force. It is suggested that one reason for this is because a building operative's wages were amongst the highest before the war, but are now about thirteenth among industries. Another reason, not mentioned, is surely the lack of continuity of employment since the government itself deliberately creates unemployment in the building industry as a matter of economic policy. It did this during the "dollar crisis" in order to force building operatives to the Labour Exchanges where they would be offered employment in export industries, and it is doing so now in what we recently described as "direction by default" to drive workers into armaments industries.

At a housing conference in Manchester, the Bishop of that city, giving what with justified modesty he called an "outsider's" view of the building industry, attacked "restrictive practices, laziness, casual attitudes" and so on which he said were holding up production. "If they go on," he said, "I see no early solution of the housing problem. In these days the trade union policy ought to be different from what it is. There ought not to be restrictions at every turn, but trade unionists should be encouraged to give of their best, and restrictive practices should be laid aside."

It is a pity that he didn't go on to attack the restrictive practices among

FOILING THE SQUATTERS

Another Triumph of the Military Mind

TWENTY families from condemned Glasgow tenements tried to occupy a disused hutted camp on the fringe of the grounds of Cowglen Military Hospital on September 17th.

So the authorities moved convalescent soldiers with their beds and bedding into the huts.

It makes us think of the old song, "Shan't let you play in my backyard."

THIS COULD BE Good News for the Miners

A DEVELOPMENT just reported from the National Coal Board's research station in the Midlands, holds out hopes that some day the dangerous drudgery that miners perform to-day can be ended for ever.

How many critics of Anarchism have asked "Who will do the dirty work? Who will work in the mines, if there is no need for a man to work for wages?" And how many times have Anarchists answered that in a free society more thought would be given to the elimination of the dangerous and dirty work than is the case to-day?

Some such thought, however, is being given to-day. Not primarily for the elimination of hard work, however, but mainly to make the mines more efficient and more profitable.

Dr. Bronowski, head of the N.C.B. research station has just announced that means have been devised for saving the 10 per cent. of coal that is regularly wasted because it is in the form of dust, or

very small pieces. The researchers have now developed a way of moulding this small stuff into "briquettes" which can be made in any size, of any quality of coal, for use in any purpose.

This would mean right away a saving of 20 million tons of coal a year—enough, says Dr. Bronowski, to completely cover our present shortages and even allow some for export.

Further, and more important in our view, his statement declares that we may be on the way to the time when men "need no longer spend their lives underground". Machines could now be developed to scrape coal from the sides of seams, in the form of dust; it could be washed out of the workings by water, and made into briquettes up on the surface, without men having to hew and handle the stuff as they now do.

The problems that would be solved by such a method are many. Not only the physical problems of cutting and haulage by men or machines, but also the scourge of the diseases the coal-dust brings to the miners.

Obviously, however, under present conditions it will be many years before this method can be in operation on any large scale. Many "economic" factors will have to be taken into consideration. So far as we know, Dr. Bronowski has been speaking only from his own standpoint as a research workers; we have yet to hear from the administrative side of the N.C.B. Dr. Bronowski has told us what *could* be done, but Lord Crooks, present chairman of the Coal Board will no doubt tell us what *will* be done.

We fancy they will make haste to use the method to save the 20 million tons that are now being wasted, but as long as miners are prepared to continue to work and breathe in the deadly dust and only their lives are wasted, the Coal Board will probably not take much drastic action to revolutionise the methods of coal-getting itself—it would, after all, be rather expensive.

Only the miners themselves, whose lives are at stake to-day, have the most interest in altering coal production now. And they are not in control.

Stop! Look!

THE response, in the first week, to the reminders sent out to FREEDOM readers whose subscriptions are due for renewal, has been fairly encouraging. About one-third have already renewed their subscriptions and only a handful have cancelled; and the latter have in most cases added a note to say that it was on the grounds of economy, and not because the paper did not interest them any longer.

If the rate at which the renewals came in the first week can be maintained, there will be smiling faces in FREEDOM's offices. It will save us having to send out further reminders in a month's time, and the income from the renewals will ensure the continuity of our work at least for some months ahead.

So, reader, if you have not yet attended to the notice we sent you a fortnight ago, please do something about it now, before you forget again!

C.W.

AMERICAN MINORITIES-4 THE JAPANESE IN AMERICA

"We're charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. We might as well be honest. We do. It's a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown men. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over."

—AUSTIN E. ANSON, representative of the Shipper-Grower Assn. of Salinas, Calif., in Washington, D.C., shortly after Dec. 7, 1941.

If the Nazis killed by the gas chamber, and if the Russians kill by overwork, cold and slow starvation, Americans, always the more civilised, kill through the spirit.

On Dec. 7, 1941, there were in continental U.S.A., 127,000 persons of Japanese descent. Of these 113,000 lived in the four States of California, Washington, Oregon and Arizona, 94,000 (74%) being resident of California. 30% of all Japanese in America lived in Los Angeles County. They constituted less than one-tenth of 1% of the entire population of the U.S. Even in California, they constituted less than 2% of the population. 47,000 of them had been born in Japan and were by the laws of the democracy ineligible for citizenship. 80,000 (almost two-thirds of them) had been born in the U.S. and were therefore citizens and, of course, "Americanised", that is they were typical (or even more than typical) second-generation Americans. They were more than typical perhaps, because the initial distance between the old and the new culture being on the average greater than in many European groups, the choice was more definite and the cleavage between first generation (the *Issei*) and second generation (the *Nisei*) was sharper and full of anguish.

In American Hawaii lived about 160,000 Americans of Japanese descent who constituted close to 40% of the island's population of about 430,000.

By August, 1941, all Japanese living on the West Coast of the continental U.S.

had been evacuated by the U.S. Army acting under an Executive Order issued by that great Executive FDR and placed in ten concentration camps ranging from the cold mountain plains of Montana to the hot sands of Arizona and the mud and muck of Arkansas. In some cases Indian Reservation facilities were used, in some cases new barracks were built and in one case the evacuees lived in the converted stables of the Santa Anita Race Track.

This was mass evacuation of 110,000 individuals for reason of race and race alone. Mass guilt was proclaimed against people who had as much to do with Pearl Harbour as Jimmy Durante had with the Italian attack on Abyssinia.

