

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"We must discard warfare as an obsolete behaviour pattern"

Dr. BROCK CHISHOLM
 Director-General, World Health Organisation, United Nations.

NINE WORKERS SENTENCED TO DEATH BY BARCELONA MILITARY COURT

Save Franco's Victims

WHEN Mr. Stanton Griffis, until recently American Ambassador to Spain arrived in New York, he told newspapermen that in his opinion General Franco was the normal and natural mediator in any dispute between the Middle East and the West. This view was not altogether disinterested since he added that in a talk with Franco on the situation in the Middle East, Spain's dictator expressed the opinion that Egypt should accept the West's proposals for the Suez Canal. On the other hand, Franco as a successful mediator on behalf of the West would help to make his acceptance as a member of the anti-Russian bloc more palatable in certain circles still opposed to his régime. But Mr. Griffis said something else which, read in conjunction with the official confirmation by the United States State Department of the existence of a military agreement with General Franco for the establishment of naval and air bases in Spain (*Sunday Times*, 10/2/52), must cause considerable apprehension in all those men and women who recall the heroic struggle of the Spanish people to crush the military rising of Franco in 1936 and to build a new society freed from the oppression of Church and State.

The ex-Ambassador to Spain said: "There is a rising tide of friendly feeling towards Spain in the United States based on the realisation that Spain began to fight communism twenty years ago. In its understanding of the dangers of communism and its willingness to fight against it, Spain was fifteen years ahead of the United States."

Anyone knowing something of Spanish politics will know that the Stalinist creed has always been alien to the aspirations of the Spanish working classes. In spite of the artificial boost given to the Spanish C.P. by Russia being one of the few countries to supply arms—in return for gold—to the Spanish Republican Government, and using this to introduce Russian political agents, the

Spanish C.P. gained very little ground, so much so that when during the last weeks in Madrid it came to a show-down between them on the one hand and the Defence Council of Madrid—comprising the other anti-Franco elements—on the other, they were quickly defeated.

But for Mr. Griffis—like Franco—all militant opponents of the régime are labelled "Communist bandits and terrorists", a very convenient term now that "Communism" is anathema to American ears. By saying that Franco has been fighting Communism for the past twenty years, Mr. Griffis is presumably approving Franco's sending the Blue Divisions to fight on the Russian front—on Hitler's side! And if one applies such arguments one's conclusion must be that it was a ghastly mistake over to have gone to war against Hitler because he had warned the world of the Communist menace years before Franco came to power!

Such obvious contradictions are the inevitable result of the present policy of making "Communism" the scapegoat and the excuse for all the violence in the world to-day and for the building up of vast war machines. In Korea, in Mayala, in Egypt and Tunisia, the Communist bogey raises its ugly head. In Italy, all unbiased observers are in agreement that the reactionary de Gasperi Government continues in power solely by convincing the people that the only alternative is Russian Communism. And the same can be said of Germany and France, to mention only two other countries. As for America, we have already shown that the Communist bogey has been the excuse for the most violent attacks on the rights and liberties of the American people.

This trend has not passed unnoticed by many independent-minded people in all countries, who until recently honestly felt that the only alternative to the "Russian menace" was unconditional support of America. They are revising their views very rapidly.

WHEN asked about the Spanish dictator's standing, Mr. Griffis re-

plied: "It is my firm judgment that Franco is more firmly entrenched to-day than at any time since the beginning of the civil war when he first came to power. There is no organised opposition to him."

How untrue this is, is shown by the political trials being staged in Spain to-day though Franco has been in power for some twelve years. We reported three weeks ago (*FREEDOM*, 2/2/52) the trial by a Seville Military Tribunal of 75 members of the clandestine revolutionary syndicalist organisation, the C.N.T. (National Workers Confederation), which ended with the pronouncement of two death sentences and prison terms ranging from 8 to 30 years.

As we go to press, reports have come through of another secret trial now taking place in Barcelona of 30 members of this same organisation, at which the

death penalty will probably be demanded for at least nine of the accused.

During Franco's twelve years dictatorial rule in Spain thousands of militant opponents have been done to death or imprisoned for their resistance to his brutal régime. And yet there are always more men and women (in the Seville trial there were six women, and in Barcelona two women are among the accused) ready to take their place and continue the struggle. It is an injury to the Spanish revolutionaries when ill-informed or dishonest observers make such statements as that of Mr. Griffis. And as if to add insult to injury, he predicted that though there are few freedoms in Spain "with closer association with and aid from the United States, Franco will begin to allow the development of freedom in Spain."

The contrary is nearer the truth. The Americans are starting on the construction of naval bases and military airfields in Spain. How much stronger Franco will feel when he has to face general strikes as occurred in Spain last year, and determined resistance by the underground movement in the knowledge that behind him he has the might of American armaments and troops. After all, aren't we now being sold the story that Franco's régime was the first to resist Communist aggression?

WE must not let down the gallant Resistance in Spain. The very least we can do is to combat the falsehoods that are being circulated not only in America, but in this country as well, that Franco is solidly entrenched in Spain and that there is no active opposition to his régime. Every day men and women are dying and thousands have been in jail for years—not to mention the hundreds of thousands of Spaniards living in exile—because they have resisted a régime which has brutally suppressed all their most elementary rights and freedoms.

V.R.

The Miners are Not Impressed

THE leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers and of the National Coal Board are alike bewildered at the apparent ingratitude of the majority of the country's miners. For years the N.U.M. has campaigned for a pension scheme for its members, and the N.C.B., like a good partner in the Welfare State, has encouraged the idea.

Alas for the benevolent employer and the conscientious union leader! Hell may know no fury like a woman scorned, but a do-gooder turned down is a pitiful sight. For the bitter fact is, that the miners are looking their gift horse in the mouth—and finding the rotten teeth at the back.

For officialdom gives nothing away. Every reform has its stings, and the pension scheme worked out so carefully by the leaders of the coal industry, is so hedged in with ifs, buts and conditions that there

is more sting than substance.

Proudly described, when it was first announced last October, as "a reform which the industry has long desired", the scheme promises miners the magnificent sum of 30/- a week on retirement at 65. At least, 30/- is the maximum and will only be paid if he has satisfied certain conditions. For instance, if he has often been absent from work, his pension will be reduced accordingly, even though he may have paid in his contributions regularly.

For, of course, he has to pay in to the scheme all his working days in order to get this enormous benefit when he retires. Not that he alone does the paying. The N.C.B., in its generosity, is going to kick in with "a handsome donation of £2,000,000" and an undertaking to meet an expected deficit for the next 30 years. Above that, the N.C.B. will pay 2s. a week into each man's pension fund, as against his own payment of only 1s. 6d. a week.

This seems all right on paper. But the miners are not impressed. Over all the country, only half of the miners have consented to join the scheme, and in Yorkshire only 38 per cent. joined—10 per cent. leaving again within one month, while in the East Midlands region only 35 per cent. joined, 16 per cent. leaving again.

The reasons for the miners' poor response are several. In the first place, the N.C.B. began to deduct contributions from all miners' pay packets as soon as the scheme began to operate—Jan. 1st. There was a sort of "contracting out"

practice here, and any miner who did not actually say he did not want to be in the scheme found his pay packet lighter by 1s. 6d.

Since they had been given three months to make up their minds about it, the miners had seen no urgency in the matter—until they suddenly found the contributions being stopped from their pay. Now, miners traditionally have fought against every deduction made from their wages, but there is now an impressive list including payments on such tools and equipment as they have to pay for themselves, national insurance, income tax and trade union dues (collected, since nationalisation, by the employer!) This last deduction, made without consulting them, seemed an unwarranted imposition. "No one," a Yorkshire miner told a reporter, "has a right to take my money without my permission."

