

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

THE ELECTIONS ARE OVER, THE NEW BOSSES ANNOUNCED

And Now What?

AT a cost of some £2,000,000, of millions of hours of envelope addressing and canvassing, several hundred tons of valuable paper; of newspapers which for weeks have been unreadable; of some nervous breakdowns and broken friendships . . . we have learned that the balance of voting power in the British Isles rested with a handful of Liberals who, deprived of Liberal candidates in all but 100 constituencies, when they voted gave their crosses to Conservative candidates in greater number than to Labour candidates with the result that in seats held by Labour in the 1950 elections with small majorities, the Liberal vote was sufficient to turn the scales.

We have also learned that in spite of all the grumbling by the housewives, the despair of the house-hunters and the despondency of the "down-trodden middle classes" they still consider the Labour Party the lesser of the two political evils. For the Labour vote was 600,000 more than in 1950. [The fact that the Labour Party polled more votes than the Conservatives and won 26 fewer seats is a question we leave to the "government by the majority" supporters to explain away.]

We have also learned that the general public is quite impervious to all the cajoling, the threats, the promises and assurances that are given by the parties at election time. The attitude, often consciously expressed, is that whoever "gets in" life will go on, more or less as before. Yet West Ham would find it just as unthinkable not to continue returning its Labour candidate to the House with a majority of 30,000 as would Westmorland not to return a Conservative with a large majority. With two solid immovable blocs voting Labour and Conservative respectively at every election, the political parties to end the deadlock which otherwise may result in a breakdown of the existing parliamentary system must either introduce some form of Proportional Representation or seek to eliminate the liberal vote altogether by absorbing it as well as finding ways and means of inducing the 6 million

electors, who at present vote for neither side, to take part in future elections.

FOR the Anarchists, their course is clear. They must continue to work to place before the general public the only alternative to government: no government. It is a slow process, for the conditioning forces at work to keep the people subservient and to inculcate in them the acceptance of the idea that there must always be the rulers and the ruled—even in the most "democratic" countries—are powerful and all-embracing. Beginning with the family, the Church, the School, the Employer and the State, we are faced with authority at every turn. Yet ours is not a hopeless task for however slowly the anti-authoritarian ideas may progress they are at least in the right direction (which is more than can be said for the reformers who in wanting to patch up the existing system to make it palatable, are travelling in circles, their ultimate fate being that of the Liberals). And there are signs of some progress in the relations between parents and children; of open criticism and scepticism with regard to the authority and dogmas of the Church; and quite visible progress in the attitude to education and discipline in our schools compared with only twenty-five years ago.

ANARCHISTS are not dreamers. Dreamers are those who, with the experience of many Governments of differing hues and broken promises, still hope that their problems can be solved satisfactorily by politicians and by governments. The Anarchists are realists because they have broken through that vicious circle, and are not afraid to face the problems of life.

We are told, "If you have no Government, there will be chaos" and because most of us have never been allowed to grow up (and no person who is not responsible for running his life and being himself has grown up) we are haunted by the unknown the moment central authority

collapses. Yet, it is in such periods in history where the ordinary man and women, left to his or her own devices, has proved the creative powers and sense of responsibility which we all possess. That the ruling classes, the employers of labour, and the parasites of society do not recognise this is understandable; it would be against their interests to do so. But to us the wage earners, the cannon fodder, the silent masses who are directed first here then there, who are one day told that black is white and the next that white is black, it is in our interests to grow up and learn to "walk" without the aid of the ever-growing number of "knowing" hands which are offered to us, all of which lead us away from the direction we would want to take.

We Anarchists are not afraid of the unknown. Nor are we afraid that once freed from the bonds of authority our fellow beings will become raving lunatics bent on cutting one another's throats. Man's real interests lie in co-operation with his fellow beings. It is in our present society that the "law of the jungle" operates.

WILL TORY LAWYERS STILL CHAMPION CIVIL LIBERTIES?

ON October 8th, the administrative law sub-committee of the Inns of Court Conservative and Unionist Society issued a report on the growth of the power of the Executive and on problems of administrative law in England.

During the past twenty or thirty years the liberty of the individual has been gradually whittled down, and practices which, a generation ago, would have horrified our fathers, are to-day accepted as normal. It is therefore gratifying to see a protest coming from the lawyers themselves.

The report stated that during the past 50 years, for various reasons, the power of the Executive has tended to expand so that there is to-day a real danger that it will overtop the other functions of the administration and will be beyond the control of the Legislature or the Judiciary. It was clear that the attempt to protect administrative decisions from the scrutiny of the Judiciary was a threat to the liberty of the subject.