More Japanese were killed in Hawaii by the attack than members of any other racial group. No sabotage whatsoever was discovered by the F.B.I. at Pearl Harbour. The brilliant General De Witt, supreme commander of the West Coast, used this fact and the fact that no sabotage on the West Coast was discovered (throughout the entire war not one instance of Japanese sabotage was uncovered) as proof that the Japanese ("Once a Jap, always a Jap") were all in a plot to "rise at the proper moment". Just another example of how it is almost impossible to counteract the emotional plague by the ordinary common sense methods and arguments. Had but one instance of sabotage been uncovered it would have been enough to condemn the whole group. However, since not a single such instance was discovered . . . it was enough to condemn the whole group.

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"America, I love you . . . You're like a sweetheart to me."

—Song by Irving Berlin, circa 1917.

What were the reactions of these people? Old, tired peasants who had bartered their immigrant lives for middle-class status. Young kids, California-crazy over America, athletic stars, school valedictorians, honours students. One

young Japanese-American had plastic surgery to remove all traces of Japanese ancestry. Another youngster reported his father to the F.B.I. for saying at home that Japan would win the war.

"They thought evacuation had been unnecessary because the Japanese had been law-abiding and not engaged in subversive activities.

"They thought they had been victimised by racial prejudice and war hysteria fanned by predatory political and economic interests.

"They thought they had been crushed economically and the results of 30 or 40 years of pioneering wiped out. The aliens, being elderly, would never recover from this blow, and for the citizens it would take years, if they accomplished it at all.

"They thought they were objects of public scorn and ridicule as well as exploitation and had no way of protecting themselves.

"They thought that the Japanese American citizens were in a particularly bad plight because they would be completely unsuited to life in Japan.

"They were disillusioned with the Americanism taught in school and felt democratic principles and the ideals for which the war was being fought had failed to prove a reality.

"They thought they had been torn from friends and associates and all that "home" meant.

"They thought the American Government had failed to give the citizens the protection it had early promised, and to which they were entitled by the Constitution, and on which they had been relying.

"They thought the American Government during evacuation proved to be unreliable, inconsistent and inefficient. As a consequence, they suffered many unnecessary hardships that involved property, health, and future security. The Government's promises had been untrustworthy and it had been easily swayed by pressure groups from a course designed to care for the evacuees' interests.

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Organisation in the Future

The following letter is from Clara Cole, who for the eighty years of her long life has worked for the cause of justice, equality and beauty. The breadth of vision which has served her in her life penetrate her words and make her regard the future, so apparently black, with optimism.

IS there any subject or project which has had less serious thought and more vilification than that given to anarchism? Organisation—do people really believe that given the opportunity we shall smash all the railways, waterways, and machinery, or scrap useful organisations? No, we shall make better use of them by sharing out their benefits.

When technicians, agriculturists, and all branches of labour realise this to the full, renewed ardour and enjoyment of work will result.

These few words are written in order to confute the unjust remark that "anarchists can't organise". There are cheap good books and pamphlets near at hand for those who seek the truth. We are practical folk first; spiritual values are in personal minds and beyond our control, but not beyond our appreciation and encouragement.

Our ideal for living will enable high spiritual aspirations to function, while at present (with mass military minds) murder is of first consideration and certainty is not conducive to spiritual aspirations.

What about the disastrous end of organisation by Parliament, by pseudo-socialists, ending, as all State power does, in war or preparation for it? No anarchist seeks State power or any power over his fellow human beings, nor does he fight in State-proxy-organised war. We have no personal axe to grind, or wish, or chance, to betray because under anarchism each back bears its own burden and it shall not be possible for any man to climb higher by riding on the back of another.

I believe profoundly in organisation or method: we cannot survive otherwise. Self-organisation and discipline comes first. Good methods save work, but method or organisation must not rule. Method is a good servant but a bad master if, change of circumstances is not taken into consideration. Starting probably from scratch to make plans or draw up blue prints for imaginary happenings in a changing and changed world would prove stumbling blocks and stultify future work. But does that mean that normal people with past experience of organising, making do and helping in times of earthquake, railway accidents and shipwrecks would fail? Much less organisation later on would be necessary and thus release men for more useful work.

Did governments start co-operatives? No, they were neither started nor backed by States, but hindered by them. We shall not shame a country by begging once a week in a land of wealth. No empty room shall gather dust while down-trodden and homeless lie down in pigsties and tanks and are not allowed to find shelter even in these horrible conditions. We shall preserve, not destroy anything of value and count the lives of human beings more precious than stocks and shares. If we destroy anything it will be to replace it by something better. As money and law are concerned with wealthy property-owners, this useless, pernicious labour would be unnecessary, and free men and women from irksome work and the arts of agriculture (good agriculture is always artistic), gardens, crafts and painting would arise re-vitalised.

Time, an artist's necessity, would bring forth works fit to compete with the greatest. Great ideas will end in a return to simplicity, as in railways and ships when superfluities are discarded; but experimentation must be allowed before perfection is obtained. It was a combine that the rich were forced to end in, in order to protect their riches. When the people form one big international combine to serve the interests of all nationalities it cannot end in war as profiteering does.

Much we advocate has been done and done with success, until international wealth rose and crushed its noble efforts. Workers have control of neither clay nor straw, but ideas precede bricks. Miners and dockers are rapidly learning the power of determined combination. To refrain from taking up the sword will finally prove more powerful than using it. Armaments feed nothing but carrion crows. States give orders, sub-committees plan; but it takes the masses to grow corn and make the plans eventuate.

Imagination is not dead when States run amuck. Then, imagination sets to work, and in the future must be used in the interest of those who need it most, and the painful tasks of to-day will become the pleasures of to-morrow.

Parliaments will be prorogued for ever and from justice we shall be able to take more abundantly than ever the vote gave. The interchange of commodities will be in the interest of all. To advance and see that these commodities are not destroyed as is done by our opponents Away with the charity, which only returns a little of what it takes.

CLARA COLE.