The second snag the miners see in the scheme is one which is already affecting every pension scheme—the falling value of money. 30/- is worth little enough now; what will it be worth in a few years' time? A miner of 40 to-day has another 25 years before he qualifies for his pension. 25 years ago, 30/- was a workman's wage—the equivalent of about £6 to-day. If money falls in value at the same rate for the next 25 years, 30/- will be worth about 7s. 6d. to-day. And, in fact, money is falling in value faster to-day than ever before. Is it worth it? Only the older men, those retiring in the near future, think so.

Another reason for the miners' apathy is that if, for any reason, a man wishes to leave the industry within the next ten years, he will not be allowed to withdraw from the scheme all he has paid in. He will get a proportion—not all. This provision was insisted upon by the Government (the Labour Government,

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Communist Party's Programme

The Uses of Empty Rhetoric

IN a recent article in the *Daily Worker*, Palme-Dutt, Vice-Chairman of the Party, "clarifies the problems on which discussion will go forward before this year's Party Congress in April." The substance of the article is pretty tenuous, but the way in which it is written and a certain approximation to the manner of some of the East European party pronouncements lead it interest.

Communist Policy

First, Dutt emphasises the "policy of peace". It is needless to say that this has nothing to do with anti-militarism proper but solely with backing the attitude of Russia ("Vishinsky has held the initiative in the fight for peace at the United Nations meetings in Paris").

Second, comes an old acquaintance, "Unity of Labour Movement". This is described as "the fight for a militant alternative policy and leadership of the Labour Movement," and is just the old boring-from-within game, the would-be popular front. But the Labour Party, for all its corruptness, has seen enough of Lenin's "policy of the United Front" (whereby the Party joins with another organisation with the aim of dominating it, or failing that, of destroying it) to be taken in. For most left-wing organisations, the overtures of the Communist Party are recognised only too clearly as the kiss of death. The Pacifist movement, swayed by its Christian brotherhood attitude,

is the weakest in this respect, and is likely to be more damaged by its flirting with the C.P. than other less soft organisations.

"Rising Spirit of Unrest"

Dutt invokes the "rising anger and militancy of the working people," in almost ludicrously urgent terms: "The supreme need now is to develop unity in action, and to translate the widespread discontent, disillusionment and opposition into a politically conscious militant fight for a positive alternative programme and leadership."

Of course, Dutt has been at it for years, churning out the stuff month by month in the *Labour Monthly* and in articles, programmes, manifestos and what not. It is not surprising that the old words and clichés are so barren and empty.

Not that the C.P. minds that. Their stuff is for empty but discontented minds. If they can use them for a few months, a few years, they do not mind if they enter finally that apathetic and politically disheartened scrap-heap, "the largest political party in the world"—the ex-Communists.

Some Reflections

Dutt ends up by denouncing and defining Left and Right deviations. The defining is particularly important for preventing the "free, democratic discussion at all levels of the Party" from developing into anything except the original directives from Moscow. A sample of this defining process is the "Right opportunist deviation" of "underestimation of the new moods among the

Labour Party" (they have been already stated by Dutt), or "distortion of the correct task of co-operation with the Labour Party workers..." (Italics ours—the correct line being the party line, not that which emerges in discussion.)

Here we see the rôle of discussion in the C.P.—it means doing your homework properly, knowing the party line thoroughly.

The laying down of this party line, and in this form, is perfectly in line with the methods used in countries of the purges. In fact, one is astonished to look at the English C.P. and see the same old figures, Pollitt, Dutt, J. R. Campbell, who having been at the top for 20 or 25 years, dispute occasional correction by Moscow. Perhaps they have imbibed something of the traditional British stability in politics.

"New-Speak"

But the other thing that is illustrated graphically by Duff's policy article is the use of words to defeat thought. The trend that interested George Orwell so much, and which he partly embodied in the concept of "New-Speak" in 1984. There are the rhetorical questions modelled on the style of Stalin.

"What will be the central task before the Congress?" There is no doubt of the answer to this question. The Central task before the Congress will be... 5 lines of print before one gets to the mouse which the mountain of rhetoric brings forth—"unity of the whole Labour Movement". All the talk about the split in the Labour Party (Bevan is not directly named) about the "deep anger of the peoples", about "resolve", or the "rising struggle" have the effect of diverting any party member from objectively examining the actual situation—such an activity would be "sectarian weakness", from coming to any independent judgment. The verbiage is mere drum-stuff to bring the "party cadres" into line behind—the slogans of Moscow.

BUSINESS PROFITS UP

THAT Big Business prospers out of wars is now considered a rather old fashioned point of view. Wars are now Crusades (at least on one side of no-man's land) and only the enemy has mean, materialistic motives for starting the trouble. (It is also to be noted that it is always the "enemy" who starts the wars!)

But the annual report of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue recently published, provide us with some very interesting figures on the changes in trading and profits of individual industries as well as in the whole industrial structure over the past ten years.

According to the report, trading profits earned in agriculture, after setting aside depreciation allowances but before meeting taxation, rose from £3 millions in 1939-40 to £140 millions in 1949-50. There was an increase of as much as £60 millions between 1948-9 and 1949-50. Trading profits of cotton companies rose from about £4 millions in 1939 to £40 millions in 1949-50, those of wool companies from £3 millions to £36 millions, and those of other textile firms from £8 millions to £56 millions. In contrast, total trading profits over the same period increased from around £1,000 millions to £2,284 millions. Profits of the chemical, iron and steel, vehicle, drink, and paper industries and of the whole-

sale and retail trade rose at a similar rate. These figures include the results of public and private limited companies, partnerships, one-man businesses, some local authorities, and societies.

The latest Inland Revenue report gives further details of the financial operations of limited companies. These include particulars of turnover, costs, taxation, and dividends, and provide some explanation of the changes in total trading profits. For example, the trading profits of cotton, wool, and other textile companies as a percentage of total turnover have risen sharply since 1939. In that year the ratio for cotton firms was 4.4 per cent., for wool 2.8 per cent., and for other textile companies 7.3 per cent.; by 1949-50 these had risen to 11.4 per cent., 12.7 per cent., and 12.4 per cent. respectively.

In the same way the percentage for leather companies had jumped from 5.8 per cent. to 15 per cent. The proportion of profits to turnover in the electrical engineering, vehicle, and chemical industries, and in the food and retail trade are much the same as they were before the war.

It is also interesting to note that there has been a sharp fall in the "profitability" among breweries and tobacco companies. These "poor man's pleasures" have suffered because the poor man is poorer.

MAX HÖLZ - A German Revolutionary

There are some revolutionary leaders whose names become legends among their people but who are seldom to be found in the history books, or if they do, are dismissed as bandits in a vague way which illustrates the academic historian's helplessness when dealing with spontaneous revolutionary upsurges which do not provide a mass of documents. Some years ago, Dwight MacDonald wrote of "those resources of spontaneous direct action by the masses themselves which are the best guarantee against the bureaucratic degeneration that has taken place in the Russian revolution; popular leaders like Makhno, Villa, John Brown and Max Hölz, who are never completely differentiated from the submerged masses who throw them up as symbols, incarnations of their needs, desires, talents—such men can teach us much to-day, if not by their books then by their lives."

This account of the life of Max Hölz has been written for *Freedom* by three of his comrades who shared his struggle and his trial.

