

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"The real law lives in our hearts. If our hearts are empty, no law or political reform can fill them."
 -LEO TOLSTOY

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Threepence

New Life to Land?

A NEW development in the question of loss of soil and of soil fertility has recently opened. This is the production of a synthetic plastic "conditioner" for exhausted soil which has been hailed in the most enthusiastic manner by many soil experts, agricultural economists and meteorologists in America.

When soil is exhausted by repeated cropping, it loses its power to hold together and to hold water. Hence in dry weather the top soil is blown off as "dust bowls", while in wet weather floods occur. Apart from loss of productivity, dust and floods have become recurrent annual disasters in the Missouri and Mississippi valleys.

The new development is a derivative of acrylonitrile, which is the starting point for many plastics, and is called "Krilium". According to Alistair Cooke, in the *Manchester Guardian*, "it is not a fertilizer. It does not feed in new foods like potassium or nitrates. Its action is like that of compost, manure or peat moss, in that it reconstitutes the physical structure of the soil to allow its natural nutrition through oxygen, water and other elements. But krilium works anywhere from one hundred to one thousand times as quickly and powerfully as the natural conditioners."

The chief science correspondent of the *New York Times* who attended a demonstration at the American Association for the Advancement of Science given at Philadelphia by Dr. C. A. Hochwalt, declared that krilium "will mark the

beginning of a revolutionary era in agriculture, in which man-made deserts may be turned into blooming gardens and green acres."

Krilium does not, like compost, add nutrients to the soil; but it does affect the physical structure in a manner which counteracts the processes which lead to erosion. It thus creates the necessary physical conditions whereby the soil can receive nutrients and become fertile. And, presumably, it also prevents the soil from being blown away and lost altogether as dust.

Dr. Hochwalt, who introduced it to the American Association, is the chief of research of the Monsanto Chemical Company. The company say that krilium will be available commercially in 1953. Despite the small quantities required—concentrations of no more than 0.1 per cent. by weight of soil—the cost is likely to be from £100 to £120 per acre (2 dollars per pound of the krilium powder). No doubt costs will later come down. The Monsanto Company is constructing a 50 million dollar factory for the production of acrylonitrile.

On the face of it, krilium offers hope of advance in the struggle against soil erosion. But its expense will make it difficult to apply except by government schemes of the type of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Small farmers and market gardeners employ methods of culture which enrich the soil and conserve it. Such people could afford krilium but they are the least likely to need it. Erosion affects the land of the

large farming syndicates who acquired it at low cost and just exhausted it by repeated cropping. Are they likely, or able, to expend £100 per acre on reconditioning when their whole economy was rapid immediate returns? Erosion also afflicts the land of poor peasants in India and Africa who would employ a soil conserving method but for economic stringency. This same factor will prevent them from deriving help from krilium.

Nevertheless, the new development shows that even the most appalling man-made "depressions" are susceptible of repair when scientific research is available to be applied to it. It may be that a powerful new weapon against soil erosion is now available. It remains to be seen whether our economic system will strangle its capabilities.

Union Leaders Cling to Nationalisation

THE leaders of two unions have just expressed their concern that the State control of their industries shall not be tampered with.

The executive committee of the National Union of Blast Furnacemen, in a resolution sent to Duncan Sandys, Minister of Supply, referred to "uncertainty and confusion... during this critical period" and stated: "That we, holding the profound belief that it is impossible to assure the necessary development and expansion of the industry, secure adequate production of iron and steel to fulfil the rearmament programme and maintain full employment unless the industry is planned and operated in the public interest, express our great concern at the decision of the Government to proceed with a Bill to annul the Iron and Steel Nationalisation Act."

The union, of course, need not worry unduly, since, as we have already dis-

cussed in these columns, it is unlikely that the Tories will interfere radically with the system of public control of the steel industry. All they are concerned about is the direction in which the profits flow, and that the products of the steel industry shall be at the service of the State for its rearmament programme.

If the profits go to the shareholders, but control remains in the hands of a public corporation, the Tories will be well satisfied—and for all we can see from the above resolution, so will the unions.

It is ironic to notice that, apart from a passing reference to full employment hardly to be feared in an industry so essential to war! the main concern of the Blast Furnacemen's leaders seems to be the rearmament programme, not the welfare of the workers.

The other union leader springing to defend the State, is our old friend Sir William Lawther, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, who, in a New Year's message told his members that private ownership was dead and that its return would be a disaster too terrible to contemplate.