A SUBJECT RACE IN ENGLAND

PERMIT me to congratulate *Dromengro* on his spirited article, "A Subject Race in England". As an old addict of gypsies, I can testify to the general truth of this survey of modern Gypsism. Brief, but caustic and un-sentimental, it comes "straight from the horse's mouth". Moving amidst a usually ignorant and hostile population, the gypsies have developed a technique, by which they may gain a living, while preserving their peculiar conventions, their code of manners and their self-respect. They say *dukerin* (fortune-telling), for the *gajos* (gentiles) is one thing and *dukerin* for the *Romanichals* another. In the one they use the ritual of cozenage, in the other they speak the truth. In both they are not unassisted by the curious clair-voyance of the illiterate. Under the present drive towards uniformity, subservience, and the sedentary life, they will fuse their morale, their folk-memory and what is left of their language, to sink at last in the underworld of anonymity, petty crime, and squalor. What Hitler accomplished by the lethal chamber, our Bumbles will achieve by a system of harrising and fines. A naturally genial, intractable and somewhat primitive portion of the community, has been condemned by bureaucratic exigency to be stretched on the fatal bed of Procrustes.

Fordingbridge. AUGUSTUS JOHN.

THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL

IT is a sombre book, piling up statistics to show that but for some miraculous turn of events, our civilisation is doomed. The cardinal fact which emerges from his survey of the economic and ecological condition of the world it that we cannot escape a gradual but finally swiftly accelerating reduction in the standard of living, accompanied by a bloody and lustful scramble for the last crumbs. "There is no new land to plough," he points out, "and the land already ploughed can scarcely feed the present population of the world." That population increases at the rate of 20,000,000 a year. In Asia alone the increase in the next ten years will be as great as the whole present population of the United States.

"Roberts realised and said that 'If new measures are not taken to check the growth of population, the old ones will reinstate themselves, and the primitive forces that reinstate themselves will work through hunger, frenzy, bitterness, and hatred of one's fellow men . . . The obvious new measure—though in certain countries and among certain classes it is an old measure—is birth control, but birth control is most easily or most willingly practised by the most intelligent social groups. But what moral right have we to impose birth control on selected individuals or selected classes; and how, short of forcible sterilisation, are we to impose it? There are no 'reasons for optimism' listed in this new book; on the contrary, there is a new reason for pessimism in the two brilliant chapters in which Roberts investigates what he calls 'the reservoir of talent', showing how the increasing industrialisation and bureaucratisation of the world is leading to a relative decrease in intelligence, to a depletion in the ranks of those occupations where intelligence is most needed if we are to survive—the teaching and other professional services.

"Michael Roberts did not finish this book, and apart from a stray note or two, we are left guessing as to how he would have finished it. One of the final notes reads: 'Man has been at war with nature and therefore at war with one another. Harmony with nature, then harmony with our neighbours. War springs from disequilibrium. We are being forced back to a harmonious relation with the soil, and that relation will solve our spiritual as well as our material problems. What ought we to do?'

"Each of us must answer that question, and answer it practically. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, voluntarily to reverse the processes of industrialisation and power economics. But one day, not very distant, the oil wells will be dry, our forests will have been consumed and our mines will be exhausted. To trust in the inventive resources of mankind is a dangerous illusion; they are more likely to lead to further weapons of universal destruction than to a harmony with nature. In the end we must return to the land, to the estate of man. We must love it and cultivate it as the only source of life. Ten million square miles is all it amounts to, or can amount to. How many millions of

people that land can support is calculable. Michael Roberts believed that a gradual return to harmony with the earth, as farmers, not miners, will gradually re-establish an equilibrium between population and resources. There will be sacrifices, but they will be to Demeter and not to Moloch.

"The final factors are not economic, but vital. They are controlled by impulses whose movements we cannot measure, or even detect. We close-shave our cornfields with combine-harvesters and the corncakes mysteriously disappear. They would mysteriously return with the scythes, or the horse-drawn reaper. This is a picturesque illustration of a process that has been going on now for many years; the machine has upset the equilibrium of nature, and our first action should be to put the machine into reverse.

"We now accept the machine without question, and cannot easily imagine a future that does not depend on an increasing use of the machine. Nevertheless, in the long run the machine is anti-vital, and will, if unchecked, destroy the life of the world. Living things depend on the cultivation of organic growths, and on a limited store of natural resources. They consume certain products of the earth, but what they consume they return to the earth in the form of essential manures. Machines also consume natural resources, but render back only smoke, gases, cinders—dead and even harmful by-products of their power. It is logically and statistically certain that such a process must, sooner or later, end in the exhaustion of the earth's resources, and part of Roberts' purpose is to show that it will be sooner rather than later.

"If we are to avoid ultimate doom, we must, as Michael Roberts says, learn a new husbandry. We must acquire the mentality of farmers and gardeners and discard the mentality of miners and excavators. We must stop burning and blasting, and resolve to conserve and cultivate. Vast schemes of reforestation and reclamation must be undertaken, and the energy and cunning, the brain-power and man-power, now devoted to the sciences of exploitation, must be diverted to the sciences of growth and creation. A distinction must be made between the sciences that promote and preserve life, and the sciences that merely generate power—the general distinction between the biological and mechanical sciences. Degrees of interdependence will be discovered, and a point of equilibrium may be reached where the life-promoting sciences require a measure of support from the power-generating sciences.

"To secure such a development, a mental and social revolution is required that will eventually exalt the biologist above the atomic-physicist, the forester above the engineer, the schoolmaster above the air-pilot, the farm-labourer above the coal-miner. But it is not merely a question of revising emoluments and restoring prestige; we must renounce our deep-seated worship of power—the worship of power for power's sake. We must recognise, before it is too late, our unconscious surrender to the forces of death, our equally unconscious rejection of the forces of life."

—From a broadcast review by Herbert Read of *The Estate of Man*, by Michael Roberts (Faber & Faber, 15/-).

COMMENT

Mr. Headcliffe's Home Truths

WE are not very fond of those whimsical little "Country Columns" that appear in the London papers. Readers may remember G.V.'s remarks several years ago in his "Land Notes", about their regular characters like Old Something-or-Other who speaks with a strong mixed Somerset and Essex dialect and "will state ponderous platitudes with a knowing smile, but as these are said in dialect the reader will believe them to be the wisdom of the soil".

Nor are we regular devotees of the literary gentleman who writes "Jan's Journal" in the *Evening Standard* and who, as Mr. R. C. Churchill says, "on Friday evening was editing the *Townsmen* with a glass of brandy at his elbow and on Wednesday week was down on the farm praising God in corduroys".