MAX HOLTZ, born in 1889, was the son of a poor saw-mill worker in the little town of Risa, in Saxony. In his earliest youth he was made conscious of the poverty of the workers, and felt it in his own body. He was only eleven years old when he had to help support the family. In the summer he worked as a herdsman and in the winter on a threshing machine. When he was sixteen years old, he emigrated to England. Here he found work and succeeded with great difficulty, by working at night, in saving enough money to study at a technical college (the Chelsea Polytechnic). Then he returned to Germany with the intention of studying further but had to drop his studies on account of his bad health and lack of money.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Hölz too was seized by the artificially stimulated war-enthusiasm and joined the army as a volunteer. He came home after the war an exasperated adversary of militarism. Here he joined the army of the unemployed. He was elected chairman of an unemployed-workers-council, and in this situation he was soon in conflict with the authorities. And since the unemployed were regarded by these authorities as rather less valuable than cattle, Hölz organised "self-help" and forced the proprietors of the big landed estates to deliver food, potatoes and firewood. On the occasion of a demonstration in the town of Falkenstein, the mayor was forced to march at the head of an unemployed workers' demonstration, with a placard on which the demands of the unemployed were written.

Hölz had to flee and until the time of the Kapp-putsch¹ was hidden by friends. During the time when he was living illegally, he found his way to the Spartacus League.² Max Hölz was not a theorist and did not join the revolutionaries on account of Marxist or anarchist theories, of which he knew nothing. He had never been a member of a political party or a trade union; all his actions had their origin in his elementary sense of justice.

In March, 1920, the reactionary forces in Germany, nursed by the Weimar Republic, thought that the time was favourable to put a stop to the activities and demands of the workers, and at the same time make an end to the Republic of Weimar. The German army was set into march to overthrow the Republic. The workers' answer to this provocation developed spontaneously. First, they declared a general strike and then they

confiscated the arms of the "Home-Guards". (These Home-Guards were para-military reactionary organisations built up with the help of the government to fight the demands of the workers when need should arise, and were found in almost every village, town or city). In possession of the arms of the Home-Guards, the workers were able to fight the army.

In the province of Saxony, Hölz became the leader of the armed workers. Throughout Germany the workers proved that their committees of action could fight. Everywhere when the reactionary army dared to show itself, it was routed. In less than two weeks the reactionary forces were beaten all over the country.

The Social-Democratic government of Germany had fled from Berlin when the reactionary forces had started to march against the Republic, but when the workers were the masters of the situation the government came back to Berlin. But the workers were aroused, and after the reactionary forces had been beaten, many of them thought the time had come to march on for the social revolution, and some of them did. But the government mobilised troops to fight these very workers who had, two weeks before, saved the government from the reactionaries. Between these workers and the government troops several battles were fought.

In this situation, the government made a proclamation to the workers' fighting formations in which it said that all their demands would be fulfilled if they laid down their arms and were willing to make an agreement with the government. This proclamation caused a split among the workers, for many among them were Social-Democrats who still believed in the Social-Democratic Government. So the agreement was made. Of this agreement few of the promises were kept, and those that were, turned out in practise to be not worth the paper on which they were written. The politicians played a shady part in this, working for the government, but giving the appearance of being for the workers.

But Max Hölz was not bluffed by this agreement and continued his struggle. The state, which had saved itself by fraud, put a price of 100,000 marks on his head to which the lords of industry in Saxony added another 500,000 marks.

Two Army Divisions—20,000 men—mobilised by the government against Max Hölz and his revolutionary workers to render these dangerous enemies of capitalism harmless, and that very action of the government destroyed the prestige of the state. Hölz could not bring about a change in the prevailing conditions, but by his boldness and determination he won the sympathy of the workers. (Once he fell into the hands of the police, and when they had got him to the police

station, Hölz, like lightning, pulled two hand-grenades out of his pockets and said, "Don't move!" and left the disconcerted police standing there.)

The Communist Party, or more accurately, the central committee of this party moved far away from Hölz. In their newspaper, *Die Rote Fahne*, they urged the suppression of Hölz as a brigand chief. This committee, led by Paul Levy, was incapable of understanding the situation correctly. Already when the reactionary forces under Major Kapp had marched against the workers and the republic, the central committee had proclaimed in *Die Rote Fahne*, "In the struggle between the reactionary forces and democracy, we Communists remain neutral! But the reactionary forces were not marching only against the democracy, they marched in the first place against the workers; and the members of the Communist Party did not obey the slogans of their central committee; they joined the ranks of the workers and fought the reaction. This was not surprising since at that time most of the members of the Communist Party had

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SEAPORT LONDON

TIDE OF LONDON, by Mervyn Savill. (Britannicus Liber, 45/-)

LONDON was described as the "great wen" more than a century ago. Since those days its sprawling bulk has bestraddled not merely the Thames but stretched across the whole surrounding countryside. In particular, however, it is the last century that has completely deformed it and made it such a monstrous ugly shape, without tradition, use or comfort. The era of capitalism triumphant, with its policy of bespoiling the countryside, and taking everything to the centre, has pauperised many parts of the country and while it was doing it, swollen the "wen" of London to a monstrous tumour. The problem of the decentralist to-day is how to decrease London; how to abolish the metropolis where it takes an hour to go to work, and to create townships which are not The Centre of the country, but which are places in their own right.

In this connection it is interesting to read books like Mr. Savill's, which do not and cannot deal with this abnormal excrescence we call "London", but single out particular aspects of London, townships in their own right, with common

traditions always in danger of being swamped but surviving nevertheless. In *Tide of London* he deals with a town which is a town in its own right, and not a parasite growth. The London whose history he traces is the port, the town of seamen and dockers that has stood in the East End for centuries.

London began as a walled fortress of the Romans against the inhabitants of the banks of the Thames. This purely arbitrary arrangement, however, has fashioned the history of the island for centuries. By the time of the fifteenth century, as we are shown in this book, London was already "fast outgrowing its cradle," and within the famous seven gates the City was growing by leaps and bounds. It was still composed of self-governing communities, however, and it is much later that the enormous expansion given to London loses its character altogether. The problem of fitting London into a free society is not an impossible one. In its present form it was fitted and shaped to suit a centralist, money-grabbing society, where the land was seized by jerry-builders.

The book, however, in the main deals with the people of the seaport, and as the last week or two has accentuated once again, it is usually the people who are not written about in history, but merely whoever happens to be occupying the throne at the moment.

Seaport London meets a great dividing line at the Aldgate Pump: the division between "the City" and the East End. On one side, the shipping offices of Fenchurch Street, and beyond that the commercial empire of E.C.3—on the other side, the way to the bustling highway of Cable Street and what was once Ratcliff Highway. As the author observes:

"At no time in the history of England has there been such contrast between wealth and poverty as in the tasteless opulence of the Victorian bourgeoisie and the black abject misery of the riverside folk."

To-day we see the results of this. The "tasteless opulence" has gone to seed and become the gloomy mausoleums of Paddington, parts of Kensington, Camden Town, much of Hampstead and Kilburn, and other desolate reminders of what was once the English ruling class. These great gaunt mansions no longer house the middle classes and have become dingy flats and boarding houses; the basement and attic for the skivvies are let as self-contained flats at two guineas a week, and even the mews come in handy at £50 key-money. On the other hand, the black misery of the riverside hovels has been struck by the blitz, and is perhaps a little better because of it, by virtue of the newer houses where they exist.

It will, however, be long before, at present rates of progress and allowing for the setbacks of war preparations (never mind war itself) the ravages of "Victorianism" will be overcome. It is our conviction that the actual forward possibilities of this generation cannot be achieved without decentralisation. This means that one must give a sense of community which the great wen of London can never have. In describing Londoners and London—at least, one particular township resting upon the tide of London—throughout the ages, this book achieves something in that direction. Henry of Navarre decided that Paris was, after all, worth a mass, and Mervyn Savill lucidly explains to us how London might, after all, be worth the candle.

INTERNATIONALIST.