Without wishing to debate that at this point, we must draw the conclusion that Sir William does not believe that a continuance of State control would be disastrous.

We do believe that the nationalisation of the mines has undoubtedly brought the miners certain small material benefits in the matter of welfare, but in return they have had to put themselves in the hands of their employers far more completely than ever they did under free enterprise.

And the material benefits they have gained are going to be nullified by the effects of re-armament—the increased pressure of work, the falling value of money.

Neither the steel workers nor the miners are going to find security or satisfaction in their position in their industries until they are themselves in control. The choice is not between nationalisation or a return to private ownership—except for those who have an interest in those alternatives. Capitalists want free enterprise; it's in their interests. Trade union leaders want nationalisation—that's in their interests. But the workers have no interest in either of these two systems of exploitation.

Their interest lies in working towards a system of no-exploitation. The system of workers' control.

And it needs years of peace. Neither of these are compatible with the present power-political forces which are dividing the world, and which will still concentrate on atom-bombs rather than on producing electricity to light our homes.

More Pay for Civil Servants

THE Treasury have decided that all Civil Servants earning up to £1,500 a year (£30 a week) are to have pay increases.

These have been arranged on a percentage basis on a sliding scale, decreasing as the salary increases: thus on the first £500 of salary, the increase is 10%, on any part of salary between £500 and £1,000, 5%; and between £1,000 and £1,500, 2%. The increases, which will benefit 600,000, will cost about £30 millions a year.

In all the various appeals we have had for restraint in pay demands, the official line has been that increases in reward must be earned by increases in production. But what do civil servants produce? Must they, in order to balance their bigger pay packet, produce more government forms? Must every document from now on be filled in in quintuplet instead of merely in triplicate? Shall we all be bombarded with com-

munications from the various Ministries, churned out by conscientious clerks and typists at the instruction of executives and administrators, hastened on their way by those Post Office departments who stand to gain their 10 per cent.?

We hope not. But even if we are, since this is the first time that Civil Service pay has been officially tied up with the cost of living index, as that index rises and the pay increase is shown to be of temporary relief only, no doubt the Whitehall production drive will prove temporary, too. The paper flood will abate and the suffering Civil Servants will drown their grievances in still more frequent cups of tea.

But the productive workers will have to continue to carry them on their backs. The £30 millions will have to be paid for by people like the railwaymen, for example, who were recently granted a wage increase of only 8 per cent. on incomes averaging much less than £500 a year.

Electric Power from Atomic Energy

THE U.S. Atomic Energy Commission has announced from Chicago that American scientists have harnessed atomic power to generate electricity.

After concentrating for years upon the destructive potential of atomic fission, time has been taken off to see if its obviously tremendous constructive possibilities are realisable.

In a two-day experiment, enough power was produced to run some of the Atomic Station's own plant, as well as all the electrical equipment of three averaged-sized homes.

This tiny experiment was only de-

signed to gain technical information necessary for further research into the problem of generating electricity at a "competitive" cost.

We wonder if the term "competitive" takes into account the cost in miners' lives of the existing method of generation—from coal?

However, the fact that a start has been made, holds out hope for the future. But, of course, it needs much more than the technical knowledge, before society will benefit from atom-produced electricity. It needs the social attitude that constructive activity is better than des-

Captain Carlsen and the Unknown Bulgarian

FOR nearly a week a ship's captain has "hit the headlines".

With their sense of what the public wants the newspaper editors have relegated all else to the inside pages. The odyssey of Captain Carlsen is the kind of story which is lapped up in our escapist society. How many people reading the accounts of his seven day wait for the trawler to take his ship in tow, and the welcome he and the trawler's mate and crew have been promised when David and Goliath enter Falmouth, have not re-lived the experience with themselves in the place of the captain, just as at the cinema they identify themselves with the Hollywood hero. What an escape from the humdrum of everyday existence! That it was quite unnecessary for Captain Carlsen to remain on his ship is beside the point, any more than there is any rhyme or reason for undergraduates at Oxford to climb the highest spire to affix a chamber pot to the lightning conductor. In America every week someone thinks up a new endurance feat—from sitting on the top of a pole for a fortnight to dancing marathons in which the winner is the last to collapse in a heap on the dance floor. In Russia where they take their endurance feats more seriously, it takes the form of laying thousands of bricks or hewing hundreds of tons of coal in a day, and of being named a Stakhanovite or Hero of the Revolution or some such pompous title.