All the same, we were delighted with an instalment of "Jan's Journal" which caught the eye of our type-setter the other day. Jan was telling us about old Mr. Headcliffe who, with his decrepit lorry, does the fetching and carrying for the village which is 22 miles from the railway and the market town. Old Mr. Headcliffe fetches everything under the sun from the town, changes the library books, and even, since the postmistress caught chicken-pox, brings the stamps. But for ten years nobody in Jan's village has paid Mr. Headcliffe for his services, because he has never sent in an account. Whenever Jan or the inevitable Amos asked him for his bill he just mumbled and rattled off down the lane. In the

end they cornered him and told him they wanted to settle up. Poor old Headcliffe looked upset and asked, "Don't you want me to carry for you any more?"

"It isn't that," I explained, "but we want to know where we are. How much do we owe you?"

"I don't know," he confessed. "I haven't kept no books ever since I lost 'em years ago. I don't want no tax men poking their noses into my business."

"But if you haven't kept any books," I asked, "how have you been paid?"

"I haven't."

"This was too much for us. 'Then how have you lived?' we both bellowed.

"But I ain't paid nobody either," he explained. "Seems if I don't send no accounts out, nobody likes sending 'em to me either. I must owe you quids for eggs and spuds if we only reckoned it; same with the garage where I gets me petrol."

As he drove off, it occurred to Amos and me that we had tumbled upon a cure for all economic ills.

"If only the nation would follow us village idiots," said Amos, "everybody would be better off. You should write to the papers and suggest it."

We don't suppose that either old Mr. Headcliffe or Amos, or even the erudite author of "Jan's Journal" has ever read Kropotkin's pamphlet on the abolition of the wage system, but they've got something there!

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

- The Burden of Our Time Hannah Arendt 30/-
See George Woodcock's article in our last issue.
- Heavens on Earth Mark Holloway 16/-
Illustrated history of utopian communities in America.
- Three Plays Anton Chekhov 2/6
Elisaveta Fen's translations of *The Cherry Orchard*, *Three Sisters*, and *Ivanov*.
- The Little Fellow P. Cotes and T. Niklaus 15/-
The life of Charlie Chaplin.
- Autobiography of a Working Man Alexander Somerville 10/6
A celebrated nineteenth-century book of memoirs, long unobtainable.
- The Nature of the Universe Lucretius 2/6
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- East of Home Sontha Rama Rau 16/-
An Indian girl in the Far East.
- Volonta, Vol. 5, No. 11, 31/8/51 1/-
Anarchist Monthly from Naples.

... Obtainable from
27 red lion st, london,
W.C.1

DIET OF DISASTER

THE newspapers give a strange picture of the things that interest us as a people. Pick up almost any copy and the same thing confronts one on the front page—disaster. It is a train smash or a national disaster like a hurricane or avalanche—and the commonest headline word may well be "victims". Or it is a murder, or the gloom of the political or the economic outlook.

Travelling in the underground or on buses to work we see our fellow men and women all absorbing the same tales of woe, for the most part, it must be admitted, with a stoical stolidity. If we are cynical we may be tempted to remark that the sufferings of others are not too difficult for us to bear. Certainly our sensibilities need to be blunt indeed to withstand the daily catalogue of disaster, repeated once again in the evening papers, and reaching a climax, a summing-up, on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

There is surely something odd about this willing diet of suffering. Our world is surely bad enough without our paying three-halfpence to twice a day have our noses rubbed in it?

The strangeness becomes weird when one of those disasters occurs which need no heightening to underline their terrible quality. Mine disasters, submarine accidents, where men are trapped and hopes diminish as edition succeeds edition. Weird, because the stolidity remains. It is as though emotion were suspended in the air, as though the closeness of urban life were without real contact of any kind.

For, of course, in the mining villages the tension and the loss are only to real and terrible. The victims are their fellows. Inside such communities there is no such contactlessness, on such occasions. On others, no doubt, miners and their families are just as stolid as others about the newspaper diet of disaster.

Nevertheless, the difference serves to underline the lack of a sense of community in modern life and the grotesque distortion of feeling that it involves.

The same sense of unreality invades one when one contemplates the general attitude towards the illness of the king. It is natural that the known misfortunes of others should evoke sympathy, and there seems no doubt that the emotional response to the affairs of the royal family does derive from a desire for communal feeling which can only otherwise find very limited expression. But the speculating and expression of feeling are very different from the reactions of people who are actually experiencing like misfortune. There is an avidity, a greedy lapping-up of bad news which is the same as the stolidity, we have already discussed. One turns away from it with a sense of unreality, and a kind of despair.

Yet people are not so emotionally lame as their newspaper reading suggests. It is the contactlessness that makes it all so weird. Where there is contact the life of people is filled with the qualities and the actions which Kropotkin summed-up in the conception of mutual aid. The participants in disaster always evoke admiration and gratitude. But our society limits the ability to participation while it enhances the disintegration, the lack of contact or sense of community, which makes us all spectators at disaster.

If we could recover the sense of community we should perhaps lose our stolidity, our bluntness of sensibility, towards the disastrous nature of our world.

SOME NOTES ON

AUSTRIA has been for many years one of the poorest countries in Europe. This due, partly at least, to the Treaty of Versailles, which cut off the thickly-populated land from the wheat-growing plains of Hungary and surrounded it by an artificial barrier of tariff walls. Within the capitalist system, which the socialists between the wars did nothing to change radically, Austria remained at a disadvantage with her neighbours, and the weight of the between wars depression, of the drain of two world conflicts and of the reactionary administrations from Dollfus to Hitler, inevitably made itself felt most of all on the lives of the industrial workers and the poorer peasants. Austria, from 1918 onwards, was a country where starvation and deficiency diseases were obvious to any discerning traveller.

All this is an old and often-told story, and it would be pointless to repeat it if the situation to-day were radically different. It is not. There is less unemployment than before the war, but the standard of living of the Austrian working people is appallingly poor. Until the last increase of wages and prices during July, there were many unskilled labourers who earned only 5 schillings (1s. 4d.) an hour, while skilled craftsmen like shoemakers and tailors earned about 8 schillings (2s. 1d.) and only a few mechanics in exceptional trades received 10 schillings (2s. 8d.) an hour or more.