COMMENT

When Kings Die

THE number of occasions when FREEDOM has made references to the late King George VI can be counted on the fingers of one hand. We do not propose to resuscitate him now that he is dead. From the oceans of ink that have been used to extol all his virtues we gather that he was a good father, and a man with simple tastes who preferred duck shooting to dictatorship, a virtue which made him a "model king".

Kingship is a dying profession. At one time it was a dangerous one, too. But as we have seen only too well, the substitution of a President for a King has not changed society by one jot. For Presidents (with the exception of the United States) like kings, are puppets. The real power lies elsewhere. Who, for instance, ever hears of or can name the President of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, or of Italy or Portugal? The only kings who are at all troublesome are the ex-kings and then again not *per se*, but because a group of intriguing politicians out of power seek to use the issue of monarchy as a lever to ensure their return to power.

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KINGS are, in a way, like film stars and politicians. They are "built up" by the popular Press. We know every detail about them, from the clothes they wear to the food they eat. Every banal remark they make is magnified into a major statement, every cough or sneeze has its interpretation for the nation. Their children are super-children. Their day to day duties are photographed and reported in every minute detail. We know how many times they wave and smile at each ceremony and our sympathies are enlisted at the astronomical statistics on hand-shaking that is the lot of kings. But kings are subject to the same laws of nature as are paupers. A successor steps into their shoes the moment they are dead. The flags at half-mast are hoisted, the black bordered Press suddenly leaps into life reporting the colourful pageantry which accompanies the proclamation of the new monarch; three cheers are called for, and the vast publicity machine of the popular Press turns its full weight to explore and exploit, to dissect and build up the new king. And the late king buried alongside his predecessors disappears into oblivion.

But not quite as quickly as all that. The death of a king sets a whole machinery of ritual into action. The "Royal Coffin" as it is referred to, is no ordinary coffin. And the funeral is no ordinary

funeral. In supreme command is the Duke of Norfolk who, it appears, is a kind of Royal Director of Funerals, by right, and during the ten days between the death of a king and his funeral, each day the Press wallows in the sordid details of the "royal coffin's" progress. And the public laps it all up. Indeed, "so anxious are people to watch the king's funeral that some are reported to be paying up to a hundred guineas for a window overlooking the streets along which the Royal cortege will pass" (*Sunday Pictorial*, 10/2/52), and in last Sunday's popular Press we were shown photographs of the preparations for this royal funeral. We have no hesitation in calling it a "morbid show". The newspaper above referred to, states that so great is the demand for window-space "that two rival theatre ticket agencies are sending representatives to ask householders to allow them to handle the 'lettings'." And at Windsor the same is happening. "Within half-an-hour of the King's death, Windsor hotels, restaurants and shops were taking phone calls from people all over the country." (Our italics.)

Such evidence of the people's love for their late King is far from convincing. Any more than all the messages of "sympathy" from the heads of States, and the outward signs of mourning (footballers playing in black armbands, and the crowds singing "Abide With Me," or shop windows specially dressed for the occasion, one, for instance, placing two glittering foot appliances on a mauve cushion!) convince us that these are anything more than evidence of the hypocrisy and morbidity of our epoch.

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IN exposing the pathological aspects of public reaction to the death of kings one must not ignore the more subtle significance of the "Pomp and Circumstance"—as the *Observer* (10/2/52) describes it, attached to kingship. That all politicians are unanimous in wanting a secure monarchy, though jealously protecting themselves from any political interference by the monarch, is noteworthy, as is the fact that for the past three years or more it has been impossible to open a newspaper or illustrated magazine without being assaulted by royal pictures, impending royal romances and royal biographies. One wonders whether even the poor Russian people have been subjected to a bombardment of photos and odes to Stalin such as we have of the Royal Family!

LIBERTARIAN.

A Salutory Immoralist

NORMAN DOUGLAS, who died at Capri on February 9th, at the age of 83, exerted a remarkable influence on English literary thought. He is chiefly known by one book, his novel *South Wind*; yet this was published in 1917 during all the hysteria of war and so inauspiciously that Douglas sold the copy-right outright for £75. In later years it had a steady sale, but even from the first it powerfully affected the post-1918 novelists (Aldous Huxley's first novel, *Crome Yellow*, shows this influence very clearly indeed; so, in a different way, do the novels of Ronald Firbank.) This influence is very hard to define but it chiefly consisted in an attitude of suspended judgment on moral issues which could not have been in sharper contrast to that of such pre-1914 figures as Galsworthy, Wells, Shaw, Arnold Bennett and other completely forgotten celebrities.

South Wind is a desultory sort of book without much obvious structure, and reviewers and critics frequently insisted that had no plot. Douglas himself, characteristically wrote, however (I quote from memory), "Plot? The book is all

plot! How to make murder palatable to a bishop!" This reply contains the essence of Douglas' influence, and it might be described as a revolt against moral judgment, a Greek attitude brought up to date—for Douglas was also a classical scholar, and an accomplished zoologist and geologist in his early days as well as a historian of great erudition. His revolt has none of the puritan quality of distaste for mankind. Indeed, his books contain a love of learning and of people—not "mankind" or the masses, but of the people of South Italy or Africa or Greece or Vorarlberg with whom he was personally in contact, and whose lives he knew. Something of this attitude emerges in his polemic with D. H. Lawrence, *A Plea for Better Manners*.

Douglas never showed any moral purpose, never ground any political axe: yet his books reveal more of the state of peasants than many a special study. There is the account of the people of Vorarlberg impoverished in 1918 by the taking of their cattle as reparations: or the insight into the poverty of Calabria. He revolted against English public-

school life—"the herd system and team-life, congenital to many, went against my grain," and he continued to value individuals and to despise that group loyalty which is the refuge of feeble people. His dislike of socialism is shown by his contemptuous reference to ants, insects he also despised, as "methodical socialists" and "insufferable communists". His books contain many telling aphorisms (often a reversal of popular sayings) like, "Never strike a child except in anger," or "It seldom pays to be rude: it never pays to be only half rude."

Douglas was criticized for his apparent unconcern about current events, but critics hated his book *How About Europe?* (1930) in which he castigated the complacency of a society that applauded without self-criticism Katherine Mayo's famous *Mother India*. Few things are more amusing than his account of the 1914 war as it affected him, in *Alone* (1921), and his remedy to prevent wars was eminently practical—to shoot every newspaper proprietor in Europe!

His hatred of the Christian religion came from a life affirmative attitude that detested the asceticism inherent in Christianity, and which is also seen in his extraordinary little book on *London Street Games*, with its remarkable insight into the ways of children.

All these qualities are to be found in *South Wind* and even more profoundly in *Old Calabria* (1915), rightly regarded by his admirers as his masterpiece. Douglas can be claimed by no particular trend of thought, but his influence has been most salutary, and is likely to be felt long after the wind of more celebrated iconoclasts like Bernard Shaw, has died down to nothing. A long life and a merry one.

J.H.

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1. KAPP PUTSCH: A counter-revolutionary outbreak of the reactionary forces in Germany under the military leadership of Major Kapp. Backed by former officers of the Kaiser's army, the big landed estate owners, and capitalism in general. The Putsch was beaten by the workers by a general strike and battles against the German army. The cowardly government fled as soon as the Putsch broke out and led it to the workers to fight.

2. THE SPARTACUS LEAGUE: The trend of the German revolutionary forces was, from the start quite different from the trend of the Bolsheviks. Notable in this trend were Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The League was established illegally in 1916 by Liebknecht and its first outbreak was the Wilhelmshaven revolt in the German Navy. It was publicly proclaimed in Berlin in December 1918, at the time of heavy fighting in the city. A few weeks later, in January 1919, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were assassinated by reactionary officers of the Weimar republic. The Social-Democratic government never punished these officers—the officers were never "discovered". See *Spartacus et la commune de Berlin* (1918-19) by André et Dory Dordhommeaux (Le Libérateur, 145 Quai de Valmy, Paris; 150 francs.)