Of course, we have all followed the salvage efforts with excitement. It represented a struggle against the elements, and the whole of mankind's history has been such a struggle, but there is surely a sense of proportion in all things. In the present case, the *Flying Enterprise* is an American ship and its rescuer, the *Turmoil*, a British trawler. To what extent does national pride play its parts in the excessive publicity? The fact, for instance, that recently somewhere off the coast of Spain, a ship was cut in two during a storm, with nine members of the crew stranded on the stern half and the

others adrift in boats, is surely drama of the highest order, especially in view of the eventual rescuing of the men and the towing to a Spanish port of the part of the ship containing the engine room and cargo. But nothing has been made of this in the Press.

AND what of that unfortunate Bulgarian, of whom we are only told that he is about 30 years old, who had travelled from Paris to London on the night ferry train by clinging all night to the rods underneath a sleeping compartment. The three-inch press report headed: "Paris to London Under Sleeping Car," tells us that the man was observed by the police as he dropped to the rails at Victoria Station, ran across the track, and walked off the platform. He was covered in grime.

The man was wearing two pairs of trousers and a thick woollen jacket. He pleaded that he was cold and hungry and near to exhaustion and immigration officers, before questioning him, gave him a hot meal.

Who was this nameless Bulgarian? He was a refugee from behind the Iron Curtain, hoping that the "democracies" would give him work and shelter. To have travelled the way he did he must have been a desperate and courageous man.

Surely if we recognise the courage in Captain Carlsen's quixotic gesture, we cannot withhold such recognition from this unnamed Bulgarian?

Yet how differently we treat these courageous men! When Captain Carlsen and first mate Dancy arrive in triumph at Falmouth, they know that a London hotel has offered them a "river suite" on the house. That obviously means the Savoy Hotel.

For the unnamed Bulgarian, an escort was provided to take him back to France!

R.

EGYPT AND MALAYA POTS AND KETTLES

EXAMPLES are never lacking as to the double-think which goes on among our politicians and in the Press. And by exposing this double-think we are not condoning the actions of one side or the other, but simply showing that before protesting about the barbarous behaviour of others we should first see whether our own conduct is such as to allow us to make such moral strictures on the actions of others.

What the *News Chronicle* calls "Cairo's extreme Left newspaper", *Al Gomhour al Misry*, last week printed a headline the translation of which reads:

"£1,000 for him who kills Erskine. And £100 for everyone who kills a British officer."

British protests have been lodged against the incitement to murder by the paper which stated in justification that it appreciates the motive which led Egypt's 'heroic Commandos' to fight the red-faced thieves with the help of others. It had decided to participate financially in the liberation battle by offering rewards."

Now let us look at the other side of the medal. Last September, Ching Peng, a Hokkien Chinese, was named officially for the first time as Secretary-General of the Malayan Communist Party.

"The authorities [that is the British authorities—ED.] have offered a reward of 80,000 Straits dollars (£9,400) to anyone who captures alive the Communist Party's secretary-general, and a reward of \$60,000 (£7,050) for anyone who delivers his dead body to the

authorities. In offering these rewards the authorities have never mentioned the secretary-general by name. As far as is known no member of the Malayan Communist hierarchy has ever been killed or captured.

"Ching Peng was described by Colonel Spencer Chapman in his book, *The Jungle is Neutral*, as a 'young and attractive Hokkien, who was later to become Britain's most trusted guerrilla representative'."

Manchester Guardian, 6/9/51.

Freedom of the Press

IN a debate on the freedom of the Press, arranged by the Council for Education in World Citizenship, Mr. Frank Owen, former editor of the *Evening Standard* and of the *Daily Mail*, declared that the freedom of the press was "slender".

He recalled the closing down of the *Daily Worker* by Herbert Morrison under Defence Regulation 18B (wouldn't it be more correct to say under 20D) When Morrison called a meeting of editors and announced his intention, Frank Owen opposed it. At the time, FREEDOM's predecessor *War Commentary* was one of the very few papers to protest, and

almost the only paper to protest earlier at the powers conferred on the Home Secretary by the Defence Regulations.

Frank Owen declared that "it is a very serious thought that it could be done again to-morrow morning". He also pointed out that the restriction on newsprint caused a real censorship of opinion, but added that "there is always an unofficial censorship, as I know as an editor, when someone comes round to your office from the boss, or perhaps even from the boss's wife, and says, 'Do you think that that is in good taste?' and you will get it in the neck for putting it in the paper."