Owing to its economic position, Austria is peculiarly susceptible to the changes in world prices which have been provoked recently by such measures as stock piling in the United States. To make it self-sufficient in food products would need vast and radical changes in the present system of cultivation and administration, and in the conditions that exist to-day it is inevitable that the life of its people should be deeply affected by economic changes which take place far outside the country's own borders.

Until July, Austria seemed a cheap country to the outside visitor, but this was largely because of the low wages—and hence the low cost of services. But for the people themselves who received these same low wages it was even then, comparatively, less cheap than the United States to the average American factory worker. The changes in July made the situation radically worse for everybody except the middlemen and the capitalists

Continued from p. 2

"They thought the Federal Bureau of Investigation had inflicted untold hardships on the Japanese by extensive unwarranted arrests during evacuation. Communities and families . . . became the more easily victims of predatory persons and of their own inability to cope with the situation, since much of the responsibility fell on the shoulders of inexperienced women and children. These raids were the more inexcusable since they did not protect the rest of the people from evacuation."

"They thought that great harm had been done to the Japanese by 'dogs' (Japanese informers) who for money and their own self-aggrandisement turned in the names of innocent people to the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

—Alexander H. Leighton (*The Governing of Men*, p. 45).

3

The whole process seemed more or less like the end of the road in an experiment in American democracy and the interrelationship of cultures in a class-ridden and frustration-ridden society.

Japanese first came to this country (and to Hawaii) in considerable numbers starting about 1885. They went first to the sugar plantations of Hawaii. They were almost entirely peasants and were meant to replace the excluded Chinese as a source of cheap tractable labour. However, unlike other groups, they served their apprenticeships as field-slaves (sometimes for decades) and showing more "push" or individuality or unwillingness to be kept down, started striking out on their own as independent farmers; always on marginal land, and with new or previously unprofitable crops, that is: never in too direct competition with the Caucasians (Whites).

By 1940 they had become "the Jews of West Coast agriculture". "In California, for example, they produced 30-35% of all 'truck' crops, and in some crops, e.g., fresh snap beans, celery and strawberries, had a virtual monopoly. Of those (45%) in non-agricultural pursuits, two out of five were engaged in trade, and almost as great a proportion in personal and commercial services. Few were labourers in mechanical and manufacturing industries and fewer still had attained status in the professions. As a whole the group belonged to the small entre-prenurial and service classes and was closely dependent upon agriculture irrespective of occupational classification."

—Dorothy Swaine Thomas and Richard S. Nishimoto; from *The Spoilage* quoted in *Race Prejudice and Discrimination*, Arnold M. Rose, editor. That is they operated small family-

type farms, oftentimes with one or two hired hands (Japanese). (Some unsuccessful still followed the crops.) They were wholesalers and retailers of this same produce. In Los Angeles alone 1,000 worked in wholesale produce and about 2,250 in retail produce distribution.

They lived mostly in little Tokyos scattered up and down the West Coast. Many ran hotels, clearing stores, restaurants and other services. They were generally marginal businesses catering to themselves, to tourists or in fields which the whites did not want to, or could not, enter.

Outside of produce there were many in fishing and in employment in canneries, in contract gardening and the floral and nursery industries. Once again, like the Jews, although they gave perhaps a general middle-class impression, there were very few really rich Japanese and while the local produce crop was a substantial industry, the real profits were in inter-State shipping to the East Coast: a problem of rationalised large-scale agriculture and a white monopoly. The fact that a few Japanese were just beginning to enter this field, plus the realisation that in the coming war period the local produce crop itself would be a "bonanza" provided enough economic incentive to make the big operators of Californian agriculture among the most vocal of the kick-the-Japs-out lobbyists.

In Hawaii the situation was fantastically different. Day-dreaming professors would have us believe it a product of peculiar system of democratic training, but there are other ways of putting it: Caucasians number less than one-quarter of the population. The Japanese (almost 40%) are the largest nationality group on the island, and there are also about 50,000 Filipinos, 30,000 Chinese and 75,000 of Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian ancestry. (Incidentally, it is this racial structure that blocks Hawaii's entry into the Union as the 49th State.) Furthermore the Japanese occupational structure is here nothing like the mainland's, there being a very large proportion of proletarians.

In a labour-scarce war economy you do not wipe out one-third of your labour supply by interning them in camps. No, Sir. Besides, unlike Californian farming, there is little place here for the independent small producer. Hawaii's is an almost entirely plantation economy based around sugar and pineapple (and war) and run by the Big Five: the five plantation, steamship and banking companies run by the descendants of the first missionary settlers who stole the islands from the natives and tried in 1893 to force it into the hands of President

Grover Cleveland, who refused it (!) But it was grudgingly accepted into the Union by McKinley in 1898 during the Spanish-American war since destiny had become more manifest and some deal had been worked out with the Cuban sugar interests.

And Hawaii's Japanese (except for about 1,000 "subversives" hand-picked by the F.B.I.) were never put in a big prison camp even though the land had been devastated by Pearl Harbour, was 2,000 miles closer to invasion and had proportionately 4,000% more of those same Japanese than the mainland of whom the eloquent General De Witt had stated:

"A Jap's a Jap . . . It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not . . . I don't want any of them . . . They are a dangerous element . . . The Jap race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on U.S. soil, possessed of U.S. citizenship have become 'Americanised', the racial strains are undiluted."—Thomas and Nishimoto.

Because, after all, money is thicker than water.

The Japanese in the concentration camps were not to be permitted to be neglected, or to languish beyond the concern of the great American nation. They were permitted to save the Colorado beet crop and to volunteer in separate *Nisei* combat teams which were thrown into the thick of it (first in line at Salerno) and suffered very high casualties (one large group suffered casualties numbering three times its original strength) and finally to begin a trickle of resettlement in the Mid-West and East (e.g., in many cases before the war was over).

As for life in camp, why it was probably the biggest and the best concentration camp run anywhere. Outside of the fact that you had been torn out of your existence and couldn't do what you wanted, you were perfectly free to do whatever you wanted.

Here were strikes, incidents, a special camp for the disloyal. (The loyal were kept in ordinary camps.)

Here were the simple years of life wasted.