Lenin, to whom the developments in Germany were too "radical" on account of the trends which the revolution there took (of course it was not an anarchist revolution), wrote his book *Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, against these tendencies. The Machiavellian Lenin did not write this book against the German revolutionaries, he wanted to keep them on his side for the present. So he wrote it against the revolutionaries in Holland where nothing had happened in revolutionary actions.

Rosa Luxemburg characterised the doctrine of the Bolsheviks for ruling the masses, as the intellect of a night-watchman, but she was mistaken like so many good revolutionaries in Germany who taught that the faults of the Bolsheviks had their roots only in the stupidity of the Bolsheviks, or at worst, in the prevailing conditions in Russia. To-day we know better. The absolute confidence and faith which the workers had in Russia at the start of the revolution, turned out to be a catastrophe for the revolutionary movement in Germany and did much to make possible Hitler's rise to power. We know to-day that in 1921 there already existed an agreement between Moscow and the German Government to help each other in their policies.

SIMPLIFICATION A BOGEY?

IN proposing the solutions to certain problems one often finds oneself running up against a wall of unbelief which can only be based upon prejudice. Sometimes the same resistance takes the form of an altogether undue insistence on difficulties. People who are courageous enough when it comes to tackling some difficult problems are rendered quite impotent in the face of some, usually much slighter, difficulties in the way of others. It becomes clear when one examines this phenomenon, that the insistence on difficulties merely covers an interior resistance to the whole proposition.

Such a process of prejudice and pusillanimity is seen in a clear enough light in such controversial questions as Birth Control. Those who cannot rely on so-called moral objections fall back on insisting on the difficulties, the possibility (represented as probability) of error, alleged aesthetic difficulties, and so on. It is not hard to see that early training and prevailing theological teachings about the wickedness of sexual enjoyment still exert their influence, disguised as exaggerated insistence upon the obstacles to be overcome.

The correspondence columns in this issue bring to the surface another deeply rooted prejudice, but one much harder to understand: the refusal to consider the possibility that this country could produce enough food to feed its population. One can only speculate on the causes of this curious prejudice.

Our correspondent draws upon a reply made by Lord Carrington on behalf of the Government which was the subject of an editorial comment in FREEDOM a few weeks ago. His reply, clearly intended to discredit the feasibility of self-sufficiency in food production, or a nearer approach to it, was couched within the framework of existing import and export policy. In a word, it presupposed the continuance of the present mode of capitalist economy. Such a reply, therefore, is a peculiar choice for one who wishes to discuss a proposition in the correspondence columns of FREEDOM. One might as well quote Russian sources for a particular hobby horse one might have about socialism—and with as much hope of carrying conviction.

What are the elementary facts in this matter? Up till 1800 the amount of food imported into Britain was negligible: it consisted of spices, tea, etc., and included no staple product. Agricultural imports began to flow in, not from failure or saturation of home farming, but as payment for industrial exports whose markets were naturally the under-industrialised countries of the world. In such countries large-scale production, low rent and abundance of cheap labour easily undersold the British farmers. The result was a decline in the area actually farmed. Thus, in 1866 there were 18,000,000 acres of arable land in England. By 1910 this had fallen to 14,650,000; and by 1938 to 8,780,000 acres—less than half the figure of 70 years before.

One may illustrate this in another way. During the 7 years, 1853-1860, three-quarters of the wheat consumed was home-grown. Twenty-five years later, in 1876-86, only one-third of the total wheat consumption was home-grown. (J. B. Lawes: quoted by Kropotkin *Fields, Factories and Workshops*.) Lord Ernle put the same figures in a dif-

ferent way: in 1870 the land fed 26,000,000 people: in 1914, only 16,000,000. (*The Land and its People*, p. 108.)

There were thus solid physical reasons why the people of this country came to derive a higher and higher proportion of their food from abroad: but they were certainly not simple physical inability to grow the food.

Another way of visualising the decline of agriculture is in the figures for the so-called Rural Exodus caused by the expansion of industry with consequent demand for industrial labour and hence higher industrial wages at a time when rural decline was making for a fall in agricultural wages. Between 1861 and 1884 agriculture lost 717,000 men—a loss of 34 per cent.: by 1901 the loss had reached 45 per cent. Thus the 1861 agricultural population of 2,100,000 (7 per cent. of the total population) had fallen by 1901 to 1,152,500 (3 per cent. of the total population). With increasing population figures this century, the agricultural labourers represented only 2½ per cent. of the total in 1931.

Such a decline obviously can be reversed, the problem being a social and economic one rather than the simple struggle with "unfavourable" natural limitations which it is usually represented as.

What of other objections? There are obvious advantages in a simplified economy. The idea of particular countries specialising in one particular product is clearly a mere capitalistic specialisation, and requires finer and finer division of labour. The dehumanisation of work which this process involves is summed-up in Marx's phrase, "The division of labour is the assassination of a people."

Every integrated community of the past has shown a greater degree of self-sufficiency in production of all sorts of goods—whether food or paintings—than is the rule to-day. Psychologists and sociologists describe the ill-effects of over-specialisation. Yet there are many socialists and anarchists who regard simpler economy almost with fear. We are left wondering why.

MAX HÖLZ

Continued from p. 2

been members of the Spartacus League before the League became the Party in December, 1918. Needless to say, this amalgamation meant an end to the revolutionary aims of the Spartacus League. From the beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution in October, 1917, every emissary sent from Moscow to Germany had the primary task of making the German revolutionary movement accept the policy of Moscow, which meant inevitably the ruin and corruption of the revolutionary movement in Germany.

The workers grudgingly consented to the unintelligible "revolutionary tactics" of Moscow. It seemed very often to them that Moscow was going backwards and in the course of time they lost more and more of their faith in a social revolution. In the year 1923, the Communist Party put the worst of its "revolutionary tactics" over its members. It recommended (on orders from Moscow) a common "revolutionary front" for the "social revolution" with the N.S.D.A.P., the party of the Nazis. Lenin was seeking to ally himself with Hitler. As regards the agreement between the government and the revolutionary workers, which we have mentioned, in March, 1920, the central committee of the Communist Party agreed with the government to be only a "loyal" opposition. With this action the connection between the members and the central committee was severed. The members rejected the idea of being the dupes of a central committee kept by Moscow. In the Spring of 1920, a new anti-parliamentarian party was formed—the K.A.P. Communist Workers Party. This party was a political party, but took no part in elections, and never had a member in parliament. The only support for this party came from the workers in the factories. Every workshop elected from its workers a committee according to syndicalist methods, and this committee could be recalled by the workers at any time. These committees had no power whatever, and were only the spokesmen of the workers in the shop, to the workers of other

The School Building Crisis

"I suppose that the two ultimate elemental factors in education are, first, environment, and, secondly, personal influences. Those two factors are represented by the school premises and the school teachers."

—SIR ROBERT WOOD.

"The question has to be asked: 'Is this a place in which children can enjoy themselves?'"

—MINISTRY OF EDUCATION BULLETIN, No. 1.

"... the headmistress told him... that the whole mental and physical bearing of the pupils had noticeably improved as the direct effect of the environment."

—R.I.B.A. JOURNAL.

"It is part of the architect's problem to provide an atmosphere of freedom."

—EAST SUSSEX COUNTY ARCHITECT at R.I.B.A. School Planning Conference.