The principal Ministers of the Crown were to-day in the possession of the powers which enabled them to requisition the property of any subject without the right of appeal. They compel service in the armed forces, restrict entrance to or exit from the country, and even control how or when the subject was to earn his daily bread.

Those enormous powers were conferred by the legislature as a result of the war, and were prolonged by the Labour Government in the Supplies and Services Act, 1945. The report says that

there was no doubt that these powers were lawful, but it was doubtful if the legislature had realised how extensive they were.

The real and growing evil, say the Conservative lawyers, is the existence of ministerial autocracy, and they propose the following remedies:

(1) Legislation to remove existing clauses in Acts of Parliament which at present hamper the free exercise of the jurisdiction of the courts;

(2) Legislation to provide a right of appeal to the courts on points of law in all cases;

(3) Administrative tribunals to be made independent of the department interested, their establishment and procedure to come under the Lord Chancellor; and

(4) The establishment of a committee or commission of three under a High Court judge to review the procedure and constitution of administrative tribunals and make recommendations.

Now it is not difficult to see in these recommendations a main concern for the property rights of individuals faced—for example, with compulsory purchase by some Ministry or other. Nevertheless, the right, upheld in the past, for a private citizen to go to law against the government ought to be upheld in the general struggle against bureaucratic encroachment.

This report appeared two and a half weeks before the General Election.

The Conservative Party itself has been vociferously attacking Socialist bureaucratic trends. Mr. Churchill has appointed two eminent lawyers to non-legal ministerial positions. Will it be asking too much of political good faith to hope that the Tories will take notice of the law sub-committee's report?

Re-enter Mr. Churchill

"I am no flatterer—you've supped full of flattery; they say you like it, too—'tis no great wonder. He whose whole life has been assault and battery. At last may get a little tired of thunder; And, swallowing eulogy much more than satire, he May like being praised for every lucky blunder; Called 'Saviour of the Nations' not yet saved, And 'Europe's Liberator'—still enslaved."
—BYRON on the Duke of Wellington.

MR. Churchill has on a few occasions pointed out that he had no personal ambitions in seeking office since the wildest daydreams of his youth had been fully surpassed. The coy admission leads one to speculate on what Mr. Churchill's youthful daydreams might have been, but certainly he could never have expected the fates—or the Press?—to have been so kind to him in his old age. There are more fulsome tributes paid to Stalin, of course, but the build-ups received by Mr. Churchill are all the more flattering because the journalists who wrote them did not have to do so and got nothing in return but good story material.

When the young Mr. Churchill came home from the South African War, his exploits were popularised in the press, and he played well up to the rôle assigned him by the journalists of the time. It facilitated his entry into politics, where for the first time he encountered real opposition, the envy of fellow-Liberals and the sneers of the Conservatives. When he crossed the floor of the House and became a Tory, he became the most reactionary of the Tories, and in office and out continued on the road to higher office yet, until suddenly he found decisively he was out. The Conservative Party had never really welcomed him; it might be all very well thinking in terms of the sinner who comes to repentance, but not when the bishoprics are being handed out. . . .

As an independent Conservative it was possible to stand out against some of the crimes and blunders of the party. While the advocacy of Edward VIII did not come off, and left Mr. Churchill lonelier than ever, it was possible for him to stand out against the Chamberlain policy of appeasing the dictators. Mr. Churchill had been in his day an extreme admirer of them; it was never in the nature of the Churchill family to stay

too long supporting somebody else, however, and when the fascist powers began to menace the security of the British Empire, and when, too, an independent body of Conservatives dissociated itself from Munich, Mr. Churchill came back into the limelight once more. The sequel is known: when Chamberlain had to step down in 1940 and the Munich leaders fell with France, in came Mr. C. to lead the Government.

There can be no doubt that the effusive compliments he was paid then and has been paid ever since, both by his professional admirers and by the Press, have been exceedingly welcome to one whose whole life was "assault and battery"—in the political rather than the military sense. The Duke of Wellington fell for the same line of talk; he too did his best to live up to it, and in the same way our new Prime Minister—although not even a soldier—came to believe that he was "the man who won the war". Recently he reproached those who called him a warmonger with the claim that they were "ungrateful". The full implications of the remark are staggering.

Byron remarked of the Iron Duke: "There is no doubt that you deserve your ration. But pray give back a little to the nation."