Japanese property loss due to forced sales, loss of crops, loss of housing, furniture, etc., amounted to between 350,000,000 and 500,000,000 dollars.

When the war was over (the Japanese had collected 700 soldier dead in the American army (everybody was engaged in suing the government for their property losses. (Always an involved process.)

CONDITIONS IN AUSTRIA

who gained from the disparity between the increases in wages and prices (for in Austria, as in most other strikingly poor countries, the situation is emphasised by the presence of a minority whose prosperity is obvious and even ostentatious.

LETTER FROM FRANCE ELECTIONS AND FEASTS

IN the recent legislative elections and in those for the Council of the French Union, a certain number of native peoples, recently assimilated into "democracy", have voted for the first time.

Very strange stories are beginning to circulate in France of the difficulties met with in the attempt to impose the institutions of metropolitan France in the very different surroundings of the savannah and the virgin forest.

In very many cases each voter considered as his legal delegate, not the candidate who was actually returned, but the one he himself had voted for. "When you choose a doctor, a lawyer, a tradesman or a boss, it is not for the law to foist another one on you—precisely the one you did not choose. In the same way, if you have accepted a political leader, it is disloyal and absurd to recognise another one, the rival and enemy of the first." These logical views have greatly surprised the European administrators who have had great difficulty in refuting them. But other still more curious facts complete the picture. Some communities who have not been taught to read and write have voted for photographs as though it were a question of selecting Miss Universe, 1951. In certain districts where no-one presented himself for election, they cast lots to choose a candidate, who was carried around in triumph before being sent off to the remote metropolitan France, whence he will perhaps never return.

And then there is the famous instance of the man-eating committee [see *The Senator Who Was Eaten By His Constituents*, FREEDOM, 18/8/51.]

There are some African religions in which the representative or the person

responsible for the community is at the same time the victim offered up to fate when it is a question of defeating obstacles to the spiritual or social life of the tribe. Just as in Europe, governments are overthrown when there is a depression in trade, so there they sacrifice the king in order to put a stop to a drought or end an eclipse of the moon. There are certain affinities between the *sacre*—the coronation, and the *sacrifice* of the monarch. The incarnation of the community in one individual has, as a consequence the right of ceremonial killing or ritual murder of this individual at the end of a certain period; the power of reviving society by a *sacrament* (or Last Supper?) restoring the social "mana" to each individual in the mystic form of flesh and blood. Thus the cannibal ritual has also its "elect", and the journalist Max-Pol Fouchet, in *Liberté de l'Esprit*, tells of having recently interviewed in an African village, a young man glowing with health and contentment, for he was to be eaten next year, and that honour filled him with pride.

Are these tribes deceived as to the true nature of the legislative elections? Already the Ivory Coast has been deprived of one of its representatives who was unable to take the plane for Paris, and whose seat in the Palais-Bourbon remains empty. For he was eaten with great ceremony by his electoral committee after the proclamation of the results. The witnesses were his two wives, the evidence, his bones. Here, indeed, is a case of sacrificing oneself for one's constituents, and the anarchist Séverine had reason on his side when he wrote in 1894, "it is disgusting to have to fatten up M.P.s without even the hope of a Christmas dinner." A.P.

THE JAPANESE IN AMERICA

The long journey home began. Many, especially the old, were extremely hesitant about leaving the camps. A date had to be fixed and in a few cases lonely old men were put on board a train with railway tickets and shoved "home".

On the West Coast, many were greeted with kerosine fires (thrown against their homes), rocks and rifle bullets shot into walls. By 1946, 55,000 (about half) had returned and it did not seem that many more would do so. There were terrible housing problems. Their homes and apartments had been appropriated and many lived temporarily in hostels set up by religious and welfare organisations.

Twenty thousand Japanese had settled in Chicago by 1950 and Japanese are now living in substantial numbers in Boston, N.Y., Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Salt Lake City, Cleveland and Cincinnati.

But this first American experiment in concentration camps was not a fortuitous thing. After all, hasn't America had a *Chinese Exclusion Act* since 1882? (During the war when it was too embarrassing, immigration quotas—of about 100 each!—were granted to Chinese, Indians and Filipinos.) Wasn't there a Gentleman's Agreement between Japan and the U.S. in 1907 virtually ending Japanese immigration to the U.S.? (And who, pray, were the gentlemen?) Haven't Japanese been officially prohibited from immigrating into this country since 1924, made ineligible for citizenship and declared racially unassimilable? Are not the following peoples debarred from immigrating to the U.S. and becoming citizens of the U.S. by section 303 of the *Nationality Act* of 1940?—Burmese, Japanese, Koreans, Malaysians, Maoris (members of the Polynesian family and natives of New Zealand, Polynesians, natives of Tahiti, and Samoans. All on the grounds of racial unassimilability?)

Koreans, mind you. The people to whom we are bringing democracy.

Before the end of World War Two Germany and the U.S. were the only two major nations that used race as a test for naturalisation.

As I write this, Shigeru Yoshida is signing the great pact of peace welcoming Japan once again to the family of democratic nations. But what after all is the signature of a racially unassimilable Jap (a man who could not even become a citizen of this country) worth to me?

"I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

I lift my gold and dash my lamp upon the floor . . .

JACK GALLEGU.

[The next article will discuss the American Indian.]

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE NEW CRIME WAVE

“ABSENT FROM TRAINING”

IT is some time since we heard British statesmen sneering at what used to be called the “banana republics” of South America. Perhaps national susceptibilities are greater now, and no potential ally that might furnish a little more cannon-fodder can be ignored these times, but it may be that the real reason for the sneer becoming old-fashioned has been our own evolution to the point where we can no longer afford to throw stones.

We can hardly afford these days to enjoy the spectacle of little generals with long swords lording it over a people enslaved by Yankee commerce. It is patent enough that whatever party wins the Election there can be no effect on the country's foreign policy: the United States will continue to rule our destiny through the surrender of native capitalism to Wall Street, and the results of the Election affect the main issues of the present day no more than do any palace rebellions over there.

That is at any rate well known enough, but what is not so much appreciated is the gradual sliding of this country into plain military dictatorship. This is an inevitable result of the importance given to war-economy and the predominance of the war machine to every single other thing in a decade-and-a-half of both war and peace. The one thing that holds back the military leaders from complete domination is the fact that politicians remain assertive of their own claims, and has nothing whatever to do with any independence of the people, who are completely subject to both.