IN 1944, the School Buildings Committee appointed by the President of the Board of Education (who was Mr. R. A. Butler) issued its report, the third and fourth paragraphs of which said:

"The general background of our problem can be quickly drawn. Even before the war, school building fell short of what was needed to complete reorganisation and replace Black List schools. Damage by enemy action and the ban on virtually all school building work during the war have made things worse. After the war, therefore, there will be an immense leeway to make up, to which must be added the demands for new and improved accommodation which must arise from the adoption of any policy of education reform and reconstruction."

"It is clear, therefore, that when building operations can be resumed the country will be faced, among other claims, with a demand for school building vastly in excess of pre-war programmes, which were themselves in fact considerably smaller than real necessity required. If, therefore, the restoration and development of the education service is to be achieved with any reasonable speed, all obstacles to the rapid progress of building operations must, as far as possible, be removed."

The problem of school buildings became in fact more serious than the School Buildings Committee suggested, because of what educational authorities call the "bulge" of about a million

1 *Post-War Building Studies*, No. 2 (H.M.S.O., 1944).

children born in excess of the normal birth-rate during the war and in 1946 and 1947, who have now begun their school life.

"The forthcoming census is likely to reveal a fact of which education authorities for some time have been only too well aware, that the child population of Great Britain has outstripped the estimates on which the post-war schools building programme was based." (*The Builder*, 6/4/51).

The first schools built after the war were constructed either from standard one-storey hutting designed by the Ministry of Works or in a manner reminiscent of hutting camps with long corridors and projecting classroom wings, occupying a very large ground area and wasting a great deal of space. The principal reasons for this type of design were the ubiquitous influence of the army camp, the desire to get away from formal quadrangular plan of many schools built between the wars, the desire to standardise building methods in the interests of greater and quicker production, and the fact that they offer an easy way to provide the high standard of natural lighting and ventilation which the byelaws made under the Education Act of 1944 demand (a standard which all but two or three pre-war schools fail to meet). But as one writer emphasised in FREEDOM in 1948 when discussing the *New Schools* exhibition at the R.I.B.A., the most important and serious defect of the first post-war schools is that many of them were designed for obsolete

educational methods.

These strictures do not apply to all local education authorities, of course, and a particular exception is the Hertfordshire County Council which initiated a long-term programme of school building based upon a system of construction like the "Meccano" toy, of standard factory-made units which can be assembled in a variety of ways. These Hertfordshire schools, which were described in FREEDOM in 1948 in an article by J. P. Harrison, do great credit to those who commissioned and built them (the best of them is probably that designed by Messrs. Yorke, Rosenberg & Mardall, at Stevenage, which has been widely illustrated).

The series of economic "crises" and cuts in capital spending during the last few years reduced expenditure on new schools. The average net cost of secondary schools started in 1947 was about £320 per place (i.e., per child). For schools started in 1950 it was reduced to £290, and for schools started in 1951 it had to be not more than £240. Comparable figures for primary schools were: schools started before 1950, £200 per pupil, schools started in 1950, £170, and schools started in 1951, £140. It will be seen from these figures what drastic cuts have had to be made in the cost of schools, especially large ones, when the decreasing value of money is taken into account. The architect has had to provide more and more for less and less. This is why such schools as that at Stevenage probably represent the high-water mark so far as design and amenity are concerned.

Fortunately, there has grown up at the Ministry of Education, a team of architects called the Development Group who, as the *Sunday Times* says, "are the mainspring of the remarkable advance in school-building design and construction of the past few years". In a series of "Building Bulletins" they have propagated ideas which reflect an educational philosophy which is not commonly associated with state education.

Continued on p. 4

Wiser than their Elders

A LETTER recently appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* showing how the threat to academic freedom in America is in at least one case an actual reality, though again it is encouraging to see that in this case the students themselves are wiser and more human than their elders.

The letter points out that, "In December the administration of the University of Minnesota terminated Dr. Wiggins's appointment as a professor of philosophy. The grounds were his alleged incompetence. This charge came as a complete surprise to students and members of the faculty alike. Dr. Wiggins was one of the most popular lecturers at the university; he has an unquestionable academic record and a period of six years' service at the university. The Philosophy Department unanimously rejected the administration's charge of incompetence and Professor G. P. Conger, chairman of the department, declared: 'On the eve of my retirement I can sincerely say that if I can feel I have left behind me a group of students who feel a fraction of the admiration and respect for me that these students expressed for Doctor Wiggins, I shall retire a happy man.'

"The administration declared that no political pressure entered into the case.

But it was subsequently revealed that a number of State senators, who considered his political views 'embarrassing', had pressed for Dr. Wiggins's dismissal. Dr. Wiggins happens to be a negro with Socialist convictions.

"Professor D. W. Calhoun, of the university, has put it that 'the administration has capitulated to political and public hysteria, and has created a set of extremely ill-formulated academic "grounds" in order to disguise from itself and others the real motives for its action'.

"When the news of Dr. Wiggins's dismissal was broken to the students of the university (who number twenty thousand), the overwhelming majority of them decided to stand and fight for his reinstatement in the name of academic freedom. For this purpose they have organised themselves into a Students' Action Committee representing all shades of religious and political opinions. They are working in co-operation with such organisations as the Council of Industrial Organisations, American Federation of Labour, National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, the Civil Liberties Union, and many religious organisations."

shops and to the capitalists. The shops in towns or districts were connected on a federative basis, and the districts again over the whole country. This organisation was called the *Allgemeine Arbeiter Union* (General Labour Union). Max Hölz was a member of this union. The trade unions and the political parties were not able to cope with the ever-growing political and economic tensions in Germany. And the leaders of these trade unions and parties hated the idea of the revolution more than anything else, because a revolution would destroy their safe and well-paid jobs. The leaders in the parties and trade unions gave the orders, and the members had only to obey: no initiative was left to them. So, in the course of time, the members lost all self-reliance, self-responsibility and confidence in their own ability.

One of the principles of the General Labour Union was that all questions and matters which concerned the work and the workshop were the affairs of the workers only. So the workers regulated everything from placing workers in the shop or discharging somebody from the shop, down to the question of workshop hygiene and feeding. Of course, the employers sometimes tried to sabotage it with every kind of crookedness. But if this happened, the workers used direct action in the form of a strike at a minute's notice. That proved to be a good remedy. All this was the result of the initiative of the workers. The Communist Party, the biggest workers' party in the province of Saxony, took no part at all in it.

Max Hölz lived near the big chemical works at Leuna. Here, and in the nearby copper mines at Mansfeld, the General Labour Union had many members, and these are the places where the fighting which is known as the "insurrection of Central Germany", occurred later. Of course, these insurrections were not confined to Leuna and Mansfeld (this part of the province of Saxony is usually called Vogtland), but also in about a dozen other cities and towns in Western and Southern Germany, for instance, Düsseldorf, Mannheim, and Hagen. But it was in the Vogtland where Max Hölz was the instigator that this insurrection started.

The General Labour Union was very young yet, and it had not been able to reach a sufficient number of the workers with its "new conception" of the social revolution. The workers had previously been led by political parties and trade unions, organisations unfit by their nature (with the exception of the Spartacus League), for revolutionary activity.

Many members considered that the time was not yet opportune for an insurrection because there were still too few workers organised to take over the means of production and stave off the forces of reaction. This opinion was justified later when the insurrection broke out, and that was the reason why it failed not only in Saxony but also in the other parts of Germany.

MAX SCHRÖDER,
HERMANN HAHN,
EMIL ERDMANN.

Translation and Notes by W.F.

(To be concluded)

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CAN WE FEED OURSELVES?

YOUR contributor, P.S., is no doubt happy creating his Brave New British World, and urging that we adopt autarky as soon as possible, but I am not.