How grateful the nation might well be to Mr. Churchill if he really had "won the war" and they had been out of it! But by and large it has never swallowed the Churchill myth. It has swallowed many incredible stories about the war, but not the oddly pacifistic belief that one unarmed old man saved England in its darkest hour. . . . It would, however, be heresy to say otherwise in Fleet Street, the Carlton Club and—possible—Transport House.

The parallel with Wellington is close enough, however, because one may legitimately consider how much he did as well. Tolstoy, writing of Napoleon, remarked that after all, these so-called great men were only the tickets of history, and he sought the cause of the war not so much in Napoleon as in some French corporal who signed on again for a further term in order to get a bounty. The legends about Churchill are growing and whether or not they will pass into history depends solely on how accurate a history of our times is compiled. Already we can see that Labour politicians and supporters referred to Mr. C. as a warmonger. One is inclined to agree with his reply that "the finger on the trigger" for the next world war might be American or Russian or

Chinese, but it would not be British, and we must add to that the statement that it matters exactly as much whether the British Prime Minister is inclined to warmongering as it does whether the Czechoslovakian Prime Minister is or not.

The truth is that once again a saviour has been hailed of nations which have not been saved. Europe has passed into its worst enslavement since the day of the Holy Roman Empire, and yet the Press keeps hailing its Liberator. The worst Mr. C. did as Prime Minister was not to cause war by imperialist provocation, but to skip gaily from capital to capital, more blithely than Chamberlain ever did, and hand over whole countries and territories, whose lives and liberties were sold to one despot in return for his support against another. Having sold out Eastern Europe to the new aggressor, Western Europe is delivered in a neat bundle to United States capitalism. The crowning glory of the Churchill administration in wartime was Yalta and Potsdam when—despite the fact that Stalin had very little bargaining power in those days—the present situation was created. Since the war he has gained in popularity amongst Continental statesmen who want a Marshall Aid feathered by his advocacy of such schemes as Strasbourg. If there is war, it will be Yalta versus Potsdam.

For all that, the gentleman who steps back into No. 10—with a small majority that baffles the pollsters and Press, who did not realise the Labour vote would not fall because it still gets the working-class district votes—still persuades himself and others that he is consistent and lets himself be persuaded that he is one of our greatest Prime Ministers. When Disraeli became Prime Minister at 64, he murmured ruefully that it came too late. In this respect, Mr. Churchill prefers to think with Gladstone. In his dotage that gentleman came out determined on his mission to pacify Ireland, which was rather more difficult than a mission to-day to pacify the remnants of the Liberal Party. But the comparison must rest with the old Iron Duke, who survived Waterloo to become Prime Minister and whose rigid Toryism in the post-war years soon destroyed the legend that he had been tough with the French—he became a little too tough for the British, and eventually London crowds turned to breaking his windows. Nowadays only high-spirited Young Tory sons of gentlemen creep out at night and break windows of Cabinet Ministers, of course, but while his windows may remain intact, a little fresh air may soon blow into the Churchill museum erected with such care in the minds of readers of the Press.

INTERNATIONALIST.

Firemen's Boycott

FIREMEN throughout the country have been carrying out a boycott against all duties except fire-fighting.

Traditionally, the Fire Brigade was paid the same wages as the police force, but following a recent increase for policemen, the firemen have fallen behind. Repeated demands and negotiations through the union have failed and the men have now turned to direct action.

Because of the special responsibility towards life and property invested in the Fire Service, however, the men have seen the irresponsibility of a normal strike, and so have staged boycotts of all cleaning and polishing, drill, lectures, and training duties in general.

The movement has been widespread. In London, the Midlands, Yorkshire and South Wales, 48-hour boycotts have been called, with 100 per cent. support—and even with the sympathy of the Fire Brigades' Union itself. It is an effective way of drawing attention to their grievances, showing their determination,

without alienating the sympathy of the public.

It is perhaps a surprise to the general public to realise that in such an essential service the men are forced to take action like this. Of course, the general public probably think the police force is an essential service—and so it is for the maintenance of State power, and the domination of property relationships.

But the police are an essentially repressive force; their existence is bound up with a repressive form of society, and they are the hirelings who protect that society, and are its first line of defence.

In a free society, the police would be redundant. But in any society, some form of organisation would have to be maintained to deal with the emergency of fire. Firemen, who perform dangerous and arduous work, often risking their lives to save the lives of others, should not have to fight for rewards equal to that given to the unproductive and officious copper.

It is only that the State sees that, for its existence, the police are more essential and therefore must be bought at a higher price. But for society and its safety, firemen are far more essential.

P.S.