To the spoon-fed reader of the Press, these statements may well sound fantastic. And yet the proof positive is not suppressed by the newspapers; it is merely presented in such a way in the news columns that the reader unaccustomed to thinking for himself is unable to link up such items to realise in which way we are drifting. For opinions he looks at the opinion-columns. He will find nothing there about the drift to military dictatorship, for no party is prepared to make an issue of the Army.

What is the most important thing that has been happening in the last few months? It is not the comings and goings of self-opinionated little men to and from Westminster; it is the fact that in Great Britain, for so long the one nation

in Europe where no man could be seized for military service against his will, civilians can at last be grabbed by military police, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for absence from the Army. If this is denied, and it is said that the men in question are soldiers, then one must face the fact that in a generation or two there will be no more civilians; all will be soldiers.

The point in question is the insolent demand of the National Service Act for Territorial training after people have (as one would think) left the Army. This is the natural complement to the Z-Training Scheme. The “zombies” left (or thought they left) the Army when the war was over (or was presumed to be over); now they are taken back a couple of weeks a year (at present) from their civilian occupations and thrust into uniforms once more at the behest of some staff-major in the War Office, without any pretence at respect of their civilian status, which does not legally seem to exist. Once soldiers, always soldiers, is the presumption. But the newer conscripts, who were seized by the armed forces since the war on their eighteenth birthdays, face a situation which is more perturbing than the Z-scheme, which follows the classic German-French pattern of conscription. These men face an apparent complete loss of civilian status, and you may read in the Press any day—and the average reader passes it over quite blindly—that so-and-so has been sentenced to 96 days* detention for not attending Territorial training. His army service over, he must serve in the Territorials (weekly as well as yearly), and face a court-martial, with an Army sentence, if he does not carry out his spare-time training. And who will be bold enough to say this is for a fixed period? We've heard that before!

This leaves nothing whatever that protects us from military dictatorship so far as the ordinary man is concerned. It seems that popular resentment at injustice is completely dead. Fifty years ago there would have been a storm of protest if such an iniquitous system had been forced by a putsch on the people

of Nicaragua. To-day it is accepted here, too. Has it not been realised what the effect of armed forces discipline on civilian life is? One cannot begin to point out what is going to happen, for the situation is so fantastic that to stress the least point seems far-fetched and bizarre. Everybody would laugh if you told them that in fifteen years time you might not be able to grow a moustache in civilian life without the permission of your commander. But ex-naval men might know that that particular fancy is not too impossible if in due course one came to spend a few nights a week under naval discipline. Need one labour the point as to the power the commanding officer is going to have?

While bankruptcy has delivered the national economy a slave to the Almighty dollar, grandiose training schemes go forward; the Armed Forces are subject to no restrictions in the waste that occurs daily; and slowly but surely the ground is prepared for two or three generations to be completely shackled to the military machine—with not even the remote pretence of a time when all these military restrictions on humanity will be cast off—so that the average civilian, in full health and with no military commitments on his hands, will perhaps become as rare as the dodo.

It would indeed be difficult for our politicians to go back to the times when they sneered at the “banana republics”, now that our little generals try out their swords three sizes too large for them, and round up the peons for forced training—and later, perhaps, labour. Viva Inglaterra! We only lack the bananas . . .

INTERNATIONALIST.

*It is usually 96 days rather than 4 months. The latter gives the game away too much. How easy to twist the Great British Public! “96 days detention” sounds so much less bad for a sentence on an ordinary, honest, “non-criminal” than “4 months prison”.

SALVATION THROUGH POLITICS

There is one particularly noisy segment of the American public which, although usually very small, is noteworthy because it is the favoured audience of the worst elements in Congress. This is the nativist lunatic fringe. Obsessed with powerful prejudices, xenophobic, stridently patriotic—the rag-tag and bobtail of American life—they are a small, cranky and quite unorganised body of spinsters, “lumpen” proletarians, fly-by-night promoters, unsuccessful businessmen, solitaires, and strays, beset by personal misery and thinking only of salvation through politics.

—Edward Shils, in a broadcast, *The Listener*, 20/9/51.

“I'd like to ask the Archbishop of Canterbury what Christ would say about his fifteen thousand a year,” said a Baptist, criticising in Kingsmill's presence the endowments of the Church of England.

“If that question could stump the Archbishop, he'd still be a curate,” replied Kingsmill.

—From *About Kingsmill*, by Hesketh Pearson and Malcolm Muggeridge. (Methuen, 10s. 6d.)

Solidarity on the Roads

IN his article “Road Transport: the Spoilt Princess (FREEDOM, 15/9/51), A.M. referred to the spontaneous mutual aid that is practised among motorists.

In that great class of professional motorists—the lorry drivers—there is practised a great deal of mutual aid that is unnoticed by the general public, although in times of strike or dispute it does receive publicity.

The Road Transport industry presents a complex structure at the moment. It is a mixed industry, partly nationalised and partly still operating under “free” enterprise. Roughly, long distance transport and parcel carriage operates under the British Road Services, short distance contracting still being carried on by private owners. Private firms can also carry their own goods in their own vehicles for any distances, operating under “C” licences—but they must not carry goods for other people. Some small-scale long-distance contracting is still in the hands of individuals—perhaps owner-drivers—but these are gradually being absorbed into the State organisation.

As far as the workers are concerned, of course, nationalisation has made no great difference. Equipment has tended to improve, but discipline has tightened up. We reported earlier this year the lorry-drivers' strike against the B.R.S.'s proposed extension of road patrols to keep check on the drivers while on the road. The proposal was withdrawn after drivers at depots all over the country had come out.

There was another strike last week of drivers for the Marston Valley Brick Company, who employ 300 drivers, nearly all of whom came out because

the company were installing time recorders in their trucks. These hated recorders are small clocks connected to the engine which faithfully record every time the driver has stopped on the road and for how long. And after he has been checked upon on arrival back at his depot he has to satisfactorily account for every stoppage.

The men came out on strike because 50 per cent. of the firm's lorries are having to operate with these recorders, and the rest are not. Upon the management offering to suspend use of the recorders until all the lorries can be fitted with them, just to make things equal for all the drivers, the men pointed out that they did not want the remaining 50 per cent. fitted, but the existing 50 per cent. removed! They were determined to carry on the strike against the mechanical snoopers until the management agreed.