I quote him, dated January 26th: "... agriculture and forestry, deliberately kept down by the industrialists, must be developed to produce as much as is humanly possible—and with modern knowledge wedded to the traditions of good husbandry in this country, we could feed ourselves better than we are fed to-day."

It is no use getting starry-eyed about agriculture, mate. A plan has been made for self-support in agriculture. And (I quote Lord Carrington, House of Lords, November 27th last) the diet would consist largely of bread, oatmeal and barley meal or their products, potatoes and such vegetables as carrots and cabbages, together with very small quantities of milk and meat, largely cow beef. There would be little or no bacon, eggs or beer.

Autarky in anything is an economic wisp, prompted by tyrants. And please, mate, don't come the old "it surely is not beyond the wit of man" stuff, because this is a phrase I have come to regard as an infallible sign that the writer has reached the end of his mental tether; it merely means that the writer hasn't the remotest clue how a thing can be done.

You accuse Churchill of thinking in terms of 1879; you, yourself, dear old P.S., are thinking in terms of somewhere between 1066 and the Repeal of the Corn Laws. Far better would it be to promote such international amity that countries much more eminently endowed with agricultural factors supply us with food, and we make the best of our other factors. It is too late to do other than dree our industrial wierd.

Surely it is not beyond the wit of man to promote, etc., etc.

London, W.1. A. B. CHALKLEY.

P.S. replies:

I can assure Mr. Chalkley that it is many, many years since I was starry-eyed about agriculture. Close acquaintance with it—from the bottom—soon robbed me of what illusions I ever had about the idyllic nature of rural life, for I know from personal experience just how wearily the ploughman can plod his homeward way. I have probably ploughed more derelict acres than Mr. Chalkley has penned chatty letters—and he seems well practised at that.

Our correspondent seems to think that because we produce a paper which, among other things, defends the interests of workers, we have to be addressed in a pseudo-class-conscious manner, but apparently he fails to recognise—as Lord Carrington (Eton and Sandhurst) very clearly does—the class interests of our noble lord, who is careful to live in a Manor House and almost certainly enjoys ample supplies of milk, meat, bacon and eggs, all produced from his own land. He probably does not drink beer.

But Mr. Chalkley suffers, not only from literary bad taste, but also economic indigestion. He does not tell us whether the plan for self-support in agriculture has been worked out for a capitalist society or for an economy freed from the economic loss of capitalism. The mental tether of those who cannot visualise the possibilities of such a society is notoriously short. Incidentally, I wonder how many eggs Mr. Chalkley was given on his ration book last week, and how much meat that is not cow beef we get now?

Anarchists do not believe that agriculture can or will be developed under capitalism. Too many economic interests are bound up with international trade for that. Neither do we raise autarky (self-sufficiency) as an ideal, but for Mr. Chalkley to believe that "international amity" under present economic systems is the answer is, indeed, starry-eyed, if not positively wierd.

But perhaps, after all, it is beyond his wit to see that.

[EDITORIAL COMMENT—page 3]

LONDON UNIVERSITY DEBATES

'I Will Not Fight' Motion

A DEBATE at London University Union on the famous motion: "This House will not fight in any war," did not turn out to be a very exciting affair. Mr. Stuart Morris, the general secretary of the Peace Pledge Union, proposed the motion; opposing it was Lord Strabolgi, the Labour Party peer.

Lord Strabolgi fairly summed-up the main contentions of his opponents in the two statements: "I would practice Gandhi's doctrine of non-violent resistance against a foreign force," and, "I would never fight in an 'organised' army, but it might, after an invasion, be necessary to fight with an underground resistance." He pointed out the incompatibility of these two positions.

Those supporting the motion were convinced of the need to defend the country against the attack which was assumed by everyone to be coming (if not from the Far East, a gift occupation from the West, amounting in the end to the same destruction), and when elucidated this need was seen to be the defence of "my aunt," "my house," "my cash."

Not surprisingly, then, there was little left to argue about, and speakers from the audience were beginning to approach the question of fighting for what, when time allotted to the debate was up.

A part of Mr. Morris' closing speech must be quoted. I do not know to what extent he speaks for other pacifists in maintaining the following:

"The pacifist does believe that it is a fine thing to die for ones country—to die for it but not to kill for it. Governments do not ask us to give our lives but to sell them, the price being the number of the enemy we can kill first."

The final voting favoured the motion by 64 to 33. Less than half of those present, however, were eligible to vote. Those sitting on the "no fighting" side of the room, appeared to have a 3-1 majority over the "fighters".

J.B.

HISTORIC PHONE CONVERSATION

CANBERRA.

Prime Minister Mr. Menzies, when informed of the King's death put through urgent phone call to Sir Thomas White, Australian High Commissioner in London, and asked: "Is this dreadful news true, Tom?" He was told: "Yes, Bob."

Evening News—Stop Press.

The Miners

Continued from p. 1

since the scheme was presented last October) in the face of opposition from both the Coal Board and the union. The Government hoped thereby to encourage the miners to stay in the mines.

But we have shown before how miners come and go in the industry as the wages rise or fall in comparison with other occupations. When a miner can get more money doing a lighter job elsewhere, he wants to be free to go and do it. When there is a wage award in mining, he will probably come back. But if he does that any time within any ten years, a part of all he has paid into the pension scheme will be a loss to him.

This provision, together with that which reduces benefits for absenteeism—meaning less than 30/- a week at 65—is causing bitterness and opposition from the men.

Union officials are working hard to persuade the miners to join the scheme. All who join before June 30th can claim credits for past services in the industry. Those who join later will be regarded as new entrants however long they have worked in the pits.

From the union point of view the scheme has many benefits. It will tend to make for a more settled labour force, with less absenteeism, less drifting away from the pits. It will be a "benefit" to point to during any time of unrest—a benefit won by the unions on behalf of their members. (We have seen how the dockers' leaders have played upon decasualisation in this way.) It will make the miners more disciplined—give them a stake in the industry.

In their arguments, the union officials are pointing out that, since the N.C.B. are paying so much towards the scheme, the miners should not hesitate to win this money from them. What the union leaders forget, but apparently the miners do not, is that all the money with which the N.C.B. is pretending to be so generous comes from the sweat of the men in the pits. The £2,000,000 donation to start the scheme; the 2/- a head weekly payment by the employers—this all comes directly from the coal dug by the men themselves. They are being given back a little of what they themselves produce. The N.C.B. will be able to cover itself by charging the consumer more for coal, so will not lose anyway, so all its generosity costs it nothing and in fact should show benefits in tying the miners to the job.

The only one who will pay will be the miner. He will pay his 1s. 6d. per week; he will be urged to produce more, for after all the industry, the State, is now looking after him better than ever before; he will pay for the clerks who will be necessary to run the scheme, and he will pay with his life and limb for the coal on which it is all based. The miners are not fools. They can see all this well enough. That is why, to the bewilderment of their various bosses, they are being so very ungrateful about this splendid pension scheme.

It is here that the pioneers of free methods in education have had an unacknowledged influence, and it is an ironical fact that one may visit the bureaucrats of the Ministry in Curzon Street and find them talking about the ideas of Herbert Read and A. S. Neill, while you can go amongst young teachers straight from their training colleges and hear them talking about "controlling a class". It is a fact that many teachers occupying new schools designed for informal groups of children busy on their "projects", complain bitterly that these schools are unusable—as they probably are if used in the old-fashioned way, with rows and rows of children in desks and a teacher sitting out in front. "But how else can you teach a class of 45 children?" one teacher asked me, and here we come to the crux of the problem, for at least a third of school classes in this country are of 45, and the *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent wrote last week that "classes are almost everywhere up to what is felt to be 'reasonable teaching capacity and often in excess of it. We have more classes of fifty and over than we really think satisfactory."