One serious result of nationalisation which is very much resented by drivers is the lack of insurance on the drivers' lives. Under free enterprise, employers would insure their drivers against accident or death. This, of course, cost the employers nothing, the cost of the premiums coming out of their profits-tax, and the compensation for the men covered by the insurance company. If a driver was killed in an accident while at work, his widow benefited.

But under State ownership, the Road Board has taken on responsibility for its own insurance—with the result that the men are no longer insured. Following a recent fatal accident, a drivers' widow applied for compensation, to be told that her widow's pension was all she was entitled to!

The men have overcome this, not by pleading with the management, but by getting together and doing the job themselves. Firstly, all the men at the depot where the dead driver used to work, contributed to a collection for his widow. They raised £500 within a month. Then they got down to establishing a fund to cover future emergencies. They now make regular contributions to a common

GERMAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

In the second of two articles on his impressions of Germany to-day (FREEDOM, 15/9/51), D.R. mentioned the Gemeinschaftshule which were run in Hamburg between 1908 and 1933. The story of these community schools and their present-day descendant is told in the article below.

IN 1908, a teacher named Lamzus published a book entitled *Das Menschenschlachthaus* (The Human Slaughterhouse), a veritable accusation of the official school. Then he opened, at Volksdorf, a popular suburb of Hamburg, a school whose principles came close to those of the anarchist Francisco Ferrer. At the same time a *Ferrerverein* (Ferrer League) was founded at a meeting of 600 people, where Comrade Schlegel was the speaker.

When Ferrer was murdered, a protest meeting of the same society, at which our good friend Carl Langer and his companion took the platform, numbered 1,800, including many young people. But the Volksdorf School, too dear for the working-class and obstructed by the administrative authorities, was, like many other schools faced with the same difficulties, unable to maintain itself.

In 1919, the movement made a new start under the influence of our comrades Zetsche (Horn) and Langer, and other Hamburgian libertarians, who founded the movement of Community Schools (*Gemeinschaftshule*) in the Wasserkante region. Zetsche himself created a “masterless school” at Rothenburgsort (a now completely ruined district of Hamburg). This school was a kind of museum, open to all comers. The children questioned their visitors about their lives, their jobs, etc., showing a healthy curiosity and a highly developed critical sense. They took turns in showing their collections of documents and work samples. “Many comrades,” Langer says, “spent their school holidays at our expense.”

Four primary schools and one secondary school were started in Hamburg (the latter at the Berliner Tor), and there was also a school for children of arrested development, where some veritable miracles of education were accomplished.

One testimony says: “These backward children were apprenticed to artisan comrades, where they developed a love for the work, which became the motive for a new development. I recall how one boy rejected from the official school as an idiot was apprenticed to my friend Boje (an old master-locksmith, well-known at the time of the German anti-Socialist laws), and how a sample of work by him won first prize in an exhibition! At thirteen years this boy could neither read nor write, then he took pleasure in the art of a smith, and so studied like one playing, inspired by the work itself.”

There were also free schools in Saxony. That at Ellerau was much influenced by

the militant Adlerian psychologist Otto Rühle, author of *Das Proletarische Kind* (The Proletarian Child), who said “Social oppression is suffered most by the poor girl, that exploited of the exploited.”

The influence of the *Gemeinschaftshule* survived the victory of Hitler. The teachers in spite, of all persecutions, showed exemplary courage. “My children,” one anarchist comrade wrote to me, “had, throughout the Nazi time, teachers who kept faithful to their old line of conduct. Some of them still come to our Young Peoples' Federation and take part in our games with the children.”

“After the war,” another of my correspondents writes, “two truly free schools were set up in two Ruhr towns, Hengede and Hamborn. They almost completely by-passed the state, the children freely choosing their own teachers and going with them on rambles. A hundred and fifty children held their school on the road and in the rooms of inns. But the newly-constituted German Government intervened to stop this practice, and the experimental school of Fehr and his colleagues, died.”

“We also had in Hagen quite a band of teachers who were well disposed to sustain the movement. One of them even got himself elected to the town council, and risked losing his job by uncovering his guns during a council meeting.”

“The chief difficulty in all of this is not to find the men (I know many quite good educators definitely on our side), but to find the money.”

Langer and his comrades in the “Federation of Free Socialists and Anti-militarists” have not, however, allowed themselves to be discouraged. In Hamburg, their “*Sonntagschule*” is a direct continuation of the *Gemeinschaftshule*. Every Sunday afternoon two “Schools of Freedom”, one for under-fourteens and the other for adolescents, are held in the Young Peoples' Federation, Warburgstrasse 35, Hamburg. The courageous example of the German teachers deserves “secular”, “civic”, free, compulsory, state schools, and further, I think, to be imitated by our libertarian educators.

ANDRÉ PRUNIER.

MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

OPEN-AIR MEETINGS at HYDE PARK
Every Sunday at 3.30 p.m.
INDOOR MEETINGS
Recommend:
SUNDAY, 23rd SEPTEMBER
NOTE: New Meeting Place:
BIRD IN HAND,
Long Acre, W.C.
(2 mins. Leicester Sq. Underground Station)
Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m.
Admission Free—Free Discussion
SEPT. 30—Tony Gibson on
WORK IN A FREE SOCIETY
OCT. 7—S. E. Parker on
VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE
OCT. 14—Albert Meltzer on
THE MIDDLE CLASSES—
BACKBONE OR BELLYACHE?

NORTH-EAST LONDON DISCUSSION MEETINGS IN EAST HAM at 7.30

OCT. 3—Round Table IN MY OPINION
Enquiries c/o Freedom Press

SOUTH LONDON

Meetings suspended for the time being. Readers interested in possible future activities, please contact S. E. Parker, c/o Freedom Press.

GLASGOW

OUTDOOR MEETINGS at MAXWELL STREET
Every Sunday at 7 p.m.
With John Gaffney, Frank Leech, Jimmy Raeside, Eddie Shaw

BRADFORD

At the MECHANICS INSTITUTE (Saloon)
Monday, Nov. 19th, at 7.30
Eddie Shaw on
THE APATHETIC THROG

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