The changed policy in many of the new council schools can be gauged from these words by a Ministry official:

"Increasing emphasis is being laid on practical activities of all kinds, carried out in small groups with the teacher no longer imposing discipline on rows of children, but encouraging their different ways of self-expression, and not only in the teaching spaces, but in the whole of the school."

Some remarks in the *Architect's Journal* by the curator of the Geoffrey Museum, Shoreditch, illustrate the influence of what are too often called "crank" schools on official policy, and also show how difficult large and overcrowded classes make such a policy:

"Anyone comparing any good school building of the past ten years with the prison-like structures built as schools at the end of the last century, needs little persuasion to believe that a revolution has taken place. Would he not find equally amazing changes inside the classrooms? There he might expect to find rows of children sitting quietly at desks facing the teacher and listening in silence to a lesson; instead, in any of the many new schools which use newer methods, he would probably see children scattered in groups about the room, moving freely to and fro, talking among themselves as they busily pursue a variety of practical activities. The teacher, far from standing in an authoritative manner in front of the class, would be mingling with them, giving the individual help and encouragement which is so important a part of learning; or, more surprisingly, there might be no teacher in the room, and the children would not have noticed the fact. What does this mean? It means, in fact, that the whole emphasis and aim of education is changing."

★

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. R. A. Butler, forecast cuts in educational expenditure last November, it was very widely rumoured that the new Government intended to raise the school-entry age or lower the school-leaving age, the public outcry and that of the Government's political opponents was so great that it became obvious that this step would not be taken. Miss Florence Horsbrugh instructed local authorities to cut their educational expenditure by five per cent., "without damaging the essential fabric of education" (see FREEDOM, 22/12/51). The returns made by education officers

showed this to be impossible. The cuts they are having to make will inevitably be damaging. We had to wait until last week to hear what decisions had been made about school building. Miss Horsbrugh began by saying that:

The need for financial economy, the shortage of steel, and the temporary overloading of the building industry made necessary a revision of the educational building programme for 1952. Projects costing about £120 millions and providing 400,000 school places and £15,000,000 worth of accommodation for technical education had been started, and the first aim must be to complete them.

From now, however, the 1951-2 building programme was closed (with a balance of work costing £36,800,000 not started), and a revised programme for 1952-3 would be compiled immediately "from the balance of the 1951-2 and the existing 1952-3 programmes".

Miss Horsbrugh explained that she would be unable to include in annual building programmes work designed to relieve overcrowding, or to replace or improve unsatisfactory premises.

She would ask authorities with less pressing needs to make "drastic cuts" in their 1951-2 and 1952-3 programmes, and in some cases to eliminate them altogether. A number of projects for which all preparatory work had been done, including some finally approved, would have to be deferred or postponed indefinitely.

There have been many expressions of relief since this announcement, though it is difficult to see why. "We've saved the programme," said a Ministry official, while *The Times Educational Supplement* declares: "There can be no complaint over these sensible means of saving money. Education has got off lightly for stern and practical reasons; the argument that education pays is beginning to tell. There will be more money for its essentials if savings are made on the frills which still remain."

The remarks of the *New Statesman* (which has just begun an interesting and disquieting series on primary schools) seem to us to be nearer the truth. It says:

"Badly over-crowded, our primary schools are to be stretched to intolerable limits. Classes of over 50 are to become classes of over 60; and these will not be rare. After 1956, when the 'bulge' begins to appear in the secondary school population, and places become vacant in some areas in primary schools, then primary schools 'may be converted into temporary secondary schools,' or—thoughtful alternative—primary school accommodation 'may be used' as annexes to secondary schools.

"This means the number of primary schools is to be reduced after 1956—although the (dwindling) effects of the 'bulge' will still be felt for several years. That is, conditions in primary schools are to be markedly worse even than they are at present. The same effect would be produced by the Ministry's alternative 'suggestion'—that the primary age be raised from eleven to twelve—a policy of cramming the primary schools simply because there will be no secondary schools to take these children.

"Teachers are already being sacked by some Local Education Authorities. What could be more logical? Fewer school places are to be accompanied by fewer teachers.

"But the Government, one suspects, has something else in mind. The easiest way to deal with the 'bulge' is to cut back the leaving age from 15 to 14. This the Government evidently does not yet dare to suggest. But it knows that the new cuts will make any form of secondary education quite impossible for a large minority of children. So it prepares a situation in which Local Education Authorities will have no alternative but to plead for permission to give parents the option of withdrawing their children at 14 instead of 15. And many parents, already dis-

"Out of the Mouths of Babes . . ."

ON the Cuckoo Hall Housing

Estate in Edmonton, a new school block has recently been built. It occupies ten acres of the estate, containing three separate schools, having taken several years to build. On Monday, 4th Feb., the Mayor, local and county councillors, parsons, officials of the Board of Education and many other notables went to "open" Cuckoo Hall School.

Sir John Maud, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education, made a speech. Alas, he did not take into account the fact that the majority of his audience were children who would be attending the school, and he began by asking questions to which he got some very "surprising" answers.

According to the Press:

"Who built these schools?" he asked, and quicker than lightning, six-year-old Francis Jolly said, 'The builders.' It was a good answer but not quite the one Sir John expected."

You bet your fanny adams it wasn't.

"Yes," he said, 'the builders certainly played an important part, but the people on the platform with me also played a big part in providing the school!'"

Never mind, Sir John. Nine years at the school will work wonders and the answer will come less pat, less accurate, and less surprising.

A.M.

Special Appeal

January 25th to February 5th:

Bristol: S.G.C. 1/6; Aldershot: D.B. 5/-; London: Anon* 2/6; London: W.W. 3/-; Capetown: C.D.F. £2/2/0; Glasgow: A.M.C.D.* 4/-; Brighton: A.S. 3/-; Paris: S.K. £1; Cambridge: C.L.D.* 5/-; Paris: R.A. 13/-; London: L.G.W.* 5/-; Dovercourt: L.C.W.* 10/-; London: J.W. 1/6; Bolton: W.H.B. 5/-; London: F.E.D.* 5/-; Bordon: Anon £2/2/0; Edinburgh: T.O.M.* 5/-; London: V.T., per V.R. £2.

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gusted with the attempt to present 'Secondary Modern' schools as the equivalent of Grammar schools, will doubtless prefer that their children should start earning at 14, rather than sit for an extra year in classrooms where, through overcrowding, they will learn nothing.

★

There is one more point to be considered. We have laid emphasis in this article and in the quotations at its head, on the importance of school buildings and their effect upon the child, and we are certainly right in doing so, especially when remembering the thousands of hopelessly sub-standard prison-schools, barrack-schools and slum-schools remaining in this country, the number of schools in use to-day which were on the Board of Education's black list in 1925. In London itself nearly half the schools were built before 1904 and only one in nine since the first world war.

All the same, when we think of enlightened educational experiments in council schools, three schools spring to mind. They are Mr. Alex Bloom's St. George's-in-the-East Secondary School in Cable Street, Stepney, briefly described in Tony Gibson's pamphlet *Youth for Freedom* (Freedom Press, 2/-); Mr. A. L. Stone's Steward Street Junior School, Birmingham, described in the pamphlet *Story of a School* (H.M.S.O., 1/-), and Mr. E. F. O'Neill's Prestolee School, near Bolton, the history of which is told in a book just published, *The Idiot Teacher* by Gerald Holmes (Faber, 12/6).

These three schools are not new buildings in new towns. They are all old ugly and dreary buildings in poor industrial areas. But the energy, vitality and vision generated by their exceptional headmasters have transformed the environment.

Our task is thus not only to rail against successive Chancellors of the Exchequer, but to subvert the teachers and parents!

W.

